

TRANSIT UPDATES *Have anything to report? Call 213 388 2364*

Two new "Smart Shuttle" experimental bus projects have been implemented. One is a route-deviation service operating in Van Nuys, Panorama City, Pacoima, Sylmar and Sun Valley. This service is similar to the West Valley Smart Shuttle, except that it operates later hours (until 10 p.m.) as well as weekends. For more information, call 818-780-1888 or visit: <http://socata.lerctr.org/ss/heshuttle.shtml>

The other "Smart Shuttle" is a group of four fixed routes (not route deviation) that operate in the Westlake/Mac Arthur Park/Koreatown area. These buses run every 15-minutes, Mon-Fri between 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. For more information, call 213-467-6278 or visit: <http://socata.lerctr.org/ss/ktss.shtml>

MTA "Bus Cubes" (special signs containing additional bus schedule information) have been installed at major bus stops along Van Nuys Blvd (Victory Bl, Sherman Way, Roscoe Bl, Nordhoff Ave, San Fernando Road, and Foothill Blvd.)

Long Beach Transit is now operating a new route #103 (which is really a peak-hour shortline of #101. Minor time changes have also been made to #111, 112, 131, 173, 181 and 182.

The Pasadena ARTS "Uptown" shuttle route has been modified to provide a direct connection with their "Downtown" shuttle route.

The Paramount Neighborhood Shuttle is now operating Saturday service (same routing as weekday), according to *Western Transit*.

OCTA #701 has been re-aligned in Downtown to utilize the 23rd St. ramp of the Harbor Freeway Transitway. No stops have been added or changed, except for one stop at Flower and Fifth (relocated to the front of the

Arco Towers building).

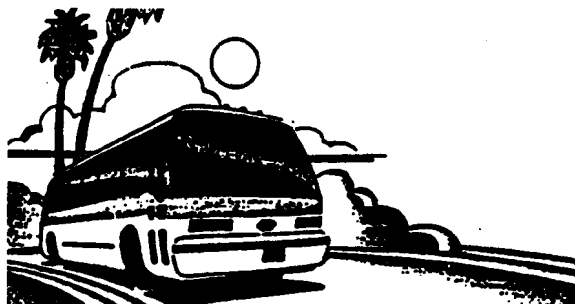
OCTA #39, 71 and 306 now stop at the arrival and departure levels of John Wayne Airport (SNA). #61 will also serve the airport, but from the departure level only.

Some important OCTA proposals include the rerouting of Routes #39, 43, 46, 50, and 205 away from the current Disneyland stop (due to construction at Disneyland). Buses normally passing near Disneyland will generally remain on the main street that they are travelling on; buses terminating at Disneyland will be rerouted to terminate elsewhere. These reroutes, as well as some minor changes to other lines, are scheduled to go into effect on Feb 8, 1998.

Also, OCTA is considering taking over various Metrolink shuttle buses now operated by the City of Anaheim.

As of November 2, Line #496 weekend-only service between Montclair and Riverside was still being operated by the Inland Empire Connection (not RTA or Foothill, as was discussed earlier).

Due to construction at Buenaventura Mall, only one of the bus stops in the parking lot is currently open. Also, VISTA buses no longer use the SCAT bus stop, but stop at a new bus stop in the parking lot, adjacent to Mills Ave.



BULLETIN BOARD

Officers and directors-at-large nominations for 1998 will occur at our November 8th meeting. We welcome any member who wishes to participate in the leadership of our group to throw their hat in the ring. Elections are to be held at a special abbreviated meeting December 13th which will begin at 2:30 p.m. Afterwards, we will travel on the Blue Line to Long Beach for our first annual Holiday Buffet at the Colonial Buffet in Long Beach. The cost is only \$12 and the food is great! A form is enclosed with this newsletter for advance payment. Non-members are also welcomed to participate! And there may be some surprises in store at the event.

Auto Free Orange County is devoted to helping members have the option of using the public transit system instead of their car for commuting or other purposes. They have a bi-monthly newsletter and provide consultation on how to live the car free lifestyle. Meetings are the first Wednesday of the month at 6 p.m. at the Club Laguna club house, 150 The Club Drive in Laguna Beach. For further information call (714) 452-1393.

The October issue of Santa Monica News (a community newspaper) included a profile of Santa Monica Mayor Pam O'Connor titled "Get on the Bus". Done as a day in the life it mentioned that when the Mayor's car died she switched to riding public transit. The article describes her taking the Big Blue Bus to downtown Los Angeles for a meeting and returning on a MTA Wilshire line. She is a big booster of the Santa Monica system and even attended some of the meetings for its ongoing restructuring. And she extols how public transit gives officials an opportunity to be accessible.

SO.CA.TA's home page is now listed on Yahoo! (<http://www.yahoo.com>) and Yahoo! Los Angeles (<http://la.yahoo.com>) as a transportation related organization. Just another way we are trying to be more visible.

MTA is faced with numerous operators retiring in the next few months. To find replacements they have begun a massive campaign to hire part-time drivers. The form to apply for consideration is on the MTA web site (<http://www.mta.net>) or call (213) 922-7153.

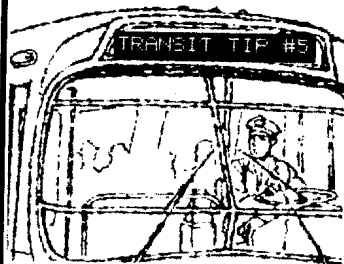
Older Flexible buses have begun showing up on Wilshire. Division 10 got these from Division 1 after it received some newer buses.

The local office of the Surface Transportation Policy Project has an informative electronic newsletter, "Ticket to Ride". To receive it send a request to: gloland@aol.com

As always, *The Transit Advocate* needs articles, letters, Transit Tips, photographs and research (newspaper clippings, etc.) from all members and interested non-members. All materials should be sent to **3010 Wilshire #362, Los Angeles, CA 90010.** (or e-mailed to transit@lerami.lerctr.org). Material for publication should be received two weeks before the scheduled SO.CA.TA meeting date. ■

"I'm off to the station. . .but I'm not catching a train . . ."

Metrolink stations are also important bus transfer points in several communities (particularly Santa Clarita, Chatsworth, Downtown LA, Claremont, Montclair, Fontana, Fullerton, Santa Ana, etc.) Other transportation modes, such as intercity buses and Amtrak, are also available at some Metrolink stations.



Thankfully the Amalgamated Transit Union for MTA mechanics reached an agreement with the agency before a possible November 11 walkout. This 3 year agreement means there will be no strike this year (the unions for the operators and clerks had already settled).

There will now be a monthly report to the MTA board's operations committee regarding the status of bus operations including key data on performance, complaints, finances, trends, etc. A year after signing the consent decree the board finally decided it needed to keep apprised on a regular basis of their progress toward compliance. The leadership of the Bus Rider's Union hinted in the LA Times they may go back to Judge Hatter if they are dissatisfied with MTA's efforts to fulfill its obligations under the agreement. Stay tuned.

All I want to say about the new service project that is part of the consent decree is that even the Los Angeles Dept. of Transportation sees some of the routes as ill-conceived. The process is driven more by doing something than doing something useful.

At our Oct. 11th meeting we petitioned Mayor Riordan to comply with the law specifying who he can appoint to the MTA board. Public Utilities Code section 130051c says they shall include "Two public members and one member of the City Council of the City of Los Angeles". Councilmember Alatorre already sits on the MTA Board. Yet Mayor Riordan went forward with appointing Councilmember Hal Bernson to the board also, saying the County Counsel office had indicated Mr. Bernson could be appointed in

his capacity as a member of the public. But Richard Katz who wrote the law admitted in an article in the Daily News that the intention of this section was to limit the number of officials on the board. A press release about our stand on the issue was sent via e-mail to numerous reporters and media outlets.

Speaking of Mr. Bernson, his motion to study Metrolink service on the Burbank/Chandler Right-of-Way was approved by the MTA Board and the Los Angeles City Council. But given lack of interest in this idea among the Valley elite (plus possible vocal opposition from the influential community who live beside it) I see this going nowhere.

Interim MTA CEO Julian Burke has announced two special board meetings to discuss the results of his review of the agency. These are:

- Thursday Nov. 13 at 9:30 a.m. on the operations budget
- Thursday Dec. 11 at 10 a.m. on the capital budget

Mr. Burke is also downsizing MTA. In the first round 85 current employees are being let go and 85 vacant positions eliminated. Rumors indicate Burke will have serious questions about the viability of the current rail construction schedule. Only the Red Line extension to North Hollywood is considered sacrosanct.

The financial perils of MTA have consequences not only for itself but the other agencies that it funds. At the Oct. 27th Annual Membership

meeting of Access Services, Inc. (the consolidated ADA paratransit provider for Los Angeles county) Executive Director Richard De Rock spoke of the problems they have with MTA's plans for flat funding of ASI. He said they hoped to get a budget commitment six months in advance to help them study options. During public comment I pointed out to Mr. De Rock and various assembled persons that MTA doesn't know its financial status week to week, much less six months from now.

It was interesting that the one flashpoint at the ASI meeting was whether MTA deserves certification for being 100% compliant with ADA. The issue of broken lifts is to be investigated regarding all carriers for next year's meeting.

The Citizen Advisory Council at its Oct. 22 meeting adopted an ambitious work plan. Too ambitious in my view. They admitted if Mayor

Riordan doesn't cotton to the idea of a Stakeholders' Conference it is DOA. The CAC should pick a few small goals and get some victories under its belt before going on to bigger things.

The draft 1998 Regional Transportation Plan that the Southern California Association of Governments has been laboring on since early this year is anticipated to be released for public review later this month. Or not, given continued grumbling by various agencies and municipalities that may delay it yet again. It is hoped by March of next year if all goes well that it will receive final adoption by SCAG's regional council. Although SCAG is essentially toothless, as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for Southern California its Plan matters because no federal funds can be awarded to projects without being included in the RTP. ■

SFV BUS SYSTEM? *Charles P. Hobbs*

Over the past decade, but especially recently, there has been much discussion of a separate bus system for the San Fernando Valley. This would involve turning over existing MTA bus lines to a new agency (similar to Foothill Transit, LADOT, etc.)

While looking through ridership figures for MTA and a few other bus operators, I discovered some interesting facts:

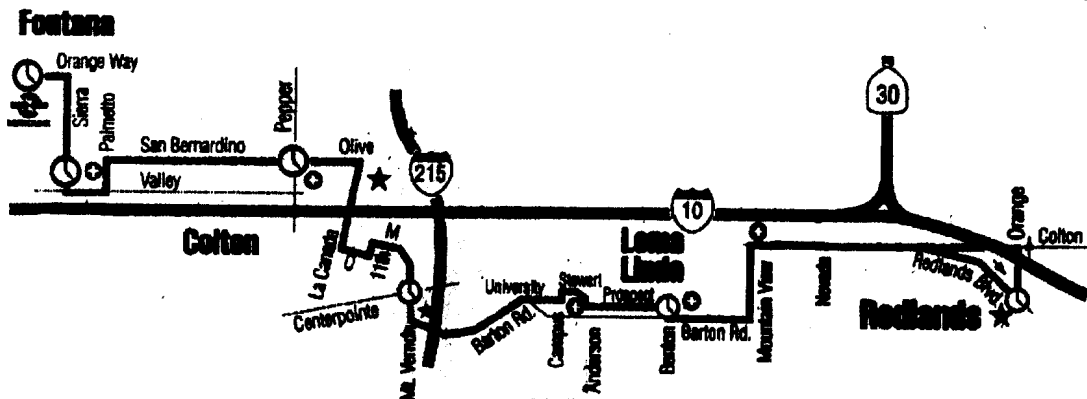
- In the Valley, MTA operates 28 lines, representing about 167,000 unlinked boardings (although not all of these necessarily take place in the Valley

due to the fact that a few of these lines provide local service to other areas as well). The top ten SF Valley MTA lines carry over 125,000 weekday boardings.

A S.F. Valley bus agency would compare favorably in ridership to some of the other larger suburban carriers:

- Foothill Transit carries about 40,000 boardings/weekday
- Santa Monica Bus routes carry about 64,000 weekday boardings,
- Orange County Transit, according to their "Bus Book", has about 150,000 weekday boardings. ■

ROUTE OF THE MONTH *Chris Ledermuller*



Route of the month: Omnitrans 19

Where does it go: Fontana Metrolink Station, Kaiser Hospital (So. Fontana Transit Center), SB County Medical Center, Colton Civic Center, Loma Linda University and Medical Center, VA Hospital, and Redlands Mall.

When does it run: 5:20am-10:00pm weekdays, 7:00am-7:00pm Sat., 8:00am-5:45pm Suns.

How frequently does it operate: Half-hourly weekdays, hourly weekends.

How much does it cost: 85 cents (35 cents seniors age 60 and older and disabled). Better yet, buy a day pass for \$2 (\$1 for seniors and disabled).

Note: On weekends, Route 19 continues as Route 32.

For more information: 1-800-9-OMNIBUS

VOTE FOR THE ROUTE OF THE YEAR!

You are all familiar with the Route of the Month segments. Well now, one of the Routes of the Month will be this year's Route of the Year. The routes to select from are:

(Jan) MTA #115	(May) CVL #3	(Sep) MNT #10
(Feb) LBT #171	(Jun) MTA #430	(Nov) OMAI #19
(Mar) OMI #64	(Jul) OCTA #60	
(Apr) OCTA #93	(Aug) IEC #110	

Please vote for the route that you wish to be route of the year by either stating your choice at the November So. Ca. TA meeting, or by mailing your selection before Thanksgiving to So. Ca. TA (address on cover), or sending e-mail to transit@lorami.levco.org

The results will be published in the December issue of the Transit Advocate.

TRANSIT TRIVIA *Chris Ledermuller/Dana Gabbard*

Last month's Transit Trivia question was:

East bound in the afternoon what is the first bus stop Foothill route 481 picks up passengers at (hint: despite the map in the Transit Book it is not Wilshire/Western)

The answer: Wilshire and St. Andrews (this is because the buses layover at 7th and Wilton and pull out along Wilton, turning onto Wilshire)

Dear Editor:

I have observed a number of meetings of the Southern California Transit Advocates as well as taking your newsletter for the last year. Overall, I have found the organization and the newsletter to take a fair minded approach to gathering and reporting transit related information. Nonetheless, recent comments concerning the San Fernando Valley in columns written by Mr. Dana Gabbard concern me.

While I agree that at times certain self appointed "leaders" of the San Fernando Valley are overly dramatic in their protests of the Valley "getting the shaft," I do feel that the needs and concerns of the San Fernando Valley are in most cases legitimate and deserving of consideration. Mr. Gabbard easily dismisses the region as "dull" and dominated by "pity politics."

I usually have high regard for Mr. Gabbard's writings, but such an attitude does not help the debate to determine solutions to Los Angeles' dire transit needs.

The San Fernando Valley is a socio-economically diverse, urban region that is an integral part of the City of Los Angeles. Though the perception by some "over the hill" is that it is a sleepy little hamlet with little need for public transit, nothing could be further from the truth.

In the future, it is my hope that your organization and newsletter will more fairly consider the San Fernando Valley in

exploring its transit needs and it's part of the region as a whole.

Editor's Note: Just for the record: we currently have about 21 "active" members (out of a total of about 50) "Active" is defined as having attended the meeting, participated in some other official SO.CA.TA event, or posted on the SO.CA.TA Members-Only WWWBoard in the past two-three months.

Of the 21 members: 8 (about 38%) live in Central LA. There are about 3 members each, from the San Fernando Valley, San Gabriel Valley, and Northern California. Each of these groups of 3 members represent about 14% of the active membership (42% total). 2 active members (about 10%) live in Pasadena/ South Pasadena.. We have one active member in the South Bay (Torrance/ Carson/San Pedro) and one in Southeast LA (Huntington Pk). Each represents about 5% of the active membership.

We are currently trying to build up both our total and active membership to be more geographically diverse, so that more opinions are made available. A few weeks ago, a marketing effort was made in the Inland Empire (Fontana, Riverside, San Bernardino and Corona). About 100 brochures were distributed in that area.

We haven't even begun to market in South Central, East LA (largely untouched by any transit advocacy, even the BRU), North LA County, Orange County, etc.■