

# BULLETIN BOARD

Election time is here again! At our Nov. 6 meeting nominations will be taken with elections to follow at the Dec. 11 meeting. At least one position will be vacant and up for grabs (Director Hank Fung is attending UC Berkeley and likely won't run for re-election). If you are interested in taking a leadership role in our group here is your chance.

SO.CA.TA has accepted the invitation to become an affiliate of the California Futures Network [<http://www.calfutures.org/>].

Our November meeting will be held on the first Saturday of the month due to a conflict with the MTA public hearing on the 13th. Among the items to be discussed are a possible increase in dues and the motion passed at the August meeting on the concept proposed by member Van Ajemian.

Our annual holiday banquet will be held on Saturday Dec. 11 beginning at 5 p.m. at Colonial Buffet in Long Beach. Cost is \$13 per person and a reservation form is being sent with the newsletter to members this month. Join the fun and camaraderie of this festive event.

At our Sept. 11 meeting Richard Silver of RailPAC and TRAC gave a presentation on the prospects for building effective statewide coalitions on issues relating to rail. Our thanks for his interesting perspectives.

Our campaign for Torrance Transit line 3 should kick into high gear after the first of the year. Input is welcome as we finalize our plans and identify key strategies.

Director Anthony Loui and Corresponding Secretary Kris Sharp are coordinating a grant proposal we are making to the American Public Transit Association to underwrite a forum next year on rapid bus, possibly as part of Earth Day 2000.

Members in the news: member John Ulloth in the Oct. 24 Los Angeles Times had a letter blasting the current politics that force passenger rail service capable of 90-mph to follow and be slowed down by 60-mph freight operations. Member Joe Dunn's comments on coordination of MTA and Metrolink services at an MTA meeting on eastside alternatives held in Montebello were quoted in the Sept. 16 edition of "The News" ("Residents Want Subway in Transit Plans for Future"). Member Chris Ledermuller had an op-ed piece ("We Can't Afford to Lose Expo") responding to NIMBY comments about the impact of rail service on the Exposition Blvd. right-of-way in a previous issue. SO.CA.TA ally Jay Laessig of Auto Free Orange County was quoted on the difficulties of being a pedestrian in auto-oriented surroundings in the Sept. 29 Orange County Register ("Pedestrians Face Risks in County"). As always we laud these efforts to contribute to dialogue on transportation issues.

The California Transit Association has undertaken an outreach program which includes building coalitions with organizations such as ours, Transit for the 21st Century. Kristina Egan of CTA may speak at one of our upcoming meetings regarding our participation in this effort.

As noted above on Saturday Nov. 13 MTA will have a public hearing to receive comments on proposed service changes to coincide with the opening of the Red Line extension to North Hollywood. Also input will be sought on two Metro Rapid Bus demonstration lines (Whittier/Wilshire and Ventura Blvd) proposed to commence operation in mid-2000. The hearing will begin at 10 a.m. at the MTA Headquarters Building, Third Floor. We will present our position and have a table to share information with the public and sell Transit Guides.

Wednesday Dec. 1 MTA will hold a public hearing at 10 p.m. at the MTA Headquarters building. This will be to receive input on MTA's complimentary paratransit plan update. For more information: (213) 922-2808 or TDD (213) 922-7674 (to pg. 7)

Most of us were surprised when Governor Davis vetoed S.B. 372, the transit zone bill being pushed by the Amalgamated Transportation Union (which represents MTA's mechanics). But the zone proponents shouldn't gloat, since they still face daunting obstacles as was made clear in the post-veto analysis by Annette Kondo and Sue Fox in the Oct. 24 San Fernando Valley edition of the L.A. Times ("Valley Transit Zone Faces Tough Road Despite Davis' Veto"). Examples of roadblocks include the amount of subsidy MTA will provide for operating service and the savings requirement of the Zone Guidelines.

Zev did it again! On Oct. 28 at the MTA Board meeting he introduced a motion to defund projects to mitigate traffic for the potentially moribund Playa Vista and redirect the \$30 million to purchase buses for consent decree compliance. After this was ignominiously rejected he quietly voted in favor of a Kenabe/Riordan motion (agenda item #35) that did the exact opposite of his failed motion: preserve the entire \$30 million despite half the funds being for projects that will not begin for some time. I think Douglas Shuit in the Oct. 29 Los Angeles Times ("Mayor Exercises Clout on MTA Board") is on the money in seeing Mayor Riordan as the key player in this little drama. Zev knew what the final outcome was going to be and saw an opportunity to grandstand. Again.

Mayor Riordan has appointed his longtime transportation aide Asst. Deputy Mayor Jaime de la Vega to the MTA Board (viz Richard Alatorre). Activist John Walsh tells me Riordan wanted to give the seat to a city councilmember (I've heard whispers of Cindy Miscikowski) but couldn't get anyone to agree to be a rubber stamp. Plus being on the MTA Board isn't the appealing political plum it was 3-4 years ago. In any case I lauded the appointment during the public comment portion of

the Oct. 28 MTA Board meeting, thanking the Mayor for finally agreeing with the general understood interpretation of Public Utility Code section 130051 that his appointees are to consist of two members of the public and one city council member. For the past year or so Riordan had as appointees two councilmembers and one citizen.

Struggling with the enormous pricetag of the consent decree, on July 29 the MTA Board approved language to have all agreements with external bodies it funds include language warning MTA may have to comply with federal court orders by rescinding commitments. In implementing this legal provision (quickly dubbed "the caveat"), MTA pissed off municipal operators and call for projects grantees by requesting they sign a memorandum of understanding before it would release funds. MTA Boardmember Frank Roberts of Lancaster requested the MTA staff address these concerns (agenda item #45, Oct. 28 MTA Board meeting). Staff now contemplate sending letters explaining the situation, but contractual language in municipal operator's funding agreements will not be excised. As the draft letter circulates comments by grantors may compel MTA to rethink its current line of thinking.

The latest development in the BRU's phony Thursday fare strike campaign is the appearance of small nearly indecipherable triangle stickers on bus shelters and bus interiors crammed with bilingual slogans. Meanwhile MTA has mounted a major media campaign "It's Getting Better on the Bus" to counter the BRU line that everything the agency does is too little, too late.

Question: would MTA be able to comply with Transportation Development Act guidelines if it adopted the BRU sound bite demand of a fifty cent fare and \$20 monthly pass? (to pg. 4)

(from pg.3) Answer: No (the MTA Board could grant a waiver but that would surely raise howls of protest from the munis). Source: Carlos Monroy of MTA staff, in response to my query.

And here is another consequence of the consent decree: Quarterly Line Performance Trends Reports that MTA formerly compiled with detailed point checking of service have been discontinued. While statistical systemwide sampling continues (for reporting purposes) detailed information on ridership by line is available only for the heaviest top 20 or so routes that are the sticking point of the consent decree. The effort to gather data on crowding and schedule adherence for the consent decree is so time consuming MTA schedule checking staff are unable to engage in line-by-line ridership checking for any other lines except the top 20. This could have a dire impact on MTA's ability to schedule service appropriately (which is why line-by-line data was compiled in the first place).

How much did the BRU spend on its anti-NFL campaign? Those color posters stuck to traffic signal boxes all over L.A. must have cost a pretty penny. All for naught, as no one credits their campaign with Houston getting the team. Their only accomplishment was angering proponent Councilman Mark Ridley Thomas by claiming he was racist for wanting a team in the Coliseum. The BRU continues to burn bridges with reckless abandon.

Deceitful public statement of the month: Eric Mann on a recent "Life & Times" show declaring MTA could acquire temporary buses to comply with the overcrowding relief ruling by Judge Hatter the same way fleets were assembled for the 1984 Los Angeles and 1996 Atlanta Summer Olympics.

Western Transit in its September issue breaks the story that MTA is including in the new RFP for contracted bus service 4 lines from the consent decree pilot program: 58-Alameda Street, 214-Main

St.-Broadway Loop, 530-Panorama City-East LA College and 577-El Monte-Norwalk Station-Cerritos. decree pilot program: 58-Alameda Street, 214-Main St.-Broadway Loop, 530-Panorama City-East LA College and 577-El Monte-Norwalk Station-Cerritos. It appears MTA is attempting to contract out these lines under the new service provisions of the collective bargaining agreement with the UTU (which represents MTA's bus and rail operators). This may result in MTA again facing arbitration with the union (it lost past challenges over line 305 and the BDOF clause and now is wrangling with UTU over the temporary Red Line shuttle on Hollywood Blvd contracted thru LADOT).

Double-deck freeways? Underground freeways? These are the prescriptions to congestion offered by transportation consultant Wendell Cox in his Oct. 17 Daily News op-ed "Honk if you love Traffic" (<http://www.publicpurpose.com/ut-ladn-traffic.htm>). He actually complains if the 1956 master plan for freeways had been completed "There would be considerably less traffic congestion in Los Angeles today". My Oct. 22 letter in the Daily News questions that assumption, noting recent research shows increased capacity is quickly gridlocked by latent demand. Cox also claims suburban sprawl is a myth, citing figures regarding how densely populated the L.A. area is. I responded that critics like USC Professor James Moore and the Reason Foundation who claim rail will fail due the low density of our region. Cox in e-mail correspondence with me said he was simply making people aware of options. Maybe, but I think they are pie in the sky and DOA options.

The Dept. of Transportation's Office of Inspector General recently finished a review of the Alameda Corridor Project (<http://www.dot.gov/oig/audits/tr2000004.html>). Overall it gets a clean bill of health, although one caveat is the possible financial impact of consent

decree compliance on MTA's ability fulfill its funding commitment to the project.

Meanwhile the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is in trouble. A recent audit was the subject of a Oct. 20 Los Angeles Times article by Jeffrey Rabin ("Study Uncovers Irregularities in Regional Panel"). Rabin details findings that include SCAG's internal financial controls are inadequate (employee paychecks bounced last Spring) and use of consultants is excessive. Oh, my!

Joel Szabot, Transportation Policy Consultant to Assembly Republicans made an illuminating presentation Oct.15 before SCAG's Long Range Transportation Finance Task Force. From his comments it is clear a deal is possible at the state level to move forward with long term financing of transportation improvements but the politics so far are volatile.

Director Anthony Loui recently brought to my attention an amazing SCAG document: "Profiles of Subregional Organizations in the SCAG Region". This invaluable directory of organizations such as Councils of Governments includes addresses, phones numbers, members of governing boards, etc. To request a copy call SCAG at (213) 236-1800.

Odd accolade of the month: "SCAG has brought transportation equity to the planning table and the Environmental Defense Fund is committed to working with SCAG to improve transportation for communities of color and the transit dependent" -- Robert Garcia, EDF Senior Attorney (and co-counsel on the consent decree).

I was gratified the Daily News on Oct. 7 published my letter questioning their Oct. 4 article touting smart shuttle. My key statement: "The only thing being demonstrated is what happens when transit becomes political pork".

Access Services, Inc. the coordinated paratransit provider for Los Angeles county has proposed a separate logo and identify ("Access Paratransit") for the transportation services they provide (under contract) as distinguished from other activities they undertake. Interestingly one of the reasons offered for doing so is that counterfeit copies of the current logo were found on illegal bandit cabs. Evidently this was a ploy to appear legitimate (cabs can cross into jurisdictions they lack licenses for when carrying an ASI trip).

The Oct. issue of Metro Investment Report (<http://www.ablinc.net/mir/>) is full of interesting transportation-related news. Interviewees include new Pasadena Blue Line Authority CEO Rick Thorpe and Metrolink CEO David Solow. Thorpe is confident the Blue Line can built on time and within the budget provided and Solow affirms that internal problems at Metrolink are being addressed. Elsewhere MIR reports the proposed ten cent fare increase will be voted on by the MTA Board in December and that the Alameda Corridor Authority has instituted an audit oversight committee after recent irregularities came to light. Lastly there is an excerpt of the new report "Smart Public Investments: Information and Analysis for Infrastructure planning" from the Center for Continuing Study of the California Economy (see [http://www.californiaeconomy.com/research\\_projects.htm](http://www.californiaeconomy.com/research_projects.htm) for information on how to request a copy).

Irvine has decided not to go forward with its local elevated monorail-style rail line. Instead the \$120 million earmark the city has from Proposition 116 will be offered to OCTA for its Centerline Light Rail Project. Irvine had to commit the funds to a project before an impending deadline triggered and the money reverted to the California Transportation Commission for reallocation. (to pg. 6)

(from pg. 5) Interesting fact of the month: Fullerton surpassed Irvine this summer as the busiest station on Metrolink's Orange County line.

A historic Red Car Trolley line in San Pedro is being undertaken by the Port of Los Angeles. For further details contact Project Manager Robert Henry at (310) 732-3570 or rhenry@portla.org

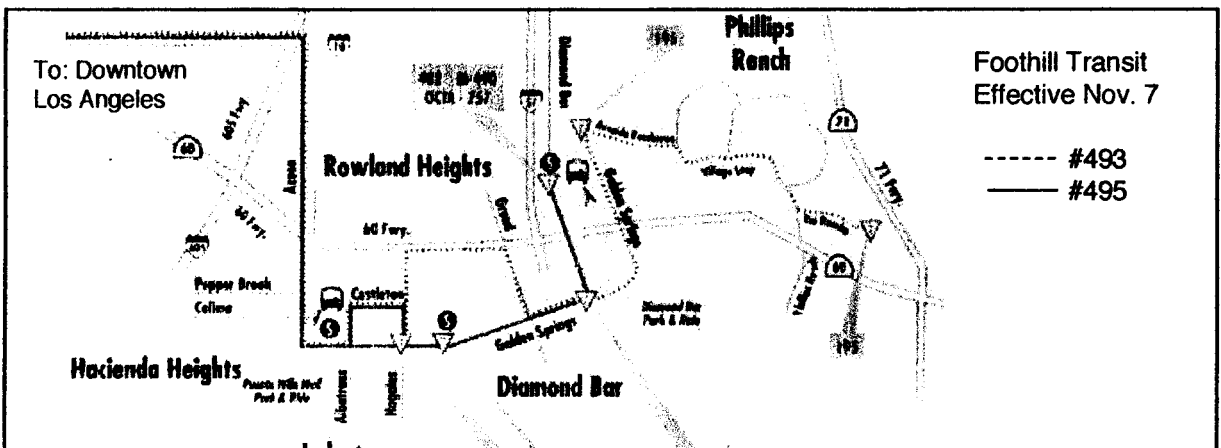
The Oct. 25 Los Angeles Downtown News reveals that Mayor Riordan has nominated Francine Banerjee to be the permanent General Manager of the L.A. Dept. of Transportation (she has been interim manager since June of last year). Banerjee has laudably spearheaded the rapid bus project, partnering with MTA. We hope this prefigures a more open style of management at LADOT and welcome the certain approval of the nomination by the City Council.

The Antelope Valley Transit Authority recently placed cameras on all their coaches. Their value is not simply in crime prevention but also the avoidance of liability suits. The minutes of a recent AVTA Board meeting state: "A driver recently was verbally accused of causing a disabled person to fall off the steps of the bus and on to the ground. The video showed that the passenger caused their own fall. The video not only avoided any payment; it avoided the claim from ever being filed".

A Transportation Summit scheduled for Nov. 9 at USC has been cancelled. It may be rescheduled for January. Certainly the advance publicity materials made it seem perhaps the first glimmer of long overdue regional consensus building on these issues. Contact Derek Chernow at SCAG if you want to be contacted if and when the event is rescheduled: (213) 236-1819 or CHERNOW@scag.ca.gov

When S.B. 63 becomes law Jan. 1 the El Monte busway will quickly become gridlocked. An examination of the MTA briefing ("A Preliminary Assessment of Variable Occupancy Requirements") to the bill's author, State Senator Hilda Solis, has convinced me we may want to be poised to find a sponsor to introduce a bill reversing this legislation. Members in Los Angeles County by calling the Registrar's Office at (800) 815-2666 and selecting option 5 can learn who their State Senate and Assembly representatives are. Let them know your concerns about the El Monte busway becoming a parking lot due to S.B. 63.

I'll close this month with a fond farewell to Ernest Pund, the recently departed Riverside Press-Enterprise commuter columnist. So long and happy travels (he is moving to Colorado)! ■



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

Testing has begun of the 6.3 mile extension of the Red Line between Hollywood and North Hollywood.

MTA has added a trip planner to its website: <http://207.155.61.166> - several members have tried it out and have given it mixed reviews. MTA staff admit it needs some tweaking.

The contract to lengthen Long Beach Blue Line platforms to accommodate three car trains was awarded in September. Construction is scheduled to start in February of next year and it is anticipated the extended platforms will be ready for use in April of 2001.

Metrolink will have some schedule changes effective November 15. Most changes are minor (involving only a few minutes). Major changes include the following:

- A new late-morning round-trip between Union Station and Princessa (Santa Clarita)
- Cancellation of several (mostly mid-day) buses between Burbank Airport and Los Angeles
- The opening of the Newhall station in "Winter 2000" (probably January or February)

Foothill will also feature some changes effective November 7:

- More evenly-spaced service on #480; increased service on #481 (but #481 service east of West Covina Pkwy will be cut)
- Reroute of #493 to use the Pomona Fwy. between Grand and Nogales
- Limited stops on #495 along Golden Springs and Colima
- Both #493 and 495 to use Azusa Bl (not I-605) between Puente Hills Mall and I-10. Service along Azusa Bl will be non-stop. (see map pg. 6)
- Bidirectional peak service on #701; cancellation of #702
- Minor time changes on #178, 179, 184, 276, 482, 498

Ventura County has issued a request for proposal for a replacement smartcard system. Their hope is the new version will avoid the persistent operational problems of the now discontinued Smart Passport.

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(from pg. 2) Friday Nov. 19 at 10 a.m. Brian Kelly, transportation aide to State Senator John Burton, will speak at a meeting of the SCAG Long Range Transportation Finance Task Force. This will be held on the 12th Floor of 818 W. 7th Street in downtown Los Angeles (adjacent to the 7th/Metro Red Line/Blue Line station). For further information: (213) 236-1827.

Saturday November 6 at 3 p.m. Santa Monica Municipal Bus Lines has scheduled a meeting to receive public input on proposed service adjustments to Olympic Blvd. service and line 10 (Santa Monica to Downtown L.A. express). It will be held at the Ken Edwards Center, 1527 4th Street in Santa Monica. For further information: (310) 458-1975 ext.245.

The Bus Riders Union has at last updated its website, which has a new address: <http://www.busridersunion.org>. We should also note MTA's website [<http://www.mta.net>] has lately added a great deal of useful information, although one glaring lack continues to be the absence of bus route maps.

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](mailto:transit@lerami.lerctr.org)). Material for publication should be received two weeks before the scheduled SO.CA.TA meeting date. ■