

BULLETIN BOARD

Our thanks to Doran Barnes, Executive Director of Foothill Transit, for an illuminating discussion at our September meeting.

Paul Dyson, President of the Rail Passenger Association of California, will describe why he believes "High Speed Rail: It's time for action!" at our October 11th meeting. He will speak on Proposition 1A, the high speed rail bonds measure on the November ballot. This will begin at 1:00 PM.

After the presentation and Q&A session, we will have our usual meeting. Topics will in-

clude a proposed change to our bylaws, where to hold the holiday banquet and a choice for the day after Thanksgiving study tour.

Californians for High-Speed Trains, the campaign for Proposition 1A, has a website: <http://www.californiahighspeedtrains.com>

The 7th Annual Southern California Transportation Summit will be held Monday, October 20th at the Wilshire Grand Hotel in downtown Los Angeles. Details at <http://www.mobility21coalition.com/> or (213) 580-7524. 🚗

TRANSIT UPDATES

MTA/Metro

There will be no Gateway Cities Service Sector Council meeting in October

Regional Connector meetings, to study connection alternatives for Metro Gold, Blue, and Expo lines in downtown Los Angeles: Thursday, Oct. 16th, 12:00 to 1:30 PM -- Los Angeles Central Library, 630 W. 5th St. Tuesday, Oct. 21st, 6:30 to 8:00 PM -- Japanese American Nat'l Museum, 369 E. 1st St. For additional information, 213.922.7277 or metro.net/regionalconnector

OMNITRANS

Open houses to receive public input for their 2010-2015 Short Range Transit Plan. Both meetings 1:30 to 3:30 PM
Weds. October 8th -- Fontana Metrolink Station, 16777 Orange Way

Thurs. October 9th -- Montclair Transcenter, 5091 Richton Rd.

sbX public meetings, for proposed bus rapid transit along the E Street/Route 2 corridor
Tuesday, October 14th, 3:30 - 6:30 PM -- Wells Fargo Building, 1003 E. Brier Dr., off

Hospitality Lane, San Bernardino. Served by Routes 2 and 8. An informal open house to 5:00, then a formal presentation and question/answer session

OCTA

Open houses for proposed fare changes: Monday Oct. 13th, 5:00-7:00 PM -- Laguna Hills Community Center, 25555 Alicia Pkwy

Thursday, Oct. 16th, 5:00-7:00 PM -- OCTA Headquarters, 600 S. Main St., Orange

Public hearing at the October 27th OCTA Board meeting

Details of the proposal were not available as of press time

RIVERSIDE TRANSIT AGENCY (RTA)

Public hearings for proposed changes to Route 52

Wednesday Oct. 22nd, one-hour sessions at 12:30 and at 5:30 PM, at Riverside City Hall's Mayor's Ceremonial Room, 7th Floor, 3900 Main St.

Public comment will also be taken at the beginning of RTA's Oct. 23rd Board meeting.

No public details as of press time 🚗

A correction to last month's column--it was in 1997 (not 2007) that funds were awarded for the Ramirez Flyover Project. By the way, project funding for the flyover is now to be part of the Congestion Pricing plan upgrade of the I-10 corridor Metro is undertaking.

We are supporting Measure R, the 1/2% 30 year transportation sales tax for Los Angeles County to pay for large capital projects and other vital needs. Also we have endorsed Proposition 1A, the \$10 billion bond for high speed rail in California (our endorsement is listed on the proponent's website: http://www.californiahighspeedtrains.com/docs/Coalition_List_Prop_1a.pdf). We urge a yes vote for both, which are appearing on the November ballot.

All of us are greatly saddened about the tragic incident in Chatsworth and I support reasonable measures to make train travel safer. A lot of uninformed comments have appeared in the press, and frankly I don't think this has been Metrolink's finest moment as it hung Denise Tyrrell out to dry and circled the wagons in service of what I often have perceived as a rather insular culture at the agency. Part of the problem is simply Metrolink did what it was asked to do by the powers that be - run commuter rail service under a restrictive political framework in which its needs often took a backseat to the member agencies whose attitude regarding any source of funding for Metrolink can be summed up "Hey, is this money that should go to us instead?" They did the best they could, only to now be bombarded by 20/20 hindsight, etc. Despite the current impulse to "Do something", very soon it will become clear why improving safety in an complex environment like our region's train network isn't simple to address and won't

anytime soon be solved.

Martin Gombert is Acting Director of Transportation in Commerce while Danny Gomez is on medical leave. Commerce also has new NABI CNG buses scheduled for November delivery.

My comments at Metro's Westside corridor meetings were quoted in three community newspapers:

Santa Monica Daily Press: <http://www.smdp.com/site/archives/090508.pdf>

Santa Monica Mirror: <http://www.smmirror.com/MainPages/DisplayArticleDetails.asp?eid=8557>

Beverly Press: <http://www.parklabreanewsbeverlypress.com/Issues/9.11%20issue.pdf>

I'll conclude with a big raspberry to the transportation columnist for the *Pasadena Weekly* who shall remain nameless that dropped in on our meeting last month hoping we'd hand her enough material for a column on a silver platter. Instead she heard us discuss mostly administrative matters, which any group from time to time have to deal with. BUT this brainiac didn't stick around for when Doran Barnes spoke later in the meeting--Barnes runs Foothill Transit BTW, an agency that operates buses in various cities including PASADENA. I bet his comments and the spirited q&a we had would have provided ample material for a column. But Ms. Future Pulitzer Prize winner had a better idea after she got bored--rush off the a car dealership to test drive a hybrid (and she even managed to botch that). Amazing! http://www.pasadenaweekly.com/cms/story/detail/futile_pursuits/6401/



FOOTHILL 480 & SILVER STREAK STUDY

INTRODUCTION

A desire was expressed for us to have a guest speaker from a local municipal operator (aka a "Muni") at one of our meetings, specifically Foothill Transit. Kymberleigh Richards arranged for Foothill's executive director Doran Barnes to speak at SO.CA.TA's Sept. 13th meeting. As an adjunct to Mr. Barnes's appearance, we decided to have an informal study tour the day before of service on the Silver Streak and Line 480. This would be some 18 months after the Silver Streak was inaugurated, which heralded extensive changes to the 480 which formerly was Foothill's trunk line, and to Foothill's other service in the I-10 corridor. We were curious to see what changes had occurred to ridership patterns, crowding, etc. due to the restructuring. And then share our observations the following day with Mr. Barnes.

1st & Hill was designated as the distribution point for the free ride tickets Mr. Barnes kindly arranged to supply us. From 3:45 to 5:15 PM, participants were able to go to this location and obtain tickets, with everyone else having to pay their own way.

CONCLUSIONS

DANA GABBARD

At 4:45 p.m. I caught Silver Streak eastbound on 1st Street at Hill in downtown Los Angeles, articulated low floor F1627. It wasn't all that crowded, but that is partly because a crowded/late Silver Streak had shown up about 3 minutes earlier which I decided not to board, gambling a less crowded bus was just behind it. And I was right. Traffic was very backed up, partly due to several street closures around Olvera Street for a carnival to be held that weekend celebrating Mexican Independence Day. And yet as we inched along our bus started to fill up until by the time we finally reached the El Monte busway we had a seated load. There were also several board-

ings at the two busway stops. Soon we were whizzing by gridlocked evening traffic on the mixed flow I-10 lanes, only to have a Metrolink train zip by US. At the El Monte bus station there were significant boardings and alightings. We continued through heavy freeway traffic but the bus was full of contented riders who didn't mind the delay as they were chatting with seatmates, reading or catching a nap. I decided to catch the 480 at its start on West Covina Parkway. Before I got off, the Silver Streak operator mentioned she was going to drive the 480 the next day and lamented it is always crowded on Saturdays for reasons she couldn't fathom.

After a few minutes at 6:30 p.m I caught the westbound 480, vehicle F1469, with 7 passengers. As we buzzed along the freeway we passed a broken down Foothill artic bus on the roadside. 5 boarded at the forlorn Cal Poly Pomona stop. And before you know it, I had arrived at the Pomona Transcenter at about 7:15 p.m. All in all a very uneventful trip.

MARK STRICKERT

I rode the Metrolink Inland Empire-Orange County line # 802 to Riverside-Downtown, somewhat quieter than my normal ride home on train # 804. From there it's either a short but infrequent bus ride, or a long walk to the RTA 204 stop just west of the Downtown Terminal. I had enough time to stop at Coffee Bean for an iced tea and an internet check, and thanks to lack of bus stops in downtown Riverside, the walk was more practical. I got to the 204 stop a couple minutes ahead of the 4:00 PM departure, and the 204 was waiting behind an Omnitrans 215. I've seen only cut-aways on the 204, but for this trip we had a Thomas SLP300, with 27 soft, cramped seats. The wheelchair setup is awkward...they have to lift 2 pairs of seats, the straps almost completely block the aisle, and it took almost five minutes to load and strap it in. We left at

4:05 with 10 passengers. Seven of them got off at Ontario Mills, and 1 got on. The 10 Freeway way packed west to Vineyard, then opened up. The bus wobbled quite a bit whenever it got up to freeway speeds, not the first time I've experienced this on a model SLP300. We reached Montclair TransCenter at 5:02 PM, at a stop in the parking lot behind the Silver Streak stop.

I had just missed a westbound Silver Streak. The windows were too dark to count riders. I picked up a Foothill bus book on an incoming Foothill 699, and it listed trips leaving at 4:50 and at 5:05. I looked up and saw a NABI article at the Silver Streak stop, which I barely caught. Bus # F1621 left at 5:15 PM with only this reporter. I pulled out my laptop and got into the WiFi quickly. However, the ride was too rough to type, so all I did was a very quick e-mail, and an almost instant response from Andy Novak noting the train wreck in Chatsworth. We picked up 2 people at Pomona, and 4 at the freeway stop at Azusa. One person got off and 4 boarded at West Covina and California. This was the logical stop for me to get off as well, but I had looked over the bus book and found the 480 was listed as a route stopping at eastbound West Covina east of Pacific in the Plaza at West Covina boarding diagram. To confirm, I stayed on the Silver Streak's stop on Pacific, then fast-walked back over to West Covina Parkway. The book lists Lines 178, 272, 274, 284, and 480. It does not serve the 284 or 480, but does serve the 185 and 281.

I had to fast-walk east, but I made it to the real first 480 stop, at California Ave., in time for the 6:00 trip. Four people got on bus # F1462, plus Charles Powell and myself. Three more boarded on Vincent. With several other ons and 1 off, we had 14 riders when we arrived at Temple and South Campus. Two westbound 480s were turning right as we were turning left; There were 2 riders on the first bus, and 12 on the second. 13 folks got on at the eastbound stop, for a total of 27 riders plus

us. After a couple ons and several offs, there were 19 riders when I got off at Garey and 3rd. at about 6:40 PM. I chatted with the several SO.CA.TA members who were already waiting outside Joey's until 7:10, then I walked over to the Metrolink station for the eastbound Riverside Line train back home.

The 480 still has its uses where it still operates. If 480 service can not be expanded, I think they should at least convert the Silver Streak late night/Owl service to a Los Angeles-Montclair 480.

NATE ZABLEN

I boarded the eastbound articulated Silver Streak bus at 4:32 PM at 1st and Hill with a complimentary pass given to me by Kymberleigh Richards which was provided by Foothill Transit. I picked up a Foothill Bus Book and thought it was an improvement over the Metro bus schedules which are often of bus lines other than the one you are taking. About 90% of the seats were occupied and I chose to sit in the back row. Downtown traffic was quite heavy and it took about 10 minutes before we finally got on the busway.

The Silver Streak made excellent time on the exclusive bus-only lane but it was much slower on the HOV portion of the busway as it shared the lane with autos. The ride in the back row was a bit bumpy so I moved up a couple of times but I still felt that the San Fernando Valley Orange Line busway was a more comfortable ride. I noticed that some of the riders were boarding through the middle doors and they did not have to show their passes. The freeway traffic was quite heavy and a lot of time was consumed getting off and on the busway to pick up and drop off passengers. The ridership dropped off significantly after the El Monte Station and West Covina stops and there weren't too many passengers left when we reached Pomona.

I finally arrived at the Pomona Transit Station at 6:02 while the scheduled arrival time was

5:31. The delay was probably due the heavy weekend traffic and the LA County Fair. The Pomona Station is a combined bus and train depot but I believe Metrolink only stops there during certain peak hours and usually stops at the North Pomona.

From the depot, I walked the long way to Joey's Barbeque Restaurant by way of Main Street to 2nd Street. There is a pedestrian bridge from the depot over the tracks which a much shorter distance to the business area. I waited outside the restaurant and met Craig Weingarten who had arrived some time earlier. I heard about the terrible Metrolink accident from some others on the excursion and it deeply saddened me.

After dinner a group of us walked backed to the depot and waited a few minutes to board a Silver Streak back to Los Angeles. We boarded the westbound non-articulated bus at about 9:21 and made much better time than the trip to Pomona. It also seemed that the ride was somewhat more comfortable on the smaller bus than it was on the larger articulated bus. There were about 10 passengers on the trip besides the SO.CA.TA members. It must be noted that the return stops in downtown LA differ from the outgoing stops. For example, I boarded the outbound bus at 1st and Hill but the returning bus only stops at 1st and Spring Street. One should never assume that the stops are the same in both directions. The ride on the Silver Streak is certainly not as smooth as riding on a train but it is a real bargain at \$2.50 and thanks to Foothill Transit we got to ride free.

CODA

It appears Foothill has achieved its primary goal in starting the Silver Streak, which was to improve the the average speed of its core route in the I-10 corridor. Riders seems to have adjusted well to the shift from the long distance local 480 to the express limited-stop Silver Streak with a truncated 480 providing

local coverage between West Covina and Montclair. What Foothill has been unable to solve (and this is something they have no control of and likely can do little about) is the traffic congestion that especially in peak hours direly impacts reliability in terms of frequency and the interval between buses. Much like Wilshire bus service the I-10 corridor is afflicted with gaps between buses and/or bus bunching. Traffic accidents and special events (such as the set up of a Mexican Independence Day celebration at Olvera Street and the ongoing L.A. County Fair in Pomona that we encountered during our ride day) add to the chaotic conditions. Even the dedicated HOV lanes at times back up and are of little aid. Instead of the congestion pricing for this corridor that Metro is proposing perhaps what is needed are dedicated bus-only lanes--banning carpools from the busway and HOV lanes. This may be politically unpopular but there seems to be no other viable option to achieve the improvement in performance bus service in this corridor needs. Otherwise the trends will be a gradual decrease in quality that undermines Foothill's substantial investment in the Silver Streak--a trend that needs to be reversed given the growing importance services like this will have to improved mobility in our region.

Around 6:00, many of us began arriving at Joey's BBQ in Pomona, near the Transit Center, including those who had been part of the tour plus members who live in the area and dropped by to hear what happened. Some had to leave early or were unable to join us at Pomona. Over the next few hours we had an informal get together/meal discussing what we saw and other pleasant topics of conversation. Around 9:00, we began to make our separate ways home.

Participants and visitors were Armando Avalos, Hank Fung, Dana Gabbard, Eric Griswold, Sam James and spouse, Mina Nichols, Charles Powell, Ken Ruben, Mark Strickert, Craig Weingarten, and Nate Zablen. Our thanks to Doran Barnes for the free ride tickets.