

MTA REVIEW

JULY 1997



MTA and City of Los Angeles Reach Agreement

*Congressional
Subcommittee*

*Earmarks \$76 Million
for Metro Red Line*

The Metro Red Line is continuing to make its way to North Hollywood and the Eastside thanks to ongoing funding.

The Los Angeles City Council voted June 24 to approve an agreement with the MTA that frees \$200 million in city funding for rail construction and sets provisions for a strong bus improvement plan.

The agreement calls for a commitment to begin construction of a rail project in the San Fernando Valley by 2007. The plan also requires the MTA to order an additional 323 compressed natural gas buses by November 1997.

Continued on page 3

I N S I D E

The Board Report

Metro Bus Service Added

Web Site Offers Timetables

**157 Call for Projects Submissions
Shares \$666.3 Million**

The Future of Transportation

METRO VIEW



By Linda Bohlinger
MTA Interim Chief Executive Officer

As we prepare to begin rail construction on the eastside, I am pleased to report that the MTA is taking a proactive approach to serving the communications needs of the MTA and the eastside community. Clear and consistent communications between the MTA and the community we serve will help ensure that issues are known, communicated and responded to in an efficient and timely manner.

The Eastside Communications Coordination Team (ECCT) is comprised of representatives from cross-functional departments involved with eastside concerns such as Real Estate, Construction, Procurement, County Counsel, Marketing, Public Affairs, Government Relations, Operations and Regional Planning. The team will operate under the direction of Rae James, Executive Officer for Customer Services and Communications. Gisselle Acevedo-Franco, Director, Government Relations and Public Affairs, will assist James in leading ECCT efforts.

The representatives from the ECCT will serve as facilitators and advisors on MTA/eastside issues, and will establish an organizational process to secure the dissemination of information regarding the eastside to all parties concerned. The team will become eastside experts by serving our internal and external customer. Internally, the team will serve as an advisor to the various units at the MTA, by providing feedback and input on programs and projects that would affect eastside community residents and merchants.

In the near future the group will develop a monthly newsletter to provide eastside community members with information about MTA-related programs and activities. In addition, they will create a "Community Forum" designed to, on a monthly basis, hear community issues before they escalate, return with answers and responses to community questions and raise the visibility of MTA's programs that could assist the community.

The ECCT will also be active in conducting other community outreach efforts including presentations to a spectrum of neighborhood organizations. They will also be pursuing a marketing/advertising campaign that emphasizes the benefits of public transportation.

I am very pleased that the ECCT has been convened. I am confident that our involvement with the community will be enriched by the open communication that will be facilitated by this proactive team of MTA employees.

Richard Riordan

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Jan Heidt, Alt.

Dean Dunphy

Ex-Officio Member,
California Secretary of Business
Transportation and Housing
Tony Harris, Alt.

Linda Bohlinger

Interim Chief Executive Officer



The Board Report

BUDGET ADOPTED

The fiscal year 1998 budget approved by the Board calls for major improvements in bus service, including purchase of 223 buses, continued construction of the Metro Red Line subway, and funding for numerous traffic improvement projects throughout Los Angeles County.

The \$2.8 billion spending plan for the fiscal year that began July 1 is \$24 million less than last year's budget. Service expansion and other improvements will be accomplished by reducing operating expenses.

Without increasing fares, the MTA will again expand its bus fleet in mid-September when 50 additional buses are deployed. The added service will focus on providing transit-dependent individuals with a means of reaching jobs, schools and health care facilities. This action follows the assignment of 53 buses to the MTA's regular service in December and 53 more scheduled during service expansion on June 29.

On the rail side, the budget will enable work to be completed on the Metro Red Line subway extension to Hollywood, continuation of subway construction in North Hollywood and the beginning of subway construction in East Los Angeles.

In addition, numerous traffic improvement projects such as freeway carpool lanes, major street widenings, traffic synchronization, transit centers and regional bikeways also are slated to receive funding.

The funding plan calls for the elimination of 192 staff positions. These have been attained by voluntary retirements, attrition and some layoffs. Funds appropriated for salaries and wages during the fiscal year will be reduced by \$28 million as a result of the staffing cutbacks. Division 12 in Long Beach, one of a dozen Metro Bus operating divisions, will be downscaled to a light maintenance and storage facility.

Much of the cost reduction is being driven by declining operating revenues. Funding from local, state and federal sources also is expected to hold steady or be less than the current year.

ROUTE 30 FREEWAY

The Board authorized award of a contract to W. Koo and Associates, Inc. for a total budget of \$1,856,102 for engineering services to design 15 bridges and structures for the Route 30 Freeway Gap Closure project in east Los Angeles County. Caltrans has requested that the MTA award a structures design contract to expedite completion of the Route 30 Freeway. Design, right-of-way, and construction for the Route 30 Freeway project are fully funded from sources outside the MTA operating budget. The MTA approved \$65.9 million for the project in the 1995 Call for Projects. The State approved \$225 million for the project in the 1996 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

The Route 30 Freeway Gap Closure will extend the existing Route 30 Freeway 28.2 miles from its current terminus at Foothill Boulevard in La Verne to the Route 215 Freeway in San Bernardino. The Los Angeles County portion of the project is 5.4 miles long and passes through the cities of La Verne and Claremont. The project duration is estimated to be 12 months.

MTA and City of Los Angeles Reach Agreement *Continued from page 1*

The agreement on rail construction in the Valley calls for completion of an environmental study by fiscal year 1998 and completion of design work by fiscal year 2002, with start of construction to follow by 2007.

Both sides have now agreed on the terms and principles to conclude a final contribution agreement.

"This accord with the Los Angeles City Council allows us to work together toward the same goals, for the good of all of the people in this region," said MTA Interim CEO Linda Bohlinger.

Also on June 24 a congressional subcommittee earmarked \$76 million in federal money to be provided next year for Metro Red Line extensions to the Eastside and North Hollywood.

MTA
BOARD
ACTIVITIES
FOR
JUNE
1997

Better Service

METRO BUS SERVICE ADDED

The MTA has made major changes to Metro Bus service as part of its semi-annual efforts to improve service. The agency has added a total of 53 buses which will reduce the standing capacity on buses by adding to the frequency of service.

"The June service changes really amount to a win/win situation for our riders," said Linda Bohlinger, Interim Chief Executive Officer. "Our riders are seeing major improvements to many Metro Bus lines with more frequent service on many of the most heavily-traveled routes. This means less-crowded buses, making for a more pleasant trip."

Nine route changes were implemented. Seventy-seven of Metro's busiest lines have buses added to their routes to improve frequency of service. Eighty-three Metro Bus Lines along with the Metro Red and Metro Green lines had minor frequency changes.

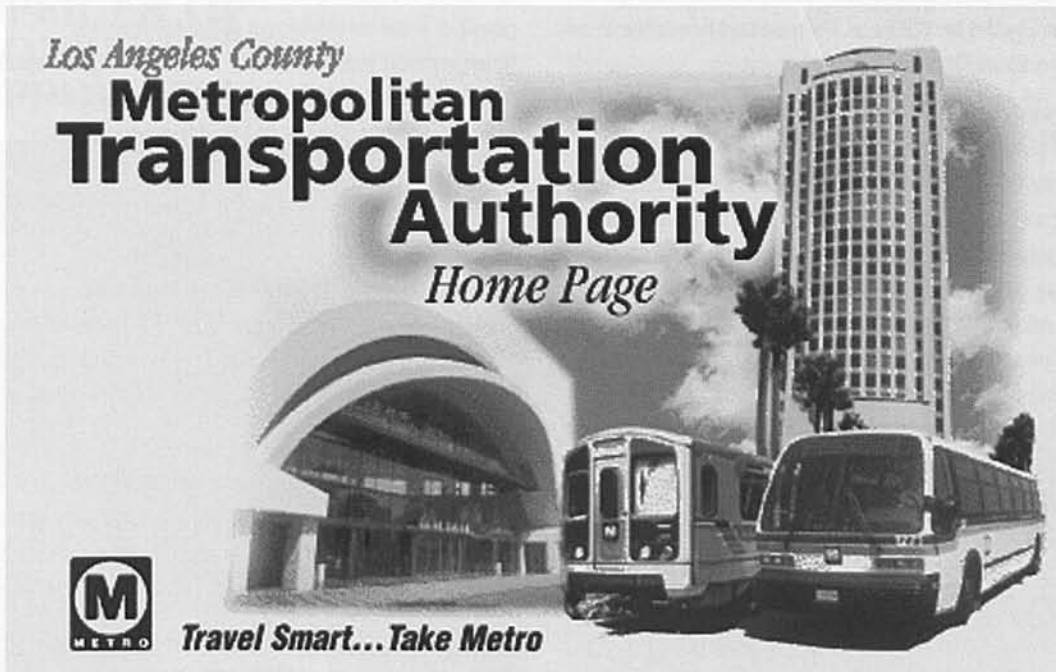
New timetables for the changed lines are available from Metro Customer Relations, One Gateway Plaza, Los Angeles, CA 90012-2932 or by calling 1-800-COMMUTE. They can also be accessed on the MTA's web site, www.mta.net.

*"THE JUNE SERVICE CHANGES
REALLY AMOUNT TO A WIN/WIN
SITUATION FOR OUR RIDERS."*



In June the MTA made improvements to Metro Bus service by adding 53 buses. Riders are seeing more frequent service on many of the most traveled routes.

“New Look”



MTA WEB SITE NOW OFFERS TIMETABLES FOR METRO BUS AND METRO RAIL LINES

MTA's web site features a new graphic design, offering Internet "surfers" access to services and programs offered by the Authority, including direct access to individual schedule and route information for all Metro Bus and Metro Rail lines.

Those wanting to access timetable information on the web site will need to download a special program that allows them to view the schedule of bus and rail lines in their entirety. The program download is offered free of charge.

In addition to timetables, the MTA web site offers daily updates on Metro Red Line construction projects in an effort to keep the public informed about progress made in tunneling construction.

Also offered is information on the Authority's Metro Customer Centers, fare information and employment opportunities at the MTA.

The "new look" web site also offers agendas of MTA Board meetings, schedules and updates of actions recently taken by the Board.

In addition, MTA press releases and announcements are posted on the site and individuals wanting to do business with the MTA will find a section devoted to contracting opportunities with the Authority.

"By accessing MTA's web page, users can now get a schedule of a particular Metro Bus or Metro Rail line to help them plan their commute using public transportation," said MTA Interim CEO Linda Bohlinger.

MTA's newly redesigned web site is updated regularly and is located at www.mta.net.



Executive Officer Honored

6

Black

Woman

of

Achievement

Rae James, Executive Officer for Customer Services and Communications for the MTA, was recently honored by the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc. as a Black Woman of Achievement.

James was selected for her significant achievements in the field of public service and for her volunteer work. As an Executive Officer for the MTA, James oversees a \$23 million budget and approximately 300 employees and consultants. She is responsible for directing the departments of Customer Relations, Government Relations, Internal Communications, Public Affairs, Marketing, Media Relations and Metro Art. In a brief period of time, James has had numerous successes including reorganization of the Communications Division which has streamlined and strengthened the unit. Displaying her strong emphasis on delivering quality customer services, James recently organized the first ever national "Customer First Conference."

James has had several notable achievements in her 14 years of serving the Los Angeles area, but one she is particularly proud of is the establishment of the Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative (LANI) while working as Deputy Mayor for the City of Los Angeles. This innovative street-level program unites residents and business people in the redesign of their community. LANI's success earned recognition in the form of nearly \$5 million in federal funds for neighborhood improvement programs.

James is on the board of directors of the Women in Transportation Coalition, the Women in Transportation Seminar and the Ethnic Coalition of Southern California. She is a commissioner for the Los Angeles County Commission on Energy.

In the community, she is active in her neighborhood Friends of the Library group where she recently led a fund-raising drive to purchase new furniture and children's books. She is also a member of the Black Art Coalition and the NAACP.

James was one of 16 honorees who received special recognition at the annual Black Women of Achievement luncheon held in June.



Rae James was named Black Woman of Achievement by the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc.

NEW EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF CONSTRUCTION APPOINTED



Interim MTA CEO Linda Bohlinger has named Charles Stark as the new Executive Officer, Construction. He has held the post in an interim capacity since January.

"Charles Stark is the best person for the job," Bohlinger said. "He has excellent technical skills, works well with Board members and has shown strong leadership during his tenure with the MTA. This appointment also helps us stabilize the construction unit and move forward with changes critical in the construction area of our organization."

Stark has more than 26 years of experience in the transportation engineering field. He has served as deputy executive officer and project manager since joining the MTA in 1991. He directed the completion of the first operating segment of the Metro Red Line, from Union Station to MacArthur Park, and he served as project manager on the North Hollywood extension.

Prior to joining the MTA, Stark was senior vice president at the firm Seelye, Stevenson, Value & Knecht, where he managed the company's operations in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and was responsible for the operation of the rail engineering and project management oversight department. He also served as assistant director of rail car engineering for the New York City Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

Stark graduated from City College of New York with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering and received a master's degree in civil engineering transportation from Manhattan College.

BOYLE HEIGHTS 620 SHUTTLE OPENS FOUR NEW STOPS TO BENEFIT PICO ALISO HOUSING COMMUNITY

Residents of the Pico Aliso Housing Community in East Los Angeles will soon enjoy the convenience of getting to schools, markets, shops, hospitals and other neighborhood locations with greater ease as the Boyle Heights 620 Shuttle introduces four new stops along Gless and Fourth streets.

The old route traveled straight down State Street to Boyle Avenue until reaching Whittier Boulevard. The new change will include a small horseshoe loop with two new stops along Gless Street at First and Third streets and two other new stops along Fourth Street. The stops will be in operation by August.

"The Pico Aliso Community in Boyle Heights is comprised of four different sections and houses about 6,000 residents," said Interim MTA CEO Linda Bohlinger. "Each of the four new stops is within walking distance for the residents. It's a minor route change for us but will provide that community with much greater convenience in getting around."

Shuttle 620 will continue its normal schedule Monday through Friday, between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m., every 12 minutes, at the same 25-cent fare. For more information, call 213-626-4455.

Los Angeles

County

Metropolitan

Transportation

Authority

MTA BOARD OKAYS 157 TRAFFIC CONGESTION MITIGATION PLANS

A total of 157 MTA Call for Projects submissions will share \$666.3 million in funds for the purpose of implementing a wide range of transportation improvements.

Every two years the MTA solicits regionally significant innovative proposals submitted by 88 cities, Los Angeles County and state agencies for reducing traffic congestion in Los Angeles County. For the 1997 Call for Projects, 414 proposals were evaluated and ranked by MTA planning staff, who passed along their recommendations to MTA's Technical Advisory Committee and finally to the MTA Board for review and approval. In all, 157 projects were approved for funding by the Board at their June meeting.

Among the projects funded are 6.2 miles of carpool lanes in the San Gabriel Valley on the San Bernardino Freeway from the Orange/Foothill Freeway interchange to the county line and a 3.6-mile carpool lane on the northbound side of the San Diego Freeway on the Westside, and traffic signal resynchronization within four interstate highway corridors in Southeast Los Angeles and also in the San Gabriel Valley and the South Bay. Also receiving funding was the Alameda Corridor, a 20-mile high speed rail/land truck line between East Los Angeles and the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles.

Other projects funded are the widening of the Antelope Valley Freeway (Route 14) between Escondido Canyon and Pearblossom Highway with the addition of an HOV lane in each direction; construction of a transit center at the Metro Red Line station at Wilshire Boulevard and Western Avenue, the resynchronization of traffic signals at 109 San Fernando Valley intersections, a Metrolink bike station in Chatsworth, and the equipping of Santa Monica Bus lines with a fare debit card systems.

"The guiding force throughout this process has and always will be identifying projects that when implemented, result in improvements that benefit as many Southern Californians as possible," said Interim MTA CEO Linda Bohlinger. "Call for Projects is rather like putting the pieces of a puzzle together or building a bridge. We're building a multi-modal transportation bridge."

Since the program's inception in 1991, the MTA has allocated nearly \$1.4 billion for such projects as freeway carpool lanes, major street widenings, freeway ramps, traffic signal synchronization, bus system improvements such as bus lanes, ridesharing incentives, transit centers, park-and-ride lots and regional bikeways. Funds were also approved for televillages, a new concept where local residents use mass transit to reach a transit station featuring computer equipment with Internet access and other equipment so they can telecommute to work.

Criteria used in evaluating applications include determining regional significance and project benefit, cost effectiveness (and local funding match), land use and environmental compatibility, project need, project readiness and benefits to the overall transit system.

One of the largest efforts is the Alameda Corridor project, which will increase the flow of rail freight between the ports of Los Angeles/Long Beach and downtown Los Angeles while reducing surface street traffic congestion. The \$198 million in funding will allow work ranging from grade separations, minor bridge improvements, track work, including storage tracks, new structures and utility relocation to proceed on the north and south ends of the project.



This enhanced photo shows the middle mile high speed rail/land truck line between Long Beach and Los Angeles. This project is funded from the MTA Call for Projects.

TRAFFIC SIGNAL SYNCHRONIZATION PROJECTS

In the San Gabriel Valley, a total of \$13 million will be allotted for three separate traffic signal synchronization forum areas. (Projects proposed by a collection of cities in the San Gabriel Valley area and sponsored by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works.)

The Gateway Cities Traffic Signal Corridors Project Phase II, first funded by MTA in the fiscal year 1995 Call for Projects, will receive \$15 million to pay for the synchronization of traffic signals and traffic improvements to increase bus speeds at major arterial intersections that parallel interstates 105, 710, 5 and 605. The major corridor intersections are Firestone Boulevard, Rosecrans Avenue, Imperial Highway, Atlantic Boulevard, Paramount Boulevard, Lakewood/Rosemead boulevards and Telegraph Road.

A \$4.5-million traffic signal resynchronization project encompassing 37 square miles is among the San Fernando Valley traffic improvement plans that will receive funding. The integration of 109 intersections bisecting Granada Hills, North Hills and Van Nuys to the Automatic Traffic Systems and Control System along the San Diego Freeway corridor will substantially reduce the daily delays encountered by motorists.



section of the Alameda Corridor, a 20-mile project was one of many that received

On the Westside, Culver City and West Hollywood received monies for signal synchronization projects along two regional corridors.

PLAN TO DESIGN INTELLIGENT TRAVEL INFO KIOSKS FOR GLENDALE, PASADENA AND BURBANK

The Arroyo Verdugo Traffic Forum was awarded \$333,000 to create a database with information on real-time area roadway conditions, bus and Metrolink arrival/departure times and paratransit options, as well as current weather conditions and special events. The data will then be fed to 14 user-friendly kiosks featured at such locales as the Glendale Galleria, Burbank Amtrak Station and Pasadena City College.

CARPOOL LANES

One carpool project, 6.2 miles, will receive \$69 million to construct and is located on the San Bernardino Freeway from the Orange/Foothill Freeway interchange to the Los Angeles County line. Another four miles of carpool lanes will be built on the Pomona Freeway between Fullerton and Brea Canyon roads for approximately \$16 million.

The MTA has programmed \$57.6 million in funding to construct a 3.6 mile carpool lane on the north side of the San Diego Freeway between the Marina and Santa Monica freeways.

An Antelope Valley proposal to widen Route 14 from Escondido Canyon to Pearblossom Highway and add 11.2 miles of carpool lanes in each direction was approved for funding of \$33 million. The project is good news for the thousands of residents in Lancaster and Palmdale, and the unincorporated areas of the Antelope Valley who regularly drive to jobs in the Los Angeles basin. In addition to carpool lanes, other planned Route 14 improvements include the widening of bridges and the reconstruction and restriping of the median.

Continued on page 13



The Southside Smart Shuttle is the first of four Smart Shuttle demonstration projects underway

NEW FLEXIBLE SERVICE AROUND BUSY VERMONT LINE BEGINS

The MTA has recently enhanced service around its busiest line, Vermont Avenue, by offering patrons special shuttle rides to destinations several blocks away.

Called the Southside Smart Shuttle, the experimental service is operating between Slauson Avenue and the Metro Green Line's Vermont Station seven days a week. The Shuttle provides patrons direct access to neighborhood shopping areas, medical facilities and regional transit services.

Running every half-hour for 12 hours on weekdays and 10 hours on weekends, the Southside Smart Shuttle stops to pick up and drop-off passengers at five stops along the corridor. Drivers will, however, be able to deviate from their routes to pick up and drop-off passengers in the immediate vicinity of the corridor between Normandie Avenue on the west, the 110 freeway on the east and 120th Street on the south. Those requesting this special service must call ahead to a dispatcher at a toll-free number, 213-35-SMART.

The demonstration project consists of four 15-passenger mini-buses operating in adjacent areas from Slauson Avenue on the north end of the route to the Vermont Metro Green Line Station on the south. There will be a transfer point between the north and south segments of the shuttle service at Manchester Avenue.

An MTA fare token with a value of 90 cents is the basic charge and a second token will be necessary for pick up and drop-off at destinations other than the designated stops. This is a cashless system, so tokens are required for all shuttle trips. MTA tokens are available from Metro Customer Centers, selected grocery stores, check cashing outlets and hundreds of other locations. MTA passes may be honored in the future.

The service will be operated on a day-to-day basis by the Watts Labor Community Action Committee. Hours of operation are from 6 a.m. until 6 p.m. weekdays and 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. weekends. Estimated cost of the service from July through September is \$174,000.

The Southside Smart Shuttle is the first of four Smart Shuttle demonstration projects underway in the city of Los Angeles. The others are located in MacArthur Park and the west and northeast San Fernando Valley. These projects are co-funded by the MTA and Los Angeles Department of Transportation.



Contract Ratified

NEW THREE-YEAR CONTRACT WITH UNITED TRANSPORTATION UNION RATIFIED BY MTA BOARD; PACT BENEFITS MTA, EMPLOYEES, CUSTOMERS

The MTA Board approved a new three-year contract with the United Transportation Union (UTU), the group that represents 4,000 MTA bus and train operators, following ratification by the organization's rank and file on July 13.

The pact is expected to save the Authority at least \$20 million over the next three years, an amount that will be used to improve customer service, with a focus on expanding bus service. The union also achieved its goals of securing a pay raise for its membership and protecting the jobs, wages and benefits of existing drivers.

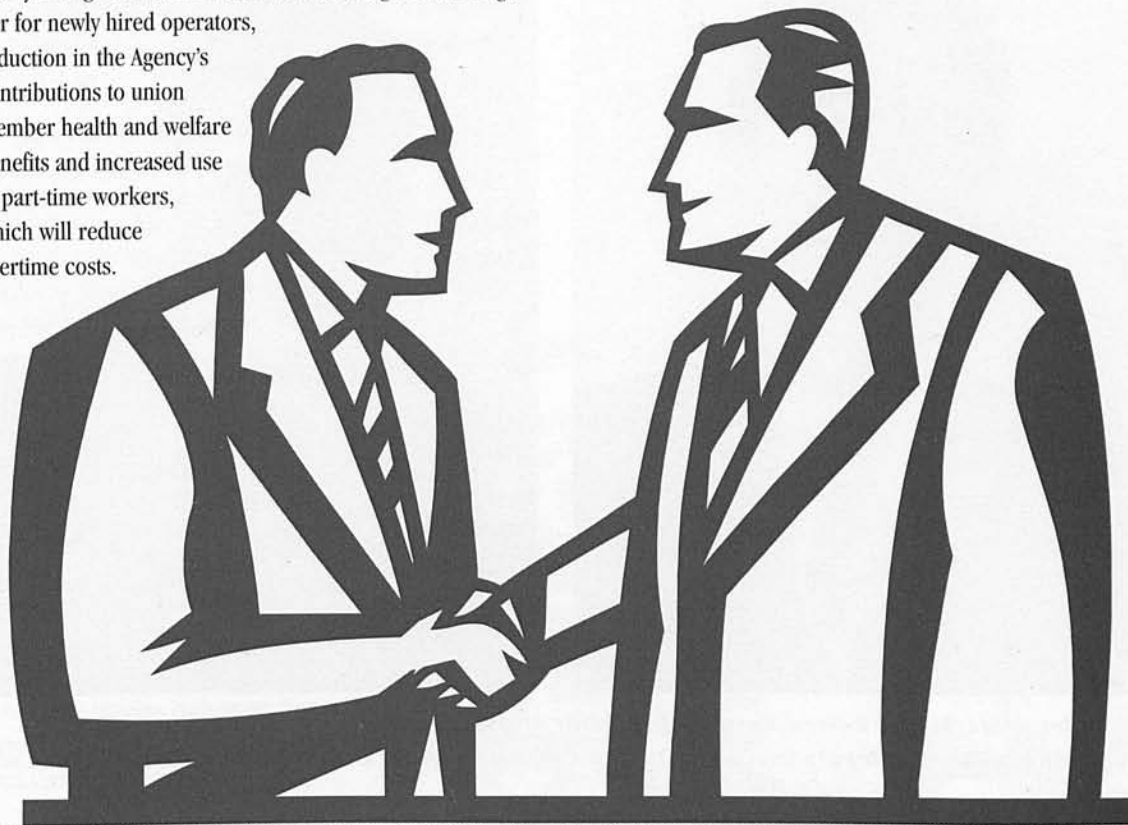
Specifically, the three-year contract provides quarterly cost-of-living wage adjustments for all operators, in addition to increases in base pay of 1.5 percent each year.

The MTA expects to achieve cost savings through a number of key changes in the UTU contract including a lower wage tier for newly hired operators, reduction in the Agency's contributions to union member health and welfare benefits and increased use of part-time workers, which will reduce overtime costs.

The contract also enables the MTA to reduce the cost of operating certain lines by hiring new union drivers at a lower hourly rate on new and less-used routes. This gives the Agency new flexibility in serving customers, saves taxpayers dollars and guarantees union jobs. In exchange for this contract provision, the MTA has agreed not to subcontract out existing services.

"Throughout the talks, MTA negotiators kept the best interests of passengers in mind," said Interim MTA CEO Linda Bohlinger. "Our approach was simply to put the customer first, while recognizing the important role our employees play in providing quality bus and rail service. I am pleased that the UTA leadership worked cooperatively with us to reach a contract settlement that is truly a win-win situation."

The contracts of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), which represents 1,700 MTA mechanics and maintenance staff, and the Transportation Communications Union (TCU), which represent 600 MTA clerks, expired June 30. Negotiations are ongoing with representatives of the two unions.



"Throughout
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MTA negotiators
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The MTA
Speakers
Bureau
is an
integral
part of the
agency's
community
outreach
efforts.

SPREADING THE WORD

If you've ever wondered how MTA is working to avoid traffic gridlock while dealing with a surge in new county residents or perhaps you've been curious about how the subway is built, now is your chance to satisfy that curiosity. The agency's Speakers Bureau is scheduled to kick off in August and make presentations of interest to various social and civic groups.

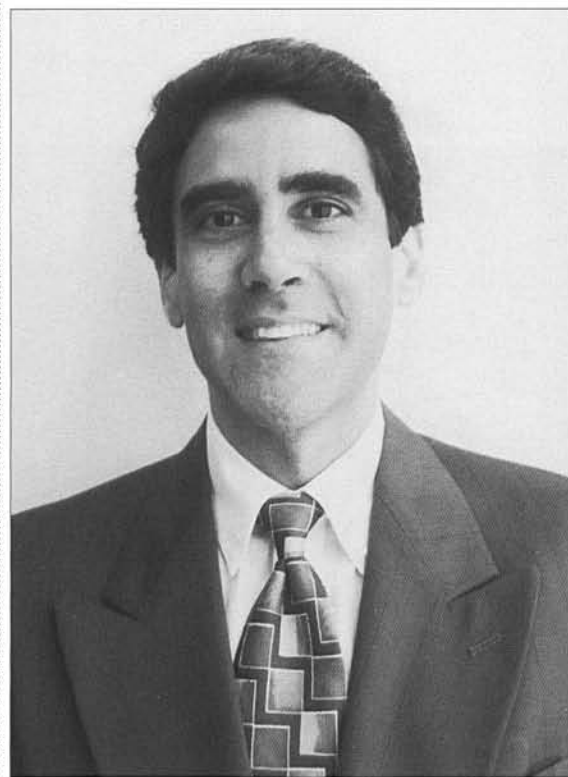
The MTA Speakers Bureau is an integral part of the agency's community outreach efforts. More than 100 MTA employees, representing a cross section of disciplines, are available to go out to your business organization, civic group, church group, school, scouting or neighborhood association to speak about the MTA.

Coordinated by Marc Littman, Public Relations Director, and Judy Schwartz, Director of Program Management for Multimodal Planning, the Speakers Bureau is part of a broad program that also includes tours of MTA facilities and construction sites, Metro Art public forums and other events.



While MTA executives, public affairs staff and area team members have always been active in speaking to community groups, the new speakers bureau will tap in to a much larger group of employees who have expertise in a broad range of areas. The intent is to actively seek opportunities to speak before groups that the MTA has not reached before. "The purpose of the speakers bureau is to promote greater public awareness of the MTA and its many positive programs and to engage the public in an ongoing dialogue with the agency," said Littman.

The speakers are armed with a Meet the MTA video, brochures and fact sheets about the agency. If you would like to schedule a speaker to address your group, please call Lydia Torres at 213-922-5634.



Director of Marketing Warren Morse and Director of Customer Relations Scott Mugford were recently both named Deputy Executive Officer, Communications and will be taking on expanded responsibilities within the division.

MTA Board Okays 157 Traffic Congestion Mitigation Plans

Continued from page 9

BIKEWAYS & PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS

The MTA funded 27 bikeway and pedestrian improvement projects totaling \$19.9 million. For example, a total of \$1.9 million will be allocated for building a bikeway within the former Santa Fe railroad right-of-way in the cities of San Dimas, La Verne, Pomona and Claremont.

The 6.9-mile Coyote Creek Regional Bikeway will receive \$424,000. One end of the bikeway is located at the intersection of Imperial Highway and Beach Boulevard in La Habra and will extend through four cities and two counties.

The City of Los Angeles will receive \$2.2 million for landscaping, sidewalk improvements, bus shelters, signage and other improvements along Vermont Avenue between 3rd Street and Hollywood Boulevard. This will enhance the pedestrian environment for the Vermont bus line and the three Metro Red Line stations opening shortly.

Culver City will receive \$250,000 to rebuild a pedestrian bridge over Ballona Creek at Ocean Drive and Westwood Boulevard, a project designed to ensure child safety and reduce traffic congestion around schools and Sepulveda Boulevard.

SHUTTLES AND FEEDER SERVICES

Twelve shuttle and feeder lines serving various areas in Los Angeles County were allocated a combined funding of over \$6 million. These services provide connection from Metro Rail, Metrolink and the Metro Green Line stations to adjacent major employment and activity centers.

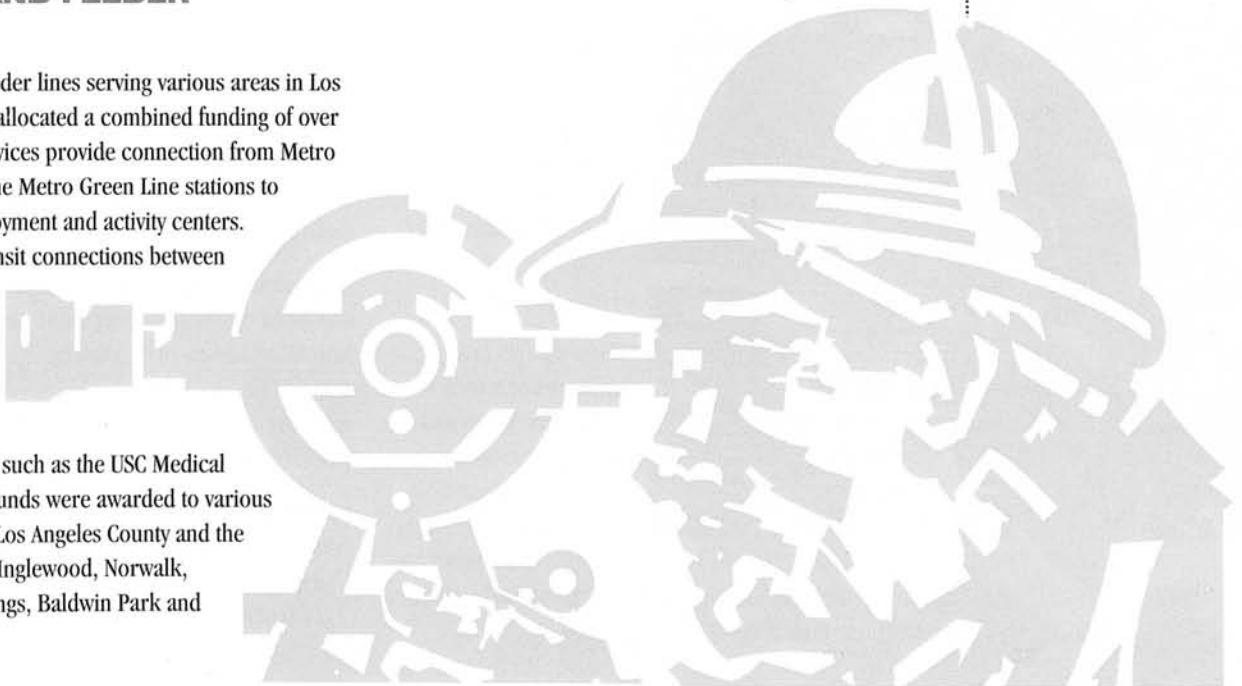
They also provide transit connections between communities such as Conejo Valley to West San Fernando Valley Express Shuttle, and to major activity centers such as the USC Medical Center. Over 60% of funds were awarded to various jurisdictions such as Los Angeles County and the cities of Los Angeles, Inglewood, Norwalk, Carson, Santa Fe Springs, Baldwin Park and Santa Clarita.

OTHER PROJECTS

San Fernando Valley projects and funds approved include \$2 million for the Warner Center Transit Hub where bus riders will be able to easily transfer to other bus lines or Smart shuttles serving the Valley, \$283,000 for a bike station at the Chatsworth Metrolink Station, and \$435,000 to extend Mason Avenue, also in Chatsworth, between Nordhoff and Plummer streets.

Various westside projects are also funded including \$3.2 million for a transit center at Wilshire Boulevard and Western Avenue and the Metro Red Line subway station site, a project that will make it much easier for Metro System riders to connect with Metro Buses or Metro Rail.

Santa Monica Municipal Bus Lines will receive a total of \$2.4 million to equip or upgrade its buses with magnetic fare debit card systems.



Future of Transportation

“Congestion is becoming transit’s worst enemy,”

MTA PLANNER EYES THE FUTURE OF TRANSPORTATION IN LA COUNTY AS THE POPULATION CONTINUES TO GROW

LA County’s glowing reputation as the land of fun and sun is under siege. The steady growth in population is putting more pollution-spewing cars and trucks on already clogged streets and freeways to the point where soon it may be too tough to get to the fun.

As the growth continues to outpace resources, planners, governmental agencies and residents alike will have to make some tough choices if Southern California is to head off the drive toward total gridlock.

“Congestion is becoming transit’s worst enemy,” says Keith Killough, MTA deputy executive officer, countywide planning. “Unfortunately, we don’t have as much money for transportation improvements as we anticipated. That means to a large degree we need to make more creative use of the resources we already have or watch traffic on our streets and freeways become even worse.”

A long-time advocate of public transportation, Killough says buses continue to form the backbone of the transit system

in Southern California, but, more and more, gridlock is compromising their effectiveness. He says at the rate we’re going, in the next two decades the average speed of Metro Buses will drop from the current 12 miles per hour to below 10 miles per hour.

“The way to get more transit for our money is to speed up the buses and we can do that by creating more lanes dedicated solely to bus travel,” says

Killough. “It won’t do us a lot of good to put more buses on the streets if they’re moving slower and slower and adding to the congestion.”

At present, Los Angeles County has less than two miles of bus lanes on surface streets. The lanes located on Spring Street in downtown Los Angeles were designated before Killough came to Los Angeles 15 years ago.

What’s getting in the way of creating more of the dedicated lanes? Killough says it’s the misperception of property owners and merchants along the streets where bus lanes are needed the most. One stretch of Broadway in the downtown area is a good case in point.

“I doubt very many people believe that most customers on Broadway, as well as on nearby Hill Street, get there by automobile,” says Killough. “It can take a bus 40 minutes to get from Venice Boulevard to Temple Street because of traffic. In that amount of time the bus could be back in the community providing transportation if we could just move it along a little quicker.”

MTA’s most recent Long Range Transportation Plan proposed the creation of bus lanes wherever buses run four minutes apart or less. That would amount to 130 miles of bus lanes, something that Killough says is much needed on busy thoroughfares such as Vermont Avenue, a street that points to an interesting contradiction.

“Vermont Avenue is one of the streets where we put more buses than we should need to,” says Killough. “Conceivably, with bus lanes we wouldn’t need as many buses on those streets because they’d be able to move along much faster. We actually could put some of those buses on other routes.”

What’s going to happen if we don’t create more bus lanes? Killough says as congestion worsens in the years ahead we’ll have to add more buses just to maintain the same frequency of service. That means we’ll be paying more of our tax dollars for less, something that Killough says just doesn’t make sense.

In recent years, one of the region’s most visible and successful efforts at keeping traffic moving has been the joint MTA/Caltrans HOV (High Occupancy Vehicle or carpool) project. With the opening earlier this year of a 12-mile long carpool lane on the 118 freeway, 124 miles of the lanes are now in operation in Los Angeles County.

A problem is looming, however. As carpool lanes become more successful they too will become congested. What to do?



"There's some discussion that eventually we might have to increase the occupancy requirement in carpool lanes to three persons per car," says Killough. "Then they'll probably become somewhat under-utilized, so one option is to let two-person carpool vehicles buy their way in. And there's also been some talk about letting single occupant vehicles buy their way in, although this would lessen the carpool incentive. Whatever number you choose, the buy-in idea simply says that if some commuters want to travel 'time advantaged,' they'll have to pay for it."

Some people may react to this so-called HOT (High Occupancy Toll) lane concept by saying, "So much for the concept *'freeway!'*" Killough is quick to reply, "Well, it is free, if you're a qualifying carpool... that's what those lanes were built for."

Killough says the HOT lane idea may be one way to pay for improvements on the Santa Ana, Hollywood and Ventura freeways where double-decking (as was recently constructed on the Harbor Freeway) is under consideration.

Another way some people can get around gridlock is to ride bicycles, but the number who choose pedal power in Los Angeles is small.

"Despite having some of the best weather in the country, Los Angeles is not bicycle friendly when compared to cities such as Washington, D.C. and Davis, California," says Killough.

Nevertheless, an estimated 40,000 people in Los Angeles County commute to school and work by bicycle and changes are in the works to make it more bicycle friendly. To date, MTA has helped fund 400 miles of bike routes in Los Angeles County, and it will fund some \$18 million in general improvements for bicycle use in the next two years.

"Our focus has always been to try and encourage more commuter travel by bicycle," says Killough. "In the MTA planning department we probably have a half dozen people who do it every day."

While most commuters are looking for a way to skirt traffic congestion in their cars, an estimated 4 to 6 percent of the workforce earns its living in front of a computer at home. Killough says while it's not a viable arrangement for every employer or self-employed person, "Telecommuting has taken some travel off the system, and employers need to realize that just because someone is working at the office doesn't necessarily mean they'll be any more productive there than at home."

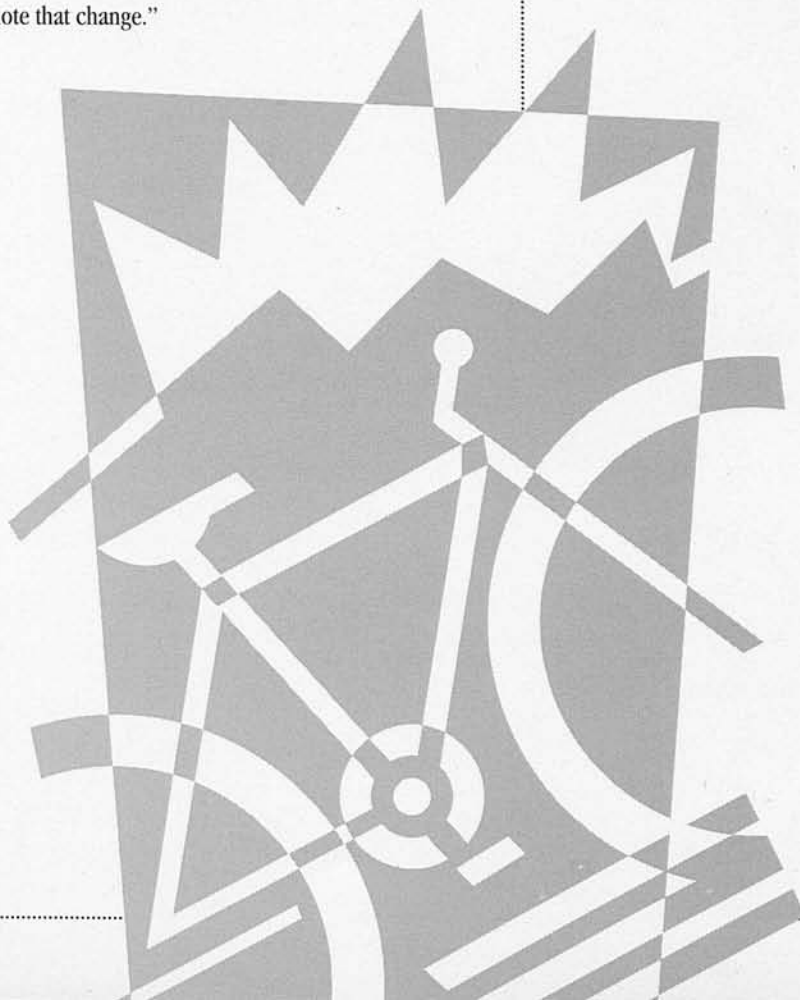
Killough points out that while we're quick to complain about traffic congestion, most of us have an amazing tolerance for it. Given that tolerance, the only thing that will get some people out of their cars is a higher cost to drive them.

"People value their personal freedom," says Killough. "There won't be any change unless people realize it's to their economic benefit to do so, and that gets real tricky. Do you impose economic penalties, or do you try and buy them into more efficient modes of travel?"

Not surprisingly, perhaps, Killough favors economic penalties, including higher parking fees, to persuade commuters to get out of their cars. He also believes it should cost more to drive to work than it does to drive to do business or to shop, although in most areas it costs less.

Killough says getting off our collision course with gridlock will take a change in behavior, but most people will ignore a challenge to change their commuting habits.

"Ultimately, change comes when people attempt to maximize their resources," says Killough. "If you want to see a shift, incentives and disincentives are the way to promote that change."





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