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## Former MTA Intern Allison Yoh Now Serves on Board

### • A Bus Rider, She Doesn't Own a Car



Allison Yoh

By BILL HEARD, Editor

Allison Yoh is a confirmed transit rider who doesn't even own a car. She was chosen by Mayor James Hahn, in fact, as someone who could bring the bus rider's perspective to the 13-member Board.

Yoh, 30, is a native of Florida and a graduate student who's working toward a master's degree in urban planning at UCLA. She was hired, last summer, as an intern in Countywide Planning's Systems Analysis and Research department where she has helped survey bus riders and the public. She resigned that position in July to serve on the Board.

"I ride the buses and talk with people who ride them and I see some of the problems," she says. "I'm there to witness the great things about the bus system and some of the things that impede people's access."

Yoh's eyes were opened to the need for effective community transportation when she volunteered at a county suicide prevention and crisis center in her Gainesville, Fla., home town. Clients, she found, needed the support of family, friends and social services for a successful recovery. "A lot depended upon how well they were able to access those services."

That experience and her internship at the MTA heightened Yoh's interest in transportation, now a specialty area of her master's degree program.

### Working on ridership project

Currently, she's working on a project funded by San Jose State and UCLA's Institute of Transportation Studies to learn how some transit agencies have increased ridership. This fall, she'll begin work on a doctorate in urban planning.

"Travel is something that affects everyone's daily life – whether you can get to work on time, drop off your kids or get to school," says Yoh. "I'm really interested in improving the reliability, schedule adherence and other factors that affect whether people can trust transit to work in their favor."

For the past two years, Yoh – who lives on the border of West LA – has used Santa Monica bus lines 1 and 2, Culver City airport buses, Metro Rapid and Metro Bus lines on Wilshire Boulevard to take her where she needs to go. Only occasionally does she drive a borrowed car.

As a UCLA student, she can ride the Big Blue Bus free by swiping her student ID card – the "Bruin Go" pass – in the fare machine when she boards. This pilot program is similar to some aspects of the Universal Fare System the Board will consider in the months ahead.

"I think it would be great for bus riders not to have to worry about having a token or passes or paying an extra quarter for a transfer," Yoh says. "It will make transferring bus lines much easier."

### A real challenge

"That's my perspective as a bus rider," she adds. "Such a massive project brings uncertainty; and the real challenge is trying to anticipate – as best we can – all the unexpected results and problems."

Allison Yoh is the daughter of a Gainesville auto body shop owner and former math professor, Richard, a native of Shanghai. Her mother, Jau, a chemist at the University of Florida, is originally from Liaoning, a province in northern China. Both her parents immigrated to the U.S. from Taiwan. Her brother, Eric, 26, works in their father's business.

Yoh earned a bachelor's degree in anthropology at UC Berkeley in 1994, then worked in the Registrar's Office at the University of Florida before moving to Los Angeles in 1999 to start her master's program at UCLA.

A volunteer computer trainer at the Little Tokyo Service Center, she also is interested in martial arts and modern dance.

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