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## Need e-Help?

Call the Help Desk  
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LAMTA Car 3022 trundles down the R Line tracks on owl service in 1963. The R Line traveled along Whittier Boulevard, through downtown LA and continued west on 3rd Street. Photo by Alan Weeks.



Photos courtesy of Dorothy Payton Gray Library

## The 24-Hour City: 100 Years of Owl Transit Service LA

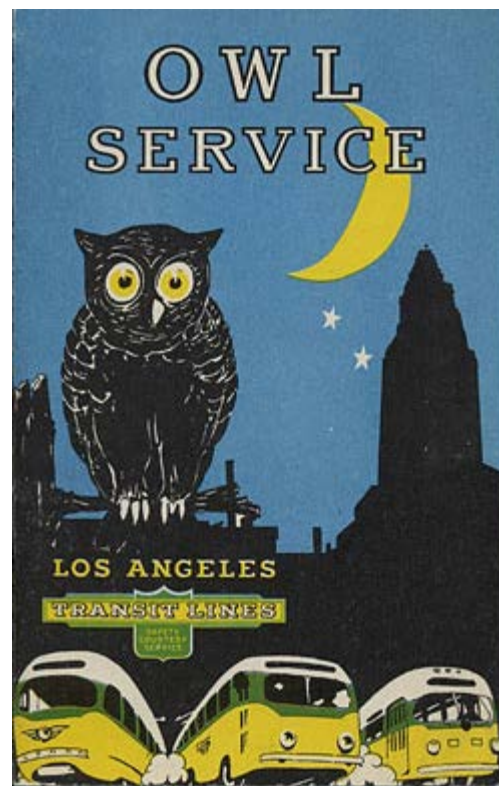
- Streetcars eventually were replaced by motorbuses
- [Metro's Current Owl Service Lines](#): Metro currently operates 60 buses on 25 owl service lines.

By MATT BARRETT

(Nov. 2, 2006) Los Angeles has been a 24-hour city for much longer that most would imagine, and transit service has played an important role in keeping the city moving overnight for 100 years.

According to the September 11, 1906 edition of the *Los Angeles Examiner* newspaper, in a brief article entitled "Owl Cars Are Run on Principal Lines":

The "owl" car service began last night. Cars on the principal lines left First and Spring streets at 1 and 2 o'clock. They were well



This 1947 brochure advertised LAMTA's owl service.

patronized. The lines included are Boyle Heights, Grand Avenue, Vernon Avenue, University, Main Street, and Pico Heights.

At the time service began, these lines linked Downtown with what were then LA's most populated neighborhoods around 6th and Rampart, Central and Slauson, Boyle Heights, 46th and Wesley, Vermont and 54th, and Pico and Wilton.

Owl service continued in operation as the fledgling network of streetcar lines, buses and interurban rail lines was purchased in 1911 and organized into two main transit companies: Pacific Electric, for long-distance interurban service, and Los Angeles Railway serving urban inner city Los Angeles.

As Los Angeles grew outward, so did the length of the lines offering owl service. Special owl service guides were published and system maps included extensive owl service information for passengers.

Even as streetcar service slowly began the conversion to bus service, beginning as early as 1925 and continuing until the last rail line was shut down in 1963, owl service remained a part of the transit system – as it does today.

Currently, Metro has 60 buses running on 25 lines during its overnight owl service, roughly midnight to 5 a.m., connecting Downtown to points north to the San Fernando Valley, south to Long Beach, east to El Monte and west to Santa Monica and Venice.