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No Cards or Flowers Required: Metro Turns 50 March 3

LAMTA, Metro's predecessor agency, was originally formed to study a monorail line from the San Fernando Valley to Long Beach.



By NED RACINE, Editor

(March 4, 2008) Although birthday candles and flowers are unnecessary, March 3 marks the 50th anniversary of the formation of Metro's predecessor, the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority (LAMTA).

On March 3, 1958, LAMTA became the owner and operator of the Los Angeles transit system with a governing board of local officials, making this the 50th anniversary of the Metro Board of Directors. For the first time, the people of Los Angeles had control over the transit system.

With LAMTA's formation, fares and routes could now be set locally. Previously, the private companies operating transit services were required to win approval from the Public Utilities Commission in Sacramento, a time consuming process.

Financed with revenue bonds, LAMTA purchased the equipment, facilities, and routes of two privately run transit companies for approximately \$40 million:

- Metropolitan Coach Lines (formerly the Pacific Electric Railway and Asbury Rapid Transit Lines)
- Los Angeles Transit Lines (formerly Los Angeles Railway).

LAMTA, originally created in 1951 to study a monorail line from the San Fernando Valley to Long Beach along the Los Angeles River, had an annual budget of \$45 million dollars and a base fare of 17 cents. Because there were no transit grant funding partners then, LAMTA had no access to public subsidies.

The Federal Transit Administration and California Transportation Commission came later, as did local sales tax subsidies.

While continuing to plan a new mass transit system for Los Angeles, LAMTA shut down the last remaining rail and streetcar lines. It also purchased modern buses and implemented more Freeway Flyer services. The new agency ran into controversy over its monorail plans and local community demand for subway instead of monorail on Wilshire Boulevard.

In 1964 LAMTA became the Southern California Rapid Transit District and in 1993 became today's Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, with an annual budget of \$3.1 billion.

