By Numan Parada

Port operators are keen on making as few container movements within the ports as possible. The GRID project aims to achieve this through its novel SuperDock concept, where ships can interact directly with rail carriers, eliminating the need for redundant sortation facilities.

The docking platform would also act as an on-site, fully consolidated rail yard. This alone would magnify the crane-to-train ratio to ten times of what conventional on-dock terminals currently produce. Thus, containers are moved straight to rail platforms without incremental sorting currently being done by trucks. The SuperDock can load destination-specific trains within a 3 to 4 hour train turnaround time versus 36 to 42 hours that is achieved today.

This way, containers can be siphoned through the Alameda Corridor, a trenched railway operating from the ports to near Downtown LA, instead of being loaded onto trucks and sent one-by-one to rail yards, bypassing conventional facilities currently impacting the communities of Wilmington, Long Beach and Commerce. This would remove many trucks from the 710 Freeway, reducing pollution, congestion and allowing the freeway to function at its designed capacity.

The SuperDock concept aims to render the current system of container movements obsolete, while also rendering two rail yards redundant under the GRID project: Union Pacific’s near-dock Intermodal Container Transfer Facility (ICTF) and the proposed BNSF Southern California International Gateway (SCIG).

Providing an alternative to those two facilities would save these freight rail companies $1 billion in capital. The SuperDock would also save the ports (see SUPERDOCK, Page 5)
Metro Provides Streetcar Update

By Numan Parada

After months of scoping and public input, Metro has narrowed down the list of possible routes for the proposed Downtown LA streetcar.

All potential routes will use a segment of Broadway, reflecting the original intent of bringing rail service to this historic street as part of the Bringing Back Broadway initiative.

However, various alignments north of this segment continue to vary in both length and destinations served, including one option where the streetcar may run through Olvera Plaza, just short of Union Station.

To the south, two different routes would equally serve the Convention Center, though one would better serve LA Live.

The brainchild of the GoLAStreetcar Initiative, the proposed streetcar intends to connect historic Downtown neighborhoods with entertainment, business and government centers, while also providing meaningful infrastructure that can stimulate development.

Transport Shorts: Bits of News to Bite On

by Zach Gutierrez

- The Gold Line Foothill Extension Construction Authority and the City of Monrovia reportedly reached a deal on a 14-acre piece of land needed for a rail maintenance yard, but the deal is far from being finalized. The Gold Line Board discussed the deal in late July, but the City of Monrovia will not consider the proposal until September.
- The City of Palmdale is suing the state HSR Authority to stop a new study of the feasibility of a high-speed rail route through Palmdale. However, a Grapevine route would skip Palmdale completely. In the past, Palmdale actively lobbied for a stop and was awarded one, which the city wants to keep.
- The Los Angeles City Council became the first government in the country to create a civil course of action for harassed cyclists. Councilmember Bill Rosendahl is using social media to try and expand the anti-harassment ordinance into other cities.
- Gas prices in Southern California are on the rise again. Prices are not as high as they were in the summer of 2007, but recent trends indicate that gas prices will probably never see the lows prior to what we are seeing today. Oil imports were partly responsible for a May trade deficit of $50 billion.
- Traffic at the twin ports of LA and Long Beach fell in June but experts are chalking that up to a return to normal shipping patterns. Gains in June 2010 were 32% compared to 2009 and it wasn’t inconceivable to see a 4% drop off in June 2011 from last year’s high.
- The 405 Freewaythrough the Sepulveda Pass, which closed for a weekend on July 16 and 17 for demolition work, reopened 17 hours ahead of schedule.

For many, it was a day free from traffic, increased public transit ridership and bikes beating planes. Despite publicity on the closure pleading otherwise, some people chose not to stay home and took transit instead of driving.

Metro reported a 15% increase in ridership on Metro Rail, thanks in part to free rides on select bus and rail lines, which continued through the rest of Sunday.

- Metrolink scored a big win carrying over 20,000 riders for the Carmageddon weekend upending the previous record where 11,000 U-2 fans sped by the gridlocked I-5. Those special Angels baseball trains and the new regularly scheduled 11 p.m. train on the San Bernardino Line are pulling their own weight as they are hauling nice crowds of baseball fans.
- The Victorville-Las Vegas DesertXpress HSR project has received environmental clearance. Now the project can move forward with design and funding applications.
Saving (and Improving) the Westwood FlyAway

By Numan Parada

Community members interested in saving the LAX FlyAway service to Westwood are working with Los Angeles World Airports and UCLA to better promote the airport shuttle bus and ensure its survival.

The Los Angeles Board of Airport Commissioners has threatened to end the vital transportation link between Westwood and Los Angeles International Airport if a $1 million operating deficit is not reduced by January 2012. To cut the deficit, the commission approved doubling the FlyAway fare from $5 to $10 and cutting peak period service to once an hour effective August 1.

The Transit Coalition is working with representatives from Westwood area homeowner and business associations, the staff of Los Angeles Councilmembers Paul Koretz and Bill Rosendahl, the Westwood Neighborhood Council, UCLA, and Los Angeles World Airports to market the FlyAway service.

All who attended an initial meeting of the working group in July agreed on the importance of keeping the FlyAway as a way to reduce traffic on the 405 Freeway and improve air quality.

Four target markets were identified for the service: UCLA students, faculty, staff, and visitors; Westwood and Brentwood area residents, businesses, and visitors; employees of the high-rise office buildings within easy walking distance of the FlyAway bus stop, and people who work at LAX.

The lack of a park and ride lot has been a major problem for the Westwood FlyAway, as parking was only available on the weekends, not weekdays. Other FlyAway routes serving Van Nuys, Union Station, and Irvine have ample parking spaces, but no such parking has been available during the work week.

To remedy this, UCLA agreed to dedicate 25 spaces in the university’s parking structure next to the Westwood FlyAway bus stop and promised to increase the supply, as demand warrants.

The Coalition conducted a field study and was instrumental in pushing LAWA and UCLA to provide up-to-date information about the fare increase and schedule change to FlyAway customers before they arrive at LAX. UCLA also is being urged to provide FlyAway information to students, faculty, staff and visitors in addition to driving directions and parking information.

Better coordination is also needed between the FlyAway service and other transit operators, including the UCLA Bruin bus system, Metro, Santa Monica Big Blue Bus and Culver City Transit.

The Westwood FlyAway service was launched in June 2007 as part of an agreement to settle litigation by local governments and community groups challenging expansion of facilities at Los Angeles International Airport.

The settlement requires LAWA to initiate eight more FlyAway routes by 2015 to reduce traffic at the airport and mitigate the environmental impacts associated with expansion of the world’s sixth busiest airport.
Comic-Con Provides Vital Transit Lessons

By Numan Parada

Having managed to get any tickets to the 2011 San Diego Comic-Con was a miracle. Having found a room at $150 a night was an outright privilege.

In the past years that I have been to the Con, I managed to find some relatively decent deals on just about everything, especially lodging. However, hoteliers have grown smart about the true value of this annual event and are now charging accordingly. As a result, it was imperative to keep my costs at the Comic-Con as low as possible. Therefore, riding the San Diego Trolley would prove important in making that happen.

As I reflect my experiences on the Trolley, I can’t help but wonder what we can learn from San Diego (and what to avoid) when discussing expansion of our own convention center in Downtown LA and the possible construction of an adjacent football stadium.

For the first day, I carpooled with friends to the Fashion Valley Trolley Station, where upon arriving I was greeted with attendants who directed me and other patrons to a booth. There, we purchased 4-day passes for $15. These passes graphically celebrated the event and made for a snazzy souvenir. In previous years, you would have to head to a ticket vending machine and purchase a very standard (though still 4-day) Trolley ticket pass.

In any case, having a pass that guarantees unlimited bus and Trolley trips makes for a much less harrowing alternative to paying $20 a day to park near the San Diego Convention Center, where Comic-Con is held every year.

With that as an example, Los Angeles Metro should consider making (and designing) special event TAP cards. That way, visitors can take them home and have not only a tangible memory of their convention experience but also a good opinion of our transit system.

At the platform, a special direct Trolley would take us directly to the Convention Center. (Normally, a Trolley from Fashion Valley would end at Old Town San Diego, to which those going Downtown would be forced to transfer.) In a few minutes, our train arrived and all Comic-Con revelers boarded and soon we were whisked away.

In the 20 minutes that it took to reach the Convention Center, riders could look at their event schedules and pick out which panels will they see, gawk at the mostly tasteless costumes, take photos of said costumes, and complain about the odious ticketing company that Comic-Con hired this year.

Once we reached the Convention Center, the problems started. To be fair, there are two stations serving the Convention Center, and there is a choice of getting off at either one. Both stations (see COMIC-CON, Page 5)
Comic-Con: What L.A. Should (and Shouldn’t) Do

(from COMIC-CON, Page 4) have unusually longer platforms and are next to plazas where crowds waiting for their trains can spill over. Nevertheless, there are a lot of people alighting from these trains.

By contrast, the Pico/Chick Hearn Blue Line Station, which serves not only the existing LA Convention Center, but also Staples Center and LA Live, is hideously tiny and has no spillover area for riders. It would be quite inadequate for Comic-Con, which regularly hits 130,000 visitors each year. No event in the LA Convention Center or nearby venues comes even close.

Worse yet, all of these visitors must cross the Trolley tracks, a freight rail right-of-way and Harbor Boulevard before they can enter the Convention Center. The police officers stationed at the intersection are easily overwhelmed by the foot traffic.

Pedestrians must especially watch out for the railroad crossing arms and bells, since Trolleys are actively passing by.

In an attempt to mitigate this problem, a pedestrian bridge south of the Convention Center was opened, where pedestrians can safely cross over all three of these obstructions.

However, it was built so far south from the Convention Center (actually in front of Petco Park), that it is devoid of use and meaning for most convention goers. I used it only once.

It made me think if trenching the Trolley at some point in the future should happen. I don’t see it as an engineering challenge, since a parking garage was built below the Convention Center.

Or perhaps a new pedestrian bridge or underpass should be built at the Trolley stations. The safety of future Comic-Con visitors hinges on a real solution. After all, not all of us going there are super heroes.

Trenching has often been discussed for the Blue Line on Flower Street, especially now that the Expo Line nears completion. I once held hope that it would be made part of an overall strategy to build the Metro Regional Connector, which would connect all Downtown light rail lines.

Considering the ravenous competition for conventions, a fight which Los Angeles has been losing in recent years, would event organizers view adequate infrastructure to support the thousands of potential visitors not only as a plus but as a necessity? Currently, there are plans afoot to bring the National Football League back to LA with the construction of Farmers Field, which would also double as a convention center floor.

This development promises to bring larger conventions and the associated revenue, but is poised to cause a transportation challenge, if not addressed up front.

Seeing what can go right and wrong in that camp, with Comic-Con as an example, causes us to address this issue if we are to cater the hundreds of thousands of annual visitors that we aim to bring to Los Angeles.

GRID Poised to Change Shipping at Ports

(from SUPERDOCK, Page 1) nearly $2 billion worth of disparate and needless terminal expansion projects. Thus, the total savings from GRID would come to close to $3 billion. GRID proponents are confident that a public-private partnership with significant private sector financing will be generated once political will to “Zero-Emission Platform” the container supply chain be seriously supported.

Part of the GRID project would also make use of a second rail platform that introduces the next generation of environmentally-conscious transshipment logistics. This high-speed electric cargo conveyor and synchronous container loading platform would use a freight pipeline along several rights of way including freeways, river levees and adjacent land where power transmission towers are currently positioned.

These freight pipelines would then move goods inland to zero-emissions container discharging facilities called Electric Container Transfer Facilities (ECTFs), similar (see PORTS, Page 6)
Expo CEO Comes to TTC Dinner Meeting

By Carlos Velásquez

Rick Thorpe, CEO of the Exposition Line Construction Authority, was the guest speaker at The Transit Coalition’s July dinner meeting. He touched on the Expo Line Phase I and II’s current status and their respective engineering challenges.

Prior to being named Expo CEO, Thorpe was Metro Construction Chief. Before that, he was CEO of the Pasadena Blue Line Construction Authority and Program Manager for the first segment of the Salt Lake City TRAX light-rail system.

Thorpe first touched on the search for a maintenance facility for the Expo Line. He mentioned that initially, the Authority was looking at having a 16-car storage facility somewhere in downtown LA. Yet, thanks to Measure R and increased funding for the project, the Authority was able to broaden its search for a larger maintenance facility—which it found in Santa Monica.

Expo Line Phase I testing is continuing. The tie-in with the Blue Line at the intersection of Washington Boulevard and Flower Street continues to be challenging as the Authority needs to simultaneously mitigate for traffic operations and plan for train operations for both lines.

Metro has also provided the Authority with funds to implement Automatic Train Protection (ATP) in order to reduce collisions. As of now, the contractor continues to test gated at-grade crossings west of Gramercy Place.

Revenue operations may begin in November to La Cienega for Phase I depending upon the success of pre-revenue testing or in early 2012, if kinks remain unsolved. Both temporary and permanent parking issues at the Culver City Station continue to be addressed. The Authority is targeting an opening early next year for the next segment to Culver City.

As for Phase II, Thorpe mentioned that the project has received bids that are well under budget. He also discussed several engineering challenges along that stretch of the corridor.

He mentioned the issue of acquiring clearance approval from Metro for building two tracks under I-10, which can potentially lead to a closure of the highway for up to three months. The issue is that the box structure under the highway was initially designed to accommodate only one set of train tracks. The Authority wants to squeeze in two tracks for the project, but this will require permission for variances from Metro to relax clearance regulations.

He also talked about utility relocation, street realignment, and improvements along the corridor. Some potential street improvements include pedestrian enhancements along stations in Santa Monica and the provision of bike infrastructure as well.

The Authority expects opening Phase II for revenue operations in early 2016.

 GRID Project: Cut Pollution, Reduce Truck Trips

(from PORTS, Page 5)

but smaller in version to the SuperDock.

By way of this electric cargo conveyor configuration, GRID designers seek to reduce the freeway truck delivery component by creating truck loading stations at these inland ECTF’s.

Street truck travel is only required from existing warehouse distribution hubs back to designated inland container facilities.

GRID would make electric truck drayage viable because the truck trip distance to each delivery would be significantly reduced, completing the supply chain.

By eliminating this long, costly and road congesting freeway step, these efficiencies, coupled with near-complete electric operations of the SuperDock, reduces port air pollution, making GRID especially attractive to environmentalists and impacted surrounding communities.

To learn more about this, attend our August Dinner Meeting featuring project developer David Alba. See Page 8 for details.
Eastside Gold Line: Choosing the Right Route

By Bart Reed

Metro has released the initial results of their study for an extension of the successful Eastside Gold Line. The agency chose two alignments for further study: An eastward extension along the 60 Freeway to the Montebello Town Center, and a southeasterly extension to Whittier via Garfield Ave. and Washington Blvd. Both show poor ridership potential and are not good investments.

The Transit Coalition, however, believes Metro is missing a major opportunity by shelving further consideration of a Whittier Blvd. alignment. The Whittier corridor already benefits from high transit use, pedestrian-friendly design and numerous community, job and entertainment destinations.

The stretch from Garfield Avenue to Lambert Road in the City of Whittier is a barren, auto-oriented landscape that is not conducive to light-rail transit ridership. Washington Boulevard passes through the industrial districts of Commerce and Montebello. Although these types of developments may hold some jobs which can be served well by a light rail line, they are largely morning and afternoon commute-time traffic generating land uses. Thus, a light-rail line would only see major patronage during those times of day.

Unlike Washington Boulevard, Whittier Boulevard provides a much better alternative as it contains land uses that are more conducive to transit usage. The Whittier alignment would also provide direct access (via Hadley Street) to Uptown Whittier, a shopping and entertainment district that makes the perfect end-destination for the light-rail line.

Serving such a destination would guarantee strong ridership as it makes its way through the suburbs of east Los Angeles County.

The extension is funded under Measure R to the amount of $1.27 billion. It is listed as one of the 12 projects that would be built through the proposed American Fast Forward initiative (previously known locally as the 30/10 Plan). It is hoped that community support can be gathered to define a route that has a chance for success.
Attend these Upcoming Events

- Aug 4—Metro Board Meeting 9:00 a.m., Metro Gateway Headquarters, One Gateway Plaza, L.A.
- Aug 8 and 22—OCTA Board 9 a.m., 600 S. Main St., Orange.
- Aug 8—Metro San Gabriel Valley Public Workshop 5 p.m., East LA Public Library, 4837 E. Third St., Los Angeles.
- Aug 10—Metro Westside/Central Service Council Meeting 5 p.m., La Cienega Tennis Center, 325 S. La Cienega Blvd., Beverly Hills.
- Aug 11—Metro Gateway Cities Service Council Meeting 2 p.m., Salt Park Recreation Center, 3401 E. Florence, Huntington Park.
- Aug 12—Metro South Bay Service Council Meeting 9:30 a.m., Inglewood City Hall, One Manchester Blvd., Conference Room A, Inglewood.
- Aug 12—SCARRA Metrolink Board 10 a.m., Metro Gateway Headquarters, 1 Gateway Plaza, Los Angeles.
- Aug 13—Southern California Transit Advocates (SO.CA.TA) 1 p.m., Angelus Plaza, Los Angeles.

- Aug 22—Long Beach Transit 12 noon, City Hall Council Chambers, 333 W. Ocean Ave., Long Beach.
- Aug 23—Transit Coalition Monthly Meeting 6:45 p.m. Philippe The Original, 1001 N. Alameda St. at Ord St., L.A.
- Aug 24—LOSSAN Joint Powers Board Meeting 11 a.m., OCTA Headquarters, 600 S. Main St., Orange.
- Aug 26—Foothill Transit Executive Board 8:00 a.m., Board Room, 100 S. Vincent Ave., 2nd floor, West Covina.
- Aug 31—LOSSAN TAC Meeting 10:00 a.m., Metro Gateway Headquarters, 1 Gateway Plaza, L.A.
- Sept 1—Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority 2:30 p.m., 500 W. Temple, 3rd Floor – Room 381B, L.A.
- Sept 1—Transportation Committee Sierra Club 7 p.m., 3435 Wilshire Blvd., #320, Los Angeles.
- Sept 7—Metro San Fernando Valley Service Council Meeting 6:30 p.m., Marvin Braude Center, 6262 Van Nuys Blvd., Van Nuys.
- Sept 9—Ventura County Transportation Commission 9 a.m., Camarillo City Hall, 601 Carmen Dr., Camarillo.

An Invitation From The Transit Coalition Executive Director

Many of you may already be familiar with the Clean Trucks Program at the ports, which has helped reduce pollution in the area. Currently, no one has figured out how to remove lifts involving trucks from ship to train. However, innovators are thinking of a next-generation project that can cut down pollution even further while reducing traffic on our port-bound roads. The GRID project calls for an all-electric ship-to-rail facility that would accomplish just that. Even as details continue to be hammered out, how can we advocate for this project, which promises to improve goods movement and, in turn, people movement? Join us for our monthly membership meeting, on Tuesday, August 23, 2011, featuring GRID designer David Alba. Our two-hour meeting at Philippe the Original starts at 6:45 p.m. If you or anyone you know is interested, get them there on the 23rd to join the discussion!

-Bart Reed
Executive Director