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Metrolink plans rush-hour express trains to downtown [Updated]

March 11, 2011 | 4:03 pm

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Southern California's commuter rail service soon will launch its first rush-hour express trains to downtown Los Angeles, cutting the longest travel times by about half an hour each way.

The pilot program, coming as gas prices soar, could make Metrolink trains a more attractive alternative to driving to work, particularly for residents of far-flung suburbs.

"It'll change the dynamics," said Bart Reed, executive director of the Transit Coalition, a grass-roots public transportation advocacy group. "There's a whole group that don't ride [trains] because they can go quicker by driving."

The express trains will run mornings and evenings from the [Antelope Valley](#) and San Bernardino to [downtown's Union Station](#) beginning in May. In traffic, both commutes take about two hours by car, according to Google Maps.

The San Bernardino express will take an hour, compared with the current 90 minutes for trains that make about a dozen stops. The express will stop only in Rancho Cucamonga and [Covina](#).

The new service from Palmdale will make stops in [Santa Clarita](#) and [Burbank](#), rather than all of the line's 11 stations.

[For the record at 1:53 p.m. March 14: An earlier version of this post stated that Metrolink commuter trains would run between Lancaster and Union Station. They will run between Palmdale and downtown.]

The express trains will be on top of the current schedule and will continue for a six-month evaluation period. If successful, express service could be added to other outlying areas, officials said.

Billboards promoting the service will begin appearing next month at freeway choke points in the Antelope Valley and along the 10 Freeway, a main artery connecting Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties.

Getting express trains to [Palmdale](#) and Lancaster has been talked about for "many, many years," said Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael Antonovich, who represents the area.

He predicted the time savings of an hour or more a day could fundamentally change attitudes about commuting options. Many of his constituents battle a daily bottleneck of automobiles and big rigs near the 5 and 14 freeways, north of the [San Fernando Valley](#).

With gas prices pushing \$4 a gallon, Reed said the economic appeal of the new service could entice people out of their cars. By his estimate, a downtown worker driving solo from the Lancaster area could save hundreds of dollars a month at current gas prices.

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-- Rich Connell

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On: San Onofre nuclear plant can withstand up to 7.0 quake, is protected by a 25-foot tsunami wall, Edison says

Where is this 25 foot wall? You can not see it from this photo. If a tsunami hit the water would be right up to the containment building. Who are ...

-- Rick Noir

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How about they fix the tap card system while they're at it.

Posted by: Mark | March 11, 2011 at 04:30 PM

Well Duuuuh.

And maybe extend the concept to the green line to nowhere connect to the blue line downtown?

Oh--why is the Bart, in its fouled up way, more efficient than LA?

B/C it has far fewer stops.

Glad every poltico with a voice got a multi-million dollar bus --err -- rail stop-- not.

Posted by: thealaskan | March 11, 2011 at 05:34 PM

Wow that's great...only took fifty years for it to happen. Local elected morons chose to waste stimulus transportation funds by extending 405 diamond lane instead of putting it to good use with rail. But this is good news.

Posted by: pargrad | March 11, 2011 at 05:48 PM

excellent. we are getting smarter and smarter about transit in LA

Posted by: D | March 11, 2011 at 05:54 PM

A lot more people are going to be commuting from San Barnardino if the pilot program is successful and more express trains are added. Getting that hour and a half trip down to an hour is a game changer.

Posted by: Spokker | March 11, 2011 at 06:15 PM

That's a good first step. A better one would be to run the trains until 2AM...

Posted by: Dan | March 11, 2011 at 06:52 PM

This is a brilliant idea. Having a solid plan to market the change will help a lot too.

Posted by: Bill D. | March 11, 2011 at 07:36 PM

Hard to believe that Orange County wasn't one of the demonstration lines chosen. Irvine, Santa Ana, Fullerton, Los Angeles would seem to make a logical sequence.

Posted by: Bob Thomas | March 11, 2011 at 08:08 PM

Any why do you live in San Berdoo?

Posted by: Angelino | March 11, 2011 at 08:40 PM

What about Ventura County!!!! It makes at least 15 stops between Moorpark and Union Station!!!

Posted by: A Gargar | March 11, 2011 at 09:01 PM

"Hard to believe that Orange County wasn't one of the demonstration lines chosen. Irvine, Santa Ana,

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On: San Onofre nuclear plant can withstand up to 7.0 quake, is protected by a 25-foot tsunami wall, Edison says

To quote Frank Zappa: It cant happen here, It cant happen here, It can happen over there, but it cant happen here.... (Keep chanting that over and o ...

-- Citizen 1000

On: Should California lawmakers get special status to carry concealed weapons?

In good behavior. ...

-- Dolly

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3/14/2011

Metrolink plans rush-hour express train...

Fullerton, Los Angeles would seem to make a logical sequence."

Amtrak has begun testing express service.

"It makes at least 15 stops between Moorpark and Union Station!!!"

There are eight stops between Moorpark and Union Station.

"And maybe extend the concept to the green line to nowhere connect to the blue line downtown?"

Oh--why is the Bart, in its fouled up way, more efficient than LA?

B/C it has far fewer stops."

Stop spacing on Metrolink is appropriate for commuter rail. The Green Line has nothing to do with Metrolink.

"How about they fix the tap card system while they're at it."

TAP has nothing to do with Metrolink.

Posted by: Spokker | March 11, 2011 at 10:30 PM

How about adding more trains to serve those commuting OUT of LA to Orange County???

Posted by: Chatteress | March 11, 2011 at 11:40 PM

Although express commuter trains in New York City often only save 5 or 10 minutes in each direction, they are usually jammed. Even express subways trains are popular.

Sure, LA lacks multiple tracks (there are four tracks on the right-of-way between New York City and New Haven, Conn., for example, and no fewer than two at any point between New York and Washington, D.C.). Still, you would think that even a cursory examination of commuting habits would have led L.A. to express trains from the moment Metrolink service was inaugurated.

Posted by: WaltB | March 12, 2011 at 08:41 AM

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (TAP, Green Line) is not the same entity as the Southern California Regional Rail Authority (which markets itself as "Metrolink")

Posted by: Silver | March 12, 2011 at 08:58 AM

I live here in Oceanside, the terminus for the O.C. Metrolink, and they left us out of the picture? We do an excellent job of attracting people here to take the train up to L.A. Union Station. Something wrong here.

Posted by: Chuck Kopsho | March 12, 2011 at 09:13 AM

I suspect OCTA didn't want to pony up any money for Express service to LA, seeing as they are readying their Fullerton-Irvine every 30 minute service. Have you seen the Fullerton stub platform they are finishing up? It basically shows they have no interest in continuing additional train service into LA. Fullerton-Irvine every 30 minute service is going to be such a waste of money seeing as there will be virtually no time advantage for those who can use it and a lack of frequent transit connections to major employment centers or residential developments. So if you decide to park your car at Irvine and commute to your job in Anaheim, you likely need a car at both ends because the connecting services are too infrequent. But that's not a problem for people who take the train to LA because there are NUMEROUS connections from Union Station (Red Line, Purple Line, Gold Line, Rapid buses).

I do agree that there needs to be more service between LA & Orange County. One might say that Amtrak Pac Surfliner provides service, but the problem with them is they miss some key Metrolink stops (Buena Park, Orange, Tustin, LN/MV). But Orange County historically has never supported the idea of mass transit. The Centerline proposal [Fullerton-Anaheim (Disneyland, Angel Stadium, Honda Center)-Orange (The Block)-Santa Ana (Santa Ana College, Depot)-Costa Mesa (South Coast Plz, Performing Arts Ctr)-Irvine (JWA, UCI, Spectrum)] was rejected. I believe it would have been completed this year had they approved it. They have cut a large chunk of their bus service along with half their weekend train service, while at the same time embarking on major highway projects (405-22-605, 5 at the LA-OC line).

Until Orange County gets serious about their transportation priorities, mass transit is always going to take a back seat behind highway funding. One might think that a light rail line would never succeed in a conservative region like Orange County. People there still think that the gas tax fully funds roads and highways (it doesn't come close). But it only takes a quick look at Phoenix's new rail system

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(4:01)



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Metrolink plans rush-hour express train...

which has been nothing short of a huge success, already surpassing ridership expectations and gathering support for future extensions.

Posted by: Stephen | March 12, 2011 at 11:19 AM

A lot of things people are complaining about here are a) legitimate, but b) actively being worked on by Metro and/or Metrolink.

Expanding TAP throughout the region -- working on it.

LAX light rail -- Measure R's Crenshaw line is breaking ground shortly and will make the connection.

405 corridor -- Metro has money for a mass transit project in Measure R.

Connect the Blue Line to downtown -- that's the Regional Connector subway that will connect the Blue/Expo Lines to the Gold Line via a 2-mile subway.

More details on Metro transit projects here:

http://www.metro.net/projects/progress_tracker/bytype/expansion/

Posted by: Carter R | March 12, 2011 at 06:24 PM

Oh wow... this third rate backward nightmare run by greedy civil servants has big breakthrough. Metrolink should be farmed out to private industry instead of these dreadful useles bureaucrats!

Posted by: pasadena jag | March 12, 2011 at 09:58 PM

Will anyone really use it? I mean Calif need a good set up.. But the way it is now. It is a Joke....

Posted by: Danofive0 | March 12, 2011 at 11:51 PM

Great idea, but is there going to be enough parking at the selected stations and will the parking be free.....

Posted by: Roller | March 13, 2011 at 08:23 AM

Excellent start. Now if we really ramp up the express service from Downtown LA /Union Station to Ontario Airport by linking the Metrolink San Bernardino Line to the airport effectively, we can seriously grow air carrier service at Ontario AP just as Measure R/30-10 projects stimulate the Downtown LA economy. Expanded air carrier service will stimulate job production around Ontario Airport, reduce Inland Empire commuter traffic to Orange and LA Counties, and create a multi-family housing market and the prospect of a "smart growth" revitalization strategy at the other end in downtown San Bernardino.

Repeat the process on the Metrolink Riverside Line, and we begin to have synergies there as well. The San Gabriel Valley will start to look like the Valley of Opportunity. And traffic congestion at LAX will be reduced as well.

Nice.

Posted by: Denny Zane | March 13, 2011 at 04:29 PM

This is an excellent idea. And, if Metrolink also ran some trains regularly to and from in the middle of the day, say once an hour, that would also help get people around without having to use gasoline.

Posted by: Leric Goodman | March 14, 2011 at 09:45 AM

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