

# PUBLIC FORUM

**DAILY NEWS**

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## MTA financial cutbacks must spare bus service

For today's Public Forum, readers were asked to comment on plans by Julian Burke, chief executive officer of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, to reduce service on some bus lines in order to reduce the MTA's deficit.

Thus far, Julian Burke's hard-nosed approach to decision-making appears to be paying off, but scheduled reductions in bus service are troubling. Burke — Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan's proxy — may be afraid that he has pushed fiscal prudence as far as political reality permits. What he has done thus far is very courageous, but we need to go further.

Los Angeles has lost total bus boardings equal to 40 percent of current transit ridership. We began losing ridership when we began diverting Proposition A funds from buses, raising bus fares and building up the capital account for construction of the Blue Line train.

The awful political truth is that the MTA should terminate both rail construction and rail operations, and switch all available funds to expanding and improving bus service. Note that none of the MTA's announcements has explicitly mentioned the Pasadena Blue Line, implying that construction on this line may have halted or be about to halt.

Burke's next step should be to reconsider the MTA's scheduled purchases of alternative-fuel buses. These vehicles are expensive to maintain and break down frequently, reducing the size of the fleet available to provide service. The fleet should be expanded to the greatest extent possible, which means relying upon the most conventional technology available.

— James E. Moore II  
Associate professor  
School of Urban Planning  
and Development  
University of Southern California

I am opposed to the further cutbacks of service, especially in the San Fernando Valley. Were the routes designed more carefully, there would be no lack of ridership.

Most of the Valley routes were configured in the mid-1970s, at a time when the Valley was still lowly populated.

The Valley population is huge today. Hundreds of thousands of our residents are working-class Latinos who are transit-dependent. It is they who ride the 166, 234 and 183 lines that are scheduled for serious cutbacks. I have ridden those lines with standing-room-only loads.

Many of us do not own cars today. Let us encourage nondriving and put more bus lines out there.

— Charles Thomas  
North Hollywood

Any proposed cutbacks are going to hurt people in need of decent transportation.

I have been riding the bus for years and have watched service deteriorate. Many buses are old, dirty, falling apart, and the seats are uncomfortable — if you're lucky enough to get one. The standing-room-only overcrowding is a disgrace.

How can you sell riding the bus to people with cars who drive regularly when service is so shabby? They won't give up their comfort and space to ride public transportation under such conditions, and I wouldn't either if I had a choice.

A good bus system would sell itself. A satisfied public would advertise it by word of mouth.

The trains and subways don't go where most people need or want to go. They don't service a wide-enough area. L.A. is laid out different than New York or San Francisco. Its sprawling suburbs seem to go on forever.

MTA, when are you going to get it? You can't keep robbing Peter to pay Paul. Rearrange and get your priorities straight.

— James A. Reese  
Burbank

Just a few months ago I attended a Valley meeting. The topic was, "Where do you want to travel to on an MTA bus?" I thought I was seeing a turnaround.

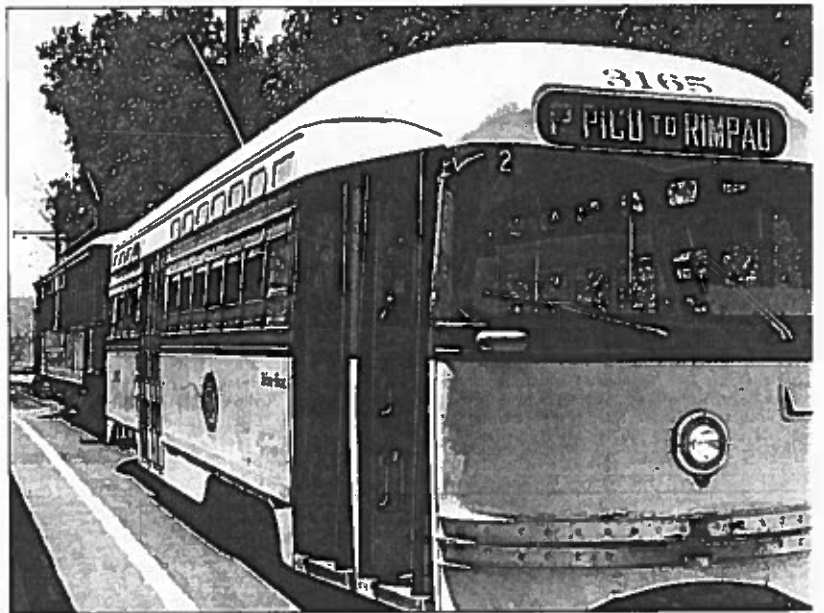
MTA customer service will fax your route to you, call you back in five minutes and get schedules on the Internet. Now they want to cut routes, increase fares on the rail lines, even eliminate some lines.

We need a world-class bus system and deserve one. Hey, it's our money they are spending. We have a right to see what it is spent on and a say in this matter.

Let the private sector fund and build rail and subway projects.

— Mike Hablinski  
North Hollywood

What further comments are there left to be made about the results of the cut-the-service, hike-the-price line that has been repeated over and over for the past 20 years by stupid, greedy mismanagement of public transportation that



One of the last of L.A.'s streetcars was this 1948 model, later put on display at the Orange Empire Railway Museum.

## All that L.A. needed to do was update its street

It's really sad about the end of the old Red Car ("Bygone era; Region misses extensive rail system that made its development possible").

I remember when I was a kid I rode on them. Through the years, all we needed to do is to update those cars. It sure would have been a lot cheaper.

Our problem is poor management and politics. It seems like the more you pay in taxes, the less you get back

in services.

Look at your gas stations, for example. Back in the 1960s, for just a quarter per gallon of gasoline you got trading stamps, plates and glasses, and they checked your oil and washed your windows.

If our new rail system ever makes it out here to the Valley, we will be very lucky. All we need to do is to get good contractors for the product, good

management and political really care about the future of L.A.

Remember, nothing is simple to do. It can be done who is a good leader.

Other big cities have done not us?

— L

### Backyard lions

Recent sightings of mountain lions in hillside areas around the San Fernando Valley have prompted some residents to keep their children and

pets indoors. For the Public Forum for Saturday, Nov. 29, the Daily News invites readers to comment. How do you feel about co-existing with mountain lions in suburban areas? Is there a need to amend a 1990 state initiative that gave special protection to California's growing population of mountain lions? Or should the occasional presence of the animals in inhabited areas be accepted? Letters on this subject must reach the Daily News no later than Tuesday, Nov. 25.

haven't already been said?

It's like a broken record — ridership down as funds funneled into rail while the anointed MTA officials ride the money train.

— Laverna Holington  
North Hollywood

It's time to cut, the umbilical cord. Privatize the MTA. It's as simple as that.

All the problems, the cutbacks, the service, the ridiculous spending, our tax money — all these things would be taken off our shoulders. We dump the subway and let the private owner establish a profitable transportation system, decent bus service or, at their decision, an above-ground rail service, van service or

whatever. If they do not perform, cancel them.

— Charles Dushek  
Chatsworth

It's time for everyone in Los Angeles to face the music. Rail is dead. We can not afford to build any more rail lines at the expense of the bus riders. It's time for the MTA to cut back in every department and program to keep the buses moving. It should not and cannot cut bus service.

The first place the MTA should look is at its highly paid management. All MTA employees making more than \$100,000 a year should get a 5 percent pay cut. Get rid of all MTA cellular phones. Make them use radios or pay phones like the bus operators do.

Stop use of MTA cars. Have the employees use their own cars or take the bus.

Reduce the money paid to other transit companies, like Foothill, and have them bring their fares up so all L.A. County bus riders pay the same fare.

Whatever the MTA does to save money, it should not raise fares or cut bus service any more. It has got to get more buses on the street.

— John A. Singleton  
Saugus

### 'Create more havoc'

Thomas A. Rubin's fanciful "rubber-tire guideways" (Viewpoint, Nov. 16), would create more havoc in the Chandler Boulevard community and be less appealing as a transit option than any rail mode.

People who talk about nary land-use upheaval in Valley neighbors nixed a create a bus transit center campus.

Let's get serious about downtown Van Nuys go which might possibly son transit center and City Hall. The very permanence of tem is appealing to dev coincidence that the \$300 proposed Hollywood redevelopment is cluster future subway stations.

When was the last time get a district because a bus line?

### How to write

We welcome letters on all concern. All are subject to denotation, and they can be with the writer's true name, home community, rather it will be published. Letters / writer's complete home address, telephone number for verification.

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