

FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER & BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Photo by Paul Wellman

With the threat of losing critical funding looming over MTD for several months, 2013 was a year of uncertainty for local transit service. Because of Teamsters union objections to California's Public Employee Pension Reform Act (PEPRA), The Federal Department of Labor withheld funds pending resolution of the dispute. Without that Federal money, MTD would have been forced to reduce bus service by almost thirty percent and lay off a significant number of employees.

Fortunately, Governor Brown acted to avert the crisis by granting the Teamsters an exemption from PEPRA. He might not have done this, however, if it weren't for the outpouring of support for MTD and other California transit providers that YOU and other members of the community delivered.

The high level of public participation in the many meetings that were held to discuss the Emergency Service Reduction Plan is indicative of the importance of transit on the South Coast. We are so very grateful to this community for the confidence you expressed in us throughout that process; we will continue to do everything we can to deserve it.

Thank you,

Sherrie Fisher
MTD General Manager



2013 MTD Board, from left:
Director Dave Tabor, Director Dick Weinberg, Secretary Olivia Rodriguez, Chair Dave Davis, Vice Chair Chuck McQuary, Director Ed Easton, Director Bill Shelor

The Santa Barbara Metropolitan Transit District (MTD) is an independent government agency whose mission is to provide transit service to the South Coast of Santa Barbara County, but we don't do it alone. Cooperative arrangements with other public entities enable us to leverage our resources, and the community benefits from the most efficacious service it is possible for us to provide.

Upsides to the funding scare that MTD endured this year are the new and strengthened partnerships that were forged with student, neighborhood, and activist community groups.

With this Report to the Community, we will highlight just a few of the partnerships that contribute to the success of transit in our area and that enabled MTD to, once again in FY 2013, be ranked among the top-performing transit providers in the United States for a community our size.

The mission of MTD is to enhance the personal mobility of South Coast residents and visitors by offering safe, clean, reliable, courteous, accessible, environmentally-responsible, and cost-effective transit service throughout the district.



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REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



SBCC

Santa Barbara City College (SBCC) students approved a registration fee increase (effective Fall 2014) that will allow them to continue using their student identification cards as bus fare when school is in session. SBCC student bus fees have not been raised since January 2009, but student ridership has grown dramatically since then. MTD has tried to accommodate the demand by adding service on Line 15x (between SBCC & Isla Vista), but the buses are still quite crowded.

The new contract with MTD affords students unlimited use of the bus system for \$30 per semester. If the fee increase had not been approved, students who ride the bus would have paid regular adult fares. The registration fee is a bargain for those who use transit and they free up parking for those who don't! For MTD, the ability to budget based on expected student enrollment enables more effective long-range planning, so it's a win-win.

MTD is purchasing three 60-foot articulated buses and at SBCC's request also has plans to upgrade the bus stop across Cliff Drive from campus. MTD will continue to look for opportunities to provide better service to the campus, without reducing service elsewhere in the District.

UCSB

UCSB continues to expand its enrollment and is constructing new student & faculty housing near the intersection of El Colegio & Storke Roads. Recognizing that the bus routes serving UCSB and Isla Vista are already operating beyond capacity, UCSB has committed to work with MTD to develop a comprehensive transit plan for the area.

As UCSB student representatives emphasized to MTD during the Emergency Transit Service Reduction Meetings last summer, they don't just use the bus to go to campus; there is also strong student demand for bus service to downtown Santa Barbara, the Camino Real Marketplace, Old Town Goleta, and other destinations throughout the South Coast for employment, shopping, and entertainment. Indeed, system-wide UCSB ridership rose by 11% in fiscal year 2013 to nearly one million student trips per year. MTD looks forward to receiving funding from UCSB that will enable the District to provide needed additional transit service.



A fully-loaded Line 24x bus departs Elings Hall for downtown Santa Barbara on a recent Saturday afternoon.

CDBG BUS STOP IMPROVEMENTS

In collaboration with City of Santa Barbara Public Works staff, MTD has applied for and been awarded Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding to upgrade bus stops for the past several years.



Salinas and Cacique bus stop before and after CDBG-funded improvements

Upgraded bus stops must be in qualifying census tracts (generally Lower Eastside and Lower Westside) and are selected in cooperation with the Neighborhood Advisory Council.

Bus stop upgrades include accessible boarding pads, shelters to protect waiting passengers from the elements, solar-powered night lighting for safety, benches, and trash receptacles.



In 2013, bus stops at Canon Perdido & San Pascual, Salinas & Cacique (shown), Milpas & Canon Perdido, and Milpas & De La Guerra were upgraded with CDBG funds. More upgrades are in the works for 2014.

CARPINTERIA BENCHES

Every year for the past several years, Carpinteria Beautiful volunteers and MTD staff have worked together to repaint a number of the wooden bus stop benches in Carpinteria. This year, twelve benches were delivered to two locations, Cate School and Carpinteria Arts, where talented volunteers applied their own whimsical visions to create one-of-a-kind works of art for the enjoyment of MTD passengers and the Carpinteria citizenry at large.

MTD appreciates the bus stop beautification efforts of Carpinteria Beautiful.

Examples of Carpinteria's newly beautified bus stop benches



TRIENNIAL REVIEW

MTD's Draft Transit Development Act Triennial Review, released in October, is a glowing performance audit for the three year review period.

The Public Utilities Commission requires that an independent auditor review the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of transit operators. The auditor found that MTD fully complied with all nine applicable TDA compliance requirements and that MTD's performance indicators over the three-year period reflect a stable system characterized by an efficient operating cost structure.

MTD was also rated satisfactory (the best available rating) in each of the California Highway Patrol audits conducted during the period, reflecting well on the Operations and Maintenance Departments. The detailed data collection and reporting done by the Planning Department was also noted in the audit.

FINANCIAL OUTLOOK

MTD is in good financial health, but operating expenses have risen 4% over the past 4 years, while farebox revenue has declined 2% over the same time period, resulting in a Farebox Ratio* that is down by nearly 6%.

The District has slightly reduced service levels over the past few years and froze employee wages to slow the rate at which operating expenses were growing and bring them in line with a sharp revenue decline experienced a few years ago. This approach has served MTD well financially.

While demand for additional public transit service has increased significantly, uncertainty regarding future union employee wages and benefits is hindering the District's ability to seriously consider increasing service levels.

The collective bargaining agreement expired on June 30, 2012 and negotiations for a new contract have been drawn out, due to the Teamsters objection to California's Public Employee' Pension Reform Act of 2013 (PEPRA). Federal transit law provides special employee protections as it pertains to collective bargaining. The result of the Teamsters' objection was that the District's federal funding assistance was delayed for most of calendar year 2013. The matter was resolved recently when California adopted SB 13, exempting Taft-Hartley pension trusts from PEPRA.

* Farebox Ratio is a standard transit performance indicator that is calculated by dividing passenger fare revenue by operating expenses (less depreciation and interest).

