Dear Readers,

Welcome to the new and (we hope) improved Metrolink Matters. We have refocused our on-board newsletter to cover topics that you, our readers, have told us you’d like to see us cover.

Some of the columns in this issue will be regulars; others may take a break from month to month, depending on the space available. We are also introducing some interactive columns that will allow you to participate in shaping the content of Metrolink Matters.

We hope that you enjoy the revamped Metrolink Matters, and look forward to your feedback.

Potential Fare Increase & Service Cuts

Last year, Metrolink’s Board of Directors approved a three-year program of annual system-wide average-fare adjustments of 3.5 percent that would take effect on July 1, 2007, 2008, and 2009, to keep pace with higher costs to operate commuter-train service. Because of the escalating cost of diesel fuel, scheduled increases in costs for operating-services contracts, and new start-up costs related to the arrival of additional passenger cars in 2009, the board is considering a fare increase of up to 7.5 percent as well as potential reductions in service, instead of the previously approved 3.5 percent, to take effect on July 1, 2008.

The Metrolink Board is also considering changes to the Group Travel Program. The proposed changes to the program are as follows:

- Increase the discounted Group Travel fare for a round-trip ticket from $7.00 to $10.00 beginning July 1, 2008
- Increase the minimum number in a group to qualify for the discounted fare from 10 to 15 beginning July 1, 2008
- Index future increases in the Group Travel fare to system-wide fare-change proposals, but only increase the fare when the cumulative total of increases is equal to or greater than $1.00

The public can comment about these proposals in several ways:

- Attend the public hearing
- Send an e-mail to MetrolinkFares@scrra.net
- Fax comments to (213) 452-0421
- Mail comments to Metrolink Fares, 700 S. Flower Street, 26th Floor, Los Angeles, California 90017

The Metrolink Board of Directors will receive a compilation of all comments received, and a public hearing will be held by the board at its meeting on Friday, April 25, 2008, at 10 a.m. at the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) San Bernardino Conference Room, located at 818 W. 7th Street, 12th Floor, Los Angeles, California.

For more information or to download or view tables with fares with 3.5 percent, 5.5 percent and 7.5 percent increases, please visit www.metrolinktrains.com. You can also call (800) 371-LINK (5465).

Construction & Maintenance Update

Beginning April 12, on Saturdays and Sundays the tracks between the Oceanside and San Juan Capistrano stations will be shut down for construction. This will take place over four weekends and is scheduled to end on the weekend of May 3, 2008.

All weekend trains will originate/terminate at San Juan Capistrano. Orange County and Inland Empire–Orange County Line trains

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Our new column, “What Happened When…” will focus on service disruptions, incidents, and other factors that contribute to those times when our passengers may be wondering why their train was delayed.

During the morning commute on March 4, Metrolink Train 104 struck a semitrailer at Rice Road on the Ventura County Line. Some train equipment was damaged, and the train wasn’t cleared to leave that location for more than an hour—which, in turn, meant delays for Train 106, which had been following behind 104 on the single-track stretch of Union Pacific track.

Fortunately, Metrolink was able to put into action a contingency plan to get riders into Los Angeles as quickly as possible under the circumstances. Here’s how we did it: Train 104 was damaged—not in a way that made it dangerous to operate, but in a way that prevented our operating it at normal speed. So, once it was cleared to leave the site of the incident, it traveled slowly to the Moorpark Station, where passengers were transferred to Train 106, which could run at normal speed all the way to Union Station. Metrolink then coordinated with Amtrak to accommodate passengers who had been waiting for the now out-of-service Train 104. This was the fastest way to get passengers into Los Angeles under the unforeseen circumstances.

We would like to ask you, our riders, to let us know about diners, eateries, and restaurants that you enjoy near the station you commute to or from. Let us know what you enjoy most about your favorite eating establishment! We have only three guidelines:

1. Restaurant must be within walking distance of a Metrolink station.
2. No chain eateries, please. We want to hear about places other riders may not know about.
3. Your eatery must have been in business at least a year.

Send your “find” via e-mail to metrolinkmatters@scrra.net, with the subject line “Railroad Grub.”

Philippe the Original, one of the oldest restaurants in Southern California, was established in 1908 by Philippe Mathieu, who invented the French-dipped sandwich when he accidentally dropped a sliced roll into a hot roasting pan full of juice. Philippe the Original has been at its current location in Chinatown since 1951—and the proprietors claim that little about the place has changed since those days. “We like to say that only the prices have changed,” they say on their Web site.

Even if they’ve changed since the ’50s, the prices at this classic L.A. restaurant are still tough to beat, with house-specialty French-dipped sandwiches (beef, pork, lamb, ham, or turkey) just over $5. Philippe the Original is also famous for pickled hard-boiled eggs, daily soup specials, and sides like potato salad, coleslaw, and pickled beets. They also serve breakfast and dessert, as well as a wide selection of beverages, including more than a dozen kinds of beer.

Philippe the Original is open every day from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. They’re located at 1001 N. Alameda St. in Los Angeles—just one block north of Union Station. Simply exit Union Station onto Alameda and walk north. Find out more at www.philippines.com.
Have you met the furriest members of the Metrolink Security Team?

Metrolink has three canine teams whose job it is to sweep trains and stations throughout the Metrolink system to detect explosives. They are deployed somewhere on the system every day. If you see them appear unexpectedly onboard your train, there is no need to be alarmed. They are probably just conducting an unannounced sweep rather than responding to an actual threat.

Our three teams are
K9: “Amor,” German Shepherd; handler: Deputy Craig Roberts
K9: “Topnot,” Golden Retriever; handler: Deputy Mark Newlands
K9: “KC,” Labrador Retriever; handler: Deputy Richard Bavouset

Each canine team underwent several months of intensive training at the Transit Security Administration (TSA) Explosives Detection Canine Handler Course at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, or another certified Canine Training Center. Once the teams were certified by the TSA, they underwent several hours of proficiency training in their operational environment, which includes all the smells and distractions associated with a busy railroad. The teams are on call 24 hours a day and respond as needed to investigate suspicious packages. They have also assisted at major sporting events, parades, and even participated during Oscar Night.

The dogs have special reward toys that they only have the opportunity to play with when they locate an explosive substance. The handler wears the toy reward on his belt to communicate to the dog when they are performing random searches or during practice drills.

For more information about Metrolink’s Safety and Security programs, visit www.metrolinktrains.com and click on the “SAFETY” tab.
L.A. Clippers vs. Denver Nuggets: Tuesday, April 8, 7:30 p.m.

The L.A. Clippers are wrapping up the 2007/2008 season. This is the last game for which Metrolink riders can save 20 percent on $35 and $85 seats. Discount tickets can be purchased at the STAPLES Center box office by showing a valid Metrolink ticket or pass and using the promo code “train” or via Ticketmaster at www.ticketmaster.com/promo/p3mvtz.

32nd Annual Home Remodeling and Decorating Show

The Home Show has everything you need to improve your home and garden under one roof. Come see the latest in home-improvement projects and home furnishings, and learn from the experts at the seminars and how-to classes. Metrolink riders can save 50 percent on the general admission price at the box office with a valid Metrolink ticket or pass. The Home Remodeling and Decorating Show runs Friday through Sunday, April 11 to April 13, at the Pasadena Conference Center, and April 25 to April 27 at the Los Angeles Convention Center. For more information, visit www.metrolinktrains.com and click the “SPECIAL EVENTS” tab on the right-hand side of your screen.

Four Questions for...

Ever wanted to talk directly to someone “in the know” at Metrolink? Now you can! In the coming months, Metrolink Matters will print your questions, answered by the appropriate person from the area in question.

Submit up to four questions that you would like to see answered in an upcoming issue to metrolinkmatters@scrra.net, with the subject line “4 Questions,” and you may see your answers in print!

National Train Day

Mark your calendars for Saturday, May 10, when the first annual National Train Day will be celebrated at Union Station. Sponsored by Amtrak, Metrolink, and Metro, this event is free to the public. Spokesperson and television personality Al Roker will be on hand to talk about his cross-country train experience. There are also fun planned activities for the whole family to enjoy, including special exhibits, trip planning, VIP appearances, trip giveaways, and live musical performances. Special guest performers include Nickelodeon star Drake Bell, from the hit series Drake and Josh. Bell will perform a live concert in support of National Train Day.

For more information about National Train Day and the planned activities, visit www.nationaltrainday.com

Wicked Tuesdays Extended

By popular demand, the Wicked Tuesday promotion at the Pantages Theatre in Hollywood will continue through the run of the show. Metrolink riders can still save 20 percent on Tuesday general admission tickets, subject to availability. Don’t miss out on seeing L.A.’s most popular musical before it leaves town for good. Show your valid Metrolink ticket or pass at the box office, call (213) 365-3500, or go online to ticketmaster.com and use the promo code “train.” Getting there is easy with your free transfer to the Metro Red Line subway. For more information or directions, visit www.metrolinktrains.com or call (800) 371-LINK (5465).