

Need a plumber? Check out our home service directory in today's classified section.

LOS ANGELES Independent

Tell us your news!
Call (213) 932-6397
FAX (213) 932-8285
or E-mail us at
LAINgroup@aol.com

For advertising, call
Classified:
(213) 932-8100
Display:
(213) 932-6397

FREE C Vol. 64 No. 48 Wednesday, June 4, 1997

Los Angeles Independent Newspapers • Serving Los Feliz, Silver Lake, Echo Park and Atwater Village

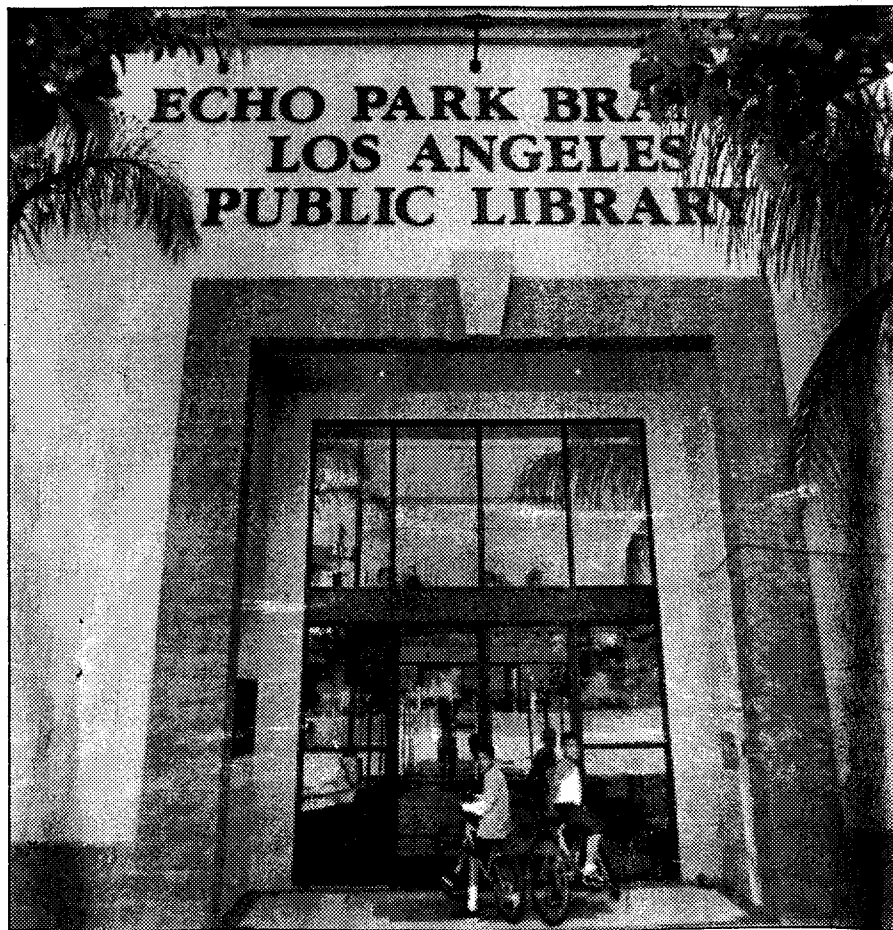
Agency readies plan in case of strike

By Jillian Bailey

With less than a month to go before contracts with its three largest unions expire, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority has a contingency plan in place to fill the gap in service in the event of a strike.

While negotiations with the United Transportation Union (representing operators, schedule checkers and traffic loaders), the Amalgamated Transportation Union (representing mechanics and maintenance workers) and the Transportation Clerks Union are ongoing, Raman Raj, managing director of the MTA's Employee and Labor Relations, reports that the agency has spent \$2 million developing a contingency plan to cover positions that could be left vacant if an agreement is not reached by June 30.

Noting that the 1994 nine-day strike of ATU workers cost the city's economy an estimated \$2 million a day and left thousands of public transit dependent riders



Young readers will only have to wait until Thursday for the doors of the new Echo Park Branch Library to open.

A move for the books

By Jillian Bailey

After more than 25 years of operating out of its "temporary" site on Laveta Terrace, the Echo Park Branch Library will open the doors of its new Temple Street facility this week.

"We're very, very pleased. We've been waiting a long time," says Senior Librarian Sylvia Galan while preparing for the library's grand opening on Thursday.

Whereas the Laveta Terrace building was on a secondary street and accessible only by driving down an alley, the new branch library is prominently located on the corner of Douglas Street and heavily traveled Temple.

"We've noticed that people are already clamoring to get into the building," says Galan, adding, "there are generations [who] used that old facility," which she now describes as a "dump" when compared to the new branch's palatial home. She predicts the new library's clientele will "skyrocket" once the branch opens.

The new building offers more than 17,000 square feet to house the library's approximately 40,000 titles. In addition to all new furnishings, a multipurpose room for community meetings, a used bookstore and special seating areas for children and young adults, the library will offer its patrons new materials as well.

Along with the branch's large Spanish language

collection, the new library will feature materials in Chinese to better serve the area's growing Chinese population.

"This is the beginning of our attempt to serve patrons who read Chinese," says Galan. While she admits that the library's budget will most likely not be able to afford many more Chinese language materials, she says she will be conducting a survey to determine what the community would most like to read.

"I will take their suggestions very seriously," says Galan. "That's how we created our computer center."

Established in 1990, the library's expanded computer center features word processors and computers loaded with programs to help non-English speakers learn the language.

Also included in the library's design is the ability to act as a "virtual electronic library." Eight computer terminals have been dedicated to provide direct access to the Internet, as well as the catalog and circulation systems of all L.A. public libraries.

The library has also reinforced its commitment to the area's large school-age population, which is primarily made up of Belmont High School students, by hiring an additional young adult librarian and increasing its young adult collection.

Along with titles ranging from "Aiiiee: An Anthology of Asian American Writers" to "The Pig-

See "Library" on third page

MTA board vote angers bus riders

By Jillian Bailey

A motion by Mayor Richard Riordan and L.A. County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky to buy 200 new buses ended with a song last Wednesday as 100 members of the Bus Riders Union linked arms for several choruses of "We Shall Overcome" in the Metropolitan

against his own motion," said an incredulous Mann following the board's 45-minute debate.

The motion called for interim CEO Linda Bohlinger to immediately order 200 CNG buses and report back to the board within 30 days with details of the costs and sources of funding to pay for these buses. In addition, Bohlinger would

bus service.

To date, said Bus Riders Union Organizer Rita Burgos, no new buses have been deployed and the MTA's fleet remains "the most dilapidated fleet in the nation."

In addition to 152 new buses required by the consent decree, the Bus Riders Union is calling for 600 additional buses to replace older



Photo by Gary McCarthy

agency is taking a proactive stance toward the possibility of a strike.

"We hope never to have to come to use this," says Raj, who has been negotiating with the unions since April. Nevertheless, he says that news of the contingency plan is "helping us to talk more" and

See "Strike plan" on third page

Joyful noise

By Jillian Bailey

Standing on stage, the four members of Under the Influence look like any band of post-punk rockers, decked out in black T-shirts, ragged jeans and low slung guitars plastered with stickers bearing the names of favorite groups Voodoo Glow Skulls and Rancid. Their sound is an aural assault punctuated by rapid-fire guitar riffs, thumping bass, crashing cymbals and vocals that range from a whisper to a scream.

But don't call them "alternative" — the preferred term is "meat fed."

"The Bible says when you first come to the Lord that you feed on babe's milk, and that as you grow spiritually then you feed on meat," says Mark Horvath, the group's drummer.

"I would classify it more as Under the Influence music — under the influence of the Holy Spirit," says guitarist Sam Blaza, "but meat fed is good."

Under the Influence's quartet of "bold Christians" is rounded out by bassist Homer Apor and vocalist Glen Cruz. It's not a band though, explains Horvath, it's a ministry.

"A lot of bands will sing about a positive message, we put it into action because of this place here," he says, gesturing around him.

This place is The Dream Center, a 10-building compound that formerly housed the Queen of Angels Hospital. The L.A. International Church purchased the property near the Hollywood Freeway and Alvarado Street last year to serve as a safe haven for recovering addicts, former gang members, AIDS patients and the homeless. In addition to providing a home for 300 people, the Dream Center serves 1,000 meals each day to the hungry and provides clothing at the "His Hands Extended" department store.

room.

Eric Mann, the director of the Labor Committee Strategy Center which works in conjunction with the Bus Riders Union, called the defeat of the motion to purchase 200 new compressed natural gas buses an "absolute double cross."

"Mayor Riordan was speaking

Formerly a successful television executive, Horvath now lives at the center. In 1995 Horvath's career was at an all time high, and so was his drug problem. He eventually found himself wandering Hollywood Boulevard homeless, getting by on charging tourists to photograph him with his 5-foot long pet iguana named Dog.

Looking back at the experience now, Horvath sees the hand of God at work.

"He designs all our steps, and I needed to see darkness before I saw light," he says.

The light came two months later, when Horvath spotted a drum set in the window of a shop on the boulevard, went inside and asked if he could play. Smelly and carrying a large reptile, Horvath was expecting to be turned away at the door. Instead, he was invited inside what turned out to be a Christian recovery center. From there Horvath was sent to the Dream Center, where he began a discipleship program and is now drug free.

"I used to think when I walked into the recovery center that God wants me sober so that I can play drums," says Horvath. Now he says he realizes that "God wants me to do his work and right now he's using me and my talents."

Today, Horvath and fellow Christians Apor, Cruz and Blaza are using their combined talents to spread the good word that it's cool to love God and you don't have to wear a suit and tie to be a Christian.

While they began playing at church functions, Under the Influence does not limit themselves to preaching to the converted. Instead, they regularly take their message to nightspots like the Roxy and Hollywood Moguls where audiences are less likely to be saved.

"Heathen nights are more fun anyways," jokes Horvath.

board with a detailed plan for bus system improvement, including full implementation of the consent decree requirements.

The consent decree, issued in October 1996, was the result of a civil suit between the MTA and bus riders. It calls for reduced fares, increased bus security and expanded

"We can't have just 152 new buses now and watch the rest of the buses deteriorate," said Burgos.

Nevertheless, members of the Bus Riders Union saw the Riordan-Yaroslavsky motion as a good faith gesture to fulfill the consent decree signed seven months ago.

See "Buses" on second page

Photo by Gary McCarthy



"Bold Christians" Under the Influence are (top to bottom) Sam Blaza, Mark Horvath, Homer Apor and Glen Cruz.

In songs like "Real" and "Alone," lyricist Cruz tries to connect with a disaffected Gen-X audience, assuring them God does indeed exist and can be depended on.

"Singing about the devil has been cool for years. You know what's radical?" asks Horvath. "Going into the Whisky a Go Go and singing about Jesus."

According to promoter Mike Giangreco, it's not the message he's

concerned with when he books Under the Influence into the Roxy or the Whisky, it's the music.

"They're good musicians — [the] message is theirs," he says. "I just book bands that people come to see. What they say is their business. I never tell people what to sing about, [but] they pull in a great crowd."

In fact, as Under the Influence See "Influence" on third page



MTA interim CEO Linda Bohlinger, Board Chairman Larry Zarian and Mayor Richard Riordan (left to right) listened to arguments for and against the purchase of 200 buses.

Apartment fire

■ Fire heavily damaged an apartment on the second floor of a three-story building in the Los Feliz area last week. The fire started at 3 a.m. in the 2200 block of Nellie Vista Avenue, said Los Angeles Fire Department spokesman Bob Collis. It took 45 firefighters 20 minutes to extinguish the blaze. No injuries were reported and the cause of the fire was not known.

Police forums

■ The Los Angeles Police Commission will hold two more public forums to help gauge the qualities residents want in their city's next police chief. The forums will be on Saturday at 10 a.m. at the Norwood Elementary School, 2020 Oak St. in South Los Angeles; and on June 10 at 6:30 p.m. at Marina Junior High School, 12500 Braddock Drive in West Los Angeles. The civilian panel held its first such forum at Mission College in the San Fernando Valley last Tuesday. Residents called for the city's 51st police chief to be hired from within the ranks because the candidate would understand the problems facing the department and have the respect of rank-and-file officers. Spokesman Ken Ferber said the panel will use the comments to help formulate questions for candidates. The deadline for applications is June 12 and the commission has set a July 29 deadline for submitting the names of its top three choices to succeed ex-Chief Willie Williams to Mayor Richard Riordan. Riordan will select the chief, subject to confirmation by the City Council.

News of your neighborhood

Request denied

■ A judge denied a request on May 23 by the Los Angeles Unified School District to lift a court order and allow construction to begin on the Belmont Learning Center. A district oversight committee already has reviewed the \$87-million project and voted 7-1 to recommend that it move ahead. But the panel did not decide whether Proposition BB money, which many voters believed was strictly for fixing up schools, should be spent to build a facility. The injunction issued by Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Diane Wayne stalls construction of the project pending a committee review of a development agreement. The district says it may have to pay developer Kajima Corp. up to \$12,000 a day in penalties until the issue is decided. Wayne did not supply a written explanation of her decision. A lawyer for the unions that secured the injunction said it should remain in place, because the committee's review does not address the crux of the issue: whether money from the \$2.4-billion measure can be used for a new high school. Another district lawyer, Richard Mason, said the judge also ordered the unions that filed the lawsuit to post a \$500,000 bond, which will be used to cover the district's costs if the plaintiffs lose the case. United Teachers-Los Angeles and Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union Local 11 are plaintiffs in the lawsuit. The hotel union is in the middle of a labor dispute with the New Otani hotel in Little Tokyo, which Kajima operates. In a letter attached to the motion, Steven Soboroff, chairman of the committee, said the group held five public meetings and several interviews and determined the project should proceed "without further delay." But Soboroff

See "CityBeat" on third page

Strike plan

Continued from page one

"forcing everybody to the table."

Raj also says the agency has requested that Gov. Pete Wilson not step in to invoke a cooling-off period as he did last time around. He says the MTA would prefer that if a strike were inevitable it take place in the relatively slow transit month of July rather than September, which is a peak transit time.

According to Raj, the plan calls for 350 buses to be deployed along the MTA's 41 most heavily traveled routes on July 1. An additional 150 buses could be added should a strike last more than three weeks, he says. Buses and trains will operate on an extended schedule running between 6 a.m. and 7 p.m. daily, fares will be reduced to 50 cents and riders will be offered a refund on their passes, he says. Neither the Metrolink nor Red Line subway construction, he says, would be affected by a strike.

Along with hiring drivers from other bus companies like Laidlaw, non-contracted employees will again be called upon to fill in for striking drivers as they were in 1994. In fact, says Raj, some of these non-union workers have already begun taking refresher courses to prepare them to take the wheel on July 1.

The MTA is also hiring temporary replacement workers to back up striking mechanics and customer service representatives. While non-union supervisors are currently training these temporary workers at MTA headquarters, talks between union and management representatives continue at the nearby Omni Hotel.

The issues on the table, according to both sides, are cost of living increases, overtime, benefits and the hiring of additional part-time and sub-contract workers.

Raj says the MTA is looking to eliminate the union's cost of living increases, which this year would amount to an increase of between 1.9 and 2 percent, to be possibly replaced with a one-time payment.

According to Raj, automatic cost of living increases have been dropped by nearly every other union. In addition, he claims that the MTA's operators are among the best paid in the nation, third behind New York and Boston. This claim, however, is brushed off by union leaders.

"We don't care about what other unions have, we only care what we have," says UTU consultant Goldy Norton, who notes the UTU represents more than 4,000 operators in the state's largest transit agency. "We figure we're the best and we deserve it."

Ray Huffer, a labor leader with the TCU, disputes the expense of the cost of living increase, noting his union's members received only a 14-cent increase in 1996.

Norton was also unimpressed by the MTA's claims that it is paying

\$150 more per worker into the unions' benefit trust funds than it pays for non-union employees receiving similar benefits. "I think our package is far better than theirs and far more encompassing," he says. "That's what we give to our people — we don't care what they give to theirs."

Raj says while these savings are not factored into the MTA's 1997-98 budget, the agency could stand to save between \$20 million and \$25 million should it succeed in making these cuts.

"If we can do this we're talking about putting an additional 70 buses on the road," says Raj, who adds that this increase in bus service is separate from the fulfillment of the 1996 Consent Decree which requires that the agency expand bus service. The budget currently calls for the purchase of 223 new buses to augment the agency's aging fleet.

Norton says he is concerned that the MTA will use the consent decree as an excuse for cutting wage increases and benefits.

"We're always concerned when they're trying to use operations as a means of cutting their expenses, especially since under the consent decree they're required to increase and improve service," he says. "How do you increase and improve service [without the operators]?"

The MTA is currently preparing a Rail Recovery Plan to present to the Federal Department of Transportation meant to demonstrate that the agency, which has been operating under a near \$1-billion deficit, has a responsible financial plan. Part of the MTA's recovery plan, says Raj, is a commitment to hiring more subcontractors. While the proposal is not specific, says Raj, it does allow for unions to bid for jobs that are contracted out.

While he says he does not want to "wound the MTA animal so that it dies," Huffer is standing by what he believes are his union's legitimate claims. He fears, however, the negotiations could move away from specific labor-management issues and into the realm of political posturing.

All three unions are aware of the contingency plan, but none of their representatives say they are surprised.

"I think it's part of the process," says ATU Treasurer Tommy Elisaldez. Elisaldez declined to comment further on the negotiations, except to say that the two sides were "communicating."

Norton also took the contingency plan in stride, saying his union has a contingency plan of its own — which includes printing up strike ballots and cards.

Asked if a strike were imminent, Norton responds, "Anything's possible — we do what we feel we have to do, they do what they feel they have to do."

Huffer, for his part, wonders what the contingency plan signals for the MTA's negotiating stance.

"I'm concerned that this organization doesn't put as much effort into solving whatever labor problems they have [as] proving that they can do without us," he says.

Negotiations are expected to heat up this month with daily meetings between the unions and the MTA. Raj expects round-the-clock sessions could begin during the third week of June if an agreement is not reached by that time.

Editor's Note: Is it appropriate for the MTA to spend \$2 million on a contingency plan while it is negotiating new contracts with its unions? Call the Independent's Voice Mail line at (213) 694-2456 and voice your opinion.

SPARKLING COIN LAUNDRY SPRING SPECIALS

• GIANT WASHERS & DRYERS • DROP OFF LAUNDRY •
• FULL TIME ATTENDANTS • AMPLE PARKING • SNACK BAR •
CONVENIENTLY LOCATED • STATE OF THE ART • COMFORTABLE • CLEAN

50¢ Wash

Valid on any
Top load washer

ONE WASH ONLY WITH COUPON
PER VISIT PER CUSTOMER
EXPIRES 6/18/97



Silver Lake
(213) 688-2904
2590 GLENDALE BLVD.
(GLENDALE & FLETCHER;
NEXT TO UNION 76)
6 AM-MIDNIGHT 7 DAYS

GLENDALE
FLETCHER

FREE DRY

ONE COUPON PER CUSTOMER PER VISIT
EXPIRES 6/18/97

50¢ off Giant Washers

Valid on any
Front load washer

ONE COUPON PER CUSTOMER PER VISIT
EXPIRES 6/18/97

Drop off Laundry Special 60¢

per pound
with this coupon
(reg. 70¢ - min. \$7.00)

SAME DAY SERVICE AVAILABLE
EXPIRES 6/18/97

Library

Continued from page one

man" by Paul Zindel, the young adult section features a special seating area and eight private study carrels for students.

"The density in this area is so high that they don't have a place to put down a book," says Anthony Bernier, one of the branch's young adult librarians.

Friends of Echo Park Library President Juanita Dellomes calls the

new library a "monumental historical event for Echo Park." But the library's new features will only be considered improvements if they help bring more young people into the branch, she says.

"It's the kids we're most interested in reaching," said Dellomes, "to make them book people."

The grand opening will take place tomorrow at 10 a.m. and will feature presentations by 1st District City Councilman Mike Hernandez, the Betty Placencia Elementary School Drill Team and the Belmont


High School's Color Guard. Throughout the day the library will offer activities, including a doll making class, an origami workshop and Spanish-English poetry reading.


Looking for God?

Episcopalian or not, church person or not, everyone's welcome at the

Chapel of St. Francis

3621 Brunswick Avenue (near Glendale Blvd. in Atwater Village)
Rev. Toni Stuart, Vicar (213) 663-2063





BAPTIST

FIRST OF LOS ANGELES - 8th & Westmoreland, S. S. 9:30 a.m. Wor. Sun. 11 a.m. & Wed. 6:30 p.m. 384-2151.

FOUR SQUARE

ANGELUS TEMPLE - 1100 Glendale Blvd. S. S. 9:30 a.m. Wor. 10:45 a.m. 2:45 and 6 p.m. - Dr. & Mrs. Harold Helms pastors, 484-1100, Svcs. also conducted in Spanish, Korean, Bulgarian.

CHRISTIAN

LUTHERAN

Sunquest Holidays

The Best Value Under the Sun

Hawaii		Mexico	
6 Days <i>Waikiki</i>	6 Days <i>Maui</i>	4 Days <i>Los Cabos</i>	4 Days <i>Cancun</i>
\$369	\$479	\$199	\$349
<small>from</small>	<small>from</small>	<small>from</small>	<small>from</small>
<small>Air, Kala Village & Transfers</small>	<small>Air, Maui Park Hotel & Car</small>	<small>Air, Howard Johnson Plaza & Transfers</small>	<small>Air, Imperial Laguna Cancun & Transfers</small>
Roundtrip \$229	Roundtrip \$269	Roundtrip \$149	Roundtrip \$299
<small>Airfare from</small>	<small>Airfare from</small>	<small>Airfare from</small>	<small>Airfare from</small>

Jamaica	Nassau	Aruba
4 Days - Air, Hotel Montego & Transfers	8 Days - Air, Sun Club w/ Nassau Beach Hotel & Transfers	8 Days - Air, Holiday Inn & Transfers
\$359	\$399	\$599
<small>from</small>	<small>from</small>	<small>from</small>
Roundtrip \$279	Roundtrip \$279	Roundtrip \$409
<small>Airfare from</small>	<small>Airfare from</small>	<small>Airfare from</small>

Influence

Continued from page one

strives to blast the stereotypical image of the uptight Christian they have met with more resistance from believers than non-believers.

"The non-believers accept us

right for Christians to mosh."

While the members of Under the Influence say they're not seeking fame and fortune, a proffered record contract wouldn't be turned down either.

"If that happens," says Horvath, "it only helps us to help more people."