

DAILY CLIPPINGS

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1. Orange County Transportation Authority Names New Deputy CEO

OC Metro

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2. Schwarzenegger To Veto Democrats' Public Transit Cuts

Los Angeles Times

The rejection by the California governor, the second in two weeks, kills the Democrats' \$4-billion deficit-reduction package.

3. Mission Viejo Lets Contract To Widen Intersection

Orange County Register

Mission Viejo- A \$4.6 million contract to widen the intersection of Oso and Marguerite parkways was awarded Monday night by the City Council.

4. Metrolink Plan Jeered

Burbank Leader

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News Articles

1. Orange County Transportation Authority Names New Deputy CEO

By Kristen Schott
OC Metro

The [Orange County Transportation Authority](#) has named industry veteran Darrell Johnson its new deputy CEO, effective March 29. Johnson will replace Jim Kenan, who is retiring after more than 30 years with the agency on March 25.

Johnson has been with OCTA for seven years, and he most recently served as executive director of rail programs. In the position, he led the Metrolink expansion; grade crossing safety and separation programs; development of the high-speed rail; and work on the [Anaheim Regional Transportation Intermodal Center](#), which is expected to be completed sometime in 2013.

"Darrell has done an outstanding job as a member of OCTA's executive management team," notes OCTA Chairman and Tustin Mayor Jerry Amante, "and his experience in transportation planning and operations, coupled with his tremendous leadership abilities will serve this agency, and the people of Orange County, well."

Before he came to OCTA, the Southern California native spent 12 years at Amtrak, where he held posts dedicated to operations and planning. He also supported the development of passenger rail service throughout the state, Oregon, Washington and British Columbia.

"I'm honored to ... have the opportunity to continue contributing to OCTA's long-standing tradition of visionary thinking and delivering effective transportation solutions for our residents," Johnson says.

2. Schwarzenegger To Veto Democrats' Public Transit Cuts

By Shane Goldmacher
Los Angeles Times

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, taking aim at what remained of a deficit-cutting package drafted by Democrats, said Tuesday he planned to veto \$1.1 billion in projected savings realized largely through cuts to public transit.

Democratic lawmakers had approved the measure as part of a package they said would have addressed \$4 billion of California's estimated \$20-billion deficit.

Combined with Schwarzenegger's veto last week of a larger component of the plan, the announcement puts Capitol politicians back at square one on the deficit.

The gridlock has come despite the cuts on the table being among what all sides acknowledged was the easiest budget options. Many of the toughest choices -- how deeply to cut education, health and human services, for instance -- were put off until the summer amid hopes that an economic recovery would lessen the need for those cutbacks.

In a sharply worded letter to top lawmakers, Schwarzenegger chided them for failing to do more faster to address the shortfall.

He also demanded they pass his job-creation package, which includes tax breaks for home buyers, businesses and the green tech sector.

"Californians don't have months to wait for action by the Legislature," he wrote.

Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg (D- Sacramento) struck a strident tone in responding to the "mini-budget impasse" created by the governor's vetoes.

"We're just not going to negotiate under a barrel of a gun. And we're just not going to negotiate by threats and posture," Steinberg said. "He's got, whatever, nine months left," referring to the governor's status as a lame-duck.

Still, Steinberg signaled he would go back, however grudgingly, to the negotiating table, though he accused Schwarzenegger of being unfocused in his final year in office. "He is sort of at 30,000 feet right now and it's been a little difficult, frankly, to engage," he said.

Republican lawmakers, whom majority Democrats were able largely to bypass in writing their budget plan because it did not raise taxes, cheered the governor's planned vetoes.

The centerpiece of the legislation Schwarzenegger said he would reject Tuesday is

a complicated change in the way California taxes gasoline, allowing lawmakers to divert money from mass transit to pay down the deficit.

Schwarzenegger said he would reject the lawmakers' gasoline tax plan because it differed from the proposal he first made in January. Schwarzenegger's plan would have lowered gas taxes by 5 cents per gallon. The plan Democrats pushed through the Legislature would keep gas taxes at their current level.

Democratic lawmakers said they doubted oil companies would pass along to consumers the savings projected by the governor.

Instead, the Democratic plan had left some gas tax money in the state budget for public transit. The governor's plan eliminated it.

"I cannot sign this flawed legislation," Schwarzenegger wrote.

Last week, the governor vetoed a \$2.2-billion deficit reduction bill that would have cut the state payroll by 5%, reduced prison medical expenses and asked the governor to commute prison sentences for undocumented immigrant inmates.

In Tuesday's letter, the governor pressed lawmakers to rewrite a bill that would ease taxes for Californians who lost their homes in short sales last year.

Schwarzenegger has said he will veto that legislation because it contains penalties for those who abuse tax credits, arguing that current penalties are sufficient. Steinberg promised that lawmakers would "do right" by those who face outsized tax bills after selling homes for a loss.

But Steinberg questioned the governor's job-creation package, saying tax credits for home buyers and businesses would deepen the state's deficit. Democrats are moving forward with their own package, he said.

One glimmer of good budget news came Tuesday. The Department of Finance said revenues in February exceeded expectations, the second month in a row that has happened.

For the fiscal year, tax collections have outpaced forecasts by nearly \$2 billion, a trend that could help shrink the deficit.

3. Mission Viejo Lets Contract To Widen Intersection

By Niyaz Pirani

Orange County Register

MISSION VIEJO A \$4.6 million contract to widen the intersection of Oso and Marguerite parkways was awarded Monday night by the City Council.

The project, awarded to GASS Construction Co. Inc., is expected to begin in mid-April and last 12-14 months.

The work includes adding dual left-turn lanes in all directions, designated right-turn lanes for both directions of Marguerite and an additional through-lane for both directions of Oso.

Oso will also be repaved from Country Club Drive to the eastern city limit.

Mark Chagnon, director of public works for the city, said only one lane per direction will be closed at a time during daytime construction.

In a 3-2 vote – with members Cathy Schlicht and John Paul Ledesma voting against the motion – the council approved installing four decorative pots and two pilasters in the medians, similar to the series on Crown Valley Parkway, at an additional cost of \$41,000.

Other items approved Monday by the council to go out to bid:

A project for outdoor fitness equipment at Oso Viejo Park, which could cost up to \$65,000.

A project to make improvements to the bridge over the railroad tracks on Los Alisos Boulevard, where small cracks in the deck of the bridge that were found by Caltrans. Engineers determined that there were no structural issues, but that the cracks could allow water to seep into the bridge and create problems. The cracks will be filled with a chemical resin sealant, a project that could cost up to \$55,000. Lake Forest has agreed to pay one-quarter of the cost, up to \$15,000.

A \$34,484.56 project to purchase and install software and hardware is expected to provide patrons better self-service tools on library computers.

4. Metrolink Plan Jeered

By Christopher Cadelago
Burbank Leader

DOWNTOWN — Area representatives derided a series of proposed Metrolink fare hikes and service reductions, contending that their renewed pledge to boost public transportation would suffer significantly under diminished service.

The Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Airport Authority on Monday unanimously opposed proposed cuts to Metrolink service at the Bob Hope Airport Train Station, challenging the wisdom of adjustments that could include significant service cuts to the Antelope Valley and possibly eliminate service from Camarillo and Oxnard.

“They’re just going to add to the congestion that’s on the surface streets and the

freeways if they continue to do this,” airport Commissioner Don Brown said. “They should take advantage of what they have and utilize it, particularly if the transit center is built.”

The planned \$120-million regional transportation center across the street from the airport train station is expected to further promote a link between the terminal, public transit and rental cars — at no cost to Metrolink, President Joyce Streater said.

In a letter to the Southern California Regional Rail Authority, which governs Metrolink, she argued that proposed service cuts would severely diminish the value of the airport stop to passengers, namely the synergy between alternate modes of public transit that converge at the airport.

Metrolink is slated to consider fare increases and service changes at a public hearing April 2 in Los Angeles. Proposals to close a projected \$17-million shortfall for fiscal year 2010-11 are wide-ranging.

Service reductions include the possible elimination of eight weekday Ventura County Line trains through the cancellation of trains 103, 105, 107, 108, 112, 114, 900 and 901. Another proposal calls for reducing weekday service on the Antelope Valley Line by eliminating 11 trains. All of them stop in Burbank and Glendale.

Officials in both cities said they likely would not take official positions on any of the proposals.

Still, policymakers from both cities maintained that now is not the time to pull back operations.

“The combination of fee hikes and [service] cuts — that goes contrary to what we’re trying to do to increase ridership,” Burbank City Councilman Dave Golonski said.

Fare restructuring options, which if implemented across the board could bring \$6 million to \$6.4 million, include increasing 10-trip ticket prices and reducing ticket validity from 90 days to 45 days. Others would eliminate weekend discounts and reduce student price breaks from 25% to 10%.

Absent significant expense reductions, a fare increase of between 3% and 6% would be needed to maintain current revenues, in addition to all of the fare policy options, according to a draft Metrolink report.

Streater challenged the report, arguing that it was better public policy to try to increase the number of paying passengers rather than reduce service and raise fares.

“We do not believe that Metrolink adequately promotes the connectivity it has to a major-air-carrier airport,” she said. “And Metrolink could be promoted as a cost-

effective way for passengers to get to the airport in lieu of more expensive taxis or parking.”

Angela Starr, a Metrolink spokeswoman, said the board would carefully consider changes that had the least impact to the fewest number of passengers.

Considering the severity of the rail authority’s financial issues, airport commissioners said they were willing to promote Metrolink service to the airport so long as it was not reduced.

The airport authority would also consider reviving shuttle service between the Downtown Burbank Station to the Bob Hope Airport Train Station, reconnecting Antelope Valley Line passengers to the airport.

But it’s going to take a reordering of priorities to ensure those services are maintained, Glendale City Councilwoman Laura Friedman said.

She pointed to a proposed tunnel extension of the 710 Freeway — a costly, long-fought-over project that the Glendale City Council took a harder stance against last week — as a prime example of what she called misguided planning.

“Overall, the state really needs to take a look at where it’s spending its money,” she said.

“It should be spending it on alternate transportation — not on highways and tunnels.”

5. San Juan Balks At Caltrans' Freeway Designs

By Peter Schelden

Orange County Register

Caltrans plans for about 20 to 30 trees to be cut down, retaining walls up to 30 feet tall will be erected and more giant images of swallows and similar drawings will be etched into the Ortega Highway/5 Freeway intersection, San Juan Capistrano Planning Commissioner Tim Neely told the City Council on Tuesday night.

"We need to know what we're getting ourselves into," he said of the project, which is slated to be completed in November 2014.

Neely showed giant images of "Godzilla-scale swallows" etched into some nearby retaining walls. He said the same could enter the designs being prepared for the new intersection.

He said such features do not fit the "timeless elegance and subdued beauty" encouraged by city design codes.

Neely offered several suggestions, such as adding 1930s-era bridge designs to the new intersection and covering retaining walls with ivy if the walls are deemed

necessary. He said landscape could be made to look rugged yet upscale through scrub oak and similar chaparral.

Caltrans wants the bridge design selected by August, Neely said.

Some design elements can be negotiated, but safety matters cannot, said Nooshin Yoosefi, Caltrans project manager.

Construction is scheduled to begin in October 2012. Plans include removing several businesses near the intersection, including a [Chevron](#) gas station and Arby's and [Jack in the Box](#) restaurants.

In other news Tuesday night:

- The council learned the city experienced a \$1 million revenue shortfall in the past six months.

The city received \$292,000 less than expected from property taxes following reduced value assessments. More than \$400,000 more was lost from a "significant decline in development," said Steve Montano, administrative-services director.

He said costs were reduced by about \$700,000, including \$162,000 from unfilled staff vacancies, \$83,000 from three furlough days and \$51,000 from closing the red light camera for five months during construction.

This left the city \$302,000 behind for the year. Staff was instructed to consider all options when working to resolve the deficit, including cutting staff salaries.

"These are the most challenging times I've ever seen in my life," Councilman Tom Hribar said, asking for employees' cooperation.

- The council unanimously approved launching a study on relaxing design standards to encourage hotel development.

The standards to be studied involve a hotel room's floor-area ratio, the maximum building height and parking.

A hotel would bring the city revenue from transient occupancy taxes, also known as bed taxes. The city charges 10 percent of a hotel's nightly room rate in bed taxes. San Juan has 108 hotel rooms.

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6. Special Train Trips To San Juan For Swallows Parade

By Peter Schelden
Orange County Register

To avoid traffic and road closures, visitors might want to take a train Saturday to see the Swallows Day Parade in San Juan Capistrano.

[Metrolink](#) is making an exception to its usual limited weekend service in San Juan.

This Saturday and Sunday only, Orange County trains 662 and 663 will operate beyond Irvine to Laguna Niguel/Mission Viejo and San Juan Capistrano, according to a city statement.

Trains 661 and 664 also will transport riders from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. for downtown San Juan's Swallows Day festivities. The parade begins at 11 a.m.

To learn more, visit octa.net/swallows.aspx or swallowsparade.org.

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7. 3 Die After Car Erupts In Flames

By **Alejandra Molina**
Orange County Register

ANAHEIM — Three people inside a [Mazda](#) died Tuesday night after the car crashed with another vehicle and erupted into flames on the eastbound 91 freeway near the Coal Canyon under-crossing, according to the [California Highway Patrol](#).

The three who died have not been identified. The crash happened at approximately 8:33 p.m. and involved a 2008 [Chevrolet](#) Silverado.

The occupants of the Chevrolet included the driver Brandon H. Charlie, 29, and passenger Arioll Joe, 23. The Redlands residents suffered minor injuries.

According to CHP, here's how the crash happened:

The 1988 Mazda was traveling on the 91 eastbound, east of the Coal Canyon under-crossing in the No. 3 lane at approximately 45 mph.

The Chevrolet was traveling at approximately 70 mph on the 91 eastbound, east of the Coal Canyon under-crossing and was in the No. 1 lane of the 91 Express Lanes.

For unknown reasons, the Mazda swerved out of control from the No. 3 lane to the 91 Express Lanes and into the path of the Chevrolet.

The front of the Chevrolet collided with the right side of the Mazda. The Mazda immediately erupted into flames, resulting in the death of all three occupants, according to CHP.

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