Who Watched Roger Rabbit?
The Los Angeles Metro and the Bus Riders Union

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Overview

- List of Actors
- Timeline of Events
- Policy Issues
- Discussion Questions
Actors

Pro-Bus
- Bus Riders Union (BRU)
- Labor/Community Strategy Center (LCSC)
- Eric Mann
- NAACP Legal Defense Fund

Pro-Rail
- Los Angeles County Transportation Commission (LACTC)
- Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA)
- Southern California Regional Rail Authority

Historical
- Pacific Electric Rail (PE)
- Southern Pacific Rail (SP)
- California Railroad Commission (CRC)
- Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Early 20th Century Rail

http://www.usc.edu/libraries/archives/la/historic/redcars/
1900 –30s: Dawn of the Automobile

- Individual automobile ownership began
- Existing road networks could not support the increase in demand
- Public & City Council supported growth of roads through proposal & approval of the Major Street and Highway Plan (1924)
- Public did not support PE expansion initiatives
Timeline

1901 - 1930s

1940s - early 1960s

1960s - 1970s

1980s - Present
1940s –70s: Increased Demand for Highways

- Individual automobile ownership continues to increase
- Existing road networks could not support the increase in demand
- Suburban Residential Developers and Downtown businesses support the growth of Rail to connect with the central city
- Suburban businesses support highway expansion to connect to emerging
1940s –70s: Increased Demand for Highways

- PE ridership declines before and after WWII (except for war time bump)
- PE wants to cut service, raise fares, and switch some lines to buses but must get approval from California Railroad Commission (CRC)
- PE hires consultant engineer Arthur Jenkins in 1939 and Arthur Ager in 1947 to prepare two separate analysis of the PE operations, services, and facilities
A. Jenkins’ Analysis (1939)

Fundamental Belief:
"that the era of rail transit, indeed, of transit generally, was drawing to a close and that PE ought to grow old as gracefully as possible while it bowed to the realities of technological progress represented by the automobile." (Adler p.63)

Recommended:
• Cutting labor costs by substituting one person operated rail cars for the existing two person operated ones currently in service,
• Large scale conversions of rail lines to bus service
A. Ager’s Analysis (1947)

Fundamental Belief:
"thought that transit, especially rail rapid transit, still had a great deal to offer in dealing with metropolitan area traffic congestion problems and that it was PE's responsibility to play a leadership role in securing for the region the benefits that rapid transit had to offer” (Adler p.63)

Recommended:
• PE should switch from 2 person operated cars to 1 person operated cars
• PE should use profits gained in freight operations to reinvest in the passenger operations – for upgrades and repairs to the service
• The managing relationship of SP was preventing PE from being able to invest in system improvements
Discussion Questions

Break into two groups (Jenkins and Ager) and discuss:

• What principles from lecture are evident in your engineer’s argument and recommendations (system maturity, cash cows, etc.)?
Timeline

1901 - 1930s

1940s - early 1960s

1960s - 1970s

1980s - Present
1980s – Present

- 1980 – Proposition A approved for 0.5% sales tax for subway and rail construction
- 1988 to 1992 – MTA cutback bus service via vehicle-revenue miles by 8%
- 1990 – 0.5 percent sales tax increase
- 1990 – Blue Line opens from CBD to Long Beach
- 1992 – MTA created by merger
- 1993 – Red Line opens (heavy rail)
- 1994 – MTA proposes bus fare increase from $1.10 to $1.35
  - Board approved in June; voted to spend $123 million on next phase of rail seven days later
  - Bus Riders Union (BRU) formed out of the Labor/Community Strategy Center
1980s – Present (cont.)

- 1995 – Green Line opens
- 1996 – Consent Decree signed between MTA and Bus Riders Union
  - Fare reduction through monthly passes, but MTA receives regular fare increase to $1.35.
  - Reduction of bus overcrowding through more buses, more lines, more frequently served.
  - New bus service to major centers of employment, education and healthcare throughout the county.
  - Joint Working Group (joint BRU and MTA policy making body that oversees the implementation of the Consent Decree).
- 2006 – Decree ends, and MTA raises fares
Current LA County MTA Rail

Policy Issues

• Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) disproportionately funds rail over other modes of public transit

• MTA, from an economic standpoint, does not need to put money into better bus service

• MTA supports the use of bus fare increases to fund rail initiatives

• MTA encourages rail ridership by keeping fares artificially low, while allowing bus fares
Policy Issues

- Los Angeles favored low density development, leading to scattered populations and employers
- Los Angeles, in response to state and federal clean air and congestion mandates, now emphasizes rail transit and HOV lanes, and to a lesser extent, traditional bus service
- Los Angeles supports environmentally sound transit. Rail is deemed better than bus
- MTA supports transit as a tool primarily
Discussion Questions

• Is transit’s purpose to serve those without cars, or is it to get people with cars to stop driving?
• What obligation do transit authorities have to the people who have no option but transit?
• What obligation do transit authorities have to the people with alternative transportation modes?
• Is the Bus Riders Union racism claim
Discussion Questions

• Do people who pay more taxes have a right to more expensive rail transit?

• Is the cost of a transit option the only factor of importance when deciding which to incorporate? What benefits of rail validate its continuing use?

• Given the argument that funding transit by increasing sales tax disproportionately burdens the poor, what other taxing options would be more equitable?
Questions?