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## NEWS RELEASE



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### **Santa Monica's Big Blue Bus Celebrates 80 Years of Service and Innovation at Public Celebration on April 14**

- ***Transit agency began with six rented buses and 5 cent fares.***
- ***One of the oldest bus systems in California; fleet has traveled over 778 million miles since 1928.***
- ***Big Blue Bus now considered one of the finest transit systems in the nation; entire fleet runs on alternative fuels.***

**SANTA MONICA, Calif.** – April 4, 2008 – The Big Blue Bus has come a long way from its early beginnings as a collection of unemployed Model T car owners who charged five cents for a ride down Santa Monica Boulevard.

It has evolved to become one of the most efficient and well-run transportation systems in the nation, admired for its deep commitment to the environment and its continuing mission to provide convenient and low-cost transportation to get people out of their cars and onto public transit.

The City of Santa Monica will hold a free public celebration event to honor the Big Blue Bus' 80 years of service to the community on Monday, April 14 at 11 a.m. on the Third Street Promenade at Broadway in downtown Santa Monica.

"The Big Blue Bus has been able to grow over the years because of the incredible vision and dedication of many former city and transit leaders," said Big Blue Bus General Manager Stephanie Negriff. "They knew a long time ago that investing in a modern public transit system would be very important to the growth of Santa Monica, and they never gave up trying to improve what we could offer to the public."

"When we first started back in 1928, we were only able to take people down the main streets of Santa Monica, like Pico and Wilshire Boulevards. Now we cover almost 52 square miles of Los Angeles county with over 200 ultra modern, alternative fueled buses, which helps more than 20 million people a year get to work, school and around town."

Negriff said the Big Blue Bus was especially proud that it has been able to consistently maintain low-cost fares over the years, so that anyone who wanted to ride, could.

"Our regular fares are only 70 cents higher than they were 80 years ago, and that's remarkable in this day of \$4 a gallon for gas," said Negriff. "For students and seniors, that fare drops to 50 cents, which was what it was during the early 1980s. Keeping public transportation affordable and accessible to everyone was a major goal of this transit

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agency from the very beginning, and I'm very happy to say that it's still one of our most important objectives."

One of the most anticipated highlights of the celebration on April 14 will be the announcement of a new collaboration between the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, one of the preeminent automotive design centers in the country, and the Big Blue Bus, to help design the "next generation" of advanced buses.

"If you want people to get on board the concept of taking transit instead of driving, you have to provide them with more cutting edge, attractive and comfortable rides," said Negriff. "We are thrilled to be working with the talented staff at the Art Center College of Design on this collaboration to actually make the changes necessary to put transit squarely at the core of the way people will want to travel in the future."

During the event, Negriff will also talk about a wide range of upcoming plans for the transit agency, including new Rapid service, real time information for passengers at bus stops, more bus only lanes and mobile trip planning assistance.

Another highlight of the event will be the display of a vintage "New Look" bus, so named because at the time it was introduced by General Motors, it represented the very latest concept design in buses. The New Look bus defined transit in the 60s and early 70s, and nearly every transit system in the country had them. Over the years, the Big Blue Bus purchased 246 New Look buses, and ultimately this same model became a central character in the movie, "Speed." Actress Sandra Bullock was trained on a similar model by Big Blue Bus staff for her role in the film.

A new original video produced especially for the Big Blue Bus called "80 Years in 8 Minutes" will be shown inside the vintage New Look bus parked directly on the Third Street Promenade. The video will offer a lighthearted and informative look at the transit agency through the years, and will feature interviews with current and former Big Blue Bus employees who witnessed many pivotal events in its history.

In addition to the New Look bus, a variety of antique photos from the 1920s through the 1950s will be on display, along with other artifacts from the transit agency's past, such as some of the first tokens ever used.

Making a special appearance at the event will also be several employees celebrating more than 30 years of service with the Big Blue Bus, including 40-year veteran motor coach operator Ken Johnson, who first started driving in 1968, and who holds "badge number 1" at the transit agency.

"I think so many of our employees remain here a long time because of the camaraderie we have here," said Negriff. "We have quite a few employees that have passed the 20 and 30 year marks, and one of our employee's father even worked here in the 1930s!"

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Culinary students from the Art Institute of California-Los Angeles will be creating a gigantic bus-shaped cake for the event, which will be carved up and served to the public, along with other refreshments. Additional activities will include live music by the Blue Notes musical group, and the giveaway of transit-themed souvenirs and specially prepared keepsakes.

A new eco-art exhibit by Art Institute of California-Los Angeles graphic and interior design students will also be available for viewing at the nearby Big Blue Bus transit store at 223 Broadway.

For more information, please visit [www.bigbluebus.com](http://www.bigbluebus.com). For media inquiries, please contact Francine Pares at 949-481-7559 or 949-244-4574, or [fpares@intelibrand.com](mailto:fpares@intelibrand.com). High-resolution vintage and other photos are available for use by the media.

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### **About the Big Blue Bus**

The Big Blue Bus operates a fleet of over 200 energy efficient vehicles transporting more than 80,000 passengers daily across a nearly 52-square mile service area. Nationally recognized for its long-standing commitment to a cleaner environment, the entire fleet operates on alternative fuels, including liquefied natural gas (LNG), which helps cut emissions by over 80 percent. Serving Santa Monica and the Los Angeles area since 1928, the Big Blue Bus has an 86 percent on-time performance record, and has won numerous awards for its customer service, safety and efficiency.

### **BIG BLUE BUS TIMELINE**

**1891** – First local transportation in Santa Monica was a horsecar on Wilshire Blvd. Legend has it that service ended when the horse dropped dead near Wilshire and 26<sup>th</sup> Street.

**1914** – First local “bus” service in Santa Monica was operated by unemployed Model T owners, called “jitneys,” along Santa Monica Blvd. Jitney was a common term for a nickel.

**1921** – Jitney operators incorporated as Bay Cities Transit Company.

**1928** – Santa Monica started its own bus service with six rented buses. New service was called Santa Monica Municipal Bus Lines, and the tag line “Ride the Big Blue Bus” was created. Fare was 5 cents.

**1928** – Santa Monica Municipal Bus Lines replaced rented buses with new ones, and painted buses blue and white.

**1928** – First bus facility for the new transit system was a gas station at Pico and Lincoln Boulevards.

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**1934** – City purchased an old bus, which had been serving as a chicken coop, for \$450 to operate as a shuttle to a Catalina steamer docked off Santa Monica Pier.

**1934** – One of only two bus turntables in Los Angeles area was installed at Ocean Park. Turntable was in operation for almost 20 years.

**Mid-1930s** – City started producing tokens with holes in the middle, which patrons strung on large safety pins to keep handy.

**1940s** – Before World War II began, city purchased 18 small buses. During the war, some buses became so overloaded they couldn't reach the top of Ocean Park Boulevard unless some passengers got off and walked.

**1951** – Big Blue Bus bought rival Bay Cities Transit. New system now operated 13 routes and 107 buses.

**1974** – “Diamond Lanes” began along Santa Monica Freeway, allowing service to downtown Los Angeles for the first time.

**1984** – Big Blue Bus moved into new headquarters 56 years to the day after the transit agency was founded.

**1987** – Big Blue Bus named winner of Outstanding Achievement Award by American Public Transportation Association. Will win three more APTA awards in ensuing years.

**1990 & 1991** – North American Transit Research Group selected Big Blue Bus #1 transit system in nation.

**1994** – Big Blue Bus staff teach actress Sandra Bullock to drive a bus for her role in “Speed.”

**2000** – Small 30-foot buses purchased for neighborhood routes.

**2002** – First liquefied natural gas buses purchased.

**2005** – Rapid Blue service began to LAX.

**2007** – 66,000-square foot high tech maintenance facility broke ground. Transit store opened near Third Street Promenade, and talk show host Jimmy Kimmel taped an entire episode aboard a Big Blue Bus.

**2008** – A Big Blue Bus operates within one-quarter mile of every Santa Monica residence. Service area is now nearly 52 square miles, and fleet carries over 20 million passengers a year.