Subject:	Vegas X Train in trouble, Amtrak blames LD Trains for losing money again
From:	Rail Passenger Association of California (noelnoelt@cox.net)
To:	ntbraymer@yahoo.com;
Date:	Monday, November 18, 2013 9:31 AM

RailPAC Weekly E-Newsletter for November 18, 2013

Edited by Noel T. Braymer

Feel free to forward copies of this E-Newsletter to your friends or someone who can use this information.

If you would like to subscribe to the E-Newsletter just send me your name and email address to nbraymer@railpac.org

Rail Passenger Association of California
www.railpac.org
Traffic? Gas Pains? We need more Trains!

This month your editor spent some time on vacation which left me with less time to shoot pictures of trains. But here I am at Disney's California Adventure with a shot of one of their scaled-down Pacific Electric Cars. The Disney people are insisting that a planned future "Streetcar" to the Disneyland Resort from the Anaheim Regional Transportation Intermodal Center (ARTIC) not have overhead wires near Disneyland.This demand has increased the cost of the project to the public. Yet here are trolley wires in a part of Disneyland. Notice how awful and obvious they are. Look carefully now. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

CityDig: Pacific Electric's Los Angeles Legacy

LA Magazine (blog)-Nov 13, 2013

Nevertheless, this cheery map still beckons the common man or woman to come out on the rails and explore the glories of SoCal. In cajoling day-trippers, the Pacific Electric provides a cartographic picture of all the dazzling destinations one could travel to in a day: Folks could ascend to the Mt. Lowe Tavern at 4,429 feet elevation, take a bus to beautiful Sunland and Tujunga, streetcar out to the Vineyard station and grab the connector to the new UCLA, or take the “El Dorado System” down to the Pike in Long Beach for some roller coaster fun.

Modern transit planners could learn a great deal from the past. There is a larger market for public transportation than just commuter traffic. NB

Southern Colorado Amtrak Route In Jeopardy

CBS Local-Nov 12, 2013

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) – New Mexico, Colorado and Kansas communities face the potential loss of passenger rail service if Amtrak fails to reach a new agreement by 2016 for maintaining and upgrading portions of the Southwest Chief route through those states, the rail operator said Tuesday.

Amtrak Service To Lamy Could Cease if NM ...

KSFR-Nov 13, 2013

Amtrak Southwest Chief service to Lamy and other stops could cease if New Mexico doesn't come up with millions of dollars needed for rail line ...The cost-sharing price-tag amounts to four-million dollars a year for a decade. The proposal has the support of Amtrak officials and several New Mexico local government leaders including Santa Fe Mayor David Coss.

Martinez: Amtrak shouldn't stick state with large tab

Santa Fe New Mexican.com-Nov 13, 2013

Gov. Susana Martinez is not enthusiastic about a plan that would require the state of New Mexico to pay $4 million a year for 10 years to help fund upgrades and maintenance of railroad tracks used by Amtrak's Southwest Chief.

Amtrak Serving Free Wine to Steak Loses Millions on Food

Bloomberg-Nov 14, 2013

Amtrak, the U.S. taxpayer-supported passenger railroad, is losing tens of millions of dollars a year on food and beverage service even after years of cost cutting, its inspector general said.

Almost all of last year's $72 million in food-service losses were from providing meals on long-distance trains, Inspector General Ted Alves said in testimony at a House Oversight and Government Reform Committee hearing today.

I remember at least 30 years ago I heard the same story that insider theft was costing Amtrak a fortune for food service on the Long Distance Trains. To "solve" this problem the china and silverware was replaced with disposable plastic to save money and food was served much like the airlines pre-cooked at a central kitchen and heated like TV Dinners to discourage food theft. I wonder if this latest effort will be anymore successful than what was done in the past? I question any cost claims by Amtrak which are based on an allocated basis and are not itemized. Too often Amtrak uses the Long Distance Trains as a scapegoat to distract politicians and media from their real problems. NB

Amtrak's fiscal report card for 2013

Fred Frailey Trains Nov 13, 2013

But there is a humongous backlog of unmet capital needs just to get the existing physical plant in a state of good repair (the price tag for 2009-2023 is $11 billion). And if you want newer and faster trains and straighter track, why, just add a zero to the $11 billion. So the **(NEC)** corridor is not profitable by a long shot,

Much of this capital spending is primarily needed for commuter trains on the corridor, not for Amtrak but since Amtrak owns the NEC it gets the bill, NB

SBB launches Starbucks coffee coach

Railway Gazette Nov 15, 2013

SWITZERLAND: A Swiss Federal Railways IC2000 double-deck buffet car has been refurbished and branded as a Starbucks Coffee House. From November 21 it will be used for a nine-month trial period on two daily services from Genève and Fribourg to St Gallen, and the success of the venture will be evaluated before a decision is made on future use.

End of the line for LA to Las Vegas X Train? CEO says no

VEGAS INC-Nov 13, 2013

The top executive of a company planning to run a casino party train between Southern California and Las Vegas is denying a published report ...

Planned 'party train' from California to Las Vegas hits snag as Union Pacific deal fails

Washington Post - Nov 14, 2013

In a Securities and Exchange Commission filing on Tuesday, Railway Express officials disclosed that the Union Pacific deal had fallen apart, and Union Pacific would be keeping the company's $600,000 deposit.

Amtrak set to finish study on service between DFW and Shreveport ...

WWNO-Nov 14, 2013

Amtrak and the Texas Department of Transportation are expected to wrap up a feasibility study at the end of the month that explores ...

When was the last time one of these studies resulted in a train start up? NB

High-speed rail line could stretch from S.A. to Monterrey

KENS 5 TV-Nov 11, 2013

SAN ANTONIO -- A south Texas lawmaker and officials in Mexico are in talks to build a high-speed rail from San Antonio to Monterrey, Mexico.

The railway would extend a project already in the works that would begin in Oklahoma and end in San Antonio, as proposed by Congress, Rep. Henry Cuellar said.

Texas high-speed train idea mirrors All Aboard's Florida plan

South Florida Business Journal-Nov 11, 2013

Texas Central Railway Co., with one of Japan's high-speed rail operators as main investor, hopes to break ground on the project in 2014 and start running trains within a decade,...

Drilling starts for high-speed Alpine rail line

FRANCE 24- Nov 12, 2013

AFP - A six-metre-wide drill roared to life Tuesday in Chiomonte in northeast Italy and began boring a reconnaissance tunnel for a controversial fast train from Lyon, France to Turin, Italy...

The link, set to come into service in 2025, is expected to see one million fewer lorries on the motorways a year, and reduce train times between Paris and Milan from seven hours to just over four.

Thousands protest Turin-Lyon high-speed rail project

FRANCE 24-Nov 16, 2013

AFP - Thousands of people staged a protest Saturday in Susa, northwestern Italy, against a planned high-speed train line that will pass through ...

Like it or Not, Here Comes California High Speed Rail

By Noel T. Braymer

Despite numerous predictions of the imminent death of the California High Speed Rail Project it is still chugging along and even picking up speed now. Not that it hasn't had a few near death experiences along the way since the voters approved nearly 10 billion dollars in Bonds for it in 2008. The first construction contract was awarded this summer between Fresno and Madera. Already money is being spent around Fresno to hire employees for preliminary work to start construction.

The cheap new way to use Europe's trains

Sydney Morning Herald-Nov 14, 2013

The managing director of International Rail in Melbourne, Jonathan Hume, says rail operators are increasingly following airlines, with the best deals available to those who book early.

Hume says more than 80 per cent of the most popular high-speed rail journeys in Europe must now be reserved in advance.

Amtrak arrival at St. Paul's Union Depot now early 2014

Minneapolis Star Tribune - Nov 13, 2013

Amtrak won't operate out of St. Paul's Union Depot until sometime early next year, another in a series of delays frustrating rail fans and downtown backers who can't wait to see train passengers going through the grand old station once again.

It is a beautiful old building, but does it have parking, freeway access or good connections to transit which most train stations need today? NB

Amtrak Great Dome cars will run through Thanksgiving

Chicago Tribune-Nov 12, 2013

Amtrak's historic Great Dome rail car will be running on more routes through Chicago during Thanksgiving week, the railroad announced ...

Duffel bag stolen at Madera Amtrak stop lands man in jail

Fresno Bee-Nov 14, 2013

A 31-year-old Madera man who hopped on an Amtrak train, stole a passenger's duffel bag and then tried to flee on a bike is in jail, the Madera ...

Amtrak train fatally strikes woman who walked onto tracks

Los Angeles Times Nov 13, 2013

The woman, who has not been identified, stopped at a pedestrian walkway at La Palma Avenue after the warning arms went down, and she watched a southbound Amtrak train go by, said Anaheim Lt. Tim Schmidt.

After it went by, she stepped onto the tracks, apparently unaware of an approaching northbound train, authorities said.

Metrolink service disrupted after train strikes, kills pedestrian

Los Angeles Times Nov 13, 2013

A northbound Metrolink train was delayed 90 minutes and another was canceled after an Amtrak train struck and killed a pedestrian at an Anaheim Metrolink station early Wednesday.

Both of these stories are about the same accident in Anaheim. NB

Union Pacific Corporation : Union Pacific Big Boy Locomotive Begins Journey From California To Wyoming

4-traders (press release)- Nov 14, 2013

Roseville, Calif., November 14, 2013- Union Pacific Railroad today announced that Big Boy No. 4014 has commenced the second phase of its journey to Union Pacific's Heritage Fleet Operations headquarters in Cheyenne, Wyo., from Fairplex, home of the L.A. County Fairgrounds in Pomona, Calif.

Big Boy lumbers to life at Pomona fairgrounds

Inland Valley Daily Bulletin-Nov 14, 2013

In midcentury, No. 4014, the world’s largest steam locomotive, traveled up to 70 mph, hauling freight over the mountains between Wyoming and Utah along the intercontinental railroad.

On Thursday, after a half-century of retirement, the Big Boy was on the move again — inches at a time, and under tow.

More oil means more trains over the Tehachapis; safety a concern

Bakersfield Californian-Nov 10, 2013

With an average of about 35 trains running over the pass per day, the corridor is already considered to be

at capacity, according to the project's environmental review.
While the route carries a 50-trains-per-day rating, rail officials say that it is unfeasible to operate at that volume because it would require almost constant maintenance and leave no room for clearing up accidents. Exceeding the route's existing freight volume would force more trucks onto Highway 58, worsening the area's air quality.

Railroad Industry Calls for Safer Tanker Cars

LA Times Nov 14, 2013
After a series of fiery crashes involving trains hauling crude oil, the railroad industry called on the federal government Thursday to significantly strengthen safety standards for new tank cars and require retrofitting of the nation's huge fleet of existing tankers.
Corporations HATE regulations when it cost them money, but LOVE regulations when it lowers their legal liabilities. NB

Broken-Down Train Causes Caltrain Delays

The San Francisco Appeal-Nov 12, 2013
Caltrain service got behind schedule this morning after a train became disabled in Palo Alto. The northbound train broke down at about 6:30 ...

Caltrain, SamTrans seek funding solutions as ridership recovers

S F Examiner Nov 13, 2013
Despite some long-term financial questions, Caltrain's 2013 ridership has been at an all-time high — averaging 54,989 boardings on a weekday — with many commute-hour trains reaching capacity. This marks a 13 percent increase from the prior year.

Caltrain Asks Public's Input in Changes to "Go Pass"

Patch.com-Nov 16, 2013
Caltrain will present the proposed changes to its board of directors at the Dec. 5 meeting. If approved, the changes will take effect Jan. 1, 2014.

Raising Fares Is Not the Only Way to Fund Public Transportation

The Atlantic Cities Nov 15, 2013
The always thorough Todd Litman of the Victoria Transport Policy Institute released a report last week analyzing 18 local options for funding public transportation

Caltrain works with North Central over bridge replacement

San Mateo Daily Journal-Nov 14, 2013
Four Caltrain bridges in San Mateo are due for an upgrade, so the transit agency is working with the North Central neighborhood to ensure .

BART officials call for return to bargaining table

Christian Science Monitor- Nov 16, 2013
San Francisco transit officials are calling for a return to the bargaining table, saying an expensive provision was "erroneously" included in a labor contract that settled a union dispute that had caused two recent strikes.
Yeah, good luck getting the Unions to agree that. NB

Santa Rosa seeks input on railroad crossing swap

Santa Rosa Press Democrat-Nov 13, 2013
Santa Rosa is preparing to tackle one of the thorniest issues related to the arrival of commuter rail service

to the city — where people should be allowed to cross the tracks.

[SF light rail train leaves station without driver]

Contra Costa Times-Nov 13, 2013

SAN FRANCISCO—A San Francisco light rail train left a station without its driver, who got out to fix a door and may have forgotten to set the ...

Report from the agenda for the LOSSAN Board of Directors meeting scheduled for Wednesday, November 20, 2013

AGENDA ITEM NO.: 5

Ridership

When compared to the previous year, the Pacific Surfliner ridership decreased by 3.3 percent in October marking the second consecutive month of declining ridership. Ridership was impacted by work windows that disrupted train service in San Clemente over three Saturdays in September and October and over one weekend near Old Town San Diego. Bus bridges were provided by Amtrak to connect passengers to their destinations; however, the added transfer causes some passengers to choose other travel options. There is an additional work window planned for the weekend of November 16, 2013, in San Diego County, which could impact November ridership.

Metrolink total system ridership was down 4.9 percent in October. Ridership on the Ventura County Line was down 6.5 percent, while the Orange County line decreased by 3.4 percent in October. As reported at the October Board meeting, Metrolink ridership declines can be attributed to lower retention of daily commuters, geographical differences where ridership is declining on all lines with the exception of the Inland Empire-Orange County Line. These trends are partly due to Los Angeles County lagging the rest of the region in economic recovery, increased passenger complaints related to OTP, fare policies, and ticket vending machine problems, and price competition as Metrolink fares have increased, gas prices decreased, and competition from commuter busses offering competing services. Metrolink has developed an action plan that includes new equipment inspection and repair practices, revised fare inspection policies, and they are conducting a fare analysis and customer survey. COASTER ridership had previously increased for six consecutive months; however, ridership declined slightly by 2.5 percent in October.

Sounds like Metrolink is in a downward spiral with increased mechanical problems (deferred maintenance) and declining quality of service. The problem at Metrolink is not their market, it is with their marketing. There is a huge travel market in their service area that they carry only a fraction of. With lower gasoline prices ridership is also going down just as ridership goes up when gas prices do. Metrolink needs to look for more than commuters and rush hour travel to fill up their trains and bring in revenue. They need better connections to more places and more specials to appeal to passengers during off peak travel.NB

LOSSAN Corridor OTP was down in October especially in LOSSAN South due to Burlington Northern Santa Fe track work between Los Angeles and Fullerton, mechanical problems, passenger-related delays, and signal and gate problems. There also was a grade crossing incident at Sorrento Valley Road and a trespasser incident in Encinitas that contributed to the lower OTP this month.

The Pacific Surfliner OTP was down to 73.6 percent in October despite the high LOSSAN North segment OTP of 93.7 percent. LOSSAN South OTP was 74.0 percent. The COASTER OTP was down slightly to 96.5 percent in October. Metrolink OTP was down to 93.8 percent for all lines,

with the Ventura County Line at 94.6 percent and the Orange County Line at 90.7 percent in October, which is the lowest since July 2012.

Metrolink draws X through Xmas Toy Express train

Inland Valley Daily Bulletin-Nov 15, 2013

Metrolink stations will be a little less bright this season after the rail agency pulled the plug on its Holiday Toy Express, a train decorated with a ..

Columbus Castings to add 50 jobs after landing Amtrak supplier order

Business First of Columbus-Nov 15, 2013

The ultimate end customer is Amtrak, which is in the midst of an extensive replacement of its passenger railcars. Columbus Castings could reap ...

More rail passenger cars means more passengers, which means more money for Amtrak and so rail service becomes more important to the US economy while creating more jobs. NB

Monrovia residents weigh in on public improvements near future Gold Line Station

Pasadena Star-News-Nov 12, 2013

The city has sought residents' input on a $25 million infrastructure project that will drastically improve the area encompassing the future Gold Line Station and will act as the gateway to the city for people using the Gold Line train.

Proposed Marriott/Hampton Inn Will Help Pay For Santa Monica's Expo Line Esplanade

Curbed LA Nov 12, 2013

Things are looking good for two proposed Santa Monica hotels--a 136-room Marriott and a 143-room Hampton Inn--near the terminus of the second phase of the Expo Line light rail.

Culver City staff report on bus routes serving the Expo Line

The Source Nov 13, 2013

Above is a powerpoint from Culver City on the Expo Line's impacts on bus ridership. The bottom line: there has definitely been an uptick in ridership since the Expo Line's first phase fully opened in June 2012.

Streetcar Team Pushes Forward, Though Questions of Price and ...

LA Downtown News Online-Nov 11, 2013

Although development has sprouted along Broadway, with restaurants and stores flocking to the historic street, the streetcar has hit a series of bumps. The ever-ballooning cost is one issue: A city analysis released in September showed that the project could cost from $232.3 million to $327.8 million, drastically more than the $125 million price tag Huizar had offered as recently as last year.

Metro Presents: Pop-Up Dessert Cafe at Union Station Tuesday, Nov. 26

The Source Nov 12, 2013

Metro will host pop-up dessert café Thanksgivvukah Café on Tuesday, Nov. 26, 2013 during lunch at Union Station as part of Metro Presents, Metro's new program of arts and cultural events.

Germany's next top models practice their runway walk at Union Station — and, yes, we have video!

The Source Nov 14, 2013

It's not unusual to spot film and TV crews shooting scenes around the region and Union Station is no stranger to being a star.

In fact, it's such a popular place that Germany's Next Top Model show today used Union Station as the set for one of the models' challenges. The challenge: put on a runway show at a working train station.

BoltBus now at Union Station and ready to start service to San Diego

The Source Nov 13, 2013

BoltBus recently began operating non-stop premium bus service from Los Angeles Union Station to San Jose and Oakland, and now it's ready to hit San Diego. Beginning on November 14, the bus line will operate four daily round trips from L.A. to S.D. The curbside service in San Diego will be located at 415 W. Harbor Dr., next to Seaport Village.

Just because your editor was on vacation didn't mean there wasn't time for a train trip! This is the editor's niece Kirstie Caffrey visiting us from Dublin looking over the ocean at Del Mar. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

We Get Emails

Re: Chart of The Day

Once again my thanks on the excellent material you present in your e-newsletter. I suggest that readers should take a second look at the "Chart of the Day" from WonkWire in the November 4th E-Newsletter. And yes, Noel's comment about the even more dramatic decline in infrastructure spending compared to 40 – 50 years ago is very germane to the stagnation of the long-distance trains. Over the past 30+ years the bulk of reductions in Federal spending have been on the discretionary side of the Federal budget which includes infrastructure spending and Amtrak. Relative to history and the rest of the industrial world, the US is no longer spending any money on infrastructure!! The only funds made available are to patch holes in the bottom of the rowboat. You want oars? Forget about it.

This is why Interstate Highway bridges are failing, the Highway Trust Fund is bankrupt, the FAA is still using 1960's electronics technology for air traffic control, and why Amtrak is basically only replacing 100-year old bridges, 80-year old signal systems, 60+ year old passenger cars and 30-year old electric locomotives with over 4 million miles on them. The freight railroads have prospered by maximizing the use of their track assets, making limited capacity investments that generate the most profit and by ruthlessly increasing capacity by trying to eliminate passenger trains except on secondary lines, eliminating local freight service, pricing away short-distance and low yielding traffic.

Ironically, the action that would attract private investment to passenger rail for either privatization or franchising is a long-term commitment for Federal capital spending. This is also the very action that would improve Amtrak's performance. But as a nation we can't even keep the Highway Trust Fund solvent!

While we have visions of additional routes and Superliner cars, the looming capital crisis facing the long-distance trains is not the age of the Superliner cars, but the diesel locomotive fleet. Amtrak units rack up more miles than do freight locomotives, which means they need rebuilding or replacement when they reach 20-years old. The P32's and P40's are over 20-years old while the oldest P42's are approaching 20-years. Rebuilding or replacing the diesel locomotive fleet will cost millions and will require a predominant share of Amtrak's small capital budget in the near-term. Obtaining these funds in an environment where NEC legislators make sure funds are specifically targeted toward life-expired NEC infrastructure and where many legislators served by the long-distance trains vote to defund Amtrak will be difficult.
Steve Roberts

Re:Calif. water waste; engaging Chinese in passenger rail development
Everyone clamors for more water. In the San Joaquin and Sacramento valleys one still sees vast quantities of the ultra cheap stuff being sprayed into the hot afternoon sun or evaporating along thousands of miles of unlined open ditches. Better irrigation practices would save water, save money, retain soil nutrients and reduce polluted runoff.
I guess screaming about trains and demanding more subsidized water is easier and more comfortable than investing the modest sums needed to conserve.
In my opinion the greatest current US need is to speed up the development of conventional short-hop inter-city lines and commuter lines in the metropolitan areas. In this arena too there are attractive, mutually beneficial opportunities for creatively engaging overseas financing entities and contractors.
Jerry Cauthen
I know the Farm Lobby will disagree with you that farmers are wasting water. Many farmers are using modern irrigation methods to conserve water on many crops. Critics of farm water use complain most about "flood irrigation" which is still heavily used for growing cotton, rice and alfalfa in the State. These crops use a great deal of water and can be grown in places with more water than California. Alfalfa is a low value crop which is used only for feeding livestock.

What we need is a rail transportation system, which means we need more Long Distance, High Speed Express, regional and rail transit all working together to increase ridership and make rail travel easier, more economical and more convenient. That was a major point of Dan Richard's talk in San Francisco on October 5th. To make High Speed Rail work in California it has to be apart of a California wide Rail Passenger modernization program according to Dan Richard. That is why last year the Legislature approved spending slightly more for conventional rail than High Speed as a joint package. Long Distance service including High Speed are capable of operating at a profit. They may not pay off all capital costs but can attract private funding part of which can be

paid for from operating profits. That is harder to do with transit and short distance trains. But these services can attract capital because of the property development they can generate. NB

Opinions expressed in this enewsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Rail Passenger Association of California.

The RailPAC Mission: Passenger Rail advocacy, Publications…both print and electronic, Representation at regional meetings, and Rail education.
Join us! More memberships increase our strength in presenting the case for rail to policymakers at all levels!

You can send your comments to me at nbraymer@railpac.org

For those who would like an additional copy of the eNewsletter with plain text (minus photos and graphics) just email me at nbraymer@railpac.org **with your name and email address. NB**

If you are not a member of go to RailPAC Membership…Join Us! to get information about RailPAC and a FREE copy of our regular newsletter .

For information about RailPAC, contact the Membership Office

Write:
Rail Passenger Association of California
1017 L Street, PMB-217
Sacramento, CA95814-3805
Email us at info@railpac.org

Call at **(415) 7-TRACK-2**
(415) 787-2252

Unsubscribe from this list.

Copyright (C)Rail Passenger Association of California (RailPAC) All rights reserved.

Forward this email to a friend
Update your profile

MailChimp