

Subject: The Sunset, Food Service attacked in Congress! HSR set to head to Palmdale.

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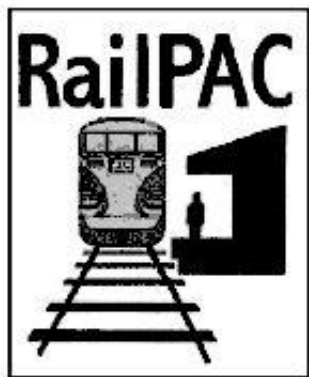
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RailPAC Weekly E-Newsletter for June 16, 2014

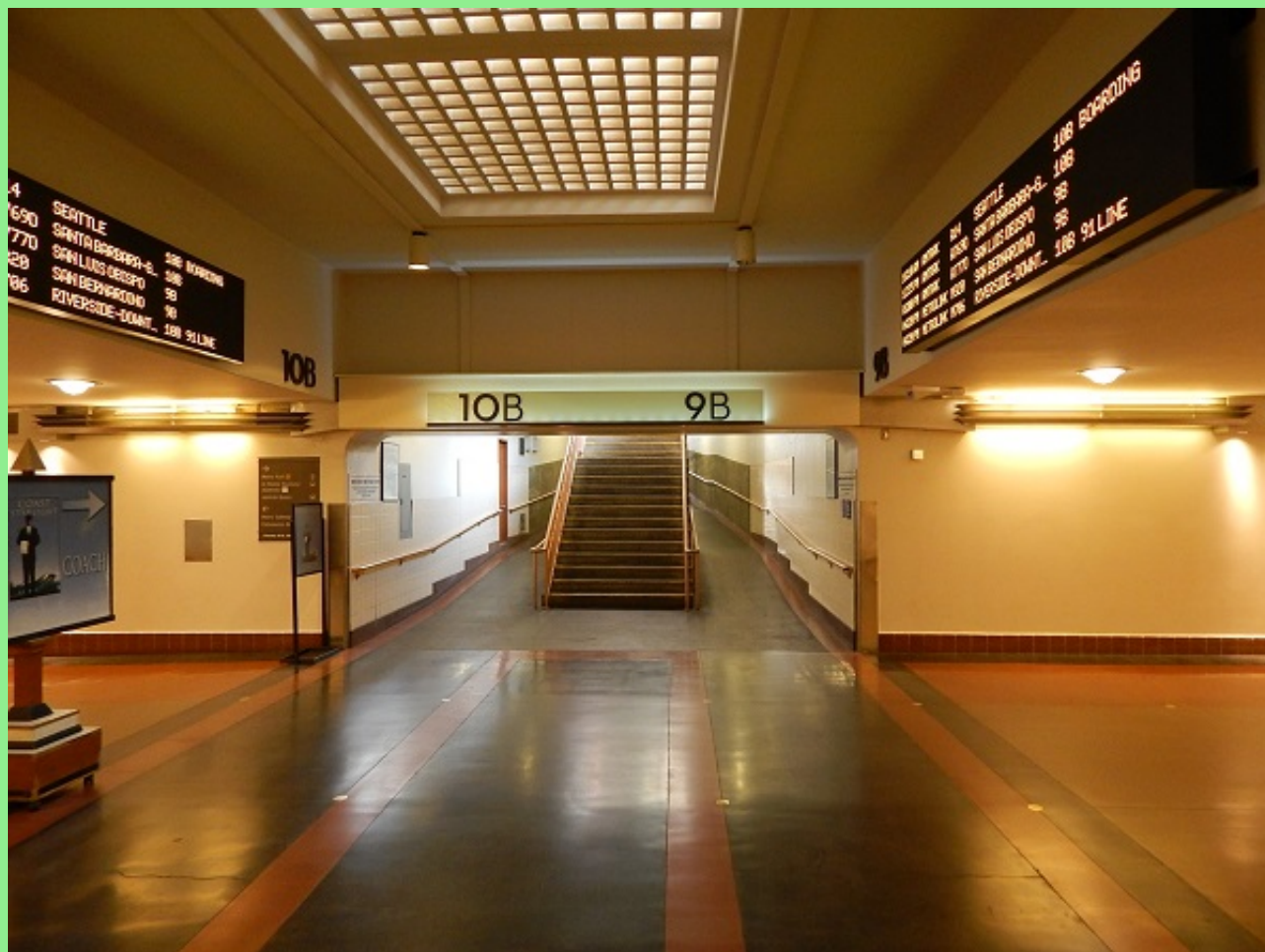
Edited by Noel T. Braymer

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



On a rare quiet moment at Los Angeles Union Station is a view of the new track number signs. These replaced the old round drumhead signs at the station. These new signs may not last long with plans to open up the area under the tracks to create a new concourse at the station. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

[Tuesday was not a good day for the Sunset Limited](#)

Commentary by Russ Jackson, RailPAC, Dallas

All passenger rail advocates know Amtrak's Sunset Limited travels between New Orleans and Los Angeles three times a week in each direction. Many of us ride it. We all know that these trains run with full cars most of the route and that not everyone rides the full distance. In fact, less than 20% of the train's riders do. When the train reaches San Antonio two cars, a sleeper and a coach, are added to the train or taken from the train to/from the Texas Eagle. Those two cars are almost always filled with riders coming from or going to the mid-West. The financial success of the Sunset Limited is constrained by its tri-weekly service, and the successful through cars from the Texas Eagle are not credited to the Sunset but belongs to the Eagle. Currently, trains 1 and 2 have an excellent on time performance, nearly 80% for the fiscal year 2013. Efforts to get daily service on the route have been unsuccessful, not that much effort has been made by Amtrak to accomplish it. The current agreement with the Union Pacific is that Amtrak will not even bring up the subject of daily service for another year, or when the railroad's double tracking project between Los Angeles and El Paso is completed. That is a good idea, but does Amtrak plan to re-introduce the idea with the UP? They may not have to.

[Morning Transportation](#)

Politico-Jun 11, 2014

Amtrak changes: The House voted for several restrictions on Amtrak funds, but rejected another.

Members approved a change from Pete Sessions to block funds for the route that loses the most money — the Sunset Limited that runs from New Orleans to Los Angeles. Another amendment from Reps.

Phil Gingrey and John Mica to stop federal subsidies for Amtrak's money-losing food and beverage service was approved on a voice vote. (emphasis added) But on a 167-250 tally, members voted down another proposal from Sessions to eliminate money for any Amtrak route that costs twice what it takes in, which the Texas congressman framed it as a matter of eliminating money-losing routes from the passenger railroad.

This is the result of Amtrak's accounting which gives the false impression that food service and the Sunset are directly losing this money when it is only what is allocated as their share of Amtrak's losses. Cutting trains or food service will not save money, but will reduce income. We all will have to work to make sure these amendments are not in the final bill. NB

[The future of Amtrak: Bring your own lunch?](#)

TheBlaze.com (blog)-Jun 11, 2014

The House on Tuesday approved a transportation funding bill that prevents Amtrak from receiving any federal subsidies for its food and beverage service, language that has the potential to end this service on Amtrak trains.

[House approves fiscal year 2015 THUD bill](#)

Railway Track & Structures - Jun 11, 2014

The U.S. House of Representatives approved the fiscal year 2015 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) funding bill on a vote of 229-192....

Several transportation amendments included in the bill were passed including Rep. Karen Bass' (D-California) amendment that allows transit agencies that receive federal funds to prioritize hiring local residents for projects; Rep. Jeff Denham's (R- California) amendment to prohibit any appropriated funds from being used for high-speed rail in the state of California and an amendment from Rep. Pete Sessions (R-Texas) that eliminates funding for the Amtrak's Sunset Limited, which runs from New Orleans, La., to Los Angeles....

The bill cuts the seventh round of Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grants by \$500 million, allocating only \$100 million, which is \$1.15-billion below the administration's request. In the first five rounds of the TIGER program the Department of Transportation received 5,200 applications requesting more than \$114 billion for projects.

"Cutting" Federal high speed rail funding for California is a rather empty gesture, that was a foregone conclusion some time ago. NB

[The Sunset Limited and Food & Beverage service are threatened by House amendments](#)

Commentary by Paul Dyson

President, Rail Passenger Association of California and Nevada

House amendments to kill the Sunset and remove food service will accelerate the demise of the Superliner network. This is not a drill!

Let's not kid ourselves. It's easy to say we have been through this before, many times over the past forty years, and Amtrak is still standing, albeit in a shrunken state. It's also tempting to think that, well, this is just one train and some kind of compromise might yet be found, or a grass roots campaign can change enough minds. Well, here's the Paul Dyson version of the ugly truth:

From the NARP HotLine for June 13, 2014

(Keep in mind, the House is spending precious time running Amtrak through the wringer for millions while they work to find \$100 BILLION with which to subsidize the Highway Trust Fund, which is set to go bankrupt in August.)

NARP needs your help! There are two steps America's passengers must take to undo this damage:

Let the House know that you're paying attention, and you're angry that these Amtrak-killing provisions were passed. ([Better still, call your Representative today](#)) The Senate is taking up the transportation spending bill next week. Click here to ask them to turn back any anti-train amendments ([or better still, call your Senators](#))

[Senate panel rolls back housing, Amtrak cuts](#)

Uniontown Herald Standard - Jun 5, 2014

WASHINGTON (AP) - A bipartisan coalition on the Senate Appropriations Committee moved Thursday to roll back House GOP-backed cuts to Amtrak,

This was too close for comfort! We need more than to "save" the Long Distance Trains. We need all daily trains with good connections to other Long Distance Trains with longer consists to carry enough passengers to be profitable. Amtrak isn't going to do this, this is up to Congress to do. NB

[BNSF derailment forces Metro Transit to suspend Northstar service](#)

Minneapolis Star Tribune - Jun 13, 2014

The incident was the latest in a string of problems that have plagued the 40-mile line, which carries about 878,000 riders a year on Burlington Northern Santa Fe tracks....

Amtrak trains between Fargo and St. Paul detoured around the wreck by using other tracks owned by BNSF, causing route delays and bus substitutions. Emphasis added

[Amtrak's next stop viability? Clock is ticking](#)

Journal and Courier-Jun 13, 2014

Four private companies proposed ways to improve the Hoosier State passenger rail line from Indianapolis to Chicago, and the winning vendor should be announced in the next week or two.

[California's budget deadline looms with a more civil tone in Capitol](#)

Inside Bay Area-Jun 10, 2014

The governor wanted to allocate a third of the fees -- roughly \$850 million in the next fiscal year -- to construction of the bullet train. But that figure may drop to as low as 15 percent, with another 5 percent of proceeds spent on intercity rail projects, said Sen. Mark Leno, D-San Francisco, who chairs the Senate's budget and fiscal review committee.

[Eric Garcetti endorses funding mass transit with cap-and-trade revenue](#)

Los Angeles Times Jun 6, 2014

Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento) and Sen. Kevin de Leon (D-Los Angeles) are pushing for the the cap-and-trade revenue -- which they say could total between \$3 billion and \$5 billion a year -- to fund mass transit projects in California.

[Comparing California's Three Cap-and-Trade Spending Proposals](#)

StreetBlog LA Jun 6, 2014

This relatively new pot of money, collected under the authority of the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, or A.B. 32, by law must be spent on programs and projects that help reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions throughout the state by 2020. The administration estimates that the cap-and-trade system will raise about \$870 million in 2015, and various estimates assume it could grow to several billion dollars each year

[Budget deal gives 25 percent of cap-and-trade money to high-speed rail](#)

Sacramento Bee (blog) - Jun 12, 2014

The amount falls short of the 33 percent Brown originally sought but is more than the Senate Democrats proposed...

In addition to high-speed rail, the deal calls for 15 percent of cap-and-trade revenue to go to other transportation projects and 20 percent to go to affordable housing projects and other programs that help reduce greenhouse gases.

[Lawsuits won't affect bid for high speed rail repair yard](#)

Bakersfield Now-Jun 11, 2014

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. (KBAK/KBFX) — Recent news of Kern County's intent to sue in opposition of the high-speed rail project has some wondering if the move will have a negative impact on the county's bid for a heavy maintenance yard.

Bringing the high-speed rail heavy maintenance facility to Kern County would have many benefits. There would be roughly 1,500 high-paying jobs and an estimated infusion of \$250 million annually to the local economy.

[Bullet train manager defends project in Fresno](#)

Fresno Business Journal-Jun 9, 2014

Recently, the California High-Speed Rail Authority approved environmental documents for the first two segments of the bullet train stretching nearly 180 miles from Merced to Bakersfield.

"By the end of this year we will have \$2.5 billion in infrastructure going in the state of California," said Ogle, a former design office chief for Caltrans' central region....

As of May 9, 384 parcels have been appraised and acquired for the route, while 248 parcels have received their first written offers.

Owners of 44 parcels have made agreements with the agency and 37 parcels have turned over to a contractor.

[Rail authority: 220 workers, 33 firms at work in Fresno](#)

Fresno Business Journal-Jun 12, 2014

With no rivets or rails yet in place, the state's bullet train project is already bringing work for a number of small businesses helping the contractors get ready for the task ahead. In the Central Valley, more than 20 locally operated businesses have agreements for services or supplies with Tutor Perini/Zachry/Parsons, the joint venture contracted last June to design and build the first 30-mile section of the system from Madera to Fresno.

[High-speed rail funding deal far below what the project needs](#)

Silicon Valley Business Journal-Jun 12, 2014

While the financing deal is not final, the plan to fund high-speed rail through 25 percent of future cap-and-trade proceeds was approved by a state budget panel Thursday in advance of a budget floor vote expected by Sunday night.

What most reporters either ignore or don't know is it was never expected that government would fund the entire California High Speed Project. This new funding will make it possible to extend HSR tracks to Southern California. This assured funding could also be used to borrow money to speed up construction and the start of revenue service. A railroad that serves Southern California with connections to the Bay Area and Sacramento will open the door to private investment to expand High Speed Rail passenger service just like it is done in most of the developed world. NB

[Capitol Corridor Monthly Report \(May, 2014\)](#)

Report from David B. Kutrosky, Managing Director

Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority

Service Performance Overview

May 2014 was the second consecutive month of ridership increases for the Capitol Corridor compared to prior year-month results.

[Merced's Amtrak station gets new drought-resistant shrubs](#)

Modesto Bee-Jun 10, 2014

Councilman Michael Belluomini organized the effort to put 173 drought-resistant plants into the landscape surrounding the train station. “For some of the tourists – visitors to Merced – the Amtrak station is the first or the last thing that they see when they come to Merced,” he said. “So we want to leave or give a good impression.”

[CALTRANS Seeks Public's Input on Statewide Freight Mobility Plan](#)

Sierra Sun Times-Jun 11, 2014

Caltrans will host eight public workshops between June 17 and July 24 to solicit input on the draft California Freight Mobility Plan (CFMP), which lays out a vision for all the ways freight is moved, including seaports, air cargo, railroads, and trucking. While promoting economic competitiveness, the plan will also benefit the environment and promote public health by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants.

[\\$6 rides for BART's Oakland Airport Connector](#)

SFGate-Jun 13, 2014

Few speakers remained for the discussion of the fare for the Oakland Airport Connector, an automated rail link that will carry passengers between the Coliseum Station and Oakland International Airport beginning this fall. But they staked out positions that left the board divided.

It took four motions before directors finally decided to charge \$6 and to offer an unspecified discount, probably during peak travel periods, of as low as \$4.

[SUMMER FUN: Five SoCal places you don't need a car to get to](#)

Press-Enterprise-Jun 10, 2014

One of the worst thing about traveling in Southern California is the driving, especially in the summer when jacked-up parking lot rates, high gas prices and an influx of tourists make it harder to enjoy the region we call home....

We've rounded up the five light rail trips you can take from the Inland area without breaking the bank, although planning a rail trip takes a bit more effort than filling up your vehicle's gas tank.

[Century Boulevard Bridge to be demolished July 25-28, 2014](#)

The Source Jun 5, 2014

Here's a traffic and construction alert that is still a little down the road. But it's important, especially for those trying to reach LAX: the old rail bridge over Century Boulevard has to be demolished to make way for the Crenshaw/LAX Line's Aviation/Century station.



This is the Century Blvd railroad over-crossing near LAX as of last year. It will be replaced with the new Crenshaw Light Rail Line. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

[LAX Rail Connections:What a Mess!](#)

By Noel T. Braymer

The two most important passenger transportation hubs in Southern California, the 2nd most populated area in the country are Los Angeles Union Station (LAUS) and Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). In terms of passenger miles generated, LAX is more important. Road traffic to LAX is also a major source of traffic congestion and pollution.

[Orange County Streetcar Proposals Having A Hard Time](#)

OC Register Jun 8, 2014

Both cities' streetcars would ride steel rails embedded in existing lanes of major city streets, traveling in regular traffic at an average speed of 11 mph to 14 mph and stopping two or three times per mile. Right now the two projects, neither of which has been approved by city or county officials, would not connect.

Maybe not to each other yet, but Anaheim's streetcar will connect Disneyland with ARTIC and Garden Grove/ Santa Ana's line will connect with the Santa Ana Transportation Center. NB

[LIRR: Record passenger surge after from Belmont Stakes delayed ...](#)

Newsday-Jun 8, 2014

Some of the 36,000 passengers who used the LIRR to come and go from the Saturday race said they were still waiting for a train at 9:30 p.m., well over two hours after California Chrome lost the Belmont Stakes to Tonalist.

[Is Raising the Gas Tax Political Suicide? Not in States That've Done It](#)

StreetBlog LA Jun 11, 2014

Lawmakers continue to avoid the most obvious solution: raising the gas tax, which Washington hasn't done since 1993.

Conventional wisdom among pols holds that a federal gas tax increase would be so unpopular that it's not worth broaching. But Teddy Lederer at Transportation for America points out that in two states where lawmakers recently raised the gas tax, voters stood by the reps who did it. Lederer explains what happened in Pennsylvania:

[Public input sought on key Amtrak, MARC tunnel replacement in Baltimore](#)

The Baltimore Sun Jun 11, 2014

The 1.4-mile Baltimore & Potomac Tunnel, considered a key bottleneck for commuter and freight traffic up and down the nation's busy Northeast Corridor, is 141 years old and a curvy, tight fit for today's modern trains — limiting their capacity and reducing their speed.

[Railroads want to hit brakes on some oil train safeguards](#)

Politico-Jun 13, 2014

The railroad industry is warning the White House against some potential safety rules for trains carrying explosive crude oil, saying freight and passenger rail traffic could be disrupted for years if companies must obey 30 mph speed limits, install more sophisticated brakes and keep the trains manned at all times.

[California's Not Ready for Influx of Oil Trains, Says Report](#)

KQED (blog)-Jun 13, 2014

It's not all about accident response; there are also recommendations for prevention. Most rail regulation is up to the federal government; the CPUC helps enforce safety rules with its own rail inspectors. There are 52 of them, responsible for monitoring more than 5,400 miles of track in the state. "This staffing level is seriously inadequate," the report says.

[Iraq conflict sparks oil price rise](#)

BBC News-Jun 12, 2014

Iraq is the second-largest oil producer in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) group.

"If this conflict knocked out Iraq as an exporter, that would have significant impact on prices," said Christopher Bellew, a trader at Jefferies Bache.

**What "saved" Amtrak in 1973 and 1979 was unrest in the Middle East and the high price of oil.
NB**



This is a recent view of construction for the Expo Line on Colorado Blvd in Santa Monica near the 4th Street terminal. While great progress is being made, you can see there is still much to be done before work is finished by late next year. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

We Get Email

Re: Coast Line

As you indicate the Lossan Rail Corridor is becoming an increasingly important means of transportation for Southern Californians. Here in the Bay Area the Peninsula Joint Powers Board and Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority are making good strides toward bringing the Caltrain and Capitol Corridor services up to Lossan's level of effectiveness. The Lossan Corridor extends to San Luis Obispo. Caltrain stretches southward to Gilroy. That leaves a gap of roughly 180 track miles.

HSR was initiated by a Valley Legislator to improve rail connections between Valley cities and also between these cities and the great Northern and Southern California metropolitan centers. However, thanks in part to its being over-priced and politically-perverted and in part because of lawsuits filed in Kings, Fresno and Kern counties, the fate of the California HSR is now in doubt. Should HSR be shelved or substantially delayed, it would open up the possibility of improving the section between San Luis Obispo and Gilroy. This improvement, which could be accomplished for a small fraction of the cost of HSR, would open up a viable passenger rail service between Southern California and Northern California many decades before the advent of HSR.

Gerald Cauthen
Oakland

You are right, the gap between San Luis Obispo and Gilroy needs to be closed the sooner the better. The problem remains the UP which has been delaying this for the last 20 years. Making

things more complicated is the current "boom" in oil by rail, some of which is headed to the Coast Line. NB

Re:LA Union Station-SCRIP Flaws

When it was announced that LA Union Station would get \$350 Million in Track Upgrades, my initial reaction was "great" now the Run-Through Project is advancing. However, after further review & evaluation, the number sounded suspiciously low & indeed there is a critical flaw in Metro's Run-Through Track Plan. To my recollection, the initial proposal several years ago was to create a Run-Through for Tracks 3-10. Can railpac provide any documentation for such a proposal? Now, it seems Metro has condensed the Run-Through project to just 4 tracks, which hardly seems sufficient enough to not only relieve the current congestion, but also accommodate a substantial increase in regional rail traffic in the future. While any Run-Through opening will be a great improvement to Commuter/Inter-City Rail Operations, creating sufficient Run-Through Tracks for more than 4 Tracks should be priority in that it not only improves current train movements, but greatly paves the way for considerable increases in Train Services.

Perhaps Metro would consider this alternative: Build the Initial 4-Track Run-Through with the option of building additional Run-Through Tracks later on.

I give Metro Credit for trying to create a Multi-Modal Transportation Center, but every transportation element needs to be factored in, in ways that may have not already been considered. Run-Through Tracks for Commuter/Inter-City Rail should not be built in a Light-Rail/Rail-Transit manner, but in a way that is most convenient for Inter-City/Commuter Rail.

Kelly Walton-Harper

Not to worry. Railyards and stations have throat tracks at the front and sometimes at the back. When Los Angeles Union Station opened it had 6 throat tracks which could switch trains to 17 tracks at the station with one of those a storage track for spare Pullman Cars. Today LAUS has 5 improved throat tracks at the north end able to access 12 passenger tracks and one storage track. When the new run-through tracks are built they will serve 4 platforms and 8 tracks. The 4 tracks on the bridge south of the station will be in effect the throat tracks. Each track will split in 2 for a total of 8 tracks. There will be crossovers on the 4 tracks so trains can be positioned to go to any of the 8 run-through tracks. Below is a LA Metro drawing of how the new tracks will look. NB



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