

Subject: Appeals Court Releases CA HSR Bond Money. New Hope for SW Chief?
From: Rail Passenger Association of California (noelnoelt@cox.net)
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RailPAC Weekly E-Newsletter for August 4, 2014

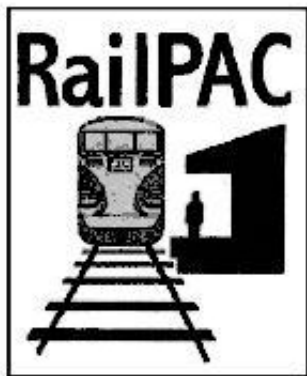
Edited by Noel T. Braymer

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



Fresno; southbound train 716 arriving almost an hour late on July 25, 2014. There was "train congestion" all day on July 25th which caused San Joaquin Trains between Fresno and Stockton to run late. Because of this, northbound trains lost time between Bakersfield and Fresno because of delays at meets from late southbound trains. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

[California High-Speed Rail Bonds Revived by Appeals Court](#)

Bloomberg - Jul 31, 2014

The California High-Speed Rail Authority can issue \$8 billion in bonds to finance the U.S.'s first bullet train, a state appeals court ruled. The agency suffered a setback in November when a state judge blocked it from issuing the bonds, saying its finance ...

[California high-speed rail project considering tunnel under San Gabriel Mountains](#)

San Gabriel Valley Tribune-Jul 29, 2014

A tunnel under the San Gabriel Mountains has been added as an alternate route for the \$67.6 billion San Francisco-to-Los Angeles high-speed rail train's Southern California segment connecting Palmdale to Burbank, officials said Monday.

[Tunnel route weighed for high-speed rail](#)

The Burbank Leader Jul 31, 2014

The initial option for the segment running from the Palmdale Transportation Center to a station near the Bob Hope Airport generally followed State Route 14, passing through Santa Clarita to end up in Burbank, for a total of roughly 48 miles.

Last October, Los Angeles County Supervisor Mike Antonovich asked officials to consider a more direct route from Palmdale to Burbank, which prompted the new, roughly 35-mile alternative, said Adeline Yee, spokeswoman for the California High-Speed Rail Authority.

"We wanted to look at an alternative proposal because there was a lot of push back from cities like Santa Clarita, which were not happy about the high-speed rail alignment going through their town," Yee said, adding that eventually the options will be narrowed down. "Right now, they're all being weighed."

[California High Speed Rail to Present LA-area Options](#)

Streetsblog Los Angeles Jul 30, 2014

The California High Speed Rail Authority will hold a series of public meetings starting next week to discuss proposed alignments for two segments of the project: from Palmdale to Burbank and from Burbank to downtown Los Angeles.

[Fresno County Supervisors Vote To Oppose High Speed Rail](#)

Valley Public Radio-Jul 29, 2014

The 3-2 vote comes just days after contractors working for the rail authority began demolishing buildings in Fresno to make way for the train.

[Work on high-speed rail moves forward](#)

Bakersfield Californian - Jul 29, 2014

Construction in the Fresno area of the 114-mile-long California high-speed rail stretch to Bakersfield will begin by the end of the year, the Kern Transportation Foundation board of directors was told Monday. The acquisition of property from Madera to Fresno is continuing, said Diana Gomez, Central Valley regional director for the California High-Speed Rail Authority, and some vacant structures have been demolished as part of the line from Madera to the southern edge of Fresno.

[California "Stop the \\$100 Billion Bullet Train to Nowhere" Initiative \(2014\)](#)

A California "Stop the \$100 Billion Bullet Train to Nowhere" Initiative (#12-0004, #12-0010) was approved for circulation in California as a contender for the November 6, 2012 ballot and the November 4, 2014 ballot. Its sponsors, however, did not submit any signatures to election officials by the deadline....

This was one of over 60 other initiatives that FAILED to get on the 2014 November Ballot. That included the "6 Californias" measure to break up California into 6 states. Despite media reporting based on press releases, it is NOT on the 2016 ballot! The billionaire who tried to get this on the 2014 ballot will try again in 2016 when it will be even less likely to pass. NB

[Yes, the Private Sector Will Invest in California High-Speed Rail](#)

Fox and Hounds Daily - Jul 28, 2014

Rather, he claims to have discovered that these so-called putative investors are really, gasp, "contractors." Betraying his lack of knowledge regarding infrastructure development, Mr. Reed doesn't realize that in addition to pure finance companies (e.g., Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan, Macquaire, etc.) many of the companies in the infrastructure sector have construction arms, operating arms, and financing arms. Their finance companies raise the funds to help build projects, often with the goal of providing work for their construction subsidiaries. In that context, they are very much investors – putting their capital at risk in order to get a return from system operations.

[Fresno: Future High Speed Rail City](#)

Photos and Story by Noel T. Braymer

Recently I went to visit Fresno for the first time. I have been on the train going through Fresno many times. I have also stopped in Fresno a few times. I even went to Fresno for a RailPAC meeting several years ago. But I've never really visited Fresno. I wanted to see the location of the future High Speed Rail Station and if there were any signs of demolition along the right of way.



Current view of future site of the Fresno High Speed Station. The High Speed Rail tracks will be built next to the UP on the left side of the pole line. Photo by Noel T. Bryamer

[Shreveport Amtrak study finally under way](#)

Daily Comet Jul 29, 2014

SHREVEPORT, La. (AP) — A 12-month study is finally underway to examine the feasibility of re-establishing Amtrak Passenger Rail Service from Shreveport-Bossier City to Vicksburg, Mississippi.

[Amtrak's Downeaster Wrapping Up Difficult Month](#)

WABI-Jul 30, 2014

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — Amtrak's Downeaster is wrapping up the worst month for train cancellations since the passenger rail service launched more than a decade ago. The train's on-time performance usually runs around 80 percent but it dipped to about 15 percent in July and ridership has dropped because of delays and cancellations caused by track repairs following a harsh winter.

[Amtrak's Downeaster back to full schedule](#)

seattlepi.com-Aug 1, 2014

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — Amtrak's Downeaster is back on a regular schedule following a month of train cancellations caused by track maintenance.

[Amtrak train leaves Penn Station for Washington, D.C., without its passengers](#)

New York Daily News-Aug 3, 2014

Scores of travelers were stranded after the Acela Express 2253 took off from one platform about 3 p.m. — while they were waiting at another and unaware the train was leaving them behind....

“They literally sent us to the wrong platform, and the conductor took off without any passengers,” said

Damien Miano, 60, of Chelsea. “The right hand didn’t know what the left hand was doing. It was just so bizarre.”

[NJ TRANSIT Train Breaks Down Outside Hudson River Tunnel In NYC](#)

NEW YORK (CBSNewYork/AP)Jul 29, 2014

A NJ TRANSIT train became disabled just outside the Hudson River tunnel in New York City, delaying other trains throughout the Northeast. **That includes Amtrak, which also owns the tunnel. NB**

[Trial for deadly 2011 Amtrak, truck crash starts Monday](#)

Reno Gazette-Journal-Aug 1, 2014

Three years after a 25-ton Peterbilt tractor-trailer slammed into an Amtrak passenger train at a rail crossing east of Reno, killing six and injuring dozens, a federal trial for the competing lawsuits filed by the railroad and trucking companies will begin Monday in U.S. District Court in Reno.

[Amtrak's on-time performance runs off the rails](#)

Philadelphia Inquirer Jul 30, 2014

Part of the problem, Amtrak says, is that most of its routes operate on tracks owned and controlled by freight railroads. And a federal-court decision last year - which is now headed to the U.S. Supreme Court - undercut Amtrak's ability to compel freight operators to give priority to passenger trains.

In the 12 months ending in June, only two of 33 Amtrak routes met the railroad's nationwide goal of 85.5 percent on-time performance.

[The Southwest Chief: a “Rose-y” mid-summer update](#)

Report and Commentary by Russ Jackson, RailPAC

Opinions expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of the RailPAC Board

Here it is mid-summer, 2014, and no final decisions have been made about the future of Amtrak’s Southwest Chief; whether it will continue to run on its historic route west of Newton, Kansas to Albuquerque, New Mexico be re-routed via the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) “Transcon” route through Amarillo, Texas, and Wichita, Kansas, or be eliminated. True, that decision does not have to be made now but will have to be made by the end of this year. Is there any news? Yes, and that news has a “Rose-y” ring to it.

Well that matt be possible. NB

[System can prevent train accidents, rail industry slow to adopt](#)

SFGate-Jul 27, 2014

Faced with a huge increase in hazardous oil-carrying trains, California is urging quicker implementation of technology that would prevent train accidents caused by human error. But after pushing back against the idea for nearly half a century, the rail industry is far from ready to adopt the safety measure.

[Make the effort, and commuter rail can be as effective as rapid transit](#)

The Transport Politic Jul 28, 2014

Of the 100 largest U.S. metropolitan areas, only two have a majority of their jobs located within three miles of their downtown, and most suburban workers don’t work in city centers. A sizable share of the population doesn’t work a “normal” workweek...

In Ontario, GO Transit is piloting a new approach that could serve as a model for commuter rail agencies that need to be brought into modernity. GO has seven commuter lines that feed into Toronto’s Union Station along 280 miles of service, carrying about 200,000 daily train riders, and until recently it’s been primarily focused on the core, peak-hour, peak-direction commute shared with most agencies.

One year ago, GO took the most significant step yet in that direction, bringing all-day, half-hourly, two-directional service to the Lakeshore commuter lines, up from one-hour headways. The change has

already increased ridership by 30% on those lines.



This is Metrolink crossing Katella Blvd headed south into the Anaheim Station at Angles Stadium. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

[7 Reasons Why Life Is Better In Switzerland Than America](#)

Business Insider Australia-Jul 30, 2014

Amazing public transportation / travel opportunities: You're right in the middle of Europe. From Zurich, Germany is an hour away, France and Italy are 2. Everything else is a few hours by flight. The trains are all on time, and the transportation both intra-city and inter-city is very good. You can pin point any remote location and reach there solely by public transportation.

Much of this is because all forms of public transportation in Switzerland connect with each other with short waiting times between modes. Everything has to be on time to make it work. But Swiss trains connect with buses, ferries, airports and other trains. NB

[Senate Tees Up Last-Minute Showdown on Transpo Funding](#)

Streetsblog Network Jul 30, 2014

With just two work days left before the federal transportation funding source dips into the red, Congress is moving toward a high-stakes showdown over how to close the gap.

Yesterday the Senate passed a bill to transfer \$8 billion from the general fund to the Highway Trust Fund, which would keep things running until December 19 — meaning the next deal would be struck before a new Congress is seated. The House, meanwhile, has a different idea — using unpopular budget gimmicks to extend transportation funding until May 31, when both houses of Congress may be controlled by the GOP.

[Another Congressional stalemate: highway funding](#)

89.3 KPCC Jul 30, 2014

Congress can practically smell the jet fumes, counting the hours till lawmakers leave town for the

summer. But as the legislative clock winds down, the House and Senate are still split over funding for highway construction. If they can't compromise, the money will start running out for road and bridge repairs.

Both the House and Senate have already passed temporary funding measures. The problem is, they don't match up and neither side is willing to blink.

[Transit agency funding threatened as Congress continues to bicker over Highway Trust Fund](#)

The Source Jul 31, 2014

Why does this matter? Here's a staff reporting explaining how Metro could suffer if funds from the Highway Trust Fund to Metro would eventually slow down or be halted.

[Congress votes final passage on highway bill](#)

USA TODAY - Jul 31, 2014

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress gave final approval Thursday to a \$10.8 billion bill to keep federal highway funds flowing to states through the summer construction season and the fall elections. The Senate passed the House-written bill on an 81-13 vote ...

Meeting Notice: Joint Rail PAC/NARP Conference November 15, 2014 in Sacramento at the State Rail Museum! Start making plans now.

Proposed meeting, San Luis Obispo - Wednesday 13 August 2014

The LOSSAN and CRCC Boards will be having their joint meeting in San Luis Obispo on Thursday 14th, details to follow. We are wondering if RailPAC members and friends would be interested in an informal gathering on the Wednesday evening at the new San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum adjacent to the depot. Please let me know as soon as possible if you are interested. We are looking for sponsors for refreshments. There will be a minimum \$10 donation.

Please respond to pdyson@railpac.org.

['Century Crunch': Street Closure Does Little to Disrupt Traffic Near LAX](#)

KTLA - Jul 27, 2014

A bridge demolition project was proceeding slightly ahead of schedule Saturday evening near Los Angeles International Airport, officials said, and few traffic delays were reported as a 57-hour street closure known as the "Century Crunch" continued.

[So how many people are paying to ride?](#)

Los Angeles Times Jul 28, 2014

But figuring out how many of those 115 million riders paid their fares and rode the trains legally has become a vexing question with important consequences.

Times analysis of agency data collected at rail stations found the Metropolitan Transportation Authority documented only 70 million legal rides last year. How much of that difference may be the result of fare evasion — or other factors — is difficult to gauge.

So the millions spent on turnstiles hasn't paid for themselves in increased revenues! People have jumped over, gone under and around turnstiles for a long time. Improving fare enforcement would have been cheaper than turnstiles and revenue would go up as more people didn't pay because more people would be caught and forced to pay fines. As it is Metro doesn't know how many people are not paying fares or just not tapping their TAP Cards when they transfer. NB

[A Look At How Well Free Public Transit Works](#)

Salon Jul 27, 2014

Today, nearly all public transport systems are heavily subsidized, and make only a fraction back from riders. Most mid-size American cities don't clear a 30 percent "farebox recovery ratio"; several U.S. transit agencies recoup less than 5 percent of operating costs through ticket sales. At that point, a transit agency might well spend more money selling tickets (machines, printing, secure money boxes, employees) than it earns. The dozens of small American towns that have free transit service usually aren't forfeiting much revenue by doing so.

[Pub Crawl LA via Metro Rail](#)

NBC Southern California-Jul 28, 2014

Los Angeles, though, has never been especially famous as a pub crawl kind of place. We're not talking to you, Santa Monica -- we know you and your neighborhood-knit ways support a few well-attended crawls throughout the year -- but rather the region at large.

Thrillist is game to address this issue in one fell swoop -- or one fell map, rather: The site has listed a number of watering holes that are within walking distance of our subterranean rails,

[Metrolink to offer special "Rail Series" service as Angels take on the Dodgers](#)

The Source Aug 1, 2014

Watch the Dodgers take on the Angels August 4 and 5 at Dodger Stadium. Metrolink is offering special \$7 round-trip tickets on the Orange County Line on game days. From Union Station, you can hop on the Dodger Stadium Express to get to the game.

[Awaiting 49ers, Santa Clara gears up for first Levi's Stadium event Saturday](#)

Contra Costa Times - Jul 30, 2014

The VTA is imploring fans, more than anything else, to buy their tickets ahead of time by preloading their Clipper cards, especially if they're connecting to Caltrain to get to San Francisco or the Peninsula, or BART to get to the East Bay. The largest lines for ...

[San Francisco Muni crashes trigger emergency response notifications](#)

KTVU San Francisco-Aug 1, 2014

SAN FRANCISCO —The two MUNI crashes Friday which happened in separate parts of the city within minutes of each other triggered San Francisco's emergency alert system, according to a spokesman for one of the hospitals.

The first crash involved a Muni bus and a dump truck on Geary Boulevard about 1:30p.m. The second crash involved a light rail train on the T-line and a semi-rig at the intersection of Third Street and Innes.

[Roadshow: Readers sound off on Highway 237 problems](#)

SiliconValley.com-Jul 31, 2014

Q There are plans to extend BART from Fremont into San Jose. I read somewhere about Caltrain running from Newark to Menlo Park. Neither provides any improvement to conditions on Highway 237. Is there any plan to run a BART or Caltrain line parallel to 237 from the Warm Springs/Milpitas area to Mountain View or Palo Alto?

A Dumbarton Rail Bridge connection would help. NB

[Stuck truck causes Caltrain delays](#)

SFGate-Jul 30, 2014

A truck became wedged under a railroad bridge in San Mateo on Wednesday night, halting Caltrain traffic and causing significant delays, officials said.

[New parking rates to start in Redwood City](#)

San Mateo Daily Journal-Jul 31, 2014

An increase in parking costs in Redwood City's core downtown area are scheduled to begin Monday with a goal of encouraging longer-term parkers to choose less expensive spaces a little further out.



Here is a trainset mostly of Comet Cars in Fresno on train 717. Loading and unloading has been a problem with this equipment with only 2 open doors available with narrow doors and steep steps. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

We Get Email

Re:Freight Railroads Road Blocking Passengers

How is it possible for the freight railroads to block new passenger traffic on their lines?

Seems to me that many of them took huge tracks of land from the federal government back in the early days of rail building in the west.

Were there no expectations that the public would be served with passenger service?

Terry Hamilton

The answer from the railroads to your question would be that they paid back all land and cash subsidies several times over subsidizing passenger and unprofitable short line freight because of government regulations. The result of these subsidies is the rail industry almost went broke about 40 years ago. From an operational standpoint the railroads today have cut their costs to the bone by running more freight with fewer but longer trains than they did years ago with much less double tracking today. To run many more passenger trains mixed in on the freight lines will need many more miles of double track which the rails don't want to pay for since they don't need it. It is reasonable for government to pay for such improvements to expand passenger service.

That said, the current problems with on time performance on the railroads is largely the result of the explosion of oil train traffic. This caught the railroads, particularly the BNSF unprepared. Not only has this affected Amtrak, but also many major shippers, who are unhappy with the railroads for back ups and delayed deliveries. It is hard to predict how long this current oil boom will last. But booms sooner or later go bust.

Most of the talk of a new age of oil abundance is coming from Wall Street. The drillers are deeply in debt to Wall Street, who are pumping oil as fast as they can just to make payments on their loans. This high level of production is suppressing the price of oil making it hard to make money pumping this oil. Many of the predictions of future yields by Wall Street are based on conventional oil well production and that all shale oil reserves will be economical to pump. But the facts are most shale oil wells have a much shorter production life and yield than conventional wells, and the price of oil will have to rise quite a bit before many shale oil reserves will be economical to pump. As it is oil prices are inflated now because of speculation , not from supply and demand. As prices rise demand continues to fall. NB

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

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

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