

Subject: What's the Sunset's Fate? Vegas HSR Comeback? Bad week for the Starlight

From: Rail Passenger Association of California (noelnoelt@cox.net)

To: ntbraymer@yahoo.com;

Date: Tuesday, September 2, 2014 9:32 AM

RailPAC Weekly E-Newsletter for September 2, 2014

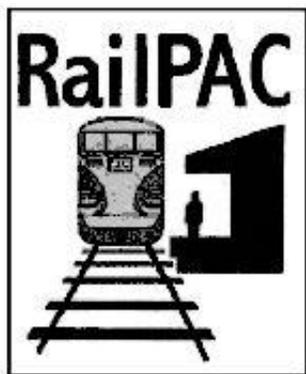
Edited by Noel T. Braymer

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Rail Passenger Association of California
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Traffic? Gas Pains? We need more Trains!

Regional Rail

Overview of LOSSAN Corridor Projects

LOSSAN Board of Directors Meeting
August 14, 2014



This great, if unrealistic (there are no tracks in front of LAUS) is the start of a PowerPoint presentation given by LA Metro at the LOSSAN Board Meeting this August. It is full of great news and over \$800 million in local projects underway just in Los Angeles County.

[Labor Day travel numbers to jump to highest level since 2008](#)

Los Angeles Times-Aug 26, 2014

More than 2.48 million Southern California residents are expected to take a trip over the weekend, a 1.6% increase over last year, according to the Automobile Club of Southern California.

It would mark the highest total number of travelers since 2008, when a record 3.2 million people from Southern California traveled for the holiday.

[Stretch of 280 to close over Labor Day weekend](#)

KTVU San Francisco-Aug 27, 2014

SAN FRANCISCO —As the Bay Area gears up for the Labor Day holiday weekend, Caltrans is trying to get the message out that a stretch of northbound Interstate 280 will be shut down for the entire weekend.

Yet another holiday weekend and rail passenger service is reduced, not expanded for holiday trips! NB

[Marion County train crash: Mechanical problems cause delay; 280 passengers still on board](#)

The Oregonian Aug 25, 2014

The crash occurred on Duckflat Road Southeast near Pearson Road Southeast. The truck driver, 64-year-old Lynn Simonds, said he did not see the train coming when he began crossing the intersection. When the driver saw the train he attempt to clear the tracks, but it was too late.

[Seattle-bound Amtrak delayed 8 hours after hitting semi](#)

KING5.com - Aug 26, 2014

A Marion County sheriff's officer said a 64-year-old truck driver escaped unhurt when the cattle feed truck he was driving was hit by a northbound Amtrak train. Initially, crews thought the damaged train could continue to Portland.

[Amtrak passenger train delayed after Salinas wreck](#)

The Salinas Californian-Aug 27, 2014

A passenger train was delayed for over four hours Saturday after a wreck at the Salinas station, Amtrak spokesperson Vernae Graham said Monday.

Graham couldn't confirm reports a pedestrian was killed in the incident...

In total, the train was delayed for four hours and 22 minutes in Salinas, Graham said. It was later delayed another four hours in San Luis Obispo for further inspection.

Not a good week for two Coast Starlight trains! NB

[Amtrak service suspended after earthquake](#)

SFBay-Aug 24, 2014

Amtrak's Capitol Corridor train service has been temporarily suspended this morning between Sacramento and San Jose while crews inspect the tracks for damage following the earthquake early this morning near American Canyon.

[Muni and Caltrain in service, local sports games on schedule after earthquake](#)

San Francisco Examiner - Aug 24, 2014

It appears to be business as usual in San Francisco today after much of the Bay Area was rattled awake early this morning by a 6.0-magnitude earthquake near Napa.

[6.1 Earthquake Delays Caltrain Service, ACE Cancels Service To 49ers Game](#)

The San Francisco Appeal - Aug 24, 2014

Amtrak's Capitol Corridor train service has been temporarily suspended and Caltrain service is likely to be delayed this morning while the rail systems inspect their tracks following the 6.1-magnitude earthquake that struck southern Napa County.

[Mother Nature gave Levi's Stadium a cool break on Sunday](#)

Contra Costa Times-Aug 24, 2014

SANTA CLARA -- Man-made or natural, the challenges that have dogged newly minted Levi's Stadium all but disappeared Sunday afternoon. The local trains ran on time and plenty of sunscreen lotion, big hats and a cool breeze kept the legions of football fans happy.

[Amtrak, commuter trains in low-speed collision](#)

Boston Globe-Aug 27, 2014

Authorities are investigating a low-speed collision between Amtrak and commuter rail trains in South Boston on Wednesday afternoon, officials said.

The collision took place under the West Fourth Street bridge about 12:50 p.m., near the Southampton Street maintenance facility. No passengers were aboard either train, and no injuries were reported.

The impact derailed and damaged the Amtrak train, a law enforcement official briefed on the investigation said.

[Engine trouble force cancellation of Amtrak train](#)

KWQC 6 - Aug 29, 2014

CARBONDALE, Ill. (AP) - Passengers were forced to leave an Amtrak train traveling from Carbondale to Chicago when engine trouble forced the cancellation of service.

The train, which was scheduled to arrive in Chicago at 9:45 p.m. Friday, slowed to a stop shortly after leaving Carbondale.

[Firsthand experience with erratic train schedules highlights problems with Empire Builder](#)

The Missoulian - Aug 29, 2014

We arrived at our destination of Everett over seven hours late. It meant we missed our entire day planned in Seattle and the ability to see Glacier National Park and other points of interest along the way, as it was never at the right time. We had taken the Lake Shore Limited that goes from New York City to Chicago and on that Amtrak train we arrived in Chicago four hours late, and again, we were not able to do our architectural tour nor have lunch in the five-hour layover Amtrak had on the schedule. We saw others waiting beside the tracks in places like Sandusky, Ohio – people who stood out in the elements for hours.

[The sun is setting earlier now, but what about the fate of Amtrak's Sunset Limited?](#)

By Russ Jackson, RailPAC

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

Passenger Rail advocates can hope that this “CR” happens, as that means the 2015 Dept. of Transportation appropriations bill passed in the House of Representatives will not likely reach a conference committee before the end of the year. That bill contains the two “poison pills” for Amtrak’s long distance trains: The Sessions (R-TX) amendment that would mandate the elimination of Amtrak’s worst performing train (the Sunset Limited) and the Gingrey (R-GA) amendment that mandates that no money in this appropriation could be used to support the Food & Beverage service on the Amtrak system. If both of those amendments survive in a final bill the slow death of the long distance trains will accelerate.

Meeting Notice [Joint Rail PAC/NARP Conference](#)

November 15, 2014 in Sacramento at the State Rail Museum!

An impressive line of speakers has already been confirmed. More details soon.

[DEA Payments to Amtrak Employee Being Investigated](#)

ABC News-Aug 26, 2014

Hundreds of thousands of dollars in alleged payments by Drug Enforcement Administration personnel to an Amtrak employee are being investigated by the Justice Department inspector general's office.

The announcement by Jay Lerner, a spokesman for the IG's office, follows the disclosure by Amtrak's inspector general that DEA paid an Amtrak secretary \$854,460 over nearly 20 years to obtain confidential information about train passengers that the drug-fighting agency could have lawfully obtained for free through a law enforcement network.

[Amtrak Extending Additional Blue Water, Wolverine Trains Through September](#)

WSJM - Aug 27, 2014

Extra Amtrak trains will still be rolling through southern Berrien County and Cass County through the end of September. Amtrak is extending the summer schedule for the Blue Water route from Chicago to Port Huron and the Wolverine line from Chicago to Pontiac for another several weeks.

[City moves forward with high-speed rail station planning](#)

Gilroy Dispatch-Aug 26, 2014

A representative with the California High-Speed Rail Authority announced at the Aug. 26 Rotary Club meeting that the organization partnered with the City of Gilroy to plan for the Garlic Capital's very own station—preferably located downtown.

In July, the City received a \$600,000 grant from the Authority and an additional \$150,000 from the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority to help the City better plan for the station, according to Ricci Graham, Authority spokesperson. The City pitched in \$80,000 from to aid planning efforts

[Full Road Closures on G Street and Kern Street in Fresno](#)

California High Speed Rail Authority Aug 29, 2014

The full closure will begin on the morning of Tuesday, September 2 and remain closed until Friday, October, 10, 2014...

Road closures are in place as part of abatement and demolition activities associated with Del Monte Building

[Kings' HSR legal costs: \\$83K and counting](#)

Hanford Sentinel-Aug 25, 2014

According to County Counsel Colleen Carlson, the county has spent about \$83,000 on what she called “hard” legal costs. Those are fees charged by outside law firms the county has brought in to assist the effort.

Carlson declined to name the total amount supervisors have allocated for the high-speed rail fight. The allocations were decided on in closed session. Carlson declined to state the amount, but she did say that the appropriations were by unanimous consent. She argued that revealing the total legal budget would compromise the county’s legal strategy.

The total population of King County is only 151,364 as of 2012. It has an unemployment rate of 13.1% as of April 2014. NB

[Swearengin won't say she'll vote for Kashkari](#)

San Francisco Chronicle Aug 26, 2014

When Ashley Swearengin, the Republican candidate for state controller, was asked at a Sacramento Press Club lunch Tuesday if she would vote for Kashkari, she said she “was still evaluating the candidates.”

Of course, Swearengin also is mayor of Fresno and suggested that she wasn’t exactly thrilled to have Kashkari — and his film crew — drop by unannounced for a week to show how tough it is to be homeless in California’s fifth-largest city...

Kashkari’s view of Fresno isn’t the only place where he and Swearengin disagree. Like plenty of Central Valley politicians, the mayor is a supporter of California’s high-speed rail plan, which Kashkari has dubbed “the crazy train.”

[Two firms drop out of bidding for Valley's high-speed rail work](#)

Fresno Bee-Aug 25, 2014

Two would-be contenders for a contract to design and build the second stretch of a high-speed train line through the San Joaquin Valley have dropped out of the competition, leaving the California High-Speed Rail Authority with three contractors chasing the job.

[Price Tops Speed for Attracting Passengers](#)

By Noel T. Braymer

How a person travels depends on several factors. Saving time is nice, but so is saving money. Safety and comfort are also factors in choosing how to travel. The best value for traveling is the best combination of speed, price, comfort and safety. If all things are generally equal, price usually is the deciding factor in choosing how to travel.

[California High-Speed Rail No. 9—the Chairman's Turn Again](#)

The Atlantic - Aug 29, 2014

When last we visited this topic, with No. 8, eight readers were offering eight complaints about the concept and execution of the system. Back in early July, with No. 3, the chairman of the High-Speed Rail Authority, Dan Richard, replied to some preceding rounds of criticism. He is back again, with his answers to the latest crop.

[Proposal for rail corridor through Angeles National Forest draws fire](#)

Los Angeles Times-Aug 29, 2014

The opposition is primarily coming from Sunland, Sun Valley, Lake View Terrace, Shadow Hills, La Tuna Canyon and Tujunga — areas that might be disrupted by a forest alignment depending on where it would go. Some residents contend the proposal is already threatening property values and pending real estate sales.

[Las Vegas rail service plans have seen starts, stops](#)

Las Vegas Review-Journal-Aug 31, 2014

Although the loan request's rejection is now more than a year old, there are indications XpressWest may be gearing for another run.

In a recent appearance in Las Vegas, Reid said the loan request may resurface in “a matter of months.” “(California Gov.) Jerry Brown and I spoke recently about our trains,” Reid said. “We both have a vision of high-speed rail in America. Amtrak is not high-speed rail. It's an antiquated system, and I'm glad we have it, but it's not very good.”

Reid noted that construction of California's high-speed rail system linking San Francisco and Los Angeles is underway. The route passes through Palmdale — the place where XpressWest eventually would link its high-speed train to Los Angeles. Reid said an environmental assessment of the right-of-way between Victorville and Palmdale is complete and leaders are looking at how it could work around Buy America provisions.

[China Touts Itself as Winner in High-Speed Rail Stakes](#)

New York Times (blog) - Aug 25, 2014

Seeing the “revolutionary impact” high-speed rail has had on the economies and on people's daily lives in China and Europe, it said, “Americans' high-speed rail dream has become increasingly intense.” But, it adds, “though America leads in freight rail, its passenger rail conditions are terrible.” The article cites, by way of example, a train ride from Washington to Boston that was scheduled to take between six and seven hours but took 13 hours because of heavy rain.

[China likely to start world's longest undersea rail tunnel in 2016](#)

Global Construction Review - Aug 26, 2014

Construction of an extraordinary underwater high-speed rail tunnel in China's Bohai Strait is likely to start some time after 2016, Chinese media report.

The proposed undersea link would stretch more than 100km under Bohai Bay to become the world's longest undersea tunnel, connecting the cities of Dalian and Yantai.

Experts say it will put the two cities within a 40-minute train ride of each other, where now a ferry-ride takes eight hours, while driving around Bohai Bay is a 1,400km road trip.

[Opinion:Our fight to stop the bomb trains traveling through our backyards](#)

San Francisco Examiner Aug 28, 2014

This question recently hit home when a local news station exposed a clandestine crude by rail-loading operation in Richmond, here in the Bay Area, that had been flying under the radar for months. After

making a backroom deal with the local air district, Kinder Morgan secured approval to introduce this highly explosive fracked crude through urban Bay Area neighborhoods without any public notice or environmental review....

Piling on to this environmental injustice, this crude is being loaded onto tanker trucks that are not certified by California. Those trucks then travel on Bay Area roadways until this dangerous commodity reaches its ultimate destination -- the Tesoro refinery in Martinez.

[Cap-and-Trade Survives Attack From Oil Companies](#)

California High Speed Rail Blog Aug 25, 2014

Earlier this year oil companies began spinning up a new attack on AB 32 and the state's wildly successful cap-and-trade system. They convinced a few moderate Democrats that applying cap-and-trade to fuels this coming January would ruin their political chances this November, as it would supposedly cause gas prices to soar. Those Democrats wrote a letter asking for the state to delay subjecting fuels to the cap-and-trade system.

Today the Legislature rejected those claims and killed a bill that would have delayed including the fuels in cap-and-trade auctions:

L.A. Union Station Run-Trough Tracks



5

Another graphic from the LA Metro Powerpoint presentation for the August 14th LOSSAN Board Meeting.

[CTC allocates funds for California rail projects](#)

Railway Track & Structures-Aug 25, 2014

The California Transportation Commission (CTC) has allocated funds for three California rail projects.

[Special late night service added to Metrolink's Los Angeles County Fair schedule](#)

The Source Aug 28, 2014

LOS ANGELES – As part of its annual service, Metrolink will operate late night trains back to L.A. Union Station on both Saturday and Sunday nights from the Los Angeles County Fair (LACF), the largest county fair in the country. The service will begin this weekend and continue on Saturdays and Sundays throughout September.

[Lancaster mulls closing Metrolink station to stop outside poaching of homeless services](#)

Antelope Valley Times Aug 27, 2014

LANCASTER – Downtown Los Angeles is actually sending transient individuals via Metrolink to access homeless services and resources from the city of Lancaster, council members argued at Tuesday's meeting.

And in response, city officials have called for staff to study closing the Lancaster Metrolink Station.

[Lancaster Wants to Close Train Station to Keep Homeless Out](#)

CURBED Los Angeles Aug28, 2014

A report earlier this year found that there are more homeless people coming to Lancaster, but most were from the area, had friends or family in the city, or at least "have found Lancaster on their own as a clean and peaceful alternative to life in the big city."...

Lancaster's bombastic mayor, R. Rex Parris, says he wants the train station—the last stop on the Antelope Valley line that connects to DTLA—shut down "today." No, a mayor can't just order a commuter train station serving thousands of people closed because he believes homeless are using it to access services, the city attorney reminded him.

[Chandler Bikeway's 10-year anniversary celebrated](#)

Burbank Leader Aug 26, 2014

Under a small pop-up tent on the side of the bikeway, members of Walk Bike Burbank, city staff and residents celebrated Chandler's 10-year anniversary with a little cake, a look back at its history and a lot of conversation around what's happening next for Burbank's bikeways....

A few passing cyclists, walkers and runners took up the group's offer of free snacks and desserts while they indulged in a history lesson about the path and the city's plans to extend routes to the downtown Metrolink station.

[City Nears Purchase of Key Parcel for LA River Revitalization](#)

Streetsblog Los Angeles (blog)-Aug 26, 2014

A big property acquisition is underway that will set the stage for planned large-scale revitalization of the Los Angeles River. The City of Los Angeles is expecting to complete the purchase of a former railyard site that Mayor Eric Garcetti and others describe as the “crown jewel” of any large-scale restoration of the river....

Though Taylor Yard had more than 10,000 employees in its 1950s heyday, rail functions were relocated and the site has been largely vacant since the mid-1990s. The rail industry left behind serious soil contamination. Nonetheless, the yard is the largest undeveloped riverfront site along the 51 miles of the Los Angeles River. The yard abuts the Glendale Narrows, one of the least concrete-covered, most natural stretches of river. There are plenty of tall trees, fish, and birds, plus lots of two-legged creatures enjoying the scenery.

[Jimmy Kimmel takes the subway to Emmy Awards in downtown L.A.](#)

Los Angeles Times Aug 25, 2014

Jimmy Kimmel apparently wanted to beat traffic Monday afternoon: The late-night host and wife Molly McNearney took public transportation to the Emmy Awards and chronicled their journey.

[T&Y Bakery opens at Union Station!](#)

The Source Aug 25, 2014

T&Y stands for Tbilisi & Yerevan (the capitol cities of Georgia and Armenia) and the bakery selections reflect that heritage. Pierogi, baclava, cannoli, breads, black and white cookies. What more could we want? Well, maybe ice cream but Ben & Jerry's is just next door and Starbucks is across the concourse.

[California commission OKs noise measures for Foothill Gold Line](#)

Progressive Rail Roding-Aug 26, 2014

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) late last week approved the Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension Construction Authority's request to implement noise mitigation measures at grade crossings near neighborhoods along the line from Pasadena to Azusa, Calif.

The approved measures include installation of covers that will direct the sound of warning bells down to the intersection, as well as the ability to silence bells once the crossing gates are down when a light-rail train is approaching, according to an authority-issued press release.

[Mike Scanlon announces retirement](#)

RailwayAge Magazine-Aug 28, 2014

In 1999, Scanlon, 67, was named of GM and CEO of SamTrans, Executive Director of the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Authority, and Executive Director of the San Mateo County Transportation Authority. "During his 15 years and at the direction of the District's three boards, Scanlon has transformed SamTrans into a modern mobility manager, led the dynamic growth of Caltrain into a regional and record-setting rail system, presided over the reauthorization of the Transportation Authority sales tax by 75% of the voters, and undertook the Caltrain Modernization program to electrify and modernize Caltrain," said SamTrans Board Chair Jeff Gee.

[Caltrain reaches deadline for comments on strategic plan](#)

Progressive Rail Roding-Aug 29, 2014

Caltrain will wrap up its public comment period today on its draft strategic plan that will set a vision for the agency for the next 10 years. The agency has been collecting comments for the past 10 months.

[San Rafael plans three meetings on SMART quiet zones](#)

Marin Independent Journal-Aug 24, 2014

With the Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit train expected to roll into San Rafael in 2016, city officials are holding meetings to discuss whether residents want to petition for quiet zones.

[Trolley Ridership Up by 10 Million, As Transit Use Hits All-Time High](#)

Times of San Diego - Aug 19, 2014

The Metropolitan Transit System logged an all-time high of 95 million passenger trips, driven by a big jump in use of the San Diego Trolley in the last year, officials said.

The 95,010,550 trips was an 11.5 percent increase over 2012-13 and topped the old record of 91,641,508, set three years ago, according to the MTS...

But the dip on buses was more than offset by larger numbers of trolley riders. More than 39.7 million trolley trips were taken during the fiscal year, a jump of around 10 million, according to the MTS.

Large increases were seen on the Green Line, with a 42 percent jump in ridership between downtown San Diego and Santee, and the Orange Line, with a 31 percent rise in trips between downtown San Diego and El Cajon.

The Blue Line, which runs between Old Town and Tijuana, carried the most passengers, with 15.1 million trips.

New Trolley Network Map



In late 2012 San Diego reorganized its Trolley service which included pulling back the Blue Line from Old Town to the American Plaza Station. The Gold line was pulled off of the Bay Shore leg by Seaport Village and the Convention Center. At same time the Green Line was extended from Old Town to 12th and Imperial which gave faster service when traveling from the Green Line south of downtown San Diego. Much of the growth in ridership was on the Green Line since these changes. In the next few years the Blue Line will be extended past Old Town on new construction north to UCSD and University Town Centre (UTC) . NB

[How Lots of Cars and Low Incomes Keep LA So Unaffordable](#)

CURBED Los Angeles Aug 28, 2014

The CBC reports use the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Location Affordability Index, which incorporates housing prices combined with transportation costs, in relation to income: "transportation costs typically are a major component of household budgets, usually second only to housing ... a tradeoff between housing costs and transportation costs often exists, and taking both into account can provide a better measure of residential affordability in an area than only considering housing costs." LA's transportation costs aren't as high as one might expect for such a car-dependent city, but

they aren't so low that they can make up for the city's relatively low incomes.

[Chicago Is Working to Prevent Train Suicides](#)

Governing-Aug 27, 2014

Signs on railway station platforms in Boston, New York and Toronto are intended to offer help to anyone who is emotionally distressed or suicidal _ a last-ditch effort to keep people from taking a final, fatal step onto the train tracks.

Increasingly, commuter rail agencies in those cities and in Europe have decided it's good public policy to partner with local suicide prevention organizations by posting 24/7 hotline numbers and urging counseling for those who are troubled.

Regional Rail Capital Program

	Project	Est. Const. Cost	Status
1	Southern California Regional Interconnector Project (SCRIP)	\$ 350M	In progress
2	Doran Street Grade Separation	\$ 40M	In progress
3	CP Raymer to CP Bernson Double Track	\$ 85M	In progress
4	Van Nuys Second Platform	\$ 35M	In progress
5	Vincent Grade Siding and Platform	\$ 13M	In progress
6	Bob Hope Airport/Hollywood Way Station	\$ 3.75M	In progress
7	Bob Hope Airport Station Ped. Overcrossing	\$ 15M	Eng. 1/15
8	Rosecrans/Marquardt Grade Separation	\$ 120M	Eng. 1/15
9	CP White to Lone Hill	\$ 70M	Env. 1/15
10	Brighton to Roxford Double Track	\$ 110M	Env. 11/14
	Total	\$ 841.75M	

This is just the intercity rail projects currently funded projects for Los Angeles County. Construction on the run-through tracks or SCRIP should start by November 2017 and finish by January 2020.

We Get Emails

Re:What is Metrolink's Problem?

In my opinion, this has to be one of the better analysis of Metrolink's problems that I've read in a while. (I have to thank Ken Ruben for bringing this link to my attention as I don't usually read RailPAC's postings cover to cover). This describes a problem I have run into many times. Despite having tried numerous times to get to destinations that are served by Metrolink stations, I've basically given up and almost always drive.

1. My biggest frustration has been trying to get from Anaheim to points north of Los Angeles. It is very frustrating seeing that Metrolink is scheduled to depart north out of Los Angeles 5 minutes before my train from the south arrives into Los Angeles. Then I'd have to wait around LAUS for another hour or so for the next train. Much faster to just drive, even with traffic.

2. Trying to get from Anaheim or Fullerton to San Juan Capistrano. Many trains terminate and turn around 5 miles short of San Juan Capistrano at Mission Viejo. An OCTA minibus is provided from Mission Viejo to San Juan Capistrano. But again, that makes driving faster and more convenient than taking the train.
3. Metrolink runs a morning train weekdays out of all stations south of Los Angeles that connects with the northbound Amtrak that heads out of Los Angeles Union Station at about 7:30am. There are NO trains that connect with this 7:30am train on weekends. Thus, I have to drive to Los Angeles on Saturday mornings when I ride the Overland Trail VinoTrain.
4. My wife and I frequent a restaurant with live jazz in Claremont. During the performance we can hear the Metrolink trains coming and going. The Metrolink Station is only a couple of blocks down. But after the performance is over, there are no inbound Metrolink trains. So again, driving to Claremont is the only option.
5. My wife and I like the live music at the Mission Inn at Downtown Riverside. There are Metrolink trains that will get us there, but there are no trains to get us back. Due to the terrible traffic on the 91 Freeway during rush hour, we rarely bother to go to Riverside at all, which is something we would do if we had a way to get back via Metrolink.
6. When Bob Manning and I get together, we will often meet in Downtown Riverside as that is relatively central between Palm Springs and Orange County. Though there is direct train service between Anaheim Hills and Downtown Riverside, it runs so infrequently and mostly during rush hour, that I can seldom use it to attend these meetings. Hence again, driving is the only option.

Most people don't even check to see if there is a rail option to get where they are going. But if they did, they'd most likely run into the same problem that I run into. Even where there is Metrolink service between ones starting point and destination, most likely the service is too infrequent or runs at the wrong times to be useful. Metrolink mostly seems to be just useful if you are a commuter and you happen to live close to one of its suburban stations and work near one of its metropolitan stations, especially in Los Angeles.

If Metrolink ran all day on all its routes on a frequent basis (hourly?) and served all of its stations, then I would most likely use Metrolink for all of the above trips and probably more. I am probably far from the only one who considers Metrolink unusable for most of their transportation needs, even when there are stations and trains that serve the route.

Steve Grande

For change to happen, what is needed is to get through to the elected officials who oversee Metrolink to create a network of service that will allow more taxpayers to get better utilization of a service they support though their taxes. NB

Re: How many trains needed to cover track maintenance?

Union Pacific doesn't seem willing to run a daily train along the Sunset route and more trains are needed to fully serve the market, so the idea occurs to me that we might accede to UP's demands and separate the passenger rail as much as possible: i.e. buy abandoned right of ways such as the Wellton cutoff Between Yuma and Phoenix to build an independent system. How many trains a day do we need to make that economically self sustaining?

Multiple daily trains with minimal transfers is supposed to be the most profitable, particularly if you can stretch the route length as far as possible, so my idea was to combine trains in pairs, with the Texas Eagle and North Shore limited sharing the northern route at complementary times, and the Sunset and the Crescent working opposite sides of the timetable along the southern route. This is historically justified, since the Sunset Limited used to have through sleepers going to New York on the Crescent. The City of New Orleans can be extended to Jacksonville to serve the gulf coast.

This puts two trains a day along the southern route between New York and El Paso (itself a large market), although as another change I would add stops at Marfa, a popular tourist and art destination, Uvalde, which at 15,000 needs a stop, and Hondo.

Two more trains would be running the northern route. The main change I would make here would be to shift the route between El Paso and DFW to the I-20 corridor through Midland and Abilene.

This arrangement would send 4 trains a day between LA and El Paso, serving the LA to Tucson market via direct service through Phoenix. Two additional DMU trains could serve the LA to Tucson route, making a total of 6 trains a day through the Wellton cutoff route.

Would that be enough to cover the cost of maintaining the tracks? Amtrak would still need to run on Class I rails in the low traffic corridors, but if we could profitably run on independent tracks in the high traffic corridors it could ease a lot of difficulties with the timetables and quality of service.

Claude L. Medearis

El Cajon, CA

The problem as far as the railroads are concerned is they aren't being paid enough by Amtrak now for running passenger trains on their freight lines. The railroads say they are not making money running Amtrak. Amtrak even promotes the fact that by law Amtrak gets a major discount to use the freight lines. For joint commuter services using freight lines, the railroads get quite a bit more per mile than what they get paid by Amtrak. In the case of the Capitol Corridor JPA, it has been paying the UP for several years extra money to improve and maintain the tracks to higher standards than needed for freight. The results are, the Capitol Corridor has an excellent on-time record even after running time was reduced and freight operations run better with fewer problems too. Also the UP is happy dealing with the JPA. Amtrak however has no desire to pay more money to the railroads even if it meant expanding service and increased revenues. 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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