

<b>Subject:</b>	Colorado and Kansas have funds to save Southwest Chief, New Mexico? New Amtrak Bill , much good, some not so good.
<b>From:</b>	Rail Passenger Association of California (noelnoelt@cox.net)
<b>To:</b>	ntbraymer@yahoo.com;
<b>Date:</b>	Monday, September 15, 2014 9:30 AM

## **RailPAC Weekly E-Newsletter for September 15, 2014**

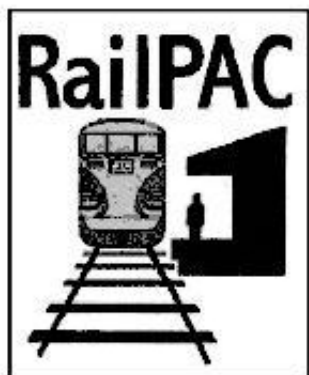
**Edited by Noel T. Braymer**

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**Traffic? Gas Pains? We need more Trains!**



This picture is a year old but shows a common sight of nearly empty trains during the off peak on Metrolink. This is train 687 waiting to depart Laguna Niguel /Mission Viejo at 8:40 AM. It has a connection with Metrolink train 850 from Oceanside to Riverside which arrives at LN/MV at 8:14 AM. Metrolink doesn't just ignore this connection like many others, it doesn't even allow through ticketing between these 2 trains, The ticket machines say no trains to Los Angeles in next 2 hours if you try to connect with the 850 to the 687. There are many more places to travel in Southern California than just to and from downtown Los Angeles during rush hours. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

### [Contrary to national trends, ridership down on Southern California's Metrolink rail system](#)

Minneapolis Star Tribune - Sep 8, 2014

Metrolink board members and analysts blame the initial loss of ridership on the recession — and the slow recovery on the lack of an employment boom in downtown Los Angeles, the system's chief destination.... Metrolink's struggles do not track with national public transit trends. In March, the American Public Transportation Association reported that the number of rides taken on public buses, trains and subways has fully recovered from a decrease during the recession.

**The population of the greater Los Angeles Metropolitan area is over 18 million people. Metrolink serves most of this area, yet is struggling to get over 50,000 riders a day? NB**

### [To get more riders, Metrolink should lower fares](#)

Los Angeles Times-Sep 11, 2014

Letters to the Editor

The comments by officials about ridership growth on the weekends due to the \$10 pass make my case that ridership is price sensitive. One way to greatly increase ridership on the weekends would be to add frequencies to existing services and schedule these trains to connect with each other so people can

transfer to more places with the weekend pass.

In any business when you have excess inventory — and seats are the inventory of transportation — it's time to have a sale.

**You can guess who wrote this, hint his initials are NB.**

### [\\$12.5 million in federal funds slated for the Southwest Chief](#)

The Denver Post - Sep 9, 2014

The new funds ensure the route will continue through the Centennial state for at least the next two decades after Amtrak pledged to continue service through that span with the grant's issuance. "This is the single best piece of news in four years since we ...

### [Southwest Chief gets reprieve in Colorado, Kansas](#)

Santa Fe New Mexican.com - Sep 9, 2014

Amtrak pledged to continue services along the endangered Southwest Chief passenger rail route through parts of Colorado and Kansas for two more decades Tuesday, when those states received federal transportation grants for the project. But the line's future in New Mexico remains uncertain.

Eleven communities in southern Colorado and the state of Kansas committed \$9.3 million in matching funds to secure the \$12.5 million Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery, or TIGER, grants from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

### [Amarillo still in running for Amtrak route](#)

Amarillo.com-Sep 10, 2014

A Kansas-Colorado coalition has secured \$12.5 million in federal funding to upgrade 54 miles of Amtrak's rough Southwest Chief route, but no money has yet been committed to improve the route's most rugged stretch in New Mexico.

Without upgrades, Amtrak has said it could reroute the Southwest Chief through the Texas Panhandle and Amarillo.

### [Our Voice: Long slow climb toward daily Amtrak service](#)

The Desert Sun-Sep 10, 2014

Riverside County supervisors on Tuesday approved a resolution urging approval of a \$3 million federal grant to complete the environment assessment of the route. The grant would be matched with \$900,000 in local funding.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, a Democrat from California, wrote to the U.S. secretary of transportation supporting the grant. "The Coachella Valley-San Geronio Passenger Rail project will create a much-needed rail option for over 10 million people, integrate transit networks and promote economic development," she wrote to Secretary Anthony Foxx.

### [House bill cuts Amtrak funding 40 percent](#)

The Hill - Sep 11, 2014

The bill is unlikely to be approved by lawmakers before this year's elections. "The reality is intercity passenger rail plays an important role in our national transportation network," House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bill Shuster (R-Pa.) said.

### [Bipartisan Passenger Rail Legislation introduced in U.S. House](#)

Posted on RailPAC.org by Russ Jackson

PRESS RELEASE Washington, DC – Transportation and Infrastructure Committee leaders today introduced bipartisan legislation that improves the infrastructure, reduces costs, leverages private sector resources, creates greater accountability and transparency, and accelerates project delivery for Amtrak and the Nation's passenger rail transportation system...

“This bill provides much-needed investments in the long-distance network and ensures continuation of all long-distance trains, including the Cardinal Route that runs through southern West Virginia,” Rahall said... Profits from Amtrak’s only profitable route — the Northeast Corridor (NEC) – currently are not invested back into the corridor. And although significant ridership increases are occurring on Amtrak’s state-supported routes, its inconsistent financial structure and “black box” accounting system hamper states’ ability to help manage the routes and understand what exactly it is they’re paying Amtrak for....

Creates station development opportunities for the private sector

Opens new revenue streams through right-of-way development

Unlocks an underutilized federal railroad loan program

Assists with advancing large infrastructure projects through partnerships with states

**There are several good ideas in this bill, but there might be problems reinvesting the NEC "profits" NB**

### [Followup Comments re HR5449 regarding Amtrak](#)

Commentary written by Andrew C. Selden

The NEC is also by far Amtrak’s most heavily-subsidized sector, both in gross and per passenger mile. The NEC relies on about three quarters of a billion dollars a year of federal cash. (Amtrak’s rhetoric distinguishing “capital” from “operating” costs is both arbitrary and inconsistent with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, it is also meaningless. Follow the annual federal cash grant to Amtrak, and you will see that the large majority of it ends up in the NEC (and servicing debt incurred to support the Acela program). The federal grant cash consumed in the long distance network is negligible—in fact Amtrak represented in writing to a US Senator in 2011 that shutting down ALL long distance services would not save any losses or subsidies!

### [Accessibility Problems Dog Amtrak](#)

Disability Scoop-Sep 9, 2014

In the last two years, Amtrak has made “limited progress” in improving compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, according to an internal inspector general’s report.

The failure to make substantial improvements stems largely from ineffective management and the lack of a written strategic plan, the report indicates.

As of 2011, only 48 of the 482 stations Amtrak serves were ADA compliant. Accordingly, Amtrak committed roughly \$100 million to address the problems during 2012 and 2013.

### [Dome car returns to Amtrak's Adirondack](#)

Albany Times Union (blog)-Sep 10, 2014

Amtrak said its “Great Dome” car, a two-level passenger car with a bubble-like glass covering on the upper level that provides expanded views of the surrounding scenery, will return to the Adirondack service between the Capital Region and Montreal Sept. 25th.

### [Take the Amtrak-Chargers Express](#)

Chargers.com-Sep 10, 2014

It’s easy going to Chargers home games by train. Take Amtrak and leave driving and parking hassles behind. From Los Angeles and Orange County, you can travel on the Pacific Surfliner to the Old Town San Diego station and then ride the trolley to Qualcomm Stadium. On the train, relax, enjoy the views and have a snack and beverage in the Café Car. With free Wi-Fi®, connect your mobile device and get the latest scores

### [Caltrans and Amtrak California Kick off Rail Safety Month by Asking Californians to Take a Pledge to “Be Track Smart”](#)

Business Wire (press release)-Sep 8, 2014



A giant rail safety pledge banner will make its way across the state throughout the month of September collecting pledges and signatures including those of local mayors and family members of those who have been killed in rail-related incident



This is at the Newhall Station in July of last year on the Antelope Valley Line. This is shortly after fare increases were announced and an attempt was made to increase revenues from the budget shortfall by cracking down on fare evaders. To this end for several weeks all passengers had their tickets checked on several lines before boarding. It is doubtful this exercise did anything to increase revenues. The Antelope Valley Line which got this treatment has seen major ridership loss. On the Orange County Line ridership hasn't seen major losses and staff didn't bother passengers at the train doors for tickets. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

### [Annual Steel Wheels Conference](#)

**Saturday – November 15th**

**Register Today**

**Members: \$35 / Non-members: \$45**

### [City Maps Show Who Lives Closest to Dangerous Blast Zones](#)

Next City-Sep 10, 2014

With little public information available, activists, municipal governments and even data analysts have scrambled to fill in the gaps. As headline after dire headline pointed out over the last year, North America's crude oil boom has a number of steep downsides, and the most spectacular is exploding trains.

### [Kern County approves state's biggest 'oil train' project](#)

Sacramento Bee - Sep 10, 2014

The Kern County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a controversial plan Tuesday to ship millions of gallons of volatile crude oil daily on trains through California to a refinery in Bakersfield.

## [Oil hits two-year low below \\$97 as supplies build](#)

Reuters Sep 11, 2014

LONDON (Reuters) - Brent crude dropped to a two-year low below \$97 a barrel on Thursday, falling for a sixth straight session as worries over mounting supply and weak demand outweighed concerns that conflicts in the Middle East could curb oil production....

The West's energy watchdog said on Thursday slowing global economic growth, particularly in China and Europe, had curbed oil demand severely at a time when supplies were growing steadily, particularly from North America.

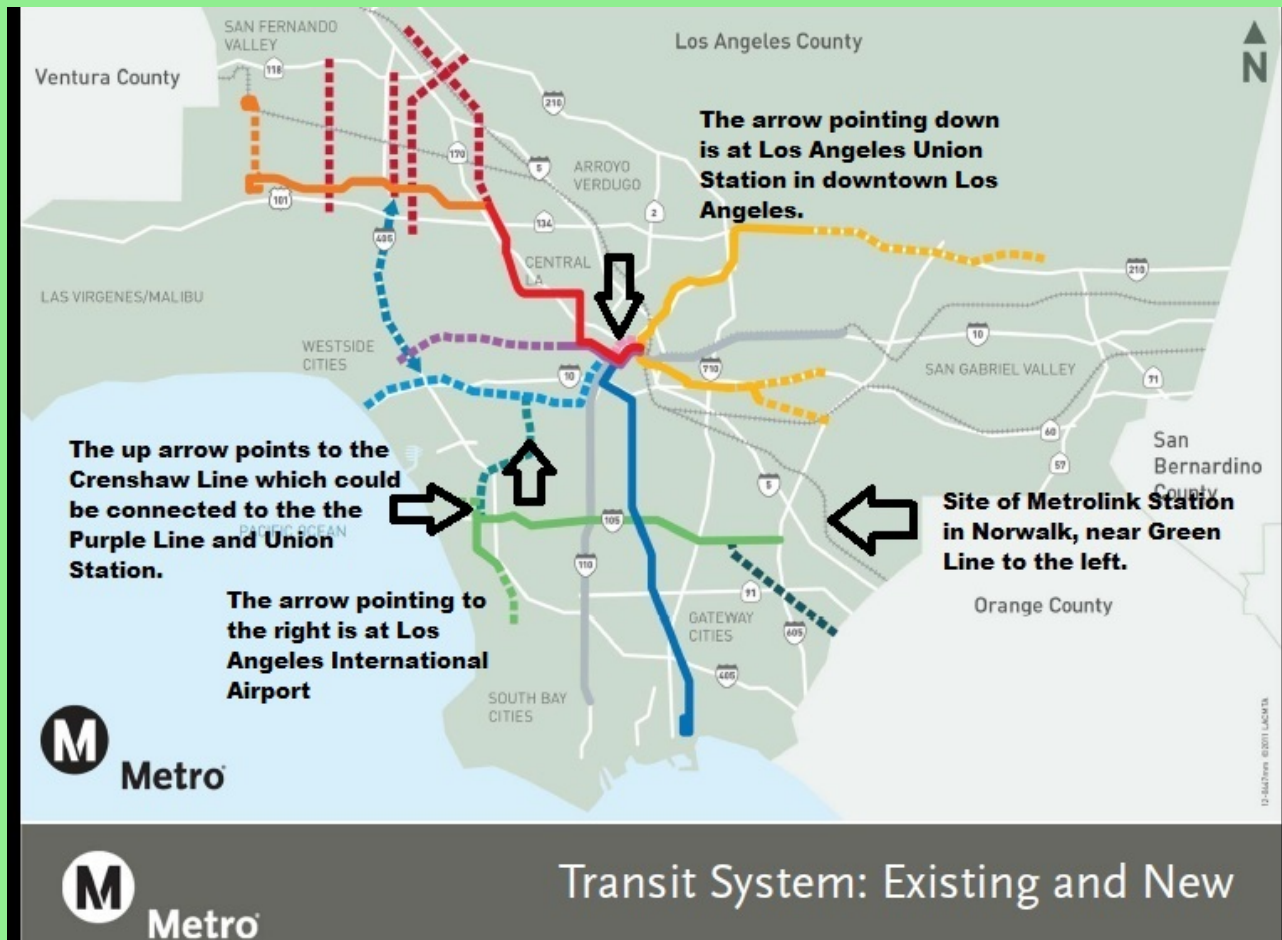
## [Assemblyman Mike Davis Presented a Hearing "Review of Rail Transportation in Southern California"](#)

Lasentinel-Sep 12, 2014

LOS ANGELES – Assemblyman Mike Davis (D-Los Angeles), Chair of the Select Committee on Rail Transportation presented the final hearing in a three part series at Expo Center, Comrie Hall in Exposition Park. The hearing examined the plans for rail projects in Los Angeles County...

A large amount of time was devoted to the discussion of the importance of connectors to the Los Angeles Airport from the Green Line, Red Line and Metrolink.

**Metrolink and the Purple Line should connect to LAX. The most likely ways to do this will not be cheap. The Green Line, which will serve LAX could be extended just over 2 miles to the Norwalk/Santa Fe Springs Metrolink Station. This station might also be a future High Speed Rail station. The most direct way to the Purple Line Line to LAX would be to extend the now under construction Crenshaw Line north to the Purple Line. Both will require miles of tunneling. NB**



## [State OKs first steps to condemn more Fresno properties for rail route](#)

Fresno Bee-Sep 12, 2014

The California Public Works Board voted 3-0 Friday to adopt resolutions declaring a public need to condemn five Fresno properties to make way for the state's controversial high-speed train project.

### [East Japan Railway targets Californian high speed contracts](#)

Railway Gazette International - Sep 8, 2014

JR East announced in Tokyo that it expects to work in partnership with six other firms in an effort to export Japanese Shinkansen technology to the USA. While the prime focus if the consortium would be rolling stock, JR East is also understood to be targeting the supply of signalling equipment. The group also reportedly believes that Japan's experience of building and operating high speed lines through areas prone to seismic activity could be attractive to CHSRA. ..

Tenders for the supply of an initial batch of around 25 high speed trainsets are expected to be issued by the end of the year.

### [Will California's First High Speed Train go to Las Vegas?](#)

By Noel T. Braymer

It is looking more and more that California's first High Speed Train will go to Las Vegas. Senator Harry Reid of Nevada, a major supporter of California- Las Vegas High Speed Rail service, says he has been talking with Governor Brown about the future of California-Las Vegas High Speed Rail. Senator Reid has said that an announcement about a new financial plan for the project will be made soon that will get Las Vegas High Speed Rail back on track.

### [Sacramento Siemens plant to build Florida high-speed rail cars](#)

Sacramento Bee-Sep 11, 2014

All Aboard Florida will receive an initial order of five train sets consisting of two locomotives and four passenger coaches. The Florida trains will be diesel-powered, whereas California's would draw electricity from overhead wires.

### [Why Americans love to hate the train — and always have](#)

Grist - Sep 11, 2014

Earlier this month, I moved cross-country using Amtrak. This is part two of the story I began here. After boarding the train in Boston, I found a good seat, and settled in to watch the state go by. I almost never drive, so taking a train like this is a rare opportunity to see what the more remote parts of the country look like.

### [Rail union rejects deal that allowed one-man crews](#)

WBOC TV 16- Sep 11, 2014

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) - A railroad union has rejected a deal with BNSF that would have allowed one-person crews on as much as 60 percent of its tracks...

BNSF operates tracks in 28 states in the western U.S. and two Canadian provinces. The railroad, based in Fort Worth, Texas, said it has Positive Train Control systems installed on about 60 percent of its 32,500 miles of track.

### [BNSF to kill Fresno-Chicago freight rail service](#)

Fresno Business Journal-Sep11, 2014

Railroad operator BNSF announced it is ending its intermodal rail service out of Fresno, discontinuing weekly service to Chicago effective Dec. 8. The consolidation will have BNSF shifting traffic to its Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Stockton facilities "so that we can provide more consistent and frequent service for our customers shipping in and out of the Central Valley of California," said Amy Casas, BNSF director of corporate communications, in an email.

### [Poor rail service threatens economy, shippers tell lawmakers](#)

News & Observer-Sep 10, 2014

WASHINGTON — Rail service backups from Chicago to the Pacific Northwest have the potential to slow the entire economy, several train-reliant industries told lawmakers Wednesday.

Representatives from grain producers and chemical and automobile manufacturers testified before a Senate panel that poor rail service has cost them business because they can't get enough rail cars to move their products and then can't get the trains to move fast enough.

### [Union Station plan could bring relief for Metra, Amtrak passengers](#)

Chicago Tribune-Sep 10, 2014

The station is like a "warren of obscure passageways with no natural light," said Marc Magliari, Amtrak's manager of media relations.

Jeffrey Sriver, planning director for the Chicago Department of Transportation, said work will be underway in 2015 on two projects that will produce an immediate benefit for commuters.

### [S.F. cuts deal with downtown property owners on tax district](#)

SFGate-Sep 10, 2014

Under the agreement, the city will still collect up to \$1.4 billion in taxes from property owners around the new transit center for the Caltrain, and possibly high-speed rail, connection. But the revenue would come in over 37 years instead of 30 after city officials agreed to extend the life of the tax district to make it more palatable for the property owners.

### [Caltrain launches electric train consultation](#)

International Railway Journal-Sep 9, 2014

Caltrain says the EMUs will replace around 75% of its fleet of diesel locomotives and coaches on the route under the Caltrain Modernisation Programme, which is due to be completed by 2019. The cost of the project is estimated at \$US 1.2bn, including \$US 440m for the new train fleet.

### [Parking permits program appealed: San Mateo streets may be included to deter Caltrain commuters](#)

Daily Journal Sep 10, 2014,

A group of residents are disagreeing over whether their San Mateo neighborhood should be included in a permit program that would deter Caltrain commuters from using their street as a free parking lot. ..

"Our neighborhood is pretty much the only neighborhood within a quarter mile of the Caltrain Station where people can park (and not pay)," Tsai said. "The station (parking lot) is never full and it's huge.

### [Farm animals ride Metrolink to LA County Fair](#)

Inland Valley Daily Bulletin - Sep 10, 2014

It's not every day you see animals at a train station, but on Wednesday at Union Station in Los Angeles that's exactly what riders saw.

The animals were there to ride the train to the Los Angeles County Fair in Pomona and that's just what they did.

### [One-Fifth of LA's New Housing in Past 15 Years is in Downtown](#)

Curbed LA-Sep 9, 2014

Since 1999, almost 20,000 new housing units have been built in Downtown, with 20,000 more set to be finished within the next 10 years. Meanwhile, only 98,000 units have been built in the entire city in the last 15 years. A lot of that might have to do with how development is received in DTLA versus elsewhere in LA. Downtown is open to density (which makes sense, since it's also a public transit hub) and is



generally pro-high-rise. Meanwhile, in most of the rest of the city, proposals for new housing projects are regularly met with heavy opposition from the neighbors, often driven by the flawed California Environmental Quality Act, which in extreme cases lets NIMBYs hold projects back until they get a pay out. And the resulting shortage is at least part of the reason why housing has become more and more unaffordable.



This picture is from last summer at the platforms at LAUS. Security is still checking tickets before passengers are allowed on the platforms to deter fare jumpers. Some security is needed on the platforms, but it is unlikely that these measures have improved Metrolink's bottom line. A friendlier, more customer service centered approach would do more to attract and retain more riders and revenues. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

## We Get Emails

### Re: Ridership and the Economy

We need to view the drop in rail ridership as a continuing indication that the economy is still suffering.

Jim Fuhrman

Garden Grove

**There is no question that the recovery from the 2007 recession is one of the slowest in history. This is particularly true outside of the United States which is why demand for oil is low and there are now lower oil prices. In terms of Metrolink, its ridership has declined while the local economy has grown. What Metrolink has identified as a major cause for their ridership loss has been the loss of government jobs in downtown Los Angeles. Because the economy is still not up to full speed, people are extra price conscious. Rising fares have taken a toll on Metrolink ridership, more than for much of the rest of the country. To make up for lost ridership, other markets**

**need to be looked at on Metrolink to bring in more riders. NB****Re: Tower 55 (not 51) and Mr. Schlegel's comments.**

The reason Tower 55 is not going to be multilevel is that TxDOT and its predecessor the Highway Dept. (1) originally built a complex, multilevel freeway interchange over, under, and around it and then (2) over the objections of the railroads, eliminated the necessary clearances which were in the new design to allow for grade separation when they rebuilt the interchange. This left the railroads with no choice but to make the best of a really bad situation and rebuild it as they are doing now. The resulting arrangement will continue to tie up freight traffic, although perhaps not as badly as before, and still forms a formidable barrier to getting any reasonable number of future passenger movements across it.

Dr. Bill Hamilton P.E  
Pflugerville, Texas

**Re: Tower 55 (not 51) and Mr. Schlegel's comments**

While the Tower 55 project should have been done simultaneously with the highway construction years ago, we are where we are. The addition of the third north-south track will allow increased volume on the BNSF. Amtrak will have fewer and shorter waits. During the construction period Amtrak's Texas Eagle used the TRE line between Dallas and Ft. Worth so that wyeing the train could be avoided. If anything should be done now it is continuing to do that, as the need to wye the train at Tower 55 adds much running time, and it would avoid freight interference while running on the UP between DAL and FTW. Grade separation is a legitimate dream here, but not something to expect in the near future for planners who did work for years to ascertain what could realistically be done.

Russ Jackson, RailPAC, Dallas

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