

Subject:	Fw: Bad week for the Starlight. Train delays east of Chicago and nation wide!
From:	Noel Braymer (ntbraymer@yahoo.com)
To:	qopus1988@yahoo.com;
Date:	Tuesday, October 14, 2014 12:14 AM

On Monday, October 13, 2014 9:30 AM, Rail Passenger Association of California <noelnoelt@cox.net> wrote:

RailPAC Weekly E-Newsletter for October 13, 2014

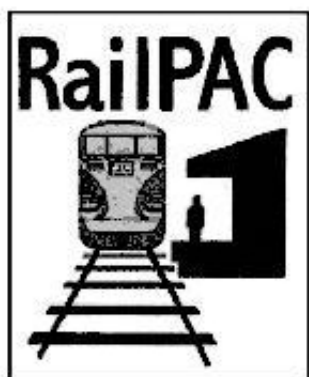
Edited by Noel T. Braymer

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



This is the Civic Center Drive Sprinter Station in Vista. With the use of drawbridges at the platforms it is possible to have level platform loading without building separate tracks for other trains. The drawbridges are raised at night so freight trains can use the tracks. With drawbridges it would be possible to have both high level and low level platforms at the same track. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

[Caltrain and High-Speed Rail Pursue Level Boarding, Compatible Platforms](#)

Streetsblog San Francisco (blog)-Oct 7, 2014

Still, many transit advocates remain skeptical that the CAHSRA is sincere about pursuing shared level platforms. The agency issued a Request for Expressions of Interest on October 1 specifying single-level train cars with a floor height of 51 inches above the rails, incompatible with most of the available bi-level electric commuter trains that Caltrain is considering. CAHSR officials insist they have not ruled out alternative platform heights, but say that trains operating at speeds of 220 mph work best with a floor height of around 50 inches.

[Caltrain electrification design-build gets nod](#)

RailwayAge Magazine-Oct 7, 2014

California Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr., has signed California Senate Bill (SB) 785, legislation that allows the Caltrain electrification project to proceed as a design/build procurement. The Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board's (Caltrain's owner/operator) authority to issue design/build contracts expires at the end of this year, but SB 785 extends the authorization until 2024.

[Amtrak trains often trickle into Toledo after delays](#)

Toledo Blade - Oct 5, 2014

While there have been exceptions, by far the biggest obstacle to Amtrak's time-keeping across northern Indiana and northern Ohio has been tracks blocked by freight trains belonging to Norfolk Southern, which

owns and operates the line Amtrak uses between Chicago and Cleveland.

“It’s absolutely unbelievable what they’re doing to the American people. It’s a fraud,” Ms. Smith said. “Every train I’ve been on has been late leaving and late arriving, and freight trains are given as the reason.”

[Amtrak busing delayed passengers](#)

Toledo Blade-Oct 7, 2014

Chronic passenger train delays of eight to 12 hours between Toledo and Chicago have prompted Amtrak to begin busing passengers on that route.

Amtrak started busing customers on Sunday when the train was more than 10 hours late, said Amtrak spokesman Christina Leeds...She said the passenger train delays are caused by congestion on the tracks Amtrak uses between New York and Toledo for the Lake Shore Limited and Washington, D.C. and Toledo for the Capitol Limited.

[Solutions sought for chronic Amtrak, freight train delays in northern Ohio](#)

The Plain Dealer - Oct 7, 2014

Ed and Rosemary Sobala, heading home to Buffalo after a train trip to the canyon-lands of Arizona, Utah and Nevada, weren't too surprised. Not one of the Amtraks on their two-week journey was on time, they said. In fact, not one was less than 5½ hours late. When the Lake Shore Limited was stalled in Cleveland, they were headed home to Buffalo -- four hours away by car.

[Amtrak woes may point to bigger rail service problems](#)

McClatchy Washington Bureau-Oct 9, 2014

Dave Pidgeon, a spokesman for Norfolk Southern, said the railroad was experiencing traffic volumes it hadn't seen since the 2008 recession. Pidgeon said the railroad is in “a strong hiring phase” and is investing in new infrastructure and capacity east of Chicago.

“While that’s a good sign for jobs and the economy,” he said, “it comes with staffing and capacity challenges.”

Federal lawmakers and regulators are expressing concern about the congestion as it’s delaying freight shipments as well, notably for auto manufacturers, grain producers, coal-reliant electric utilities and even UPS.

[Amtrak Customers Frustrated After Outage Halts Online, Kiosk Ticket Sales](#)

CBS Local-Oct 5, 2014

NEW YORK (CBSNewYork) — A network outage has snarled Amtrak’s online ticket reservation system as well as its self-serve kiosks, causing frustration for weekend travelers.

Barbara, who was trying to get back to Vermont from Penn Station on Sunday, told 1010 WINS’ Roger Stern that Amtrak’s doing better at alerting the media than it is keeping passengers informed about what is happening.

[GUEST EDITORIAL: Staring match over Hoosier State line](#)

nwetimes.com - Oct 9, 2014

All of which might be fun to watch, if it weren't for that fact that local communities had to persuade the state to help save the Hoosier State by chipping in six-figure sums of their own.

Patience is wearing thin.

Where was Amtrak's Boardman more than a year ago, when the community was at the table, telling anyone who would listen that passengers wanted the sort of amenities the rail company now says it will provide for the next four months? Amtrak officials say an automatic, 3 percent increase written into its contract extension will cover the new extras. But why was Amtrak waiting until now to do more than the status quo when it was clear what communities said customers wanted? And how close is it to working out

better access to clear rails and fewer delays as trains approach Chicago?

[Passenger train hits vehicles near Guadalupe; 1 taken to hospital](#)

KSBY San Luis Obispo News - Oct 6, 2014

The Santa Barbara County Fire Department says it happened just after 3 p.m. Monday at Brown Road and Highway 1, which is in between Santa Maria and Guadalupe. Preliminary reports show that an Amtrak passenger train hit three vehicles.

This happened to the Starlight. NB

[One dead, two injured when hit by Amtrak train](#)

KSBY San Luis Obispo News - Oct 11, 2014

One woman dead and two others are hospitalized after being hit by a train in Goleta just before 6:00 p.m. on Saturday night.

The Santa Barbara County Fire Department said two women and two men; all in their 20's were taking pictures of the sunset on the tracks of the Vista Point trestle, just north of Refugio State Beach.

Five days later, people again got in the way of the Starlight . NB

[Why Amtrak would have to buy \\$400M in NYC real estate to build new Hudson Tunnel](#)

The Star-Ledger-Oct 7, 2014

Amtrak has a \$404 million real estate hurdle to clear if it wants to build an annex to Penn Station that would serve trains using a new Hudson River tunnel, according to 2014 market value estimated by New York City.

The largest of 35 properties Amtrak needs to acquire is the 28-story Affinia Manhattan Hotel at the corner of West 32nd Street and Seventh Avenue, which has a market value of \$140 million, according to tax records.

[Amtrak's new wheels hit the rails](#)

RailwayAge Magazine-Oct 7, 2014

That's finally beginning to change this year, as Amtrak began entering new locomotives and new passenger rolling stock into service in measurable and visible (if still modest) quantities. Financed by its congressional overseers, by a Midwest compact of states (aided by California), and even by Amtrak itself (through borrowing power), a range of gear is bound to first supplement, and eventually supplant, equipment that in many cases precedes Amtrak's 1971 birthdate, sometimes by more than a decade.



Annual Steel Wheels Conference

Steel Wheels in California- Saturday, November 15th
California State Railroad Museum Auditorium, Sacramento

[Register Today](#)

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

Keynote Speaker

California Assembly Member Dickinson

Here's your chance to meet the new NARP President Jim Mathews.

NARP Chairman Robert Stewart

Dan Levitz. San Joaquin SJPA and SJRRC

Andrew Selden, President, URPA

Chad Edison (invited), California, Deputy Secretary for Transportation

CHSRA - to be announced

Siemens -Building Trains in Sacramento

[Save 15% on Amtrak travel to Sacramento](#)

California High-Speed Rail On Track

Neon Tommy-Oct 8, 2014

Global Showcase Tuesday, the California High-Speed Rail Authority outlined what lies ahead for the high-speed, all-electric rail system. The presentation was part of GloSho 2014, where investors and entrepreneurs gathered at the Los Angeles Theatre Center to network and trade ideas.

The Victorville Tri-State Junction

By Noel T. Braymer

There are plans to build High Speed Rail from Las Vegas to Victorville on I-15 and then run these trains to

Palmdale on the right of way of a proposed new highway between these 2 cities. From Palmdale the Las Vegas trains could be extended to Burbank sharing the California High Speed Rail tracks and later perhaps to Los Angeles and Anaheim. This new road between Palmdale and Victorville is planned to continue on a few miles east of Victorville to Apple Valley. What I ponder is what could be done if we extend the tracks to Apple Valley and further east?

[Public gets a peek at proposed Dallas to Houston high-speed rail line](#)

Fort Worth Star Telegram (blog)-Oct 8, 2014

Finally, the public may get a chance to learn more about the lofty proposal to build a high-speed rail line from Dallas to Houston by 2021.

[All Aboard Florida move claims to take heat off taxpayers](#)

Florida Today - Oct 6, 2014

Members of the public have raised a number of objections to the project. One of them is the possibility of federal loan guarantees for track and station development putting public money at risk.

Now, All Aboard Florida instead will use what's known as private activity bonds to finance the project. Those bonds — which are designed to encourage private companies to invest in public infrastructure — would be marketed and sold to private investors. Reininger said All Aboard Florida is "highly confident" of finding the needed investors.

[Public meeting on high speed rail set in Lincoln](#)

Bloomington Pantagraph-Oct 6, 2014

LINCOLN — A public meeting to discuss Logan County crossing improvements as part of high-speed rail between Chicago and St. Louis will be Oct. 30 at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 217 N. Lincoln.

The work includes construction at and adjacent to railroad tracks, installation of safety crossing protection features, and additional road improvements, such as drainage work and utility locations.

[Tesla co-founder Ian Wright snags FedEx for new hybrid engines](#)

SFGate-Sep 30, 2014

Unlike Tesla, which Wright left in late 2004, Wrightspeed doesn't build entire vehicles. Instead, it makes a hybrid electric powertrain — essentially, the engine and the transmission — that can be “dropped in” to existing trucks. The powertrain includes a big battery pack, plus a range-extending turbine that can be fueled with gasoline, diesel or natural gas...

[From Wrightspeed, the jet-powered delivery truck](#)

BBC News-Oct 6, 2014

Wright's weapon of mass deconstruction? A plug-in electric powertrain that turns gas-guzzling vehicles — lumbering garbage trucks, big delivery rigs and the like — into fuel-sippers. The vehicles also run cleaner, as measured in emissions per kilowatt hour, than conventional electric cars that rely on electricity produced by traditional public power stations...

Turbines typically run cleaner than piston-driven engines because of the continuous combustion process, Wright adds. “And drivers love the powertrain because it's so quiet. They don't hear diesel-engine noise all day.”

Turbine-battery hybrid powertrains for large trucks will both save money on fuel and reduce emissions more than it can be with diesel engines. This won't be good news for the oil companies. Such hybrid systems will likely be seen in future locomotives for the same reasons: to save money on fuel and meet future emission standards.NB

[Train derailment near Wadena leads to fire, explosions](#)

Saskatoon StarPhoenix - Oct 7, 2014

CN spokesman Jim Feeny said the train was made up of three locomotives pulling 100 cars and that 26 of them derailed.

He said the fire came from petroleum distillate, which spilled from two of the derailed cars...

Alison Squires, who is the publisher of the Wadena News, went to the scene and said she has never seen anything like it in the 13 years she has lived in the area.

"I've seen derailments, but this is a pretty bad one," she said. "You could see ... this huge plume of black smoke. When I got there, there was a small explosion. The smoke is too thick to see what cars are involved."

[Railroad Groups Urge Withdrawal of Emergency Rule on Oil Train Reporting](#)

NBCNews.com-Oct 7, 2014

Two railroad industry groups are asking the federal government to withdraw an emergency rule requiring their members to inform state emergency response agencies when trains carrying large amounts of highly flammable Bakken crude oil will pass through their jurisdictions.

[Railroads sue California over oil train safety rules](#)

Vallejo Times Herald-Oct 9, 2014

California's two major railroad companies filed a lawsuit this week to argue that the state lacks authority to impose its own safety requirements on federally regulated crude oil train traffic.

The lawsuit follows a new state law imposing regulations on the transportation of crude oil by rail in California. Union Pacific and BNSF Railway filed the case Tuesday in U.S. District Court in Sacramento to argue that federal law pre-empts California and other states from enforcing such regulatory regimes.

[New study on Phillips 66 refinery's proposed rail line gauges risk of oil spills](#)

The San Luis Obispo Tribune-Oct 11, 2014

Trains could enter California at five different locations and, depending on the route, would arrive at the Phillips 66 refinery either from the north or from the south. It's unknown what route Union Pacific would take to the refinery, but trains coming from Northern California would generally pass through the Union Pacific rail yard in Roseville, near Sacramento, according to the report.

Trains traveling from Southern California would likely pass through the Colton rail yard in San Bernardino County.

[As Trains Move Oil Bonanza, Delays Mount for Other Goods and Passengers](#)

New York Times-Oct 9, 2014

WASHINGTON — An energy boom that has created a sharp increase in rail freight traffic nationwide is causing major delays for Amtrak passenger trains and is holding up the transport of vital consumer and industrial goods, including chemicals, coal and hundreds of thousands of new American cars, rail officials and federal and state regulators say.

[Shale Boom Tested as Sub-\\$90 Oil Threatens U.S. Drillers](#)

Bloomberg Oct 07, 2014

"If prices go to \$80 or lower, which I think is possible, then we are going to see a reduction in drilling activity," Ralph Eads, vice chairman and global head of energy investment banking at Jefferies LLC, which advised 38 percent of U.S. energy mergers and acquisitions this year, said in an Oct. 1 interview. "It will be uncharted territory."

[Billions in U.S. Shale Assets Are Reportedly up for Sale](#)

Motley Fool Oct 9, 2014

The big oil news this week, other than the continued slump in oil prices, is that some well-known petroleum producers are looking to unload billions of dollars in shale assets. Bloomberg reported

that Pioneer Natural Resources (NYSE: PXD) has put its oil assets in the Eagle Ford shale up for sale, and that Occidental Petroleum (NYSE: OXY) is seeking a buyer for its acreage in North Dakota.

In the near future we might see reductions in oil trains traffic which could relieve some railroad congestion. NB



This is the view of a screen facing west of a Ticket Vending Machine (TVM) in the late afternoon for the Coaster at the Old Town Station in San Diego. At least the Coaster and Amtrak offers On-Line ticketing and Wi-Fi which Metrolink so far doesn't. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

[Op-Ed: Antiquated system is a ticket to frustration](#)

Burbank Leader-Oct 7, 2014

Let's start with the ticket vending machines, or TVMs. Nearly all of the approximately 130 in the Metrolink system are still in use after more than 22 years of field service. In fact, they date to the railroad's founding in 1992, the first year of the Clinton administration, and the technology has all the pizzazz of a brick cellphone.

Even the simplest transactions on these machines, manufactured by a Xerox subsidiary, force the user to endure multiple screens with ponderous response times. Purchases can take up to two minutes to execute, which is an eternity during rush hour when the lines may be backed up 10 people deep.

[Caltrain changes timetable, fares](#)

The Almanac Online-Oct 6, 2014

Caltrain adjusted its timetable, starting Oct. 5, due to upcoming construction work along the rail corridor and the fact that trains are stopping longer at stations to accommodate larger crowds.

[Caltrain set to begin replacement project for 4 San Mateo bridges](#)

San Francisco Examiner-Oct 9, 2014

The bridges at Poplar, Santa Inez, Monte Diablo and Tilton avenues, which are more than 100 years old, need to be replaced to meet current seismic-safety standards, project manager Patrick Kitto said. A contract for the \$38 million replacement project was awarded in August to ProVen Management and the work will be paid for through local, state and federal funds.

[Bay Meadows beginning office construction: Ground to be broken ...](#)

San Mateo Daily Journal-Oct 8, 2014

The entire 160-acre site was broken into two phases. A shopping plaza features a Whole Foods Market, 19 live-work condos, 55 single-family homes, 98 townhomes and 575 apartments, the Kaiser Permanente medical center, Franklin Templeton headquarters and San Mateo police station, The 83.5-acre second phase includes the recently-opened private Nueva School, open space and numerous residential developments. The site between the Hillsdale Caltrain station and 25th Avenue is nearly unrecognizable from its former days as a race track.

[Study: Trench for Caltrain in Palo Alto could cost \\$1B](#)

San Jose Mercury News-Oct 10, 2014

Last year, the City Council hired New Jersey-based Hatch Mott McDonald to evaluate a trench for the commuter rail service between San Antonio Road and Oregon Expressway, as well as submerged roadway crossings at Churchill Avenue, Meadow Drive and Charleston Road. The decision was based in part on Caltrain's plans for electrification, which could boost the number of trains from five or six per hour to 10, making it more difficult for cars to get from one side of the tracks to the other.

A 1 percent grade trench, the preferred maximum grade, would cost approximately \$1.05 billion, according to the study. The cost would fall to \$488.2 million with a 2 percent grade.

[Traffic and trains among the hot topics Atherton council candidates ...](#)

San Jose Mercury News-Oct 9, 2014

All four candidates expressed unequivocal opposition to high-speed rail and the electrification of Caltrain, saying it will disrupt residents' lives, reduce property values, bisect the town and lead to cutting down thousands of heritage trees. They also contended the project is based on outdated technology and likely will cost far more than the projected \$68 million to \$100 billion.

Lempres added that it is dangerous for Atherton residents to operate under the "false assumption" that Governor Jerry Brown will call off the project he so ardently supports.

[Streetcar Backers Reveal More Price, Funding Info](#)

Downtown News Oct 8, 2014

The final cost is critical as backers try to secure a \$75 million "Small Starts" grant from the Federal Transit Administration. If the project costs more than \$250 million, it would be forced to compete with bigger transit projects in a different category.

In 2012, Downtown residents approved a plan that would allow streetcar operators to tax area property owners up to \$85 million for project construction. That money would only be collected if the streetcar moves forward.

Even with the FTA grant, however, the project would need a public-private partnership to fill a financing gap. Huizar said the streetcar team began an outreach campaign to interested firms two weeks ago.

[L.A. ranks 3rd on jobs near transit, study says](#)

The Source Oct 8, 2014

The study finds that Los Angeles ranks third behind New York and San Francisco when it comes to the number of jobs near transit. That puts the L.A. area ahead of some older and more established transit cities such as Chicago, Washington, Boston and Philly.

[Metro fare jumpers explain how they evade fares](#)

LA Weekly Oct 8, 2014

Then in July, a Los Angeles Times report revealed a very large gap between Metro's widely-touted ridership estimates and the number of tickets Metro is actually selling. The gap suggests not only fare evasion but possibly widespread accidental failure by riders to properly swipe their TAP card, perhaps some malfunctioning equipment — perhaps even some ridership estimate quirks.

But Metro is highly critical of the Times' eyebrow-raising article, saying the newspaper merely applied simple arithmetic to outdated passenger stats, and that Metro had warned the paper that the data was flawed and no longer in use.

The truth is, Metro is in the dark.

“We know it occurs, but we don't have a good method for determining how widespread the problem is,” says Gonzales of the fare-evasion crowd, “and it's impossible to employ the number of personnel required to eliminate 100 percent of fare evasion.”

“Stations are not designed to keep people out,” says Gonzales, “they're designed to get people through the system.”

Now that the turnstiles have been proven vulnerable, LA Metro is stepping up tickets inspections. They should have done that before spending all that money for turnstiles. Self-service ticketing works with regular ticket inspections so that if a person cheats 9 times, they get caught by the 10th. When they are caught, the fines pays for all the "free rides" and them some. Done right, ticket revenues go up the more people cheat. Using Sheriff Deputies to inspect tickets is a poor use of resources. It would be better to have more unarmed ticket inspectors checking more riders and have the deputies available to provide back up when there are problems. NB

[405 Commutes Now a Minute Worse Than Before Carpool Lane](#)

CURBED LA Oct 9, 2014

Hot on the heels of a study proclaiming Los Angeles to be one of the best cities for public transit commuting comes another study focused on one of the worst places for car commuting: the 405. After five years of construction (that included two Carmageddons), the freeway debuted a brand new, very expensive, 10-mile carpool lane in May, and the results are in: commute times are actually one minute slower than before.

How about using part of the carpool (HOV) lane to run light rail from Van Nuys to West LA? Much cheaper than a tunnel and will carry more people than car pools. NB



This is the view from the Sprinter after just leaving the Vista Transit Center station heading east. In the background is construction of new, high density housing in downtown Vista. Increasingly in California, high quality, high density housing is being built near transit, shopping and services. This increases transit use and reduces traffic congestion. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

We Get Emails

Re: The Cost of the NEC

Noel: Your comment after the Hudson rail tunnel story is spot on.

Pete Loomis

Re: Amtrak keeping the Hoosier Station

Is there any downside to another entity operating the Hoosier Line besides Amtrak? Couldn't savings for Amtrak be found by eliminating some of these smaller lightly used routes from Amtrak's portfolio?

Eric Cooper

Any money Amtrak loses running short distance trains outside of the NEC is more than made up from the payments made by the States to Amtrak to keep operating these trains. When Amtrak competed against private operators for commuter train contracts, Amtrak's costs and bids were higher and they usually lost the contracts. If Amtrak loses contracts to run short distances trains, it will cost them more in revenue than from cost savings. NB

Re: Amtrak keeping the Hoosier Station

Amazing how quickly they (Amtrak) can respond (Hoosier upgrades) when someone is about to eat their lunch.

All the best,

Paul Dyson

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

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Write:

Rail Passenger Association of California

1017 L Street, PMB-217

Sacramento, CA95814-3805

Email us at info@railpac.org

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