

Subject:	Hoosier staying with Amtrak? Rail wins at ballot, Fight over Mexico's HSR.
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RailPAC Weekly E-Newsletter for November 10, 2014

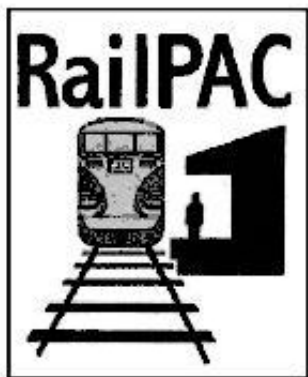
Edited by Noel T. Braymer

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Traffic? Gas Pains? We need more Trains!



This picture of a Metrolink coach seat is over a year old, but reflects Metrolink's state as it needs to catch up to be able to fulfill its role as Southern California's Regional Rail service. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

[Add ticket machines to list of Metrolink problems](#)

Los Angeles Times-Nov 3, 2014

It's struggling to build ridership. Service has been cut on the San Bernardino line. Its passenger cars don't have WiFi, and there have been recurring reports of late trains. Now, Metrolink, the region's commuter railroad, has another customer relations problem — its ticket vending machines.

[What's the matter with Metrolink?](#)

By Noel T. Braymer

Metrolink has been slowly going downhill even before the Chatsworth crash disaster in 2008. Since 2008, safety on Metrolink has been greatly improved and will get better with the full implementation of Positive Train Control. But Metrolink's problems stem from a lack of leadership and planning. Metrolink has been slow to adapt to the travel patterns and travel needs of Southern California. Metrolink has not aggressively sought the funding it needs to properly maintain itself, let alone plan for the future for major programs such as electrification. This is reflected with the problems of its old and often failing ticket machines which is one factor in Metrolink's declining ridership.

[No simple solution for railway's gridlock](#)

CNBC-Nov 4, 2014

As more goods travel by rail, volumes this year have surged 3.6 percent over the first 43 weeks versus the same period in 2013, according to the Association of American Railroads (AAR). Analysts said rail traffic is almost back to its 2006 peak, and they expect the growth to continue as the U.S. economy recovers and this mode of transport proves more cost-effective than trucking for some customers.

[Long Distance, State-Supported, and the NEC...now what?](#)

Commentary by Russ Jackson

Comments are those of the writer, not necessarily those of the RailPAC Board.

The three categories in the title of this writing are all tied to Amtrak in one way or another. Amtrak, as we know, is the “National Rail Passenger Corporation,” and is the purveyor of intercity passenger rail transportation. Rail fans and rail advocates know the three category differences. Does the public? Did anyone hear “Amtrak” or “passenger trains” discussed in the campaign that culminated in the election on November 4?

[Ridership drop another blow for Amtrak](#)

WRTV Indianapolis-Nov 3, 2014

Amtrak announced Monday that ridership and revenue were up across the country during the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30. But the Hoosier State line that runs from Indianapolis to Chicago saw a 10 percent decline in revenue and a nearly 8 percent drop in ridership, the Journal & Courier reported.

The figures further cloud the future of the troubled Indiana line.

[State ends negotiations with Amtrak alternative](#)

Journal and Courier-Nov 8, 2014

The Indiana Department of Transportation has ended contract negotiations with Corridor Capital LLC to provide passenger rail cars, marketing and other services for the Hoosier State line between Indianapolis and Chicago, said INDOT spokesman Will Wingfield.

Wingfield did not comment as to why negotiations were terminated.

But he said the state is looking at its options to continue the service after the Jan. 31 expiration date on INDOT’s contracts with Amtrak and the communities along the route.

[Study: Amtrak route shift would cause \\$3M in losses for New Mexico](#)

Santa Fe New Mexican.com - Nov 6, 2014

New Mexico would suffer economic losses of about \$3 million annually if Amtrak halted passenger service along its current route and shifted the Southwest Chief to another rail line, according to a new report issued Thursday.

[Szabo leaves FRA](#)

Railway Track & Structures-Nov 7, 2014

Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph C. Szabo will be stepping down from the post he has held since April 2009 and, effective Jan. 1, 2015, will be on staff at the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)—effectively returning to his Chicagoland roots.

[Annual Steel Wheels Conference](#)

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

From Paul Dyson:

There's still time to register for Steel Wheels in Sacramento, your chance to meet and question railroad officials and advocates and to learn about the state of the passenger rail state here in California. I have been told that Jeff Morales, CEO of CHSRA will be the presenter for High Speed Rail, and Chad Edison, Deputy Secretary for Rail of California DoT will update us on the state intercity rail program and passenger rail in general. These are the top two state officials for

passenger rail.

In addition this is your chance to meet the new NARP President, Jim Mathews, who is coming from Washington DC for this meeting. This is a not-to-be-missed event. Take advantage of the 15% Amtrak discount on travel to Sacramento and bring a friend.
See you there!
[Register Today](#)

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

[CA Local Ballot Measure Results: Transportation and Land Use Propositions](#)

StreetsBlog LA Nov 5, 2014

Alameda County: Measure BB: PASSED. The Alameda County Transportation Commission has declared this a winner, with almost 70 percent of the vote (it needed 66.67 percent to pass)...Measure BB will increase the existing sales tax by ½ cent to fund a panoply of transportation infrastructure measures,

[Voters double transportation tax to 1%](#)

Fremont Bulletin-Nov 6, 2014

Alameda County voters doubled their transportation sales tax to a full 1 percent just two years after defeating a similar increase by 721 votes...

Measure BB will raise \$7.8 billion over 30 years to fix potholes, improve freeways, boost public transit, and add bike lanes and hiking and riding trails. It also provides a \$400 million down payment on a BART rail extension to Livermore.

[Another big winner in Tuesday's elections: Transportation](#)

The State-Nov 5, 2014

As federal efforts have stalled, the power to solve transportation problems has been put in the hands of governors, state legislatures and voters. According to a post-election analysis by the American Road & Transportation Builders Association, a trade group, voters approved two-thirds of the transportation-related initiatives on the ballot Tuesday.

[China is on track to build high-speed rail in just about every corner of the world](#)

Quartz-Nov 6, 2014

Beijing moved one step closer to its aim of becoming a global exporter of high speed rail technology this week when a Chinese-led consortium won a multi-billion dollar contract to build a high-speed train link in Mexico.

[China's rail industry: the dragon on your doorstep](#)

International Railway Journal (blog)-Nov 6, 2014

There is another important reason for China's growing success abroad. China is more willing to take risks than its western competitors. Added to this is China's strategy to invest heavily in developing or economically-weak countries where it can see long-term benefits such as the supply of cheap minerals. For example, China has moved into a number of African countries such as Angola and Zambia not just to renovate their railways but also to develop other sectors of the economy such as farming and mineral extraction. In Argentina, China is helping to modernise the rundown rail network but is benefiting from large orders for equipment and rolling stock all financed by Chinese banks

[Why China Won Mexico's High-Speed Rail Project](#)

The Diplomat-Nov 4, 2014

As the only bidder, Beijing reflects its growing appetite for risky projects.

Underlying Mexico's decision to choose China, and what may have made it the only country able to meet to proposal deadline, was its decision to finance 85 percent of the project through the Export-Import Bank of China. While Japan has offered in the past to finance whole portions of larger projects, such as a proposed maglev high-speed rail line connecting the major urban centers of the U.S. East Coast, it has not shown a willingness to finance entire projects.

[Mexico revokes multibillion-dollar rail contract with China](#)

The Guardian - Nov 7, 2014

Mexico has revoked a contract for a multibillion-dollar, high-speed passenger rail link from a Chinese-led consortium after its uncontested bid sparked complaints, souring a state visit to China next week by President Enrique Peña Nieto.

The communications and transport ministry said late on Thursday that the government would hold a new auction for the contract, after lawmakers accused the government of favouring the group led by China Railway Construction Corp

[Bombardier CEO sees Mexico 6-mth high-speed rail bid window as tight](#)

Reuters-Nov 8, 2014

The government said it expects to re-run the tender to build the 210-km (130-mile) line to connect Mexico City and the central city of Querétaro in late November under the same terms, and would keep it open for six months to enable all interested parties to participate.

"They're giving it six months which is not a lot...Usually high-speed like this should take about a year to prepare because it's very, very technically challenging to do this right," Chief Executive Pierre Beaudoin told Reuters on Saturday.

[Taiwan High Speed Rail bankruptcy is imminent:](#)

China Post-Nov 5, 2014

TAIPEI, Taiwan -- Minister of Transportation and Communications (MOTC) Yeh Kuang-shih (葉匡時) yesterday stated that deteriorating finances at the Taiwan High Speed Rail Corporation (THSR, 高鐵) may result in imminent bankruptcy in March next year, during a Legislative Yuan session yesterday. As of June this year, the THSR had accumulated losses of NT\$47 billion, and is currently embroiled in 39 lawsuits relating to redemption of preferred shares by its investors.

[When will Vancouver get a proper high-speed rail link that connects ...](#)

The Vancouver Observer-Nov 4, 2014

A casual observer of the lack of passenger rail infrastructure can only ask themselves: when is China going to lend a helping hand to finance and build a proper high-speed rail link down the west coast? Who wouldn't want to zip down to Seattle or Portland for the day? Or dream about making it down to San Francisco by train? The trip from Vancouver to San Francisco would be an easy, a modest 1,500km (since 2012, there has been high-speed train service from Beijing to Guangzhou, a distance of 2,300km, which now takes 8 hours.)

What will the plan be for right of way on the West Coast? Will the train use the Golden Gate Bridge or a tunnel into San Francisco? NB

[High-speed rail line not urban vs. rural issue](#)

Fort Worth Star Telegram-Nov 3, 2014

Southeast Texas residents who oppose a high-speed rail line between Dallas and Houston have every right to do so, but if they want to build credibility they should be a bit more careful about what they say.

[Texas company considers rail project](#)

Madisonville Meteor-Nov 5, 2014

BRYAN — Texas Central Railway has taken another step toward its Texas-sized dream of introducing high-speed rail to the area by connecting Dallas and Houston with a bullet train...

The project will be privately funded, instead of a government-run project, such as Amtrak or the monorail project in California.

Monorail????, in California?, I've never heard of it. The California High Speed Rail Project is a joint Public, Private investment project and is not a Monorail. NB

[Brown brushes off GOP opposition to bullet train](#)

Los Angeles Times-Nov 6, 2014

Brown said Chinese and Japanese investors were "very bullish" on investing in the project. The Japanese ambassador to the United States recently flew to California just to urge him to consider a Japanese rail company, Brown said.

While some in Washington "may be small-minded," he added, they will come around when heavy construction starts.

[HSR Poll Numbers Continue to Improve](#)

CA HSR Blog Nov 3, 2014

They may call it a "minor shift" but that looks to me like a five point swing toward HSR. The most recent PPIC poll to examine HSR, from March 2014, showed a majority of Californians still support the project. That's a different question than the one USC/LA Times asked, but still, it's no longer possible for Vartabedian to say a majority of voters want to stop the HSR project.

[High Speed Rail Thinking About Bikes](#)

Capital Public Radio News-Nov 5, 2014

The High Speed Rail Authority has reached out to several groups, including the California Bike Coalition, for suggestions on integrating bikes into the transit system. The Authority's Annie Parker says suggestions have included building dedicated bike lanes to make it easier to get to stations, as well as creating secure places to lock up bikes at the stations and on trains.

"We also heard some really cool ideas about potential bike sharing and rental availability and other outside-of-the-box ideas that I think are really going to be very popular with our riders," she says.

[High-Speed Rail Authority has 30 eminent-domain cases pending ..](#)

.Sacramento Business Journal-Nov 7, 2014

The California High-Speed Rail Authority needs approximately 1,100 parcels for its first construction segment, 130 miles from Madera to Bakersfield. The state began making offers on properties in 2012 that were standing in the way of future tracks and infrastructure.

So far, the state has sought ownership of 822 parcels, and acquired just 106.



This is construction of the Anaheim Regional Transit Intermodal Center (ARTIC) in late May of last year. It will open next month to the public. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

[Study: Extending ACE rail service would bring big money to Valley](#)

Modesto Bee-Nov 6, 2014

Bringing Bay Area-bound passenger rail to Modesto, Turlock and Merced could boost the regional economy by at least \$1.14 billion in the next 15 years, an analysis says.

Leaders hope to extend the Altamont Corridor Express to Modesto as soon as 2020 and to Merced by 2025, with Turlock somewhere in between. That would make life easier, they say, for hundreds of Valley commuters who catch trains in Lathrop and Stockton heading to the East Bay and Silicon Valley.

[In new GOP-led Congress, will Californians in both parties make nice?](#)

Fresno Bee-Nov 7, 2014

With the No. 2 House Republican and the top House Democrat both hailing from California, and key committee seats potentially going to other Californians, the 55-member congressional delegation packs both power and promise.

But the nation's largest delegation can also be Capitol Hill's most fractious, regardless of what happens in the state's six House races that remained uncalled as of Friday...

McCarthy's enhanced stature also means the California high-speed rail project, which he opposes, can forget about new federal aid. Another high-speed rail opponent, Republican Rep. Jeff Denham, who represents the northern San Joaquin Valley, will again likely chair the House Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials.

"Republicans are going to continue to block funding," Denham said Friday, adding that "there is growing concern among Democrats, as well."

At the same time, Denham said he anticipates moving a passenger rail re-authorization bill that will include loan availability for California projects like the Altamont Commuter Express train. But given the ongoing drought, water, Denham said, "is going to be the number one" priority for many.

[Detroit-to-Chicago rail plan: 110 mph, 10 daily trips](#)

Detroit Free Press-Oct 29, 2014

A completed high-speed rail corridor between Chicago and Detroit could boost round-trip passenger train service between the two cities from the current three daily trips to 10 by 2035 at speeds of 110 m.p.h., according to preliminary planning on the project.

The higher speeds would also cut the 5 hour, 38 minute trip by almost two hours, and reduce 20 minutes from the leg that continues from Detroit to Pontiac, which would see an extra four daily round-trips from the current three.

[Build \\$16B Hudson tunnels or economy could lose \\$100M a day ...](#)

NJ.com-Nov 6, 2014

Amtrak officials are in a race against time to avoid a commuting nightmare if one of the existing 100-year old tunnels has to be closed for major repairs before new tunnels are built. Train traffic would slow to a trickle, from an average of 24 to 6 trains per hour if one of the existing tunnels had to be closed. The regional economy could lose \$100 million a day in economic activity, due to a shut down, Boardman said.

[Bridge Repair to Disrupt Amtrak Service Next Week](#)

ABC News-Nov 7, 2014

Amtrak passengers taking the Missouri River Runner between St. Louis and Kansas City will be bused for a portion of their trip for two days next week.

The Missouri Department of Transportation says Union Pacific Railroad is replacing a bridge near the Kansas City suburb of Lee's Summit, forcing the track to temporarily close.

[How Denver Leaders Pulled Off a Public Transit Miracle](#)

National Journal-Oct 1, 2014

The recession of 2008 hit not long after, which took the scapegoat spotlight off of RTD. But the transit authority was still stuck with a big rail plan and about half the money they needed to build it. They had two options. They could scrap their construction schedule and build one line at a time as tax revenues trickled in. Or they could get creative...

The creative option won out. "The mayor said, 'No, we're going to build the whole goddamned thing at one time,' " says Tom Clark, CEO of the Metro Denver Economic Group, a regional coalition that pushed for FasTracks for more than a decade.

[Mind the gap: London's buses embrace wireless charging](#)

BBC News-Nov 3, 2014

As we heard recently, tube trains without drivers may eventually become the norm, as the rail and signalling infrastructure is being updated. New trains are being designed as one long vehicle (walk-through carriages) rather than separated into cars, which means for the first time London's tube network can be air cooled to keep passengers comfortable. The city is even considering a floating bike path upon the River Thames.

[German rail strike causes commuter chaos](#)

The Daily Progress-Nov 6, 2014

Meantime, the dpa news agency reported that experts were warning the increased number of cars on the road, coupled fuel delivery delays, could lead to shortages at service stations. Industrial production delays were also anticipated as companies await deliveries of components.

[German rail strike to end before Wall anniversary](#)

KSWO-2 Nov 7, 2014

BERLIN (AP) - A German train drivers' union says it will end a strike that has caused commuter chaos ahead of the country's celebration on Sunday of the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

[Improving & Increasing Mass Transit With Wi-Fi](#)

CleanTechnica-Nov 1, 2014

TheCityFix reports that in the last year large urban areas have started offering free Wi-Fi services on their transit lines. Tokyo, Japan; Moscow, Russia; Paris, France; and Bangalore, Mumbai, and Gurgaon in India have well developed metro systems that offer free Wi-Fi. Cities such as Porto Alegre and São Paulo in Brazil; Beijing, China; London, United Kingdom; and Mumbai, India have buses that are going to try offering Wi-Fi.

[Caltrain electrification delayed, price rises](#)

San Mateo Daily Journal-Nov 7, 2014

A much-touted project to modernize the Caltrain line with more efficient electrified trains is being delayed up to 18 months and the price is rising from \$1.45 billion to a projected \$1.7 billion to \$1.76 billion, the transit agency announced Thursday...

The projected cost of the new signal system, CBOSS PTC, which is part of the CalMod Program, is unchanged at \$231 million. The Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board also received a new projection that electrified service will begin between the winter 2020 and the spring 2021. The original projection for the electrified service to begin was the winter 2019, according to the transit agency.

[A woman was pinned under the front of a Metro Expo Line train near USC](#)

Westside Today-Nov 3, 2014

The Metro spokesman said it was unclear what she was doing on or by the tracks when she was struck. Expo Lines stop for passengers at the intersection, and there are regular street crosswalks that extend across the rails at the intersection as well.

People are not allowed to walk across the tracks except in the crosswalks, and while it was not clear where the pedestrian was when she was hit, Inzunza called her a “trespasser.”

[New construction photos of Expo Line Phase 2](#)

The Source Nov 4, 2014

Photos by Jeff Zucker for the Expo Line Construction Authority. Please click on each photo to see a larger version.

[Mapping Metro's Gold Line Development Boom in Boyle Heights](#)

CURBED Los Angeles Nov 6, 2014

Metro's been working for months now to get its ducks in a row to start building a whole bunch of transit-oriented development around its Gold Line stations in Boyle Heights and now there's a bonanza coming. According to Building LA, Metro's selected and is moving forward with plans for four sites near the Mariachi Plaza and Soto stations—projects will create lots of new space for retail, medical offices, and affordable housing

[Long wait is over: groundbreaking ceremony today for subway extension under Wilshire Boulevard](#)

The Source Nov 7, 2014

The groundbreaking is for the 3.9-mile first phase of the project between the Purple Line's current terminus at Wilshire/Western and Wilshire/La Cienega in Beverly Hills with new stations at Wilshire/La Brea, Wilshire/Fairfax and Wilshire/La Cienega. Metro forecasts the first phase will open in 2023.

[LA Metro VYCON WESS system saving energy](#)

RailwayAge Magazine-Nov 4, 2014

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) Red Line's Wayside Energy Storage Substation (WESS) Project at the Westlake/MacArthur Park Subway station is producing a 20% savings in energy consumption, according to supplier VYCON, which designs and manufactures environmentally friendly, high-speed kinetic energy storage systems.

[Anaheim rejects digital billboards for transit center](#)

OC Register Nov 3, 2014

ANAHEIM The city Planning Commission on Monday rejected a proposal to erect an 84-foot-tall digital billboard along the 57 freeway and two other electronic signs that were expected to generate about \$800,000 in advertising revenue to operate a city-owned transit station set to open next month. The commission's 4-0 vote could be reversed by the City Council on Nov. 25...

[Oil Prices Stuck in 'Gray Zone' for Years and Could Fall Further, Expert Says](#)

TheStreet.com Nov 6, 2014

The oil industry has painted itself into a corner and as a result oil prices will likely be stuck between \$75 and \$90 a barrel for several years -- or they could even collapse below \$60 a barrel. That's the opinion of Leonardo Maugeri, the Harvard professor who in 2012 predicted the fall in oil prices that has occurred since June, more or less along the timetable he foresaw.

[California Oil-by-Rail Volumes Drop as Canada Faces Competition](#)

Bloomberg News Nov 7, 2014

California, the nation's largest gasoline market, received the least amount of oil by rail in 17 months as cheaper in-state supplies and imports eliminated the need for Canadian supplies.

The most populous U.S. state took 11,612 barrels a day by rail in September, a 7.5 percent drop from a month earlier and down from a peak of 38,086 barrels a day in December, California Energy Commission data show. Shipments from Canada, which made up 76 percent of California's oil-by-rail receipts last November, tumbled to zero, the agency said on its website.

[Shale Drillers Idle Rigs From Texas to Utah Amid Oil Rout](#)

Bloomberg Nov 7, 2014

The shale-oil drilling boom in the U.S. is showing early signs of cracking.

Rigs targeting oil sank by 14 to 1,568 this week, the lowest since Aug. 22, Baker Hughes Inc. (BHI) said yesterday. The Eagle Ford shale formation in south Texas lost the most, dropping nine to 197. The nation's oil rig count is down from a peak of 1,609 on Oct. 10.



Some of the "surplus" Metrolink cars in storage. These are stored in Moorpark, while others are stored near LAUS and in Colton. The reason Metrolink still needs the older cars is they don't have the new, more powerful locomotives needed to pull longer trains with their new, heavier cars. They don't have the money to replace their aging locomotive fleet. A better use for new locomotives is to run more trains using the existing they cars they are not using. These older cars should have an economic life of about 20 more years. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

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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