Subject: 4 stabbed on Michigan Train, What happened to the Hoosier State?, Those misleading Amtrak numbers

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

To: ntraymer@yahoo.com;

Date: Monday, December 8, 2014 9:31 AM

RailPAC Weekly E-Newsletter for December 8, 2014
Edited by Noel T. Braymer
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If you'd like to see expanded and improved Rail Passenger Service-
Join Us!

Membership increases our strength in presenting the case for rail to policymakers at all levels!

Rail Passenger Association of California
www.railpac.org
Traffic? Gas Pains? We need more Trains!
Yes it is that time of year again. Here is the Christmas Tree now on display at Los Angeles Union Station being set up in late November. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

**FRA waives Buy America rules on high speed train prototypes**
Railway Gazette International - Dec 4, 2014
FRA believes a waiver is appropriate because domestically-produced high speed trainsets meeting the specific technical, design, and schedule needs of Amtrak and CHSRA are not currently available in the USA, the letter explains. 'Moreover, domestically-produced high speed trainsets cannot be bought or produced in the USA within a reasonable time given the programme schedule associated with Amtrak’s and CHSRA’s projects.'

California High Speed Rail Could Earn the State Over $40 Billion in Profit
Better Institutions Dec 2, 2014
Given this reality, what we need is an analysis that accounts for a more complete utilization of assets – an analysis that can fully amortize the high up-front capital costs over their useful lifetimes and most accurately determine the extent to which California HSR revenues can cover not just operational costs, but also those of capital. The analysis below will look at costs and revenue over a full 100-year period, at which point even the longest-lasting rail infrastructure will require full replacement.

After building China's railways, giant CRCC flexes muscles abroad
Reuters - Dec 4, 2014
Executives at established players including Germany's Siemens see CRCC as a powerful new competitor. A company insider at Siemens also said he believed the Chinese firm received state aid. His comments reflect concerns that companies will struggle to compete with CRCC on costs and because Beijing will use its diplomatic clout and deep pockets to spread commercial and technological prowess around the world.
"Now China, in railway construction and equipment, has become globally competitive in terms of the pricing and the technology," said Citi analyst Eric Lau.
"So far, according to opening tenders, China's price point is about half of its global rivals," he added.

More condemnations ahead for Valley's high-speed rail route
Fresno Bee - Dec 5, 2014
California may be picking up the pace on getting land it needs to build the state’s first stretch of high-speed rail in the Valley.
The state’s Public Works Board, meeting next week in Sacramento, will consider resolutions declaring a public need to use eminent domain, better known as condemnation, to acquire nearly 40 pieces of property in Fresno and Madera counties.

Lamoure's faces fine, cleanup for land in rail's path
Fresno Business Journal - Dec 5, 2014
A former dry-cleaning business in downtown Fresno is facing an $18,000 fine and the cost of an environmental assessment and cleanup on property that will soon be taken over and leveled by the state’s high-speed rail authority. In 2010, the Central Valley Water Quality Control Board requested an assessment for potential contaminants at 1304 G. Street. The building, owned by the former family business Lamoure’s Cleaners, is along the train tracks in downtown Fresno. Buildings in that section of the city are currently being purchased and demolished to make room for the Central Valley corridor of the California high-speed rail project.

Rail talks kick off in SCV
Santa Clarita Valley Signal-Dec 3, 2014
Maps set up at Tuesday’s meeting showed three possible routes through the East Corridor. While each would share the same route either entering or leaving Palmdale, trains could leave or enter Burbank three different ways. Two of those ways would entail running the train between Sunland and Lake View Terrace, while another would swing around to the west of Hansen Dam.
The Top 3 Most Needed High Speed Rail Connections in California
By Noel T. Braymer
Current planning by the California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) is for initial High Speed Rail service of 34 round trips daily by 2022 between Merced and Burbank. By 2022 with the completion of run through tracks by 2020 at Los Angeles Union Station there will be plenty of connections from Metrolink and Surfliner trains at Burbank. But by 2022 the running times from San Diego to Burbank won’t be much shorter than today unless we see more improvements.

French Rail Company Agrees To Pay Millions In Reparations To Holocaust Survivors
CBS Local-Dec 5, 2014
As part of the deal, the U.S. government will work to end lawsuits and other compensation claims in U.S. courts against the SNCF, which is bidding for lucrative high-speed rail and other contracts in U.S. markets. State legislators in Maryland, New York, Florida and California have tried to punish SNCF for its Holocaust-era actions.

4 stabbed on Amtrak train from Chicago, 1 in custody
Chicago Tribune - Dec 5, 2014
An Amtrak spokeswoman said the incident took place on Train 364, the Blue Water service that travels between Chicago and Port Huron, Mich., in St. Clair County. At the time of the incident, the train was in Michigan at the Niles train station, said Amtrak Spokeswoman Kimberly Woods. The Amtrak Police Department is assisting in the investigation.

Amtrak suspect acting 'paranoid', relatives say
WOODTV.com-Dec 6, 2014
NILES, Mich. (WOOD) — A man accused of stabbing four strangers on an Amtrak train had been acting paranoid and feared that people were trying to kill him, relatives told 24 Hour News 8 on Saturday. Michael Darnell Williams, 44, of Saginaw, is charged with four counts of attempted murder in the attacks Friday night on Train 364 near Niles.

Fact Sheet regarding recent inaccurate claims made about Corridor Capital LLC’s and the Indiana Hoosier State route
November 26, 2014
Shortly after the terms were agreed to by INDOT, the executive in charge of the procurement fell seriously ill. Thereafter, INDOT advised Corridor mobilization funds were not available, and asked Corridor to commit to starting the service without state funding. Corridor secured a commitment for private financing to assure the train’s February 1st startup. At INDOT’s request, Corridor drafted and submitted a letter of agreement incorporating this. But the prolonged absence of the INDOT executive who had spearheaded the Hoosier State initiative caused the project to languish, and Corridor never received authority to proceed with its financing strategy or with the other elements contained in its winning procurement bid.

Those misleading Amtrak numbers
FRED FRAILEY’S BLOG Nov 26, 2014
Amtrak had given the Journal an early look at its press release, which said that the corporation’s federally funded operating loss had shrunk by 37 percent from fiscal 2013 (fiscal years end in September) and at $227 million was the lowest since 1973.
Dan Machalaba would have read this, picked up the phone, and begun asking people at Amtrak just how this miracle had been achieved. Amtrak’s press release gave not a clue. And the Journal reporter, whose
name we shall keep to ourselves because this blog is not really about him, apparently didn’t ask.

**Amtrak: Getting Back on Track**  
Wall Street Journal-Nov 24, 2014  
Amtrak, the national passenger railroad whose subsidies often are the target of cost-cutters in Washington, said Monday that its operating loss ...

This link will require a subscription to the Wall Street Journal to open. You should be able to open a link to this story looking for it with a search engine. NB

**Police investigating body found at Amtrak station**  
Austin American-Statesman-Dec 3, 2014  
The body of a 44-year-old man was found at the Amtrak rail station in downtown Austin at 250 N. Lamar Blvd. Wednesday morning, police said.Police said the man had a history of medical problems and the death was not considered suspicious.

New signs on the Metrolink ticket machines explaining some of the services on Metrolink including buying tickets for the Flyaway buses to LAX. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

**RailPAC rail PHOTOS of the month (November, 2014)**  
Here are this month’s photos by RailPAC photographers!  
Click on each photo to see it full size!  
8 PHOTOS THIS MONTH. LOOK FOR A SPECIAL WINTER EDITION SOON!  
Contributions to this page are welcome. Send your jpg rail photos to Russ Jackson, RailPAC Photo Editor, at info@railpac.org.
Placer County faces bleak transportation funding future
Auburn Journal-Dec 4, 2014
In Placer County, like many others in California, the demands of a growing population and ailing or outdated infrastructure weighs heavily on the pocketbook of the agency responsible for regional transportation...
To offset gaps in funding, several California counties have opted for regional sales tax measures to spur revenues.
Though these counties do not make up the majority in the state, McAdam said the option could be part of a last-ditch solution for Placer.
“Everybody is feeling the pain,” she said. “It’s really acute in counties that don’t have a transportation sales tax.”

Metrolink trains delayed because of car on tracks
OCRegister-Dec 3, 2014
Metrolink trains headed for the Inland Empire are delayed for 30 minutes to one hour because of a car on the tracks near the Anaheim Canyon stop. At around 5:15 p.m., the official Metrolink Twitter page shared that the Inland Empire-Orange County Line (IEOC) may be delayed.

Plan: Connect Los Angeles airport to train by 2024
Contra Costa Times-Dec 5, 2014
That’s how long it will take to design, build, test and open a tram-like "automated people mover" to link passenger terminals to a planned light rail line about 1.5 miles away. An airport representative on Thursday told the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which is building the new rail line, that the next two years will see studies of the project's environmental impacts and requests for bids.

Los Angeles, San Francisco light-rail big winners in recent Caltrans...
Railway Track & Structures-Dec 1, 2014
The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) awarded approximately $560 million to 77 transportation projects including light-rail projects throughout the state.

ARTIC, Anaheim's new transit hub, set to open Saturday
Orange County Register Dec 3, 2014
ANAHEIM – Transit passengers will be directed on Saturday from a modest transit depot in the parking lot of Angel Stadium to a $185.2 million station that city officials hail as the future of mass transportation in Orange County.
A recent photo of the back and platform area of the new Anaheim station. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

**BART To Oakland International Airport Has Good Start, Needs More Riders To Break Even**
CBS Local-Dec 1, 2014
“It was more than we expected,” said BART spokesperson Alicia Trost. “We’ve seen about a 15 percent to 38 percent increase in what was typically seen on the bus from the year before.”

**BART taps Chinese firm for West Oakland redo**
SFBay-Dec 5, 2014
The BART Board of Directors Thursday morning granted a development group led by a Chinese firm an exclusive negotiating agreement to develop a plan to build retail and office space in the parking lots around the West Oakland BART station.

**BART Will Study Second Transbay Tube, West Side Extension**
Streetsblog San Francisco (blog)-Dec 2, 2014
BART says it will formally study the decades-old ideas of building a second Transbay tube and extending service to SF’s western neighborhoods.
Ellen Smith, BART’s acting manager for strategic and policy planning, recently told a SF County Transportation Authority Board committee (comprised of SF supervisors) that regional transportation agencies plan to fund a study of a subway connecting the South of Market area to Alameda, with a possible extension west underneath the Market Street subway, towards the Richmond and Sunset Districts.

**We Could Have BART Service To The Richmond... By 2040**
SFist Dec 3, 2014
BART is officially studying the possibility of constructing a second Transbay Tube which would take BART service through Alameda, into SoMa, and potentially out to the western part of the city that's currently only served by sad bus lines like the 38. As StreetsBlog reports, though completion of the project would be decades in the future, BART recently informed a committee of SF Supervisors that it plans to launch a full study of the costs, logistics, and benefits of the project which could, potentially, double BART's capacity for serving Bay Area commuters in the future.

**With BART moving along well, it's a good time to re-evaluate all of our future rail travel plan.**

San Jose Mercury News-Dec 3, 2014

The current BART extension from Fremont through Milpitas and on to Berryessa was the result of a re-thinking by VTA, which divided the project in two. It was a sensible compromise that won public support and has turned out to be a wise and economic move. Advertisement

Now is the time to think about a logical shift to bring about the same kind of win-win for the second part of the BART project. We would urge the VTA to think seriously about swinging the line from Milpitas in a more westerly route to the airport and the Diridon rail hub. Forget the costly subway through downtown. Instead serve the job-rich "Golden Triangle" just west of Milpitas.

**Caltrain begins replacement of San Mateo bridges**

Progressive Rail Roading-Dec 4, 2014

Caltrain will begin work this month on the $38 million San Mateo bridges replacement project in California, an important infrastructure project that will provide seismic upgrades to four aging railway passes, the railroad announced yesterday.

**Report outlines impacts of Caltrain electrification**

San Mateo Daily Journal-Dec 4, 2014

Numerous residents, businesses and stakeholders raised concerns during the public comment phase ranging from the potential removal of thousands of trees to noise pollution, many of which Caltrain officials were pleased to announce can be mitigated. The Caltrain Modernization Project seeks to address projections that its current 1.3 million monthly ridership will more than double in the next 30 years through a $1.7 billion system upgrade that includes electric trains and a new control system. It hopes to be 75 percent electrified by 2021 and fully by 2040 with the project reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 176,000 metric tons annually and alleviating traffic congestion by 619,000 vehicle miles traveled daily, according to Caltrain.

**Developers push forward on projects at San Mateo Caltrain stations**

San Francisco Business Times (blog)-Dec 2, 2104

Robust job creation is reviving developer interest in high-density housing and office developments next to two of San Mateo's Caltrain stations, signaling anew the region's broadening economic recovery and rising popular preference for public transit.

**Bicyclists seeks space in Caltrain**

San Mateo Daily Journal-Dec 1, 2014

“In the last 10 years the number of people bringing their bikes on Caltrain has grown 364 percent,” said Kristin Smith, communications director for the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition. “An ongoing challenge and problem for people is they get bumped off of Caltrain. ... It’s really disincentivizing people to be biking and using transit. So we’re really look for Caltrain to come up with creative solutions to meet this need.”

Bicyclists make up about 11 percent of Caltrain ridership with its older Gallery trains able to host up to
80 bicyclists and the newer Bombardier trains providing room for up to 48, said Caltrain spokeswoman Jayme Ackemann.

**San Rafael approves SMART quiet zones**
Marinscope Community Newspapers-Dec 4, 2014
The San Rafael City Council voted 4-0 – with Councilwoman Maribeth Bushey recusing herself – in favor of establishing quiet zones along the Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit train route through the city. The packed chambers were anything but quiet as supporters applauded the decision.

**Metro trains could double up on platforms**
SFBay-Dec 4, 2014
Currently, subway riders have to wait for the train ahead of them to leave the station before the second train can unload and load passengers.
Subway stations like Civic Center, Montgomery and Powell support double-berthing because of the length of the station platforms, especially if consecutive two-car trains arrive.
Reiskin said that though trains will open its doors in the second position, trains will also still stop in the first position at the station platform.

**All-Door Muni Boarding Still Means Quicker Buses, Less Fare Evasion**
STREETSBOOKSF Nov 3, 2014
The results contradict predictions from critics who said all-door boarding would encourage fare evasion. Previously, bus operators had to verify and enforce payment at the front door. Now, buses use a “proof of payment” system, as had been the policy on light-rail lines for decades, where fare inspectors randomly check whether passengers have paid their fares. Inspection staff levels were boosted from 41 to 54 when all-door boarding launched.

In 1980 I saw in many European Cities all door boarding used both on rail and bus services. It has proven successful and had been in use long before 1980. The buses had ticket machines for passengers who needed a ticket. Maybe LA Metro should have talked to Muni Metro before wasting all that money on turnstiles to prevent fare evasion on LA Metro trains. NB

**Call for Suspension of Crude-by-Rail Shipments After Feather River Derailment**
KQED-Dec 2, 2014
State Sen. Jerry Hill (D-San Mateo) made the request after a Union Pacific freight train derailed on the Feather River route northeast of Oroville last week. A dozen cars of the train, which was carrying grain, left the tracks; one car spilled corn into the river.

**There's A Huge Problem Threatening New York's Subway System, And No One's Talking About It**
Business Insider Dec 3, 2014
A massive report issued back in 2011 accurately predicted which of the city's subway stations would fail in the event of a hurricane like Sandy. In the future, these kinds of intense storms are expected to make landfall every one to four years, rather than every 100 years.

**Oil prices plunge. Is a shale bubble bursting?**
Christian Science Monitor Dec 3, 2014
Oil prices have plunged in recent months, which is bad news for energy firms who have relied heavily on debt to finance their operations. Amid low oil prices, could a shakeout of the oil industry spark a broader financial crisis?
The oil and gas boom in the United States was made possible by the extensive credit afforded to drillers. Not only has financing come from company shareholders and traditional banks, but hundreds of billions
of dollars have also come from junk-bond investors looking for high returns. Junk-bond debt in energy has reached $210 billion, which is about 16 percent of the $1.3 trillion junk-bond market. That is a dramatic rise from just 4 percent that energy debt represented 10 years ago.

**Exposed: Oil Industry’s Astroturf Tactics Against CA Cap-and-Trade**
Streetsblog LA Dec 1, 2014
Last week, Brad Wieners at Bloomberg Businessweek leaked a presentation put together by the Western States Petroleum Association (WSPA), an oil industry lobby firm that operates in California. In the presentation slides, WSPA details its strategy to oppose regulatory efforts in California, Oregon, and Washington to combat climate change, including California’s Global Warming Solutions Act (A.B. 32), low carbon fuel standards, and the cap-and-trade system.

**Cap and Trade is funding many improvements in California of rail passenger service including High Speed Rail. NB**

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LAUS has brought back Shoe Shining service. This reflects a growing market of professional and business travelers at Union Station and on the trains. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

**We Get Emails**
Re: Southwest Airlines Is Failing California
What the man writes is somewhat true. I have flown 41 round trip flights with Southwest this year and while I still think they provide a service better than most these days, their prices have skyrocketed and I have had more poor Southwest experiences in the last 4 months than the remainder of time I have flown with them. Like the author, my business travel is largely made possible from Southwest's low fares. That isn't the case lately, when what used to be a $100-120 round trip as recently as February is now routinely $420-450...
Jarrod DellaChiesa

Re: Southwest Airlines Is Failing California
I've indeed have noticed that they are not necessarily the cheapest fare in some cases, although everyone's fares have gone up, and it often has no relationship to distance. What they still offer so far, however, is "no change fee" (the $200 charged by the legacy carriers means that often it's cheaper to buy a new ticket rather than to try using up an old one, if you need to change or cancel), and "bags fly free" (which means that I'm less likely to be forced to gate-check my carry-on bag because travelers have checked their luggage for free, instead of already filling up all the overhead compartments halfway through the boarding process because they wanted to save paying the $25 checked baggage fee. There's also the free bags of peanuts and pretzels, instead of the "buy-on-board" $3 bag of cashews, if you want something to go with your beverage. Plus, there's even those Nabisco snack bags on longer flights, instead of paying $9.50 for the tiniest sandwich I've ever seen (without even any chips to come with it), which makes the $10.50 Amtrak cheeseburger look like a bargain by comparison.
Marcus Jung

Re: Passenger Train Service depends on healthy Freight Railroads
I read your editorial and it it makes sense when there is money for intercity passenger rail. There is no new money in the pipeline, nor likely will their be as long as the Republican's control the House.

By the way, your interpretation of how the railroads behave is correct, but not legal. You see, when the railroads were relieved of their responsibility of running passenger trains they had to do a number of things in return including providing priority for Amtrak trains in perpetuity. Many freight railroad executives joined after RPSA passed so they have no memory of this. The reality is that they still have to provide a level of utility for Amtrak to use their trains. A US DOT OIG report found that freights don't provide Amtrak the priority over freight they are statutorily entitled to. Unfortunately, Amtrak can't sue over the failure of the freight railroads to provide priority, only the Attorney General can. PRIIA changed that and I can't wait for the STB to fine CN, CSX, and NS for their collective failiure to achieve even a double digit OTP for the Capitol Limited in some months. Once the fines start hitting, then and only then will freights start to even think about giving Amtrak the priority they are entitled to.
Dharm Guruswamy

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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