

Subject:	Builder's detour in North Dakota ending, Amtrak California has record Holiday travel.SFV wants more trains
From:	Rail Passenger Association of California (noelnoelt@cox.net)
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RailPAC Weekly E-Newsletter for December 29, 2014

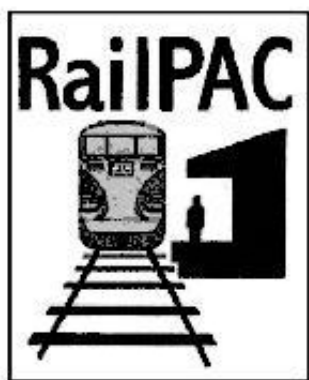
Edited by Noel T. Braymer

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www.railpac.org
Traffic? Gas Pains? We need more Trains!



Increasingly when we think of train stations, we will think of crowds and of them being popular places to be at: Los Angeles Union Station in 2014. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

[On planes, trains and automobiles, holiday travel soars to record](#)

OCRegister-Dec 22, 2014

With cheap gas, more jobs and more change in their pockets, more Californians are getting out of town for the holidays. Auto Club spokeswoman Marie Montgomery Nordhues said the projected number was at the highest level since the club first started tracking holiday travel in 2001...

The Auto Club's annual holiday travel forecast predicts more than 12 million Californians – 7.5 million from Southern California – will travel at least 50 miles between today and Jan. 4...

Most Metrolink service will be closed on Christmas and New Year's Day, but the Antelope Valley and San Bernardino lines will be open, according to Metrolink spokesman Jeff Lustgarten...

Top 5 holiday destinations for Southern Californians 1. Las Vegas 2. San Francisco 3. San Diego 4. Grand Canyon 5. Anaheim

Source: Automobile Club of Southern California.

All 5 of these destinations can be served with improved and expanded rail passenger service connecting with the rest of California NB

[Amtrak California sets ridership records over Thanksgiving](#)

Central Valley Business Times - Dec 24, 2014

Over one of the busiest travel periods of the year, Californians rode trains in unprecedented numbers this Thanksgiving, despite gas prices dipping to their lowest level in six years, says the California Department of Transportation. The "San Joaquin," which travels between Bakersfield and Oakland and is the fifth busiest corridor in the nation, had its second highest ridership and revenue in over a decade.

[Central Coast Amtrak route sees big jump in ridership during the holiday season](#)

KCBX - Dec 26, 2014

More travelers are choosing to take the train along the Central Coast than in years past, especially as part of holiday travel.

Amtrak California says it's seeing record ridership for the Pacific Surfliner, which services San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties as well as Southern California.

November ridership had levels not seen in more than a decade, despite low gas prices.

[Despite falling gas prices, Amtrak California sets ridership records](#)

Lake County News - Dec 26, 2014

SACRAMENTO – Over one of the busiest travel period of the year, Californians rode trains in unprecedented numbers this Thanksgiving, despite gas prices dipping to their lowest level in six years. November ridership and revenue reports for Amtrak California are in and boast impressive gains. The Pacific Surfliner, the second busiest intercity rail corridor in the nation, set records for the highest ridership and revenue in over a decade.

The San Joaquin, the fifth busiest corridor in the nation that travels from both Sacramento and San Francisco to Bakersfield, had the second highest ridership and revenue in over a decade.

“Intercity passenger rail is an important component of a sustainable, multimodal transportation system for today and the future,” said Caltrans Director Malcolm Dougherty. “More and more Californians are increasingly seeing train travel as a smart option.”

[Holiday travelers prefer easier experience through Ontario Airport](#)

Inland Valley Daily Bulletin-Dec 22, 2014

The crowds have increased and passenger volumes have increased,” Romo said. “It’s still an easier airport to get to compared with other airports. And it’s important to get here early enough so you’re not trying to rush getting through (security) screens.”

Other means of holiday transportation include Metrolink trains, with the San Bernardino-Los Angeles and Antelope Valley lines open during the holidays, officials said.

“We actually see a bit of a downturn during the holidays,” said Jeff Lustgarten, spokesman for Metrolink.

“We are also one of the few transit options available during the holidays. We’ll be continuing service on Christmas.”

Now if Metrolink were to have more lines running and connecting with each other on holidays to serve more places and offer deals to get people off crowded highways at times people travel on holidays; ridership and revenue might just go up and not down. NB

[Officers help deliver baby on train on Christmas](#)

News On 6-Dec 26, 2014

PHILADELPHIA (AP) - The transit police officers who helped deliver a Christmas baby on a subway train reunited with the newborn boy and his parents Friday morning, trading the chaos of the dingy rail car where they first met for the comfort of a hospital room.

[Amtrak to resume Empire Builder service in January](#)

Prairie Business-Dec 24, 2014

Amtrak’s Empire Builder will resume regular passenger rail service routes and schedules between Chicago and Seattle, including North Dakota, in early January.

As part of the service resumption, set for Jan. 12, the railroad will discontinue the use of chartered buses to cover missed station stops in Grand Forks, Devils Lake and Rugby, N.D., which has been routine since May to accommodate a BNSF Railway \$400 million track improvement project in North Dakota. Amtrak leases BNSF tracks.-

[State, Transportation Officials See Opportunity in Amtrak](#)

iBerkshires.com-Dec 24, 2014

GREENFIELD, Mass. — State and local officials on Monday afternoon touted the economic opportunities opened by the return of passenger rail to the Pioneer Valley — but only if the rail line is used...

Olver, considered instrumental in reviving passenger rail here, boarded Amtrak's Vermonter in Holyoke during its inaugural run up the "Knowledge Corridor" on Monday with Gov. Deval Patrick, U.S. Rep. Richard Neal, U.S. Rep. James McGovern and a host of elected and transportation officials.

[Rastafarian thrown off Amtrak train in Tucson for toking sacrament](#)

KVOA Tucson News-Dec 23, 2014

TUCSON- A man from Los Angeles traveling by Amtrak saw his holiday plans go up in smoke. He says, he was thrown off a train for practicing his religion and stranded in Tucson.

[Tardy train makes Christmas more 'interesting' for passengers](#)

KCRA Sacramento-Dec 25, 2014

The San Joaquin train experienced an engine problem en route to Sacramento from Bakersfield.

"It was like putt-putting and then it just stopped right there, 10 minutes from Lodi, and we just sat there," passenger Khaarin Jones said.

The train was stalled from about 11:45 a.m. until 2:40 p.m., when a "rescue train" arrived and pulled it to Sacramento.

[Can one person run long freight trains alone? Railroad execs say yes](#)

Crain's Chicago Business-Dec 22, 2014

(AP) — When American freight trains delivered cargo after World War II, the steam-belching beasts commonly had seven people aboard — an engineer, a conductor, up to four brakemen and a fireman. Trains have since grown much longer, seemingly stretching to the horizon and often taking 20 minutes to pass through a crossing. And crews have been reduced in size — to five people in the 1970s and two in 1991.

[New Law Gives Emergency Planners Oil By Rail Information](#)

Capital Public Radio News-Dec 26, 2014

A new law that goes into effect January 31 in California requires railroads to give more information to emergency planners about crude oil shipments.

Local and state emergency responders say they are given very little detail about the movement of trains carrying crude oil.

A 2013 Bakken crude oil train explosion that killed 47 people in Quebec raised awareness of the danger that poses.

Kelly Huston with the California Office of Emergency Services says with the predicted increase in the amount of imported crude oil, more information is needed.



Early morning in Bakersfield with passenger waiting for the first northbound of the morning to load.
Photo by Noel T. Braymer

[Saudi issues 'final warning' on high-speed rail project](#)

AFP Dec 24, 2014

Jeddah (Saudi Arabia) (AFP) - Saudi Arabia has given a "final warning" to avoid delays on an \$8.2 billion high-speed rail project which Spanish and Saudi firms are helping to build.

The Haramain High Speed Rail system is to transport Muslim pilgrims, as well as regular travellers, 450 kilometres (280 miles) between the holy cities of Mecca and Medina via the Red Sea port of Jeddah.

[Surface Transportation Board Rules That ICCTA Preempts CEQA ...](#)

JD Supra (press release)-Dec 21, 2014

On December 12, 2014, the Surface Transportation Board (STB) issued a decision, in response to a petition filed by the California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority), finding that the Interstate Commerce Commission Termination Act (ICCTA) categorically preempts CEQA with respect to the 114-mile passenger rail line that the Authority is constructing between Fresno and Bakersfield (the "Line") as part of its High-Speed Train (HST) System. This broadly worded decision should effectively preclude CEQA challenges to all lines that will be constructed as part of the HST System.

[More Good News for California High Speed Rail](#)

By Noel T. Braymer

After passage of Prop 1A in November 2008 which gave the California High Speed Rail project almost 10 billion dollars in funding, everything seemed to go wrong. The project was on death's door by 2012 with growing opposition from property owners who could be affected by the project. This was particularly true in the San Joaquin Valley. Since 2012 after a new Business Plan was written and with

major management changes, the project and its relations with many of the impacted communities has slowly improved.

[High-speed rail Pacheco Pass route upheld by appeals court](#)

Macro Insider-Dec 20, 2014

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) -- A state appeals court on Thursday upheld a proposed route for California's high-speed rail line connecting the San Francisco Bay Region to the Central Valley.

[California carbon funds are an uncertain benefit for high-speed rail](#)

Sacramento Bee Dec 24, 2014

The Brown administration projected generating about \$550 million from cap-and-trade auctions in the current fiscal year, but the Department of Finance refuses to estimate future revenue, arguing doing so might influence the market. For investors looking for a reliable return, the uncertainty of future proceeds is concerning.

“Cap and trade is a potential good solution, but it’s still not quite certain,” said Michael Liikala, a consultant who advises foreign companies on infrastructure projects in the United States and who has been involved in high-speed rail talks.

[Why 2014 was a landmark year for high-speed rail in Texas](#)

Dallas Business Journal Dec 26,2014

A decade from now, high-speed rail could be as commonplace in Texas as interstates and air travel. Commuters will hop on a 205-mph bullet train in downtown Dallas and find themselves in downtown Houston 90 minutes later. Trains could make 68 trips a day between the two cities. If this happens the way Texas Central Railway envisions, historians will look back at 2014 as the year privately funded bullet trains finally got on the fast track in the United States.

[Long-delayed US high-speed rail plans may ride on Texas express](#)

Reuters-Dec 26, 2014

The Texas Central Railway Company plans to use private investment and Central Japan Railway bullet train technology to run a line between two of the largest U.S. cities. Company officials say service could begin in 2021.

"If we can't do it in Texas, I don't know where in the United States you could do it," said Richard Lawless, chairman and chief executive officer of Texas Central Railway, a private company set up about four years ago to build high-speed rail.

[Commissioners to consider high-speed rail resolution](#)

Your Houston News-Dec 24, 2014

Montgomery County commissioners will consider passing a resolution against the proposed high-speed railway between Dallas and Houston due to concerns over safety and potential property damage to residents.

According to the resolution, a “better solution” would be investment in current infrastructure and having the trains follow the Interstate 45 corridor.

[Proposed high-speed rail could impact Houston property values](#)

Houston Business Journal (blog)-Dec 24, 2014

During a public town hall meeting Dec. 18, officials presented the proposed routes, which cut through some of Houston's older neighborhoods, including Garden Oaks and Independence Heights, on their way to downtown. This has some residents upset.

[Polish borders high speed rail study](#)

Railway Gazette International-Dec 23, 2014

The study will investigate continuing the branches of the future high speed line to the German and Czech borders, assessing whether it would be better to modernise existing routes or build new alignments. Nine potential corridors are to be studied, with a proposed design speed of 200 to 350 km/h.

[New 1100-Mile-High Speed Train Route For China](#)

CleanTechnica-Dec 26, 2014

A new high-speed train route from Shanghai to Guangzhou opened recently, covering a distance of about 1,100 miles. This distance is roughly the same as traveling from Los Angeles to Seattle. How long does it take to cover the 1,100 miles in China?

Looks like about 7 hours, which would be much faster than driving and far less stressful. Even the old, slow train took about 16 hours, so 7 is a huge improvement. In 2012, a high-speed rail route from Beijing to Guangzhou also opened, covering over 1,400 miles in approximately 8 hours.



The Sunset Limited layover at El Paso, TX station. Our westbound train arrived 30 minutes early; I just returned from an exciting trip across country, and am sending you a few photos from the westbound Sunset Limited. (surprisingly enough, the train was on time throughout the entire trip, arriving into Los Angeles 5 minutes early - i.e. at 5:25 a.m.) This was quite an impressive on-time performance!

Happy Holidays, and have a great New Year 2015!!- Alexander Friedman

[Lack of new San Fernando Valley rail lines draws complaints](#)

Daily News Dec 21, 2014

Those projects and others represent L.A.'s biggest transit expansion in decades. They follow passage of

2008's Measure R, when Los Angeles County voters agreed to fund transportation projects and highway upgrades via a half-cent sales tax.

But as the region's transit network grows, some say the San Fernando Valley is being left out.

"The Valley clearly has been shortchanged by Measure R," said Los Angeles City Councilman Paul Krekorian, who represents parts of the Valley and serves on the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority's board...

With the exception of a new Orange Line busway extension, which opened in 2012, no major Measure R projects have broken ground in the Valley. Instead, studies are being conducted on a rail or bus line along Van Nuys Boulevard. A new Sepulveda Pass transit line is in the early planning stages.

[The Notoriously Suburban Valley is Demanding Rail Transit](#)

Curbed LA-Dec 22, 2014

Metro's considering asking for more money on the 2016 ballot and some members of the board are threatening to withhold support for the new measure unless it gives priority to projects in the Valley. The Valley makes up 39 percent of the city, but it's only getting 13 percent of the Measure R money, a rep for County Supervisor Michael Antonovich says. The Orange Line extension's the only Valley transit project funded by Measure R that's been completed or even broken ground; it opened in 2012.

[San Fernando Valley Prioritizes Freeways, Then Bemoans Lack of Transit](#)

Streetsblog LA Dec 23, 2014

Measure R has a reputation for being money for rail construction but, as many SBLA readers know, Metro rail capital is only 35 percent of the overall estimated \$40 billion. Wholly 20 percent of Measure R goes to freeways. Metro is providing \$1.5 billion to pay for 5 Freeway widening in L.A. County. Specifically, in the San Fernando Valley, according to Metro spokesperson Dave Sotero, Measure R contributes \$271.5 million for the 5 Freeway improvements from the 134 to the 170, which total over \$700 million.

According to Sotero, in addition to that \$271.5 million, Measure R provides \$90.8 million for the \$161 million project improving the to the interchange between the 5 and 14 freeways. Measure R is building transportation infrastructure in the Valley, just not so much transit infrastructure.

[Appellate court rules in favor of Vista Canyon development](#)

Santa Clarita Valley Signal-Dec 23, 2014

The mixed-use project, which entails construction of more than 1,000 homes and almost a million square feet of commercial space on 185 acres across the Santa Clara River from Canyon Country Park and west of Sand Canyon, was the target of a lawsuit brought by Santa Clarita Organization for Planning and the Environment, Friends of the Santa Clara River and a group called Homeowners for Neighborhood Preservation...

In addition to residential and commercial areas, the project will also include parkland, miles of trails and a new Metrolink station and transit center, according to planners.

[RIVERSIDE: Metrolink train to downtown delayed by trouble in ...](#)

Press-Enterprise-Dec 26, 2014

Unspecified police activity in Pomona delayed a Metrolink train headed to the downtown Riverside station for 25 minutes on Friday night, Dec. 26, Metrolink reported.

[Foothill Gold Line testing from Pasadena to Azusa begins](#)

Claremont Courier-Dec 22, 2014

The Foothill Gold Line light rail project from Pasadena to Azusa tested its first light rail vehicle last week. The test train, which has been equipped with specialized gear for testing and protective purposes, was pulled just over five miles by a hi-rail vehicle from the Sierra Madre Villa station in East Pasadena

through the cities of Arcadia and Monrovia, periodically stopping for crews to take measurements. The train will begin the official testing process between California Avenue in Monrovia and the San Gabriel River Bridge in Irwindale as early as this week.

[Gold Line is focused on the east for 2015: Guest commentary](#)

The Pasadena Star-News-Dec 26, 2014

We're encouraged to see the positive economic impact this project is already having throughout our region. Ground was broken this past year on the Station Square Transit Village in Monrovia, a direct investment of more than \$40 million into the local economy. Other significant transit-oriented developments are also being developed or planned all along the system.

As we head into a new year, we'll start to shift our focus east to the project's eventual completion to Montclair.

In 2014, the Construction Authority began preparing the Glendora-to-Montclair segment for construction. Advanced engineering documents are now under development with the support of the corridor cities of Glendora, San Dimas, La Verne, Pomona, Claremont and Montclair.

[SLO Railroad Museum receives \\$30000 donation](#)

Daily News-Dec 23, 2014

Phillips 66 Santa Maria Refinery funds \$30,000 in museum exhibits

Christmas and trains just go together: think toy trains circling under Christmas trees, the arrival scene in "White Christmas," and children's movie classics like "Polar Express." So what better time than just days before Christmas for the San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum to announce the gift of a major contribution by the Phillips 66 Santa Maria Refinery?

[Analysis shows which BART stations have most, least crime](#)

SFGate-Dec 22, 2014

Busy Powell Street Station sits at the junction of the Tenderloin and tourist-heavy Union Square and is frequented by vagrants, panhandlers and pickpockets, as well as tourists, shoppers and commuters.

And Powell is the BART station with the most total crime. Yet on a per-passenger basis, riders are more likely to encounter crime at stations in southern Alameda County or eastern Contra Costa.



This is at San Onofre State Park where one of the major fires that hit in mid-May throughout San Diego County caused much damage. What we see is where the flames jumped over the I-5 and railroad and started a small fire next to the coast. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

We Get Emails

Re: Metro Red Line Subway Extension

With Metrolink in planning stages of a new Burbank Airport Station at Hollywood Way that will eventually accommodate HSR, its time for LA Metro to begin planning an extension of the Red Line Subway. The extension should be run from the current North Hollywood/Lankershim Terminus, up to Burbank Airport (Amtrak-Metrolink Station, underneath the Main Terminal itself w/stop, & onto the new Airport Station at Hollywood Way). I think its obvious how critical such a connected link will benefit the area. This could also be a viable alternative to a People Mover (as long as running times are frequent). Such an extension of the Red Line to Burbank Airport should be fully operational by the time HSR reaches Burbank, no later!

Kelly Walton-Harper

What you are advocating will greatly improve transportation in the San Fernando Valley. Subways however take a long time to build. There have been efforts to get subway service down Wilshire Blvd to Westwood for at least 40 years. Construction is underway now to extend the Purple Line down Wilshire to the edge of Beverly Hills by 2023. High Speed Rail is scheduled to get to Burbank by 2022. There were plans to accelerate construction to reach Westwood by 2023, but this required an extension of the county sale tax for transportation to pay for loans to accelerate construction to Westwood. But the ballot measure to do this failed to get the needed 2/3s majority by less than 1 percent. The San Fernando Valley and the Westside along with the rest of LA County will have to work together to raise the money and set priorities to get more done on transportation. NB

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily

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