

[Caltrain Asking What Riders Want in New Ticket Machines](#)

Patch.com-Jan 29, 2013

Caltrain riders are being asked for their opinions in an online survey the agency will use to improve features on its ticket vending machines.

[Razing I-280 stub only part of vision](#)

San Francisco Chronicle-Jan 27, 2013

But not everyone is on board. Caltrain officials are concerned that the city's plans could stall or even stop plans to electrify the commuter railroad, a decades-long effort that moved close to reality only last summer when the state Legislature and the California High-Speed Rail Authority made it part of the new "blended" high-speed train project that will share the tracks, and gave it \$700 million.

[Sports shorts: Caltrain offers service to Giants Fan Fest](#)

San Jose Mercury News- Jan 31, 2013

9, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., at AT&T Park, and Caltrain is offering fans an easy way to .

[Loose boards cause major delays on BART between Daly City and...](#)

Contra Costa Times-by Daniel Jimenez- Jan 31, 2013

The boards were striking and in some cases knocking off the "collector shoes," pads that conduct electricity from the third rail to the train.

[Revamped handcar races planned for summer in Santa Rosa](#)

Santa Rosa Press Democrat- Feb 1, 2013

Almost two years after Santa Rosa's popular Great Handcar Regatta ended its four-year run, one of the event's co-founders plans a new rail-car race this summer.

[PERRIS: Fate of new Metrolink line hangs on judge's decision](#)

Press-Enterprise (blog)- Jan 30, 2013

An activist group, Friends of Riverside's Hills, is suing the Riverside County Transportation Commission for allegedly not analyzing the negative effects of the project closely enough.

[Watch: Construction On Azusa Gold Line Station Underway \(Video\)](#)

Monrovia Patch Jan 30, 2013

Gold Line Construction Authority and Azusa city officials preview the progress on the new station at the Azusa/Glendora border

[Train noise rattling Laguna Niguel residents](#)

OCRegister-Jan 29, 2013

Many crossings in Anaheim, Irvine, Orange, San Clemente, Santa Ana and Tustin have been silenced, but San Juan Capistrano has not yet formally applied for a "quiet zone status," meaning trains continue to sound their horns as they reach crossings there

[Capo Beach rail crossing becomes 'quiet zone' Feb. 14](#)

OCRegister-Jan 30, 2013

Dana Point residents won't have to hear train horns at Palisades Drive and Beach Road come Valentine's Day.

[Easy Ways for Amtrak to Make More Money](#)

Report by Noel T. Braymer

Cutting back on Long Distance Passenger Service has never saved money for Amtrak. It was tried in

1979 and again in 1997 with losses increasing not decreasing. Amtrak's losses increased 150 million dollars from 1978 to 1981 after the October 1979 service cutbacks of 5 Long Distance Trains.

Table 1 – Recent Federal Appropriations

Amtrak Funding (\$millions) excluding Amtrak OIG	PRIIA Authority	FY2010 Appropriation	FY2011 Appropriation	FY2012 Appropriation	FY2012 Budget
Operating Grant	101(a)	563	562	466	345
General Federal Capital ⁽¹⁾	101(c)	574	649	607	623
Americans with Disabilities Act Investment	219 (b)	144		50	50
NEC Gateway Project Capital Funds				15	15
Plus amount Retained by FRA from Capital & DS for Oversight ⁽²⁾	103	10	9	10	10
<i>Subtotal DOT Capital Grant</i>		728	658	681	697
Capital Funded with Amtrak Ticket Revenue					121
Debt Service ⁽³⁾	102(a)	264	264	271	255
<i>Subtotal DOT Debt Service Grant</i>		264	264	271	255
Total Amtrak Appropriation		1,555	1,484	1,418	1,418
Net Funding to Amtrak		1,545	1,474	1,409	1,409

With all the noise in the media from all sides about Amtrak's deficit it is hard to get the facts. This is from Amtrak as of January 2012 on the Fiscal 2012 Budget with a breakdown of Federal funding for Amtrak. Amtrak last September after the end of the 2012 Fiscal Year ballyhooed the fact that they had recovered 85% of their OPERATING costs and only needed \$361 million extra in 2012 to cover operations. But the final figure for Federal funds for Amtrak is \$1.418 billion. The biggest chunk at \$623 million is for Capital mostly for track and catenary projects on the NEC. In 2010 Amtrak estimated that \$5.2 billion was needed to get the NEC in a "good state of repair" and that at about \$700 million a year over the next 15 years would be needed to repair the NEC. The \$255 million for Debt service is likely needed to pay off much of the debt Amtrak ran up in the late 1990's to start up the Acela trains which was the reason Amtrak almost ceased operations in 2002. The DOT charges Amtrak \$10 million from their funding to pay for the DOT's oversight of Amtrak. What is missing is any money for more equipment which is needed if Amtrak is to increase ridership and revenues to cover more of their costs. NB

We Get Emails

Re Oceanside lousy station information

Last time I was at Oceanside last summer, and was waiting for an Amtrak train going southbound, the train switched over to the opposite track just before it arrived at the station. I had to scamper down the platform, through the pedestrian tunnel, and run half the length of the train to catch the train. What a disservice it was with no announcement prior to the train's arrival. I nearly missed it. This was a problem I addressed and am glad to see it has finally been rectified!

Also much to my delight, was discussion of restoration of service to Roanoke in the state of Virginia, which is another state I've enjoyed riding the trains very much. I can't wait to visit the Norfolk and Western, O. Winston Link, and Virginia Transportation museums there, and nothing would be finer than taking the train there to do it.

Steven Crosmer

Re: California State Rail Plan Revision

Thank you for an excellent overview of the issues surrounding the California Rail Plan. I think your hypothesis

is correct in that no one has "any clear idea what is in store for the next 5 to 10 years". Each entity is generally analyzing its own operation and can't think "network". The only group thinking "network" is

RailPAC. This situation gives RailPAC an opportunity to represent the network user and directly influence the structure of the network and its parameters. However to be most effective, RailPAC needs to outline a concise list of key priorities, with overviews detailing the action and its benefits to the network and users.

- 1.) Define a limited number of key intercity rail/commuter rail/high-speed rail transfer stations. All train routes should be in the same station with either joint use of platforms to maximize station capacity or a multilevel station platform structure.
- 2.) Given FRA's new level boarding rule, it is important that high-speed rail equipment be able to share the same platforms as bi-levels.
- 3.) Easily accessible couplers and power connections on lead cars to facilitate diesel powered route extensions;
- 4.) Through fares to all stations in California with intercity service;
- 5.) One-stop booking of through trips;
- 6.) Amtrak passenger type (Senior, Child, etc.) calculation levels and rules (i.e. age, etc.) defining these discounts to facilitate through fares;
- 7.) Provision for checked baggage service and carriage of bicycles (like the Cascades, not like Acela);
- 8.) Maintain the extensive Thruway bus network to bring the benefits of the rail improvements to all of California;
- 9.) Given the modest ridership at small volume stations in the San Joaquin Valley (which in FY12 totaled less than 20 riders per train), consideration should be given to operating parallel Thruway bus service in lieu of parallel train service on the BNSF.

Through service generates strong ridership and ticket revenue performance, and at launch CHSRA's limited core route is going to need all the ridership and ticket revenue it can get. The key factors are travel time and convenience. It takes less time to add a diesel locomotive (11 minutes at New Haven) than to transfer passengers, some of whom are elderly or disabled and all of whom have a great deal of luggage (up to 30 minutes at Bakersfield). **In Europe Locomotives can be added or pulled out in a fraction of the time here. Automatic couplers with air and electric connections can reduce change out time to seconds. NB**

There are, however, several challenges to through service that must be overcome. First because of funding limitations, priorities for investments to facilitate through service will have to be chosen. Second, California rail service has been divided into multiple independent operations, each focused on local service with little consideration of the need for a coordinated network that generates longer trips. Capacity is the third challenge. This is because the new high-speed-line will have more capacity than the existing connecting legs. Providing capacity on these connecting legs will take substantial capital funds and time. Alternatively authorities could give up their operating slots for the through intercity trains; however, commuter rail operators may be reluctant to agree.

Steve Roberts

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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