

STEEL WHEELS

PASSENGER RAIL IN CALIFORNIA AND THE WEST

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**RAILPAC • ALL ABOARD ARIZONA • PASSENGER RAIL KANSAS • NEW MEXICO RA • MINNARP
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Amtrak 6 California Zephyr in snowy Utah Photo: Richard Ebright

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RAIL PASSENGER ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA & NEVADA

From the Editor's Desk

By Paul Dyson - RailPAC Editor



Is Governor Newsom Anti Rail?

A news item in the Los Angeles Times of 12 November 2023 goes a long way to explaining recent developments at Caltrans and transportation policy in California. The story highlights Newsom's love affair with autonomous vehicles, both surface and airborne. Speaking outside a Tesla plant in Shanghai recently, the Governor

told reporters: "autonomy is the future". His agenda, laudable in its way, is to ensure that California remains at the forefront of this technology with the hope of deriving economic benefits from its exploitation. The tech-friendly Governor is not alone. The Autonomous Vehicle Industry Association and its members spent \$2.4 million lobbying the state government in the first nine months of this year. The Public Utilities Commission quickly approved a massive expansion of robotaxis in August with little input from local interests. Contrast that with the PUC's failure to address the issue of platform clearances for passenger trains after years of delay.

The Governor's interest in autonomous vehicles is reflected in policy throughout his administration. Both Caltrans and the California Air Resources Board (CARB) have adopted policies either indifferent or hostile to passenger rail. In July we learnt that Caltrans had disbanded the Division of Rail and Mass Transit (DoRMT) and dispersed the staff among regional offices or the planning department. This is a clear indication that the State is avoiding taking a role in the development of intercity and regional rail, leaving it to the JPAs and the counties. At the same time CARB refuses to discuss rail electrification in favor of hoping, like Charles Dickens's Mr. Micawber, that something will turn up in the form of hydrogen propulsion that will actually work.

What I find odd is that Caltrans continues to build highway lanes. If autonomy is the future we are supposed to need less capacity as it will be used more efficiently. Yet construction continues on a large scale. Caltrans engineers, horrified by the sight of brake lights, continue to pour concrete to solve "congestion", in reality moving congestion from one location to another.

The loss of DoRMT, with apparently no consultation with the Senate or Assembly transportation committees is a major blow to the prospects for critical projects like reroutes of segments of the coast route. The only repository of passenger rail expertise at State level is the High Speed Rail Authority and they have their hands full. Who will take the lead, and who will coordinate the efforts of these local agencies to avoid duplication and waste?

Thirty years ago California had a leadership position in developing rail corridors and connecting buses and seemed to be on the way to a truly integrated system of mobility. The momentum has sadly dissipated as politicians seem to think that box has been checked and no further action is required. Probably the Governor thinks that the heavy spending on the

High Speed Rail project is as much as passenger rail deserves, and that regional rail is yesterday's technology.

Meanwhile, RailPAC continues to spend its \$20,000 annual budget in Sacramento and around the State educating elected officials to counter the highway and air lobbies. We still believe that we carry far more weight than that small sum would suggest. A big part of that influence comes from our base of members and from the fact that we are all volunteers. Your continued support for RailPAC is as important as ever as we continue our efforts to expand and improve regional, intercity, long distance interregional and high-speed services in California, Nevada and throughout the west.

Settlement Between California High Speed Rail Authority and Burbank Airport

In press releases this week the California High Speed Rail Authority and Burbank Glendale Pasadena Airport Authority have announced an agreement whereby the Airport drops its lawsuit against the CHSRA and they agree to cooperate. The Airport is attempting to build a new terminal and CHSRA wants to build its Burbank station alongside, with tracks running under part of the airport property. The announcement reads:

The California High-Speed Rail Authority and the Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Airport Authority have reached an agreement that dismisses the Airport Authority's lawsuit regarding the high-speed rail project. The new agreement creates the framework for a collaborative process for the High-Speed Rail Authority to build a station with a direct connection to Hollywood Burbank Airport, seamlessly linking two high-speed modes of travel to efficiently move travelers throughout Southern California and beyond.

"The Airport Authority appreciates the efforts of the High-Speed Rail Authority in creating a collaborative process which respects the development of the replacement passenger terminal and ongoing airport operations," said Frank Miller, Executive Director of Hollywood Burbank Airport.

The settlement commits the High-Speed Rail Authority and the Airport Authority to a collaborative process during advanced design, construction, and operation of the high-speed rail station adjacent to the airport to ensure compatibility with the replacement passenger terminal and other airport facilities.

Having read the full agreement I am inclined to think that it calls for both parties to cooperate to settle future differences, rather than that these differences have been settled. These potential conflicts are a combination of technical, e.g. tunneling methods and clearances, and commercial, such as parking and transit access. It is indeed unfortunate that we did not start out with the plan to build a single integrated terminal, but both the CHSRA and the Airport have had their travails getting approval and funding, the latter still not in place for either project. I hope that the Airport will appoint new leadership that is committed to the concept of a joint intermodal hub, and not continue their hostility to rail.

Pdyson@railpac.org

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**Rail Passenger Association
of California and Nevada**

*A statewide membership organization
working for the improvement and
expansion of passenger rail service.*

Organized in 1977 by a group of passenger rail supporters, RailPAC has been working for over 45 years to establish a network of rail services that will provide service to and throughout California and Nevada.

**We need your support to improve and expand
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RailPAC presents a strong case to federal, state and local governments for reliable rail services from long-distance trains to commuter operations. Your organization gains strength with a growing membership base and members are invited to review and reflect on proposed changes in budgets, routes and service frequencies.

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RailPAC works closely with other rail organizations and transit advocacy groups.

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Members work with local rail passenger groups including Station Hosts at several Amtrak stations, attend and report on meetings of regional and transit boards and write letters to editors of newspapers. Members also submit personal reports of on-board service levels for distribution in Steel Wheels and the weekly e newsletter.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

about RailPAC and how you can help expand and improve passenger rail, visit our website **RailPAC.org** or fill out and return the form on the back page of this newsletter.

RailPAC.org

Our website includes a complete listing of our current positions, as well as frequent articles and reports from around the state. Visit **RailPAC.org** to learn more about these and other regional passenger rail projects we support.

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RAILPAC'S WORK AT-A-GLANCE

RailPAC is working with Amtrak, Caltrans and all agencies involved in achieving the following goals for expanding and extending safe and reliable rail passenger service. We support adequate funding for these services and vigorously promote them.

High Speed Rail

Build the High Speed Rail system together with electrification Caltrain and Metrolink.

Coast Corridor

Reduce travel times. Continue to enhance onboard amenities. Restore connections to Long-Distance trains at Los Angeles Union Station. New stations at Gilroy, Watsonville, Soledad and King City.

Pacific Surfliner Corridor

Campaign for run through tracks at Los Angeles Union Station to improve punctuality and travel times for Amtrak and Metrolink. Extend service to the Coachella and Imperial valleys. Build bypass tunnels at San Clemente and Del Mar.

Sunset Corridor

Introduce daily service via Phoenix.

San Joaquin Corridor

Integrate service with High Speed segment. Extend service north of Sacramento. Add stations at Elk Grove, Marysville, Chico and Redding.

Capitol Corridor

Increase frequency to hourly service between Sacramento and Oakland. Increase frequency of service to San Jose. Extend service to Reno and San Luis Obispo.

Las Vegas

Reestablish service between Los Angeles and Las Vegas. Support the Brightline High Speed Rail Project linking Las Vegas with Southern California

RailPAC
is a 501c3
Organization
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President's Commentary

By Steve Roberts – RailPAC President

Well I was a little optimistic about the timeline for grant awards for two major Federal rail programs. As I write this only the first of the Federal/State Partnerships has been announced. Announcement of grants under this category will reveal whether California High Speed Rail and Brightline West can continue to

aggressively move forward. Texas Central could also see a boost to its fortunes. Two Amtrak grant requests are of note. The first, in partnership with Illinois and the city of Chicago, is the Chicago Union Station Access Project. This project will dramatically improve access and reliability to Chicago Union Station for Midwest Corridor and long-distance routes south and east of Chicago. The second Amtrak grant request is to fund capital improvements to enable a daily Sunset Ltd. via Phoenix, daily Cardinal, and a Fort Worth leg of the Crescent from Meridian, MS to Ft. Worth, TX and capacity improvements near Sandpoint, ID.

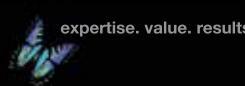
The second is the Corridor ID Program, a gateway process of planning requirements for a corridor to enter into the Infrastructure Bill funding pipeline. All of California's established corridors are expected to qualify.

A recent personnel issue at Caltrans appears to reveal that Caltrans Districts have been piecemealing projects and using semantics to create additional general purpose freeway lanes. The Districts are accused of padding road maintenance project budgets in order to build additional lanes and adding capacity when life expired interchanges with obsolete designs (1960's clover leaves) are replaced. In addition we now have "managed lanes", the HOV+2 lane strategy which, given that some autos have multiple passengers anyway, just re-sorts the traffic. HOV+2 projects just add a lane and don't reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT). And now there is a new smokescreen to skirt VMT reduction goals, adding a lane by calling it a Truck Safety Lane. These linguistic somersaults do not hide the fact that these will in reality be general purpose lanes. RailPAC will continue to monitor this issue.

About two years ago I expressed concerns in Steel Wheels that Amtrak was falling behind in the fuel efficiency race compared to the fuel consumption of new geared turbine jet engines and hybrid automobiles. Since then Amtrak and the state have been reequipping their locomotive fleets with new Tier 4 Siemens Charger locomotives which are more fuel efficient than the locomotives they replaced. Caltrain has electrified, while Metrolink and ACE have also purchased new Tier 4 more fuel efficient locomotives. Tier 4 locomotives generate less local pollutants, 85% less NOX (smog) and PM2 particulates, than the locomotives they replace. In addition, all of the California Corridors, ACE and Metrolink are now using recycled renewable diesel. Amtrak's long-term goal is to convert to renewable fuel.

Renewable fuel, if broadly used in highway and aviation applications, can be seen a problematic tool to reduce carbon emissions because of the huge volume of fuel required. This large volume means that new sources of non-petroleum plant based sources are needed. Producing these new volumes of fuel could result in carbon emissions equaling or exceeding carbon emissions saved. Because of the efficiency of the rail mode, less overall fuel is required so this is not an issue for rail usage of renewable fuel because the source of rail renewable fuel is different. Renewable rail fuel is made from recycled vegetable oil (French fry oil) and animal fats. This means using sources of fuel whose carbon production has already been incurred. While there is energy used in the collection, refining and distribution of this used vegetable and fat oil, recycled renewable rail fuel results in a 63% reduction in CO2 emissions compared to diesel fuel. Tier 4 locomotives utilizing recycled renewable fuel result in a dramatic reduction in both local emissions and Greenhouse Gas emissions and make rail the cleanest transportation mode and significantly ahead of other modes when it comes to environmental efficiency.

It seems like there are always new barriers to non-automobile travel. One that has emerged over the past few years is the loss of hotel restaurants. While every Best Western (Denny's) or Howard Johnson's used to have a restaurant, those disappeared with the rise of the streamlined middle market hotel brands (Hampton Inn, Holiday Inn Express, Embassy Suites, etc.) which served complimentary breakfast but had no other food service. That worked well for auto travelers who are stopping for lunch as they travel and can drive to a restaurant for dinner. Then that trend spread to the four-star hotels Hilton, Sheraton, Crowne Plaza, etc. Many of these hotels have no full service restaurant, only breakfast and a limited menu available at the bar the rest of the day. This presents a challenge as these hotels tend to be located in downtowns or near airports where travelers often arrived later and do not necessarily have an automobile. Now post-pandemic that trend is even starting to spread to five-star hotels. Combined with the pandemic closing of restaurants, this creates a real food dilemma for non-auto travelers and creates another challenge to traveling by rail. Now an App and delivery are options, but they are so utilitarian, like Flex or Contemporary dining on Amtrak. These App based options are not as convenient as a hotel restaurant.



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Coast Rail Is Essential

Riposte To Op-Ed In San Diego Union Suggesting That The Railroad Between Los Angeles And San Diego Is Unnecessary

by George Chilson



Surfliner at Del Mar Photo: Craig Walker

Converting the Coaster rail line into a trail without first relocating it further inland is impractical. It connects San Diego with the national rail system. It is essential for both our region and the nation. The investment to relocate it will avoid spending even more to expand I-5 into more neighborhoods between Los Angeles and San Diego.

It's surprising that a former professor of economics would advance such an irresponsible proposal without first understanding his subject. He seems unaware of the fact that the rail line through Del Mar carries more than just Coaster passengers.

- Amtrak's Pacific Surfliner connects San Diego with Los Angeles, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo as well as with trains in Los Angeles to the rest of the nation. Prior to Covid and service interruptions, Surfliner trains through Del Mar carried nearly a million passengers a year to and from San Diego. That's in addition to 1.7 million trips Coaster trains carried – removing more than 10,000 trips a day from I-5.
- BNSF freight trains move millions of dollars of goods over the Coaster route. Shifting this freight from rail to road would add nearly a thousand trucks a day to already congested I-5.
- Per ton-mile, freight rail uses less land, consumes less fuel, produces far less pollution, eliminates wear and tear on roads and reduces the risk of fatalities and serious injuries from highway wrecks.
- A key focus of the Port of San Diego is rail-oriented freight – bulk commodities, automobiles, etc.

In addition to its value in moving people and freight, the Coaster line must be maintained in a state of good repair and have sufficient capacity for reasons of national security.

- It provides logistical support for the routine and ongoing needs of the U.S. Navy's Pacific Fleet based in San Diego.
- It is essential for moving Army equipment for

deployment overseas. The military prefers rail transport because it is safer and more secure than highway. Rail is also less hazardous and disruptive than highway for transporting large and heavy armored vehicles.

- The US Military depends upon a strong domestic railroad network for logistical support. The U.S. Army Military Surface Deployment & Distribution Command, which is responsible for all U.S. military rail shipments, has designated the LA-San Diego rail line as part of the Strategic Rail Corridor Network (STRACNET).
- The Port of San Diego is one of only 18 commercial seaports in the United States designated as a "Strategic Port" for its role in moving military cargo around the globe.
- Under Federal law, and under its original agreement to purchase the rail line from the Santa Fe Railway, North County Transit District is legally obligated to maintain the corridor for freight service.

This is not a local decision. No railroad line in the United States can be abandoned without permission from the Surface Transportation Board, the independent Federal agency that regulates transportation. It evaluates all such proposals based on input from all stakeholders in the region, state and nation.

Finally, the professor's suggestions about ways to mitigate the negative impact that additional traffic would have on already congested I-5 are fanciful.

- Riding sharing and carpooling? Already a proven failure. That's why Caltrans is converting HOV lanes to Toll lanes for single occupancy vehicles.
- Uber and Lyft? They typically carry single passengers and actually create more congestion because they deadhead to and from each trip.
- Self-driving cars? In theory, they might increase freeway capacity within a narrow speed band although not proven. Despite years of R & D and hype, self-driving cars are not close to having such reliable capability.
- Most importantly, self-driving technology does not address the most fundamental cause of congestion: on a road operating close to capacity, it takes only a few additional vehicles to grind all traffic into stop-and-go gridlock. When vehicles operate bumper-to-bumper at extremely slow speeds self-driving technology does not increase road capacity.

Planning is underway to move the Coaster line inland, off Del Mar bluffs. This project so important to the region and the state that conducting a cost benefit study as Professor Cramton suggests would only waste scarce public funds, raise construction costs and needlessly delay completion of this essential project.

Great Basin Rail Service:

The emerging Southern California – Las Vegas – Salt Lake City – Boise – Pacific Northwest Passenger Rail Corridor

By Brian Yanity, VP-South RailPAC and Steve Roberts, President RailPAC

The broadly defined Interstate 15 corridor between Utah's Wasatch Front and Southern California has a population of 25 million people. Likewise the Interstate 84 corridor between Utah's Wasatch Front and the Pacific Northwest has a population of 10 million people. Greater Las Vegas, Salt Lake City and Boise are three of the fastest-growing metro areas in the U.S., each with a population increase of over 80% between 2000 and 2023.

Along this arc of major city pairs, there is a tremendous potential for a series of overlapping and complementary intercity passenger rail services. Most notably Brightline West is beginning construction of America's first true high-speed train from Southern California to Las Vegas on brand new electrified tracks. On existing Class I-owned track, there are other passenger train possibilities, from the reinstatement of the Desert Wind and Pioneer long-distance trains to a new regional train route along the entire arc through the Great Basin.

Between Nevada and Utah, I-15 traverses the far northwestern corner of Arizona, where traffic averages 20,000 vehicles per day. This is a rural area with modest local traffic, so it is safe to assume that several thousand people drive between the Wasatch Front and Southern Nevada each day. Between Las Vegas and Salt Lake City, the Desert Wind made stops in Caliente, Nevada and Milford, Utah, along with a stop in Delta 1983-1988. Boasting a grand 1923 Mission Revival-style train station and railway hotel (now the city hall, library and art gallery), Caliente is a hub for Lincoln County. Milford offers a gateway to Cedar City and the vacation wonderlands of Southern Utah. New rail service to Delta, Caliente and Milford would provide interregional public transportation access for a vast rural region larger than some Northeastern states.

Between Salt Lake City I-84 passes through several rural areas. One such area is near Mountain Home, ID west of Twin

between this region and Salt Lake City.

In mid-2023, the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT), with support from Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT), submitted a Corridor ID grant application to the FRA, requesting \$500,000 for studying the Las Vegas-Salt Lake City passenger rail corridor. Idaho Transportation Department submitted a Corridor ID application for studying Salt Lake City to Boise in collaboration with UDOT, Utah Transit Authority and the City of Boise.



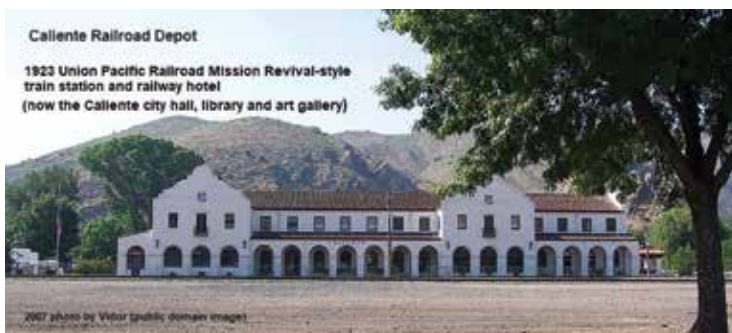
Near-Term - Transcontinental Service

The first step in expanding service would be the reinstatement of the Pioneer and the Desert Wind. Both near-term and long-term the Pioneer and Desert Wind would originate in Chicago and be part of the California Zephyr between Chicago, Denver and Salt Lake City. This allows the Pioneer and the Desert Wind consists to provide critical capacity for travel over the peak segments - Iowa through Denver and Denver through Grand Junction. It also allows the Pioneer to directly serve Salt Lake City.

This near-term action assumes that Amtrak can return to service all of the Superliners leased to states, needing overhaul and repairs and there are no additional major derailments. Under these assumptions there might be enough existing equipment for a modified Pioneer and Desert Wind. The routes of these two trains would be truncated to avoid having to provide four additional sets of equipment that their historic routings would otherwise require. Chicago based on-board service crews would staff the trains.

The Pioneer would operate Chicago – Salt Lake City – Portland. This truncation would also avoid a constant operational issue when it operated to Seattle. Late arrivals in Seattle compromised equipment servicing time and crew rest times resulting in a delayed departure next morning. This then cascaded into the California Zephyr resulting in issues in Chicago. Truncating the Pioneer at Portland provides sufficient time to offset any late arrival.

Connecting service to Seattle would be provided by Cascades Service and/or Thruway bus service. Service expansion of the Cascades as a result of the introduction of new Airo equipment and Washington State future service plans should provide full connecting corridor train service within a few years.



Falls, ID and east of Boise, ID where traffic averages 20,000 vehicles per day. Similarly, this is a rural area with modest local traffic, so it is safe to assume that several thousand people drive between the Wasatch Front and Boise, Oregon and Washington State. Between Salt Lake City and Portland, the Pioneer made stops at Ogden, Pocatello, Shoshone (Twin Falls), Boise, Nampa, ID, Ontario, OR, Baker City, OR, La Grande, OR, Pendleton, OR, Hinkle-Hermiston, OR, The Dalles, OR and Hood River, OR. The reestablishment of rail service through Southern Idaho and eastern Oregon would provide interregional transportation for a large rural region and link together the substantial community of interest that exists

The Desert Wind would operate Chicago – Salt Lake City – Las Vegas. The coming of Brightline to the Las Vegas – Southern California market would dramatically reduce local traffic previously carried on the Desert Wind. Local Las Vegas – Southern California riders were one of the three key markets on the prior Desert Wind. Brightline's faster schedule also has the potential of eroding not only local riders but through riders to Southern California who might likely transfer to Brightline. Until Brightline service begins (2028) Thruway bus service would connect Desert Wind riders to Southern California. After Brightline service begins a shuttle would link a new Amtrak Desert Wind station with the "Brightline Resort" station (approximately 1.5 miles).



Las Vegas Station Options

While the former Las Vegas station of Amtrak's Desert Wind was centrally located Downtown, adjacent to (and actually owned by) the Plaza Hotel & Casino, and right across the street from the Fremont Street Experience, this location is about 6 miles north of the Las Vegas Strip and about 10 miles north of where Brightline West plans to build its station. Given that the UPRR mainline parallels the Las Vegas Strip, it would be conceivable to build a new Amtrak station near Spring Mountain Road or Flamingo Road, perhaps in tandem with a Downtown Las Vegas station. Another possibility is using the Boulder Branch to get off the UP mainline for a turnaround facility at Las Vegas Blvd. at the south end of the airport. From that point it is about one mile south down Las Vegas Blvd. to the location of the Brightline Resort. A shuttle, extension of the Las Vegas Monorail, or future airport people mover could connect the two locations. The 2021 Nevada State Rail Plan (p. 3-33) proposed



Desert Wind at Las Vegas NV in the final month of service - Bob Pickering

a five-mile extension of the Las Vegas Monorail from the MGM Grand to the Brightline West Las Vegas station (see map).



Desert Wind E of Las Vegas NV, Jan 1994. Most of the land behind the train is now built on. Kevin Gulau

Longer-Term Regional Service

Longer term the Pioneer and Desert Wind would be re-equipped with Amtrak's new long-distance fleet continuing to offer through service from Chicago and Denver.

Linking western cities served by these two routes and tying together the fast growing cities in the intermountain west, would be the Great Basin Explorer. The Great Basin Explorer would operate from Seattle to Los Angeles via Boise, Salt Lake City and Las Vegas. All of these intermediate cities have grown substantially in population compared to when service was previously provided in 1997.

Operating from Seattle, its equipment and on-board service base, the Great Basin Explorer would provide the connections to/from the Pioneer at Portland and would run combined with the Pioneer from Portland to Salt Lake City. The southern leg of the Great Basin Explorer would operate Salt Lake City – Las Vegas – Los Angeles, in complement to the Desert Wind, providing a second daylight frequency between the Great Basin's two largest cities (Las Vegas and Salt Lake City). It also would complement Brightline's service with a unique overnight service Las Vegas – Los Angeles service departing after the last Brightline schedule and arriving in Los Angeles or Las Vegas before the Brightline's first scheduled arrival. The California Zephyr from Chicago could physically interchange cars with combined Great Basin Explorer+Pioneer (Salt Lake City-Portland), along with the Desert Wind (Salt Lake City-Las Vegas) The Great Basin route combination would increase travel options, the matrix of city pairs, mitigating potential operating issues (Pioneer) and demand issues (Desert Wind) while only adding 450 train miles compared to the previous operation.

More Service on Metrolink

by Paul Dyson, Vice President

Metrolink management has been busy initiating long-term improvements and crisis amelioration. The crisis occurred when a key section of Interstate 10 south of downtown Los Angeles was severely damaged by fire in the early hours of Saturday November 11 and closed pending repair. Metrolink swung into action to strengthen the service on the San Bernardino line and Monday morning saw scheduled trains with additional cars and three new round trips between Covina and LAUS. It is believed that repairs to the roadway will take up to 5 weeks and we hope that passengers will use the service. **Congratulations to the Metrolink team.**

Also this month Metrolink and LOSSAN have come to an agreement to expand codeshare ticketing between LAUS and Ventura on the Surfliner and Metrolink Ventura line trains. The press release states:

Customers with valid tickets for either rail service now have a total of 30 weekday Metrolink and Pacific Surfliner train options between Los Angeles and Ventura County, making train travel even more convenient along Metrolink's Ventura Line corridor. There are 14 total trains for rail passengers through that corridor on

Saturdays and Sundays. Previously, Metrolink Ventura County Line ticket holders could only ride select Amtrak Pacific Surfliner trains between Los Angeles and Ventura.



New Vista Canyon Station on the Antelope Valley Line - Photo by Metrolink

*Metrolink SCAX 268 heads through Soledad Canyon on the Antelope Valley line.
Photo - Charles Freericks*



Pacific Surfliner ticket holders are also able to board 30 Metrolink Antelope Valley Line weekday trains that operate between Union Station and the Burbank-Downtown Station, and another 24 that operate on Saturdays and Sundays.

I'm sure RailPAC members will quickly figure out how to ride the Surfliner at Metrolink prices! What this will do to Surfliner revenue is another story.

October 23 saw the opening of the new Vista Canyon station in Santa Clarita on the Antelope Valley line, the 67th Metrolink station. Concurrently Metrolink introduced and expanded service on the line with trains at hourly intervals through most of the day and into the evening, as well as expanded service at weekends.

"Thank you to the Metro Board of Directors for approving the necessary funding to meet the changing needs of our Antelope Valley Line riders," Metrolink CEO Darren Kettle said. "Adding

midday and later evening train service on both weekdays and weekends will create more options for passengers traveling outside of the traditional commuter time frames, including people heading to and from Los Angeles for sporting and entertainment events. The enhanced schedule will improve the way customers use Metrolink and, thanks to the Metro Board vision, preview what regional passenger rail service could look like across our entire system soon."

I'm starting to think that our message for the last thirty years is finally being heard.

Discontinuous - Incremental Electrification

by Steve Roberts



Siemens battery electric multiple unit in service in Germany - Siemens photo

The key step is to target initial electrification at terminal station tracks, stations with high-acceleration requirements and the key grades of the route. This significantly reduces the cost of catenary electrification and allows the electrification initiative to begin at a much lower upfront cost. The route would be operated with battery/electric locomotives or battery/electric trainsets. However, with the availability of catenary power in high power demand line segments and battery recharging as trains travel along key route segments, the number of on-train batteries would be decreased reducing weight, thus improving efficiency, and reducing vehicle cost. Also with discontinuous catenary at high power demand points and enroute charging, range and full utilization during the service day would not be issue.

As was outlined in an article by Brian Yanity in the 3rd Quarter Steel Wheels, overhead catenary electrification is the choice for efficient rail transportation. While operationally efficient, the major barrier to “tried and true” electrification is its huge upfront costs with no benefits until the project is completely finished. Adding to the expense is the need to electrify each mile of track no matter whether it’s a terminal service track, low volume connecting track or siding, etc. Also delaying full electrification and driving costs is opposition to catenary through historic neighborhoods, scenic line segments, etc.

With battery electric propulsion service can start on a small scale but the trade-off between battery weight/train performance, battery expense, range and the significant off-site expense of meeting high electricity demand at the terminal charging facility can create operational issues longer-term. It becomes a significant challenge (operational performance vs. battery weight, battery expense) trying to cram enough batteries in the rail car to get sufficient performance for acceleration and climbing grades while having enough range to complete the route. Extremes in temperatures are also a factor negatively impacting range. If charging time is required during the daily schedule cycle then equipment utilization is negatively impacted and additional trainsets are required to maintain published schedules.

While there is often a comparison between the flexibility of battery electric propulsion vs. the operational efficiency of complete electrification, there is a blended alternative that combines the advantages of both while at the same time mitigating many of the challenges involved with each technology. Electrifying selected line segments, discontinuous/incremental electrification, combined with battery electric propulsion addresses many of the shortcomings of both technologies.

Avoiding the cost of electrifying the entire route, yard tracks, sidings, etc. brings electric service on an accelerated timeline. Another benefit of discontinuous electrification is that it can reduce the risk of lawsuits from lineside stakeholders over catenary construction. These lawsuits can be a major barrier to electrification. With traditional electrification a lawsuit delays the entire project, costs rising, until the lawsuit is settled. With the incremental staging of electrification and the flexibility of battery operation, the remainder of the project can continue and service begun while the lawsuits are resolved.

As train frequency increases and to improve acceleration to reduce travel times and to improve operations, additional miles of catenary can be added longer term. Discontinuous electrification with battery electric trainsets also facilitates lower cost through service to lower volume branches and secondary lines.

Alstom Electric/battery/diesel freight locomotive in Switzerland - Georg Trub



Caltrain and BART

by Paul Dyson, Vice President

Adina Levin's "Green Caltrain" blog carried two important posts in the last month. The first report was of the recent schedule change by BART which degraded the critical connection with Caltrain at Millbrae.

Santa Clara Counties into the BART district.



New Caltrain emu - Caltrain photo

| WEEKDAY-PM | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---|-------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| NORTHBOUND | | | SOUTHBOUND | | |
| Caltrain ARRIVAL Time | BART DEPARTURE Time | Minutes between Arrival and Departure Times | BART ARRIVAL Time | Caltrain DEPARTURE Time | Minutes between Arrival and Departure Times |
| 12:03 PM | 12:12 PM | 0:09 | 12:10 PM | 12:32 PM | 0:22 |
| — | 12:32 PM | 0:29 | 12:30 PM | — | 0:02 |
| 12:36 PM | 12:52 PM | 0:16 | 12:50 PM | 1:02 PM | 0:12 |
| 1:03 PM | 1:12 PM | 0:09 | 1:10 PM | 1:32 PM | 0:22 |
| — | 1:32 PM | 0:29 | 1:30 PM | — | 0:02 |
| 1:36 PM | 1:52 PM | 0:16 | 1:50 PM | 2:02 PM | 0:12 |
| 2:03 PM | 2:12 PM | 0:09 | 2:10 PM | 2:32 PM | 0:22 |
| — | 2:32 PM | 0:29 | 2:30 PM | — | 0:02 |
| 2:36 PM | 2:52 PM | 0:16 | 2:50 PM | 3:02 PM | 0:12 |
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| — | 3:32 PM | 0:29 | 3:30 PM | 3:47 PM | 0:17 |
| 3:36 PM | 3:52 PM | 0:16 | 3:50 PM | 4:02 PM | 0:12 |
| 4:03 PM | 4:12 PM | 0:09 | 4:10 PM | 4:22 PM | 0:12 |
| 4:20 PM | 4:32 PM | 0:12 | — | 4:31 PM | 0:01 |
| 4:36 PM | — | 0:16 | 4:30 PM | 4:46 PM | 0:16 |
| 4:44 PM | 4:52 PM | 0:08 | 4:50 PM | 5:02 PM | 0:12 |
| 5:04 PM | 5:12 PM | 0:08 | 5:10 PM | 5:22 PM | 0:12 |
| 5:19 PM | 5:32 PM | 0:13 | — | 5:31 PM | 0:01 |
| 5:36 PM | — | 0:16 | 5:30 PM | 5:46 PM | 0:16 |
| 5:46 PM | 5:52 PM | 0:06 | 5:50 PM | 6:02 PM | 0:12 |
| 6:04 PM | 6:12 PM | 0:08 | 6:10 PM | 6:22 PM | 0:12 |
| 6:19 PM | 6:32 PM | 0:13 | — | 6:31 PM | 0:01 |
| 6:36 PM | — | 0:16 | 6:30 PM | 6:46 PM | 0:16 |
| 6:44 PM | 6:52 PM | 0:08 | 6:50 PM | 7:06 PM | 0:16 |
| 7:04 PM | 7:12 PM | 0:08 | 7:10 PM | 7:32 PM | 0:22 |
| 7:19 PM | 7:32 PM | 0:13 | 7:30 PM | — | 0:02 |
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| — | 8:32 PM | 0:26 | 8:30 PM | 8:46 PM | 0:16 |
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| 9:04 PM | 9:20 PM | 0:16 | 9:08 PM | 9:16 PM | 0:08 |
| 9:23 PM | 9:40 PM | 0:17 | 9:28 PM | 9:39 PM | 0:11 |
| 9:55 PM | 10:00 PM | 0:05 | 9:48 PM | — | 0:28 |
| — | 10:20 PM | 0:25 | 10:08 PM | 10:16 PM | 0:08 |
| 10:24 PM | 10:40 PM | 0:16 | 10:28 PM | 10:40 PM | 0:12 |
| 10:55 PM | 11:00 PM | 0:05 | 10:48 PM | — | 0:22 |
| — | 11:20 PM | 0:25 | 11:02 PM | 11:10 PM | 0:08 |
| — | 11:40 PM | 0:45 | 11:22 PM | — | 1:08 |
| 11:42 PM | 11:52 PM | 0:10 | 11:42 PM | — | 0:48 |
| 12:26 AM | — | N/A | 12:02 AM | — | 0:26 |
| | | | 12:19 AM | 12:28 AM | 0:09 |
| | | | 12:38 AM | — | N/A |
| | | | 12:58 AM | — | N/A |
| | | | 1:18 AM | — | N/A |
| | | | 1:40 AM | — | N/A |

BART changed its service to twenty minute intervals throughout the day, but seemingly did not coordinate with Caltrain, resulting in frustrating and unnecessary delays to through journeys. The second report a day later on November 9 noted:

"At last week's BART board budget workshop addressing the agency's financial challenges, a number of BART board members encouraged exploring consolidation with other agencies. Board Chair Janice Li suggested that BART explore expanding the BART district to incorporate San Mateo and

Li also encouraged exploring consolidations, especially focusing on rail agencies, and/or functions. Li said that it would be worth studying whether there might be potential efficiencies or improvements in capital or operations. Other BART board members including Foley, Raburn and Duffy supported expanding the district." Levin further comments that: "Several recent events show there are clear opportunities for better coordination and efficiency. BART's recent schedule change degraded the Caltrain connection at Millbrae. Recently published rider surveys from both BART and Caltrain, which were funded and conducted separately, showed extremely similar results, suggesting opportunities to consolidate this sort of project.



Also, BART and Caltrain are planning to study standardizing their fares - a recommendation from the region's adopted Fare Policy Vision that was projected to increase ridership at the scale of another Caltrain. But BART and Caltrain aren't planning to get started until after the rollout of the next-generation Clipper in 2024, more than three years after the recommendation was adopted."

(See www.greenecaltrain.com)

Clearly there are parallels with southern California and the

failure to set up a management structure that provides a passenger-focused service. It appears though that Chair Li and others recognize the problem and are willing to take up the challenge of bringing at least two of the Bay Area rail agencies together. RailPAC will be focusing on agency reorganization in the coming year.

Thanks to Adina Levin and Green Caltrain for keeping us up to date with these developments.

pdyson@railpac.org

RailPAC Annual Meeting

RailPAC held its annual meeting on Saturday, November 17, via Zoom. Opening the meeting, President Steve Roberts noted that while Covid is mostly behind us, and with membership scattered around the state and other parts of the country a Zoom meeting is the most practical way of meeting. We have however resumed our in person visits to Sacramento to distribute Steel Wheels and to meet with elected officials and staff.

Looking forward to 2024, we are awaiting the Federal Railroad Administration announcements of the award of grants, a seemingly endless process. In addition, the Long-Distance train study should be published as well as the RFP for rolling stock. Perhaps this will be the year for Brightline and a return to Las Vegas.

Note: All the speakers' presentations are in Power Point and will be available at our website, www.railpac.org.

Alice Rodriguez started the meeting. Alice is Deputy Director of External Affairs at the California High Speed Rail Authority. Alice thanked RailPAC for our support over the years and went on to provide a comprehensive update of the High-Speed Rail construction. Highlights include over 1,600 workers daily are now on the job in the central valley, and 98% of the required properties now purchased. Major construction work is on grade separations, many of which provide links for communities which previously had to endure the disruption of ever longer freight trains.

A lot of work is going into designing the stations. The objective is to create destinations that will enhance the local communities as well as providing efficient access to the trains. 6 train sets will be ordered in 2024 to allow service to start in 2030.

Jim Allison generously took time out while visiting London to update us on Capitol Corridor projects. Jim is Manager, Media Relations, for Capitol Corridor.

Jim covered a number of initiatives and projects being undertaken by the Capitol Corridor Agency in conjunction with other State and local organizations. These include the Statewide payment systems, and access to Davis station to meet ADA requirements and to link the neighborhood on the south side of the tracks with the city center. Jim also reported on the progress with the Roseville extension. Phase 1 will include 2 round trips, with Phase 2 giving the capability to operate 10 round trips, including the Auburn train. Relocation of utilities, minor land acquisition, fiber optics, and a pipeline all add complications and tend to slow progress.

Other developments are double track and sidings to complete a double track section at Newark, and the Ardenwood multimodal project.

The Alviso wetlands single track needs a long term solution combined with coastal protection.

As for the San Francisco Thruway bus connection, CapCor is struggling with high costs and a driver shortage. They are trying to make a deal with AC Transit which would then enable a relocation to Transbay Center.

Loss of commuters is a key concern. The focus is on marketing to leisure and special events.

Chris Beringer, Manager, Center for Net Zero Transformation in Rail and Transit, DB Rail

(DB Rail is the consultancy arm of Deutsch Bahn, the German national railroad.

Chris addressed the Hydrogen vs Battery controversy. In effect he said that while electrification with Overhead Catenary is the global standard, and his organization still recommends it, the reality is that the Class One railroads are not interested in making the investment. The return on investment is too long.

Chris presented a number of technical slides illustrating the range and capabilities of hydrogen and battery propulsion. A lively on line discussion and Q&A ensued.

(ED: I strongly recommend reviewing the slides on line, there is a lot of very useful information from all three presenters.)

Marcus Jung, Treasurer and Secretary, reported that 2022 finances had been stable but that we are heading into a deficit for 2023. This is largely because of inflationary driven cost increases in the production and distribution of Steel Wheels. Membership has declined slightly but we hope to see more renewals before the end of the year.

Paul Dyson, Vice President of Government Relations reported on successful visits to Sacramento and some strong support from Senator Blakespear and Assemblymember Hart. He asked for members to consider making a year-end tax-deductible contribution to assist with rising costs, pointing out that our administrative expenses are very low and most of the trips to Sacramento are funded by individuals, not by the Association.

**Don't forget
that dues and donations
to RailPAC are tax deductible.**

The Rail Renaissance - It's Not 1971 Anymore - It's More Like 1871

by Todd Liebman

Those of us who believe that passenger rail is vital to the future of the country, and are intimately involved in advocacy, are keenly aware of the history of the multi-generational decline of rail passenger service. The slow pace of improvement and frequent setbacks in rail passenger service since Amtrak Day in 1971 is frustrating. The last 52 years of Amtrak have seen periods of slight growth and improvement alternating with too many periods of stagnation and retrenchment. The good news is that the past 50 to 60 years of passenger rail retrenchment is history and not destiny. The America we live in, and will live in the future, is going to be a radically different place because it must be. It's going to be a time of expansion for rail passenger service in America.

In 1971, passenger rail was in its death throes. There were some supremely fine passenger trains still running and many amazing stations, but the railroads wanted out. There was enough support for the passenger train to get the Rail Passenger Service Act passed in 1970 to create Amtrak. But the near-term future of transportation belonged to the already congested highways, an interstate highway system that was not yet complete, and a growing air travel industry that had tremendous panache. The 1970s were a period of continued urban and rural decline, advancement of the sprawling suburb and the birth of the mega mall and the stroll.

Contrast 1971 with 1871. The Golden Age of the Railroad has been defined as the period from 1865 to 1916. During that period, rail mileage grew from 35,000 miles to 216,000 miles. The Transcontinental Railroad was completed in 1869. 1871 was the beginning of the period when every town realized that it needed the train and rail building took off. The population of the US in 1871 was 38 million. By 1916, the population of the US was 102 million. This period of railroad growth was extensively subsidized by the Federal Government through land grants for major lines; additional extensions to the rail network were privately financed. It cannot be seriously argued that the development of American into a modern nation would have been possible without the growth of the railroads during this time.

We find ourselves today in another 1871 moment regarding the railroads. The US has grown dramatically since 1971 and will continue to grow. The population of the US in 1971 was 207 million. The population of the US today is 335 million and is projected to be 458 million in 2050. Today, 83% of the US population live in urban areas. This will grow to 89% by 2050. It is unreasonable to conclude that a growing America



Union Pacific freight cross the Agua Fria River near Avondale AZ on the currently severed route to Phoenix. Ryan Schmelzer

will be able to accommodate its transportation needs absent an expanded role for freight and passenger rail. As in 1871, states and communities are clamoring for improved rail service. Again, the Federal Government is in a position of providing the capital needed to expand the railway system. Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act has taken a position similar to the land grants of the earlier era. These funds are priming the pump of rail expansion while private investment and other financing models are being developed. Brightline, for example is a mixture of

funding from private capital and industrial bonds.

To put this in perspective, Europe is expanding and investing in their already great railway system. Critics of passenger rail in the US like to argue that the US is too different from Europe to support rail. That's simply false. The US has a land area of 3.8 million square miles while the EU has a land area of 3.9 million square miles. The population of the US is 335 million to the EU's 448 million. However, Europe's population will slightly decline by 2050 while the US will pass the EU and reach 448 million. Rail will have to grow to support the mobility needs of the growing US.

But it goes much deeper than simply population growth. It isn't going to be possible to accommodate this growth with existing land use patterns of suburban sprawl and auto dependency. We will not be able to provide a high quality of life for most people without changing our transportation systems. We already know that millennials and younger generations favor living in a denser, urban environment. But not all this is choice. Fundamental problems that capture the news are the housing crisis and student loans. The income fundamentals paint a challenging picture. The average salary in the US is \$59,428. The average tax on that income is \$13,000 leaving \$46,428 per year. The average cost of car ownership is \$12,182. Median rent in Tucson, Arizona is \$18,000. Utilities are \$2,148, \$3,637 and employer sponsored health insurance is \$6,924. That leaves the average worker with \$3,537 or \$295 a month for all other expenses like cell phone, student loan payments, entertainment, retirement savings, etc. If you remove the car from the equation, the discretionary income increases by \$1,015 to \$1,310. Denser communities, with lower rents, linked by regional and intercity rail become inevitable with numbers like these. This doesn't even touch on the environmental issues that rail addresses.

It's easy to imagine cities of the future consisting of walkable, livable neighborhoods linked by transit and bike to a downtown where an active train station serves as the transportation hub of the region. This is, after all, the pattern of

cities overseas. There is plenty of infill opportunity in American cities to facilitate this. Surface parking lots and abandoned big box stores are potential infill housing areas. Many of the abandoned mega-malls of the 1970's are being converted into town centers with residential units, restaurants, shops, and entertainment. Public transit, micro-transit and ride sharing services like Uber and Lyft have resolved many of the last mile problems for intercity passenger rail. Suburban stations for intercity trains can become transportation centers serving redeveloped, denser, suburban communities.

At the same time that the US has urbanized, rural communities have been battered. Not only are many rural communities suffering population declines and blight, but they've lost air and bus service. Interstate highways moved the center of gravity from walkable downtowns to the outskirts of town and the highway cloverleaf. But rail has a major role to play in revitalizing small and medium size cities and tribal communities alike. Many rural communities have beautiful housing stock and historic downtowns. The remote work trend is only going to accelerate. As young families look for a more affordable and higher quality of life, many are choosing affordable, vibrant rural communities linked by long-distance trains to major cities. Flagstaff, Arizona and Las Vegas, New Mexico come to mind as southwest cities that are conveniently linked by rail to larger areas. A remote worker who works for a company whose headquarters is in Los Angeles, and needs to visit the office once a month, can easily do that by long distance train.

Smaller towns reap a great benefit from long distance train services. These communities can become regional transportation hubs punching far above their weight as gateway communities to entire regions. Benson, Arizona, for example, has a population of 5,355, but Sierra Vista has a population of 45,000 and is 30 miles away. A daily shuttle from Sierra Vista to Benson connecting to a daily train would benefit both communities. Walkable, bikeable, rural communities linked by rail to regional destinations is another solution to the housing crisis while reinvigorating rural communities and spurring economic revitalization.

More and more cities are realizing this. At the Rail Nation Conference this fall, John Robert Smith, former mayor of Meridian, Mississippi and former Amtrak Board Member, stated that "We planted a flag in Meridian's dying downtown at the train station." He asserts that all economic development in downtown Meridian since that time is connected to the train station redevelopment. This illustrates the nexus between quality of life, economic development, historic preservation, and the transportation value of rail passenger service.

We are poised for growth. The Amtrak law is extremely well written and provides a statutory right of access to the private railroads. Now that passenger rail has money for improvements, they are going to find willing partners with the freight railroads. We should enthusiastically push and seek out opportunities for rail improvements that move more freight off congested highways and provide options for more passenger trains.

We have something to build on. We have a very good national passenger railroad in Amtrak. A passenger can get on a smart phone and book a ticket across the country with a choice of a private room or an economical coach. We are far better than Mexico with no service except through the Copper Canyon or the extremely skeletal system in Canada. I routinely see many passengers getting on and off the train in Benson, Arizona despite a train that runs three days per week and no station platform. Imagine what a daily train, with regional connections and a station platform would do. I am all for advocating for improvements and calling out Amtrak when there are problems, but too often, some advocates want to throw a very good baby out with the bathwater and start over with something new. That's not realistic and now is not the time. Rather, it is time to build on the very good system we have and make it better. Over time, other operators will see opportunities to feed or augment the Amtrak system with additional services. Short line railroads, night train operators and high-speed rail developers are examples. But that cannot happen without the solid base of the Amtrak national system.

What this means for passenger rail advocates is that we need to move beyond what has been and recognize that the future is going to be radically different than the past. We're not simply arguing for experiential long-distance trains to serve a unique travel niche, although passenger trains are a wonderful way to see America. The passenger train is going to be a serious driver of economic development and land use in urban and rural areas and the provider of the most useful passenger transportation for many journeys. This is the time for rail, and we need to get steel wheels turning to more communities and serving more places.

As advocates, we need to get the word out on passenger rail and what it means for communities. Some great tools for developing allies are speaking during public comment at common council meetings, meeting with Chambers of Commerce and Rotary Clubs, setting up tables at farmers markets, meeting with historic preservation groups and downtown business districts, etc. Regional passenger advocacy organizations can provide the brochures and talking points to assist. This is our time. We are at the beginning of the next rail revolution in our country and it's exciting.



News from All Aboard Arizona

Todd Liebman – President – All Aboard Arizona



All Aboard Arizona Annual meeting speakers - clockwise from top left - Andrew Casselman, AZDOT, Todd Liebman, AAZ, Meredith Richards, RPA, Brian Yanity, RailPAC and Marc Pearsall, Amtrak

On November 4th, All Aboard Arizona had its annual Passenger Rail Summit in Phoenix at the Double Tree Suites Hotel. This marked All Aboard Arizona's first summit in Phoenix since before Covid. The Summit was strongly attended with representatives from the Governor's Office, Arizona Department of Transportation, Arizona State University, the Sun Corridor Metropolitan Planning Organization, Rail Passengers Association and private car owners, among many others.

The meeting kicked off with a presentation by Meredith Richards, Chair of the Rail Passengers Association who spoke about how Virginia created a passenger rail system that is a model for the rest of the country to follow. I presented on trends that I see that are highly favorable for passenger rail development and the Federal Railroad Administration's Long Distance Passenger Rail Study. I was followed by Brian Yanity, Vice President South for RailPAC, who presented on the tremendous opportunities of the Welton Cutoff for economic development in Arizona and for returning passenger rail to Phoenix. Marc Pearsall from Amtrak discussed the work Amtrak is doing to bring the Sunset Limited to daily service and routed back through Phoenix. Anthony Casselman from Arizona Department of Transportation completed the meeting with a discussion of efforts by ADOT to support the development of the Sun Corridor.

One inescapable observation from the presenters and

attendees was the tremendous synergy that expanded and improved passenger rail creates for economic development and freight rail opportunities. Passenger rail brings together a diverse group including the rail industry, commercial and industrial interests, communities seeking redevelopment and others.

By the time you read this, we may know whether Arizona made the first round of the Federal Railroad Administration's Corridor ID Program for the Sun Corridor. We should also know soon whether the grants come through for the daily Sunset Limited routed back through Phoenix.

Another great piece of news is that Tucson has landed the Rail Passenger Association's Fall 2024 Rail Nation Conference. Mark your calendar for next October. In the meantime, we are planning an informal event for Tucson in the new year and hope to do a similar event in Tempe and later Flagstaff. We're looking at a Pint Night event where we can informally discuss passenger rail and build enthusiasm in the community.

All Aboard Arizona is also sponsoring two scholarships for college students in Arizona with an interest in rail. The two \$500 scholarships will be available for applicants through Bold.org in the near future.

All Aboard Arizona is also working on revamping our website and social media presence. We now have a Facebook page again.

From the Rear Platform

By Paul Dyson, Editor



RailPAC VP James Smith, just back from a cross-country Amtrak trip that included Chicago to Washington on the Capitol Limited, reports "The Superliner consists on that train

could be changed to low-level cars. The Flexible meals on 29-30 continue, and one customer described hers as a 'Red Cross disaster handout.' If Amtrak wants to discourage repeat business on that route it's working. And, I rode the San Joaquin from LAX to the Bay Area on the bus and train. It was disappointing to see no more Club cars, just automat cars. Didn't that end with the Southern Pacific?!"

Passenger Information Signs, RailPAC at work.

Our regional Vice Presidents have been at work with the respective JPAs. Too often we see station information for only one of the rail services at a station while others are ignored. Both Brian and Doug have taken this up and are achieving some success. If you know of other instances, (San Jose?) where information is incomplete, please let us know.

Doug Kerr addressed the Capitol Corridor Board:

Doug Kerr, VP North RailPAC, Rail Passenger Association of California and Nevada. My counterpart, Brian Yanity, VP South for RailPAC has worked with LOSSAN corridor and Metrolink to have Southern California passenger information displays show all trains stopping at a given station. This includes Pacific Surfliner, Metrolink commuter and Amtrak's Sunset Ltd, Southwest Chief, and Coast Starlight long distance trains.

RailPAC strongly recommends we follow Southern California's lead and require station displays show all trains serving each station, including Capitol Corridor, San Joaquin Corridor, ACE, Caltrain, and Amtrak's Coast Starlight and California Zephyr trains. The flat screen displays at the Sacramento Valley station already show corridor and long distance trains and have demonstrated this is possible. We should always look at this from the passenger's perspective and not be guilty of a silo mentality where other organization's trains are someone else's responsibility. We urge the displays be all inclusive. Thank you.

OCTA and LOSSAN

In a recent letter to Caltrans head Teks Omishakin, OCTA in effect admits that the scope of fixing the LOSSAN corridor landslide at San Clemente is beyond their capability:

"Unfortunately, a seven-mile stretch of the 351-mile corridor between the cities of Dana Point and San Clemente is facing a precarious and uncertain future due to sea level rise, storm events, unstable adjacent slopes, and lack of long-

term railroad protection from the encroaching Pacific Ocean. Recent landslides have closed the railroad on three occasions several months at a time, impacting thousands of passenger trips that could have occurred on the rail line but were forced to travel by vehicle on Interstate 5 and other highways instead. Beginning September 30, 2022, passenger rail operations were fully or partially suspended for 251 days or 69 percent of the federal fiscal year. Most recently, passenger rail operations were suspended for six weeks from June 5, 2023 to July 16, 2023. Service was restored on July 17th, following emergency repairs coordinated between SCRRA and OCTA with strong support from the State. The State has been an incredible partner in emergency declarations and funding efforts to repair and re-open the rail line. However, encroachment by the Pacific Ocean may lead to further short-term closures and possible long-term closure should conditions make safe operations impossible.

Given these issues - and the importance of the rail line for statewide (my emphasis -ED) rail service - our agencies are writing to request the State initiate a study of a long-term plan for the railroad through Orange County in coordination with the LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency and with similar efforts underway in north San Diego County. We believe that a state-led study is necessary given the long lead-time to plan and secure funding for future phases as well as ensure continued involvement by a broad coalition of stakeholders.

Finally, the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) has secured state and federal grants for a study and is eager to work with the state on funding options. We greatly appreciate the State's leadership role in funding the current rail line repairs, and we look forward to working with you on long-term solutions."

Once again we see the need for leadership at the State level to solve regional problems. And of course it's easier for county politicians to avoid responsibility if the State orders a solution that is unpopular in some NIMBY quarters.

Russ Jackson, RailPAC Editor-Emeritus has been writing his column, "TRACKING RAIL NEWS," for over 30 years. His current ones are posted on e-mail twice monthly, containing news and commentary about the rail passenger scene. To subscribe to this FREE publication, contact Russ at editrail@aol.com to be added to the emailing list.

Russ Jackson has written two books about passenger rail in the past year. "TRAIN TRAVEL IN ARIZONA, NEW MEXICO, TEXAS, CALIFORNIA" and the new one "NEXT TIME, TAKE THE TRAIN" that will be published soon. For information about these books write to editrail@aol.com. The books are full of color pictures, with stories about train travel, its people, and its greatness.

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