

STEEL WHEELS

PASSENGER RAIL IN CALIFORNIA AND THE WEST

ISSN 2325-629X

MAGAZINE OF THE WESTERN PASSENGER TRAIN COALITION

RAILPAC • ALL ABOARD ARIZONA • PASSENGER RAIL KANSAS • NEW MEXICO RA • MINNARP
CALIFORNIANS FOR ELECTRIC RAIL • THE AURORA GROUP • NEVADA RAIL COALITION • PASSENGER RAIL OKLAHOMA

**Metrolink Gets It (Finally) –
Connections in Los Angeles coming in October**
Photo by Craig Walker



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2nd QUARTER 2024

PUBLICATION OF THE



RAIL PASSENGER ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA & NEVADA

From the Editor's Desk

By Paul Dyson - Steel Wheels Editor



After over twenty years without an increase, RailPAC is now increasing our membership dues. I would argue that we are one of the most efficient non-profits operating. Apart from some professional fees for accounting etc.

the rest of our income goes entirely to the campaign. The great majority of that, about 80%, is for publication and distribution of Steel Wheels, which you tell us you want to see continued. We have the philosophy that although printed media are out of fashion, we have found that a document in someone's hands or on their desk is more likely to be read rather than deleted along with a thousand other emails. But....printing, paper and postage have all gone up substantially in the past few years. If we are to survive we

have to increase our income. RailPAC dues will remain at a very modest level. The new minimum rate, effective September 1, 2024 will be \$45 per year for ALL members except for students, for whom the rate will be \$25.

In addition to maintaining Steel Wheels, we are beginning the process of updating and improving our website. We have received a very generous donation from a member which is enough to get us started, but we need to raise another \$10,000 by the end of this year to finish the job. Please either make a tax-deductible donation now or add it to your membership dues if you are due to renew any time soon. The website is our first point of contact with the press, politicians and their staff, government agencies and potential members.

The Board has been trying to come up with a schedule to restart in person members' meetings. We have two venues in mind; The Old Spaghetti factory in Fullerton where we have met on many occasions, and Buttercup

near Jack London Square in Oakland. These will be informal gatherings to begin with while we gauge response. Since Covid our membership has become more scattered around the State, (and out of state), so we'll find out who wants to travel.

Because SW is a quarterly publication it's not possible to keep up with the news. Candidly, I work from the assumption that those of you interested in what RailPAC is trying to accomplish will already be receiving news feeds from Trains, Railway Age, or other publications. I can only pull out some of the highlights of the quarter's events and add to it some thoughtful opinions and commentary from a number of sources. To that I add some occasional trip reports and photographs from our members to illustrate the stories. That's been the formula since 2012 when I took over what was the Quarterly Review, our original publication. I'm always open to suggestions, criticism and comments.

pauldyson@railpac.org

COVER STORY

Metrolink Connections Regional Rail Showing Green Shoots

By Paul Dyson

At last, after years of griping by me and others, we are finally about to get the first installment of Regional Rail service based on Los Angeles Union Station ("LAUS"). Metrolink is implementing a new timetable in October with significant additions to the current schedule which will finally enable passengers to make timed connections at LAUS. Weekday train movements will increase from 142 to 178, and to a great extent the schedules will be adjusted to offer "memory" or "clockface" timings at the majority of stations. The San Bernardino ("SB") line will see half-hourly service between LAUS and Covina with the addition of 9 roundtrips supplementing the existing hourly service to San Bernardino.

The Antelope Valley ("AV") line has had hourly service from the new Vista Canyon station since October 2023. The Ventura County ("VC") line will have 11 Metrolink and 5 Amtrak round trips which will provide almost hourly service, but unfortunately for Burbank and Glendale they will not be evenly spaced with the AV line to provide a half hourly interval schedule, but this allows the VC trains to connect with Orange County ("OC") and SB trains. Most of the VC Metrolink trains will run to and from Moorpark, with

the am service from East Ventura reduced from three trains to two, something we have recommended for some time. This will permit a westbound morning train to Santa Barbara (see p 15). Moorpark will "enjoy" a 4.24am departure to Los Angeles! The OC line will see five additional northbound trains and six southbound, mostly filling the big morning gap that exists at the moment. Again, this will provide an hourly clockface schedule between LAUS and Laguna Niguel. To round out the changes there will be two additional trips on the Perris valley line and two more round trips on the IEOC service.

The resulting connections at LAUS are good, but not great. Sample connecting times:

OC – AV	19 minutes
AV – OC	20 minutes
VC – SB	8 minutes
SB – VC	10 minutes
AV – SB	18 minutes
SB – AV	19 minutes

When these changes are implemented, I hope that the signage and announcements at LAUS will be improved to assist connecting passengers. The destination boards on the sides of the cars are too small, and don't

exist at all if the space is pre-empted by a "quiet car" or "bicycle car" sign. Needless to say, wherever possible, cross platform interchanges should be the norm. However, there will be too many departures, especially at peak hours, to permit this in every case. I strongly suggest the use of the ends of the platforms as well as the tunnel for passengers to make the transfer. This will require departure indicators of some kind at the end of each track, something long overdue. The ramps and tunnels can become quite congested, especially with a few bicycles and wheelchairs in the mix and a level route around the end of the tracks can alleviate the problem.

Considering how dilatory Los Angeles MTA has been in completing double track projects in the San Fernando Valley, and the utter lack of urgency to build the through tracks at LAUS, this is a very good effort with the resources and infrastructure available and an encouraging first step. In my opinion we have seen more progress towards true regional rail in the last three years under the current leadership at Metrolink than we have in the previous thirty.

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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.

Social Media

To receive the latest rail news from around the state:

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- Become a fan on Facebook:
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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. Built 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

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President's Commentary

By Steve Roberts – RailPAC President

RailNation meeting in Washington, DC, which included traveling there via Orlando and Miami.

The first trip to Sacramento was to attend the third stakeholder meeting, representing RailPAC, of FRA's Long-Distance Route Study. Presented was the proposed network map plus a route-by-route description of each of the proposed routes. Also provided was an overview of the scope (boundaries i.e. existing freight rail routes only), the study process and assumptions. Unlike the 1970 "connect the major cities" 1971 Amtrak route map, the current study, within its scope, is very focused on access, especially rural access. Details of the third meeting materials is available on the FRA website <https://fralongdistancerailstudy.org/meeting-materials/>. The next meeting for the Southwest Region is in June and I will be attending representing RailPAC.

At the fourth stakeholder meetings in June, estimates will be provided for each of the routes for ridership, ticket revenue and passenger related capital costs (stations, equipment, track upgrades Class 3 to Class 4 track, etc.) The FRA will not be providing estimates for any required freight line capacity upgrades. That will likely be done in the Project Development phase of route planning process.

The next day I accompanied Paul on visits to key Southern California legislators to discuss the Southern California Regional Rail Governance situation. About a month later it was back to Sacramento to testify before key committees in support of two rail bills. One bill I testified in support of was Senate Bill 1098. SB1098 looks at the development of roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders in maintaining and leveraging the potential of the LOSSAN Corridor. SB1098's key requirement is to make Caltrans the lead agency in this effort. In some ways this is a reversal of the trend over the past few years which saw Caltrans deferring to the JPA's in the management of California's corridors. The second bill, Assembly Bill 2503, would exempt the installation of catenary, substations and switching stations located on railroad property from the California Environmental Quality Act.

Both bills were passed by the committees and SB1098 was passed by the Senate. AB2503 was passed by the California Assembly.

As I noted earlier, I attended RailNation 2024. While speakers gave overviews of the ongoing network expansion initiative (the Long-Distance Route Study), the overarching conference message was that this initiative will not happen by itself. Amtrak is not going to unilaterally start operating any of the proposed new routes. For a new route expansion initiative to occur it must emanate from local stakeholders. There needs to be a strong focused grassroots effort by rail

advocates to gather a coalition of state legislators, members of Congress, mayors, downtown business interests and local rail travelers to bring the new route into operation. The Southern Rail Commission and Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority are good examples of focused advocacy among route stakeholders.

One key to any network expansion is the reauthorization of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. This will take place during 2025. The advocates message to legislators and other stakeholders needs to be, that to expand rail routes, reauthorization at funding levels similar to the current bill needs to be achieved. Without adequate funding levels in the reauthorization, it will be back to "feast and famine" and there will not be critical capital funding for track improvements, new stations or equipment for any new long-distance routes.

One of challenges faced by the long-distance trains, both current and new routes, is equipment availability. In last quarter's Steel Wheels Jim Tilley, President of the Aurora Group, outlined challenges to the successful delivery of new long-distance cars. He also suggested some options to offset any production delays. However, while the risks of the new equipment order were outlined, the risks of the suggested options were not included. On page XX of this issue is an article outlining those risks.

After much effort by rail advocates, Rail Passengers Association, The Aurora Group, Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority and a couple of Senators to name a few, President Biden nominated two excellent nominees to Amtrak's Board. They are Ron Batory, a resident of New Mexico, and Elaine Clegg a resident of Boise, Idaho. Ron Batory has extensive wide-ranging

rail management experience cumulating as President and CEO of Conrail Shared Assets (a key Amtrak customer). With experience as FRA administrator (February 2018 – January 2021) he also has experience as a regulator and overseer of Amtrak's grants and capital plans.

Elaine Clegg has focused on transportation and land use for her entire career. A former Boise City Councilmember (20 years), she is now CEO for Valley Regional Transit which serves the Boise area. Most importantly she has been a champion of expanded intercity passenger rail service and the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority. Hopefully, even though it is fast approaching election season, both can be quickly confirmed.

Finally, as I noted earlier, I traveled to RailNation 2024 via Orlando and Miami. The reason was to ride Brightline between Orlando and Miami. My expectations were met, Brightline offers excellent service. It is clear however that the product is designed to mimic the airport concourse experience, including baggage screening and waiting room access limited to ticketed passengers. Brightline's stations offer a number of services. There is the signature Mary Mary bar, a station marketplace offering a wide range of packaged fresh food options, packaged snacks and sundries. In the station Premium lounge there was a full array of complementary food available, so much so that I was able to have a full breakfast before boarding the train. Food and beverage service onboard the trains was provided by cart service with beverages and continental breakfast (mornings) and snacks and a sandwich or salad option (afternoon and evening).



Lunch with my son leaving Miami on the Silver Star SR

President's Commentary (continued)

While the station experience was outstanding, what this means in practical terms is that the enterprise is embedded with significant station operating costs. With cart attendants onboard to provide cart service (Premium and Smart class) there would seem to be no on-train operating cost gain vs. a Café attendant and a first-class service attendant (the Amtrak standard). Also, with food, beverage and travel experience (Mary Mary bar) offerings focused



Vending Machines at every Brightline Station



at the station, there seems to be an assumption that a passenger will arrive early and spend significant time in the station (the airport experience). This runs counter to the normal rail mode product positioning of offering a significant range of food, beverage and travel experiences onboard the train to minimize station wait time and use this travel time saving to deliver a more time competitive door-to-door travel experience vs. air and auto.

After my arrival in Miami the next leg of my journey provided this contrast, the standard Amtrak waiting room with vending machines at the Hialeah Station providing the gateway to the train. In my case the Silver Star with a full-service dining car and a Café lounge with a wide range of snacks, sandwiches, beverages and alcoholic beverages providing a way to enjoy food and beverages while also moving toward one's destination.

Alaska Trip

It is early June and I have just returned from a trip to Alaska. I took a cruise ship from Vancouver, BC through the Inside Passage to Whittier, AK. From there it was the Alaska Railroad to Anchorage, Seward, Denali Park (the stop for Denali National Park) and finally Fairbanks.

The scenery was spectacular, the service was good, all the connections worked, and all the segments were on time, the tours very well operated, and the weather was generally good with just a few rainy days. It was the kind of trip that we wish could be the norm.

Some key takeaways from the journey:

The Alaska Railroad is a major player and a fully integrated part of the Alaska leisure market. Most hotels operate shuttles to/from the train station, and the Alaska Railroad has baggage tags for individual hotels that allow a passenger to check their bags at the station and have them delivered to their hotel room. The reverse is also true. Hotels have Alaska RR baggage tags and will pick-up one's bags outside your room to delivered at your destination station.

The Carnival Corporation, with multiple cruise lines, dominates Alaska travel.

It also owns the White Pass & Yukon Railroad, hotels at Denali and has partnerships with multiple local tour companies well as the Alaska Railroad. I have no doubt that their customer focused culture is the reason why rail service is so well coordinated with hotels and tour operators.

Walking from a 82,300 ton cruise ship at Whittier a few hundred feet on a covered walkway (it was raining) to a 12-car Alaska Railroad train bound for Anchorage with no baggage concerns is a far cry from the situation at Larkspur (SMART to Golden Gate Ferry).

The train we rode from Anchorage to Seward (Coastal Classic) was connecting to a cruise ship at Seward. It had 750-riders in a mix of first-class and regular coaches. It was like a NEC Regional the

Wednesday before Thanksgiving! Except for a longer check-in line, staffing was robust, service was excellent and the scenery spectacular. The State of Alaska just passed a measure to rebuild and expand the cruise port at Seward to allow direct on-dock train connections from cruise ships.

Like VIA there is no secret to good service and well-maintained equipment, aggressive pricing leveraging demand. Alaska Railroad's fares between Seward and Fairbanks (367 miles) are \$351 in Wilderness Class (coach) and \$760 in Gold Class (first class, full meal service included). Compare this to the Coast Starlight between Los Angeles and San Jose (423 miles), where the coach fare is



Alaska Railroad Denali Star Meet

\$124 (peak fare category), \$50 (lowest fare category) and between \$300 - \$323 for a roomette (full meal service included).

Overall, a trip to Alaska and sampling all of Alaska Railroad's routes and services is well worth it with Budd short domes as an added bonus.



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Hydrogen Power for California Trains

By Steel Wheels Staff



Arrow dmu at Redlands, CA. Conversion to Hydrogen is proving to be too expensive.

Photo by Paul Dyson

The debate over the next generation of rail traction continues. The California Air Resources Board is essentially trying to force a panic decision to invest in hydrogen against an artificial timeline. However, a report by the UK Railway Industry Association's report on decarbonization points out "Hydrogen trains are considered, but their relative lack of maturity, and the potential cost and availability of 'green' hydrogen." In the Niedersachsen province of Germany the state transport authority has decided against adding any hydrogen trains to its small experimental fleet, citing poor reliability in cold weather among other factors. They have a tender out for 143 battery trains to replace their diesel fleet. The German federal government has increased its budget for 'alternative' power sources, mostly for battery trains, including 'electrification islands' for recharging on long non-electrified sections.

Other experts are weighing in on the issue. Below is a letter from Jeff Beeman to the EPA regarding the CARB regulation:

Jeffery Beeman

Scientist Rebellion, US West Coast
Retired Materials Scientist,
Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory

April 12, 2024

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
EPA Docket Center, OAR,
Docket EPA-HQ-OAR-2023-0574,
Mail Code 28221T, 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20460
Email: a-and-r-docket@epa.gov

Subject: Authorization of the California Air Resources Board In-Use Locomotive Regulation pursuant to section 209(e) of the Clean Air Act

This letter is in response to requests for public comment on the In-Use Locomotive Authorization requested by the California Air Resources Board to the US Environmental Protection Agency. In our opinion, the EPA should NOT authorize this request. At first glance, the CARB rule certainly seems needed, with requirements for zero emission locomotives by 2047. Such a goal would improve train yard air quality greatly and move the locomotive industry towards real climate change solutions. However, within this authorization is the option of using hydrogen-powered locomotives to achieve this goal. This is a highly ill-advised approach to meeting the intention of the goals for a variety of reasons.

Hydrogen is currently made in two ways: the cracking of natural gas (methane) or the electrolytic splitting of water. In the former case, the cracking of CH₄ releases CO₂ just like burning the fuel would. This is not a net win for the atmosphere at all, it is just simply a displaced discharge. The neighborhood around the train yard would certainly benefit from cleaner air, but it would be at the expense of the regions of the world where populations would be displaced (or worse) by climate disasters. This is not a net win.

Let's look at the case of H₂ production via water splitting (electrolysis). At first glance,

one could propose using renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, etc., to create the electricity necessary for this process, hence creating a zero-emission transportation fuel. However, this idealization has deceptive downsides. Current fuel cell technologies use ionic transport membranes that are, at best, 60% efficient (on an energy in-to-energy stored basis) at converting electrical energy into H₂. This is for producing free H₂ at atmospheric pressure. To be useful this gas would need to be compressed and transported to the locomotive, which would require additional energy inputs. On the locomotive side, the hydrogen would then need to be reconverted into an electrical form, presumably using similar fuel cell technology, again with a 60% efficiency. Since the efficiencies of all processes multiply, we are looking at a total conversion efficiency (collected-to-kinetic) of approximately 30% or worse. We waste 70% of our collected energy as heat, corrosion products, membrane degradation, etc. Sustainably produced electrical power is too precious a commodity to waste in this fashion. In addition, compressing, transporting, and fueling with hydrogen could hardly be considered a risk-free operation. Hydrogen is a colorless, odorless, flammable gas. It diffuses in the atmosphere at high velocity, but leaks can create high temperature, essentially invisible torches, or in the case of a confined leak with oxygen present... a bomb.

It should also be noted that hydrogen-powered locomotives are not a currently well-developed technology. In fact, one attempt at using this scheme in Germany was an outright failure¹.

There is a much more efficient technology available today that could be used to concurrently solve California's locomotive and clean air needs. Electric engines using overhead contact systems (overhead wires) have been historically used worldwide for a very long time, are well-developed, and are up to 90% efficient (including regenerative braking, for instance). The initial infrastructure costs are high to be sure, but these costs can be amortized over very long periods. The rest of the industrialized world knows this, understands the long-term value of adopting these systems, and is working to electrify their trains accordingly. The United States simply needs to think more long-term and strategically or we will continue to be one of the world's worst polluters and resource wasters. We implore you to push back against the CARB authorization until they come up with a specific plan to use a known, more highly efficient, clean technology.

Jeffery Beeman

Brian Yanity, RailPAC VP South, adds:

The much-hyped “ZEMU” slated to soon run on the Arrow line between San Bernardino and Redlands, the first hydrogen train to run in California, recently has had dramatic project cost increases. As described by San Bernardino County Transportation Authority (SBCTA) May 9, 2024 Transit Committee agenda packet:

“ZEMU conversion of three Arrow Service DMUs – When the State initially awarded a \$30 million Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program grant to develop the ZEMU technology, the State requested SBCTA convert the three DMUs procured for the Arrow Service. The 2021 Update included a project to convert all three DMUs to meet the goal of operating the entire Arrow Service corridor as a zero or low emission revenue operation. However, conversion of the vehicle will not be possible and purchase of new vehicles will be required, which significantly

increases the cost of this initiative. The Board allocated \$9.2 million of Zero Emission Transit Capital Program funds to this project, which when combined with the \$7.5 million of existing funds will allow for the purchase of one vehicle, leaving an estimated unfunded need of \$26.5 million.”

Costs for starting up service of the hydrogen-powered Stadler “ZEMU” are spiraling out of control, and the hydrogen rail pilot project is already severely overbudget. The total program cost for the one pilot ZEMU two-car multiple unit, fueling station and associated infrastructure and operations is now approaching \$60 million, more than double the original estimate. This latest cost increase of at least another \$26.5 million to the SBCTA hydrogen rail program demonstrates how hydrogen trains are an unproven, high-risk and very expensive technology.

In spite of the problems with Arrow, Caltrans is committed to spending \$207 million for ten

hydrogen Stadler FLIRT trains, or an average of over \$20 million for each small multiple unit train. The Stadler trains have 108 seats compared to a single Surfliner coach with 90 seats, or a Metrolink commuter coach with 136 seats. The new 7-car electric double deck electric units have 675 seats, nearly 100 per car. It's extraordinary that these low-capacity hydrogen trains are being ordered. It's as if Caltrans expects there to be few passengers.

Instead of purchasing new hydrogen trains, SBCTA and Metrolink should explore converting the Arrow DMUs into battery+catenary electric propulsion instead. The San Bernardino Line should be electrified, at least in part, with overhead catenary wire. Brightline West recently stated to the media that it wished Metrolink would electrify the line, so that high speed trains to Las Vegas could reach LA Union Station.

One member of the RailPAC Board, Robert Frampton, has been tracking the rail infrastructure projects in the seven counties of Southern California (San Diego, Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside, Los Angeles, Ventura and Santa Barbara counties). These include infrastructure projects for commuter light rail, passenger rail, freight rail, and rail projects at the San Pedro ports. Funding has come from state gasoline tax, Measures M and R in Los Angeles County and similar measures in other counties, and from federal grants from the FRA.

There are currently 107 funded projects with approved budgets totalling \$70.6 billion. Of these, 36 are under construction, with budget of \$36.7 billion. In addition to these funded projects, 36 other projects have been completed since 2016, with total budgets of \$9.8 billion.

We have also been tracking unfunded potential rail infrastructure projects that have been identified by county transportation agencies, many of which have had scoping studies and environmental studies, and are in line for applications for funding.

Southern California Rail Projects currently under construction

#	Project	City/County	Agency	Cost, \$M	complete	Status May 2024
5	Fullerton Road grade separation	Industry	ACE	204.0	2022	Construction delayed to changing contractors
7	Montebello Avenue grade separation	Montebello	ACE	190.0	2027	In design, Begin construction in December, 2023
8	Rosecrans/Marquart grade separation	Santa Fe	SCRRA	156.4	2024	utilities relocation and site preparation. Begin bridge constr May, 2022
13	Junupa grade separation	Junupa Valley	RCTC	133.4	2023	EIR Approval Oct 2019; Final design in 2020. Begin constr Sept 2021
16a	Terminal Island (TI) Wye Rail	Long Beach	Port of LB	40.0	2024	Begin construction in Mid-2021.
17	Pier B Rail Facility - Phase I (Port of LB)	Long Beach	Port of LB	133.0	2026	An EIR was released in July, 2021. NSPA Certification April, 2022
19a	Terminal Island Railyard Enhancement	San Pedro	Port of LA	34.0	2022	Construction begun, June, 2020
20	Gold Line, Glendora to Pomona	San Gabriel Valley	LA Metro	2058.0	2026	Construction begun, June, 2020
22	East San Fernando light rail, Van Nuys Blvd. 9.2 mi	Van Nuys	LA Metro	1568.0	2028	EIR Approved Dec 2020; ROD May 2021. Begin construction 2022
23	Crenshaw light rail to LAX and Green Line	Inglewood	LA Metro	2058.0	2023	Construction is complete; in testing phase
24	Purple Line Subway extension, Phase 1	Los Angeles	LA Metro	2979.0	2023	Under construction
25	Purple Line Subway extension, Phase 2	Los Angeles	LA Metro	2441.0	2025	Under construction
26	Purple Line Subway extension, Phase 3	Los Angeles	LA Metro	3224.0	2027	Under construction
28-D	SANDAG Bafiquitos Lagoon Double Track and bridge	Carlsbad, San Diego County	SANDAG	117.8	2026	0.75 miles of double track -- In EIR Phase
28-P	Del Mar Bluff Stabilization, Phases 5	Del Mar	SANDAG	100.0	2023	Phase 5 will begin in Spring 2021 and complet in 2023
29	Link Union Station, Phase A	Los Angeles	Metro	950.0	2028	Final EIR Approved June, 2019. Awaiting NEPA certification.
33	LAX People Mover	Inglewood	LAWA	1950.0	2023	Construction has begun
34	Orange County Streetcar	Santa Ana-Garden Grove	OCTA	408.0	2025	Under construction. Start laying Track in Dec 2020.
36	Burbank Corridor Speed/Safety Improvement	Burbank Junction to Glendale Station	SCRRA	15.7	2023	CRISI Grant awarded by USDOT April, 2020
40	Anaheim Canyon station and double track	Anaheim, PacifiCenter Dr.	OCTA	29.9	2022	Construction begins April, 2021 with completion late 2022
49	Riverside Downtown train layover facility	Riverside	RCTC	5.0	2021.	Under construction
50	Moreno Valley–March Field Metrolink Station Upgrade	Moreno Valley	RCTC	67.0	2024	In environmental review, EIR preparation. Begin construction Oct 2022
51a	Perris Valley Line Track Rehabilitation, Modernization	Perris	RCTC	34.0	2024	Add 8800 ft of new track and rails. \$15.5M Apr 2023 TIRCP grant
51b	Metrolink Perris Valley South Perris station expansion	Perris	RCTC	57.0	2026	Perris-South Station Expansion: Layover 4th track
58	Metro Div 20 Rail Yard widening and turnback facility	Los Angeles	LA Metro	876.0	2023	construction has begun, for use by red and purple lines
61	Airport Metro Connector Station at 96th Street	Inglewood	LA Metro	898.6	2022	Construction to begin in June, 2021
			Total	\$20,712.1		
	currently 26 projects are under construction					

An Excel data file containing all these approved as well as pending rail infrastructure projects will be posted to the RailPAC web site for readers perusal. www.railpac.org

Amtrak's Long Distance Equipment Challenge 2025-2032

By Steve Roberts, President RailPAC

In the First Quarter 2024 issue of Steel Wheels James Tilley, Co-Chair of the Aurora Group, provided an overview of the long-distance equipment availability situation in the years ahead.

[Steel-Wheels-2024.Q1.pdf \(railpac.org\)](#) page 10.



Westbound California Zephyr approaches Martinez May 20, 2020, with a train of Superliners. Repair? Replace? That's the dilemma. Photo: Albert Borden

First, kudos to the Aurora Group for holding Amtrak's feet to the fire, a lot of what we are seeing today is a result of their perseverance. With the past and current attrition of Amtrak's long-distance fleet as a result of fire and catastrophic damage, the risk to the National Network trains is a reality that needs to be addressed. As Mr. Tilley outlined the long-distance fleet has shrunk from 718 cars in 2018 to 658 cars in 2023. The Superliner fleet is under the most risk with, at best, 407 cars available during the next five years compared to an original fleet of 479 cars. There are many underlying reasons for this situation, many dating back decades (inadequate capital funding from Congress) to more recent (Amtrak management failures i.e., failure to keep cars operational, lack of a quality parts inventory system, etc.).

With the recent history of delays and failures by multiple car builders, combined with management shortcomings by Amtrak, the risks involved in the upcoming long-distance car order meeting its projected delivery timelines are concerning. Because of this Mr. Tilley offers some alternatives to backstop the long-distance car order project. However, in offering these alternatives the risks associated with these alternatives were not presented. In fact, common across all the alternatives are the same risk factors facing Amtrak's long-distance procurement underway; likely car builder delays and failures, and potentially poor Amtrak oversight. As a result, the reader has no way to judge which alternative is the best. First the two least feasible and most

risky alternatives are:

Procuring trainsets from overseas: Buy American has strong political support and even a waiver for individual electronic components (Brightline West) requires a complex process with public input. This can take months or years. So, a waiver for entire trainsets is highly unlikely. Also, there are no European trainsets that can meet current US safety or accessibility requirements without a major redesign which means a timeline similar to the current Amtrak procurement already underway.

Utilize the Viewliner car body design: The Viewliner car body design was completed before the current single level safety standards were completed. As a result, the car body would have to be redesigned and with new interior concepts that meet current accessibility standards. Once again that means a great deal of design work and a timeline similar to the current Amtrak procurement. Also, because two bi-level cars provide the same capacity as three single-level cars, there are significant capital and operating cost benefits for a bi-level car fleet.

Other alternatives listed:

Issue a "simpler" procurement and acquire "off-the shelf" equipment: Not clear exactly what is being proposed, as there are no "off-the-shelf" overnight trains except the European trainsets noted above. As for a less detailed Request for Proposal (RFP), that is likely what Sumitomo utilized when it ordered cars from Siemens as part of their Nippon-Sharyo settlement. What was produced was the Caltrans Venture Cars (North American version of Siemens European Viaggio cars) which have sat for months to fix manufacturer defects. So, the risk is that a "simpler RFP" might just produce a more convoluted car delivery process.

Use Airo Trainsets: The Airo trainsets now being produced are designed for short-distance corridors. Just as with Viewliners, the single-level Airo cars would mean higher

capital and operating costs compared to bi-levels. For long-distance service, the interiors would have to be redesigned and dining and lounge cars designed. Larger water and waste retention tanks would probably be required. Just as with the other alternatives, all this redesign means a timeline similar to the current Amtrak procurement. Construction of long-distance Airo cars could not begin until the current corridor contract is completed, 2031-32, the same timeframe as the first deliveries of the new long-distance bi-level car procurement.

Remanufacture the existing long-distance fleet: This alternative presents major challenges all of which will fall on Amtrak's equipment engineering, procurement departments and the craftsmen at Beech Grove. There will not be a major worldwide equipment manufacturer shouldering some of the tasks. The first risk is that the Superliner I and Amfleet II are older than VIA's Budd cars when it remanufactured them. VIA's cars were manufactured by one company all within the same technological timeframe. Systems were generally mechanical. VIA could choose the best of its fleet to remanufacture and there was still a large pool of Budd cars that could provide parts in the best condition for



Superliner repair line up at Amtrak Beech Grove shops.

refurbishment. Contrast that with Amtrak's current long-distance fleet. It was built by four manufacturers over three technological timeframes. For Superliner I and Amfleet II this technology represented first-generation electronics. The need to rebuild the entire fleet means parts from retired cars are limited. The biggest risk revolves around the complex task of sourcing US built replacement parts that are no longer made by companies long out of business. This could stall or seriously delay this initiative. Furthermore, this alternative does not replace cars severely

Amtrak's Long Distance Equipment Challenge 2025-2032 (continued)



European Trains - Very nice but would need major engineering to meet USA regulations. NightJet train in Switzerland - Georg Trub

damaged in derailments and retired (about one hundred cars). There is also the risk in removing about 80% of the baseline order of cars from current long-distance procurement, making it far less attractive to car manufacturers. And don't forget there is a political dynamic. One of the Administration's key policy goals is rebuilding America's industrial base and supporting supply chains. Building new equipment accomplishes this and creates far more jobs than the rebuilding of 600 cars with a handful of boutique one-order suppliers of components. Finally, such a large remanufacturing initiative could attract a lawsuit around the lack of full accessibility represented by continued use of the remanufactured cars by Amtrak.

One factor noted by Mr. Tilley is the detailed RFP issued by Amtrak. He notes that the car manufacturers have asked for more time to review it. Mr. Tilley warns that this is just the first of delays endemic in recent car procurements. The flip side of this concern is that the very detailed RFP could in fact represent Amtrak learning from past experiences and issuing an RFP that will minimize change orders, with their associated delays and cost overruns, as the cars are being manufactured.

Overall rail advocates need to look at the

long-term and focus on the core initiative and not dissipate our energies on alternatives that will not be successful. The action that will guarantee failure is for Amtrak to split its limited oversight management over multiple car building endeavors.

For decades we have noted the issues around the start and stop of investment in Amtrak and advocated for an ongoing production line for equipment. With funding from the current Infrastructure Bill advocates are on the cusp of that goal.

One of the most important keys to a successful order is the size of the order. Remove 600 cars from the order (through remanufacturing or other alternatives) and the economic attractiveness to the car builder is substantially reduced. The one-for-one Amtrak baseline order (700+ cars) provides a solid foundation for an attractive contract and replaces cars retired due to wreck damage. Potentially on the horizon once the Long-Distance Study is completed, outreach to stakeholders undertaken, Corridor ID and Service Delivery plans completed and the business case developed for equipment, are additional car orders for new long-distance routes that would maintain the industrial base and supply chain.

The reality is because of decisions made over the last decade by both Congress (funding) and Amtrak, there is no risk-free option. Despite the risks outlined by Mr. Tilley, the current Amtrak Long-Distance procurement defines the future of the long-distance network. It alone offers the potential of an updated bi-level product

for today's market. It alone develops the industrial base and supply chain for add-on car orders to expand Amtrak's capacity and new long-distance routes emanating from the Long-Distance Service Study.

Moving forward during this critical period for equipment availability, there are two overriding issues that advocates need to focus on as they are the key to addressing this issue and are a foundation for growth. The first is Amtrak's yearly appropriation. This yearly appropriation funds the critical brake inspections (from operating accounts), car overhauls (capital accounts), component replacements and wreck repairs (capital accounts). In FY23 and FY24 Amtrak's appropriation has fallen short of its request, restricting Amtrak's ability to return out-of-service cars to service. With these appropriation shortfalls Amtrak may already be falling behind.

The second issue is the upcoming reauthorization of the Infrastructure Bill. This will take place during 2025. Advocate's message to legislators and other stakeholders needs to focus on reauthorization at funding levels similar to the current bill. Without adequate funding levels in the reauthorization, it will be back to "feast and famine" and there will be no new long-distance routes or need for additional long-distance equipment.



Viewliner cars on the Lake Shore Limited. Yesterday's technology, would need expensive updates to meet ADA requirements. Photo: Amtrak

Don't forget to check your subscription expiration date on the mailing label and renew your membership if it is due.

Thank you for your continued support for RailPAC and passenger rail.

WANTED: Photographers for Steel Wheels

If you have a collection of hi-res jpeg photos, especially of passenger trains in California, or enjoy taking them, contact the Editor,

WE NEED YOU!

pdyson@railpac.org



Arizona News –

Todd Liebman, President, All Aboard Arizona



Please save the date for the national Rail Nation Conference that

is coming to Tucson from November 1-3. This will be a full two-day conference with top speakers from throughout the United States and Arizona. Rail Nation is a twice annual conference sponsored by Rail Passengers Association. This event is being co-sponsored by Rail Passengers Association and All Aboard Arizona. It will be held at the Ramada by Wyndham in Downtown Tucson. The conference will begin on Friday and conclude Sunday with substantive content, speakers and optional events on Friday and Saturday. The Sunset Limited arrives from in both directions on Thursday, leaves westbound on Sunday evening and eastbound on Monday morning. Please plan on attending this extraordinary national event that is being held in the Southwest for the first time in many years.

We will also have a couple regional events at local breweries this summer and early fall. Watch our website and social media for details.

The focus in Arizona is on all things Infrastructure & Jobs Act, Corridor ID and the FRA Long Distance Study. The last event for the Long-Distance Study is in June, and I will be attending as I have all the other stakeholder events. What all these disparate activities have in common is that they are all leading to an integrated rail passenger system for all Arizona. The heart of this system will be the Tucson-Phoenix-Buckeye Corridor. The Sunset Limited and the Southwest Chief are two current anchors. Add to that the two new long-distance trains in the FRA study, the eastern Arizona portion of the Sunset Route will enjoy double daily service and new service will be initiated that will link Wickenburg and Parker along with a new train heading north and linking Phoenix to Flagstaff and northeastern Arizona cities

All Aboard Arizona's vision is that each station will become regional transit hubs. We have already begun to work on a vision of this for southeastern Arizona where Sierra Vista, Bisbee and Tombstone can be linked to the Benson Amtrak Station by convenient bus connections. Willcox would be linked to Douglas and Safford in a similar way.

Extensions of the corridor from Tucson to Nogales, initially by bus perhaps, but later, by rail are natural connections. That would then link to the Mexican government's new rail service which is planned to link Nogales to Mexico City and Pacific Coast cities.

How far off is this? As far off as we make it! Get involved! See you at our gatherings this summer and early fall, and in Tucson for the great Rail Nation Conference in November.

Take the Sunset Limited to Tucson AZ for the

RAIL NATION Conference November 1-3

Venue: Ramada by Wyndham located in downtown Tucson

Call the hotel direct for the best room rate: 1-520-239-2300

Check RPA website
narprail.org for registration



Lessons From London

Elizabeth Line A Gold Standard

By Paul Dyson

I was in the UK for a couple of weeks in April catching up with friends and family. As usual I purchased a Britrail Pass and was able to do most of my visits by rail, at least as far as the nearest station. I was fortunate to spend a couple of days with my good friend and former British Railways colleague, Brian Ringer. Brian and I were managers at Acton Marshalling Yard, a few miles west of Paddington station, and the remains of the yard are still in use for block swapping and staging of unit trains of construction material.

Brian and I took a day to sample London's two cross-town routes; Thameslink, which runs between multiple end points such as Bedford to Brighton and Cambridge to Gatwick Airport, and the new Elizabeth Line. The Thameslink route includes St. Pancras International and London

Bridge stations as well as being a very short walk to Kings Cross, so the number of possible origin and destination pairs with a single connection is enormous, and includes Paris, Brussels and Amsterdam. I have used the service many times from Gatwick Airport to

Kings Cross to connect with express trains to York. (The Dysons are a Yorkshire family). We took a local train from Milton Keynes to Bedford and a Thameslink as far as Farringdon station where Thameslink and the

Elizabeth Line intersect.

To say that I was impressed with the Elizabeth line is an understatement. The line has converted train-underground-train journeys to a single trip, reducing journey times and adding convenience for thousands of Londoners and tourists everyday. It runs between two routes in the east, Shenfield in Essex north of the Thames and Abbey Wood in Kent, south of the River, and Heathrow Airport or Reading in the west. The trains run every few minutes through the central core. Imagine being able to ride from say Covina direct to LAX or Long Beach to Santa Clarita. We rode east to Ilford on a busy mid-morning train, arriving in time to see a Freightliner container train hammering westbound through the adjacent platform at 60mph, heading for

the junction at Stratford where it will diverge onto the North London line and thence to the midlands or north of England. These freights are timetabled and have to keep to their "paths" to avoid delaying the passenger service.

We turned back west from Ilford and crossed central London in less than

40 minutes to West Ealing where we were hoping to see the prototype battery mu (converted from an old Underground train) but we were out of luck. Instead we saw more freight activity in and out of Acton Yard as well



New class 805 Hitachi bi-mode (diesel and electric) 125mph train undergoing mileage trials at Milton Keynes, May 1, 2024. These trains will operate on routes like London - Chester which are 80% electrified. Battery and Hydrogen were considered but deemed not ready for high speed service. Photo: Paul Dyson



RailPAC member Paul Bendix and wife Jane MacDougall listen to the Great Western Railway band at Paddington station. "Elizabeth Line is a miracle for anyone in a wheelchair."

as 125mph express trains on the electrified Great Western main line. "Our" old Acton Main Line station is now an Elizabeth Line stop and has a brand-new station with lifts, plenty of electronic information signs, and an excellent café across the street.

Signs on board both Thameslink and Elizabeth trains include very clear next station indicators, as well as a diagram which shows which cars are most heavily loaded and which are empty. The Thameslink trains have toilets as the routes are longer, and the signs inside the train tell you which in which car they are located. Elizabeth Line stations have toilets, but not the trains. Access for wheelchairs has been designed in and is excellent. RailPAC member and intrepid traveler Paul Bendix has just been navigating his wheelchair around London and reports that "Elizabeth Line is a miracle for anyone in a wheelchair."



Amtrak – Change Management’s Attitude or Just Change Management?

by Doug Kerr, RailPAC Vice President - North

In the last issue of Steel Wheels (1Q 2024) RailPAC President Steve Roberts penned an article “It’s Not Your Father’s Railroad (or Climate)” detailing the changes and challenges in today’s rail industry that keep Amtrak and freight railroads from providing consistent service especially during inclement winter weather. Summarizing very briefly, railroads today are operated to maximize Operating Ratio (profit margin in any other industry) and returns to investors. Growth of business, reliability of service, meeting customer needs and reduction of delays are all secondary to maximizing efficiency, increasing profits for freight railroads, and reducing expenses for Amtrak. Roberts further states there is “a risk-averse bias among decision makers.” All of the points raised in the article are valid and true.

These issues have led to many cancellations of Amtrak trains, truncation of trains leaving passengers stranded, and excessive delays. Left unresolved, Amtrak will continue to provide poor, unreliable service that does not meet customer expectations. Instead of looking at the issues as excuses for poor quality service, Amtrak management should be approaching the issues as problems to solve. I recently boarded the eastbound California Zephyr in Martinez, California headed for a meeting in Chicago. Later that day the conductor announced Amtrak had decided to terminate the train in Denver. There would be no alternate transportation to Chicago. In other words, if you are ticketed

beyond Denver, you are just out of luck. I’ve chosen to ride the train most of my life rather than drive or fly, but this experience has pushed me close to the “never again” category of Amtrak passengers. I expect when I board a train it will actually get me to my ticketed destination. This is a very reasonable customer expectation, but one Amtrak management apparently considers unimportant.

There are some similarities, for those of us old enough to remember, to American automobiles of the 1970’s. The cars of the era were very poor quality. The manufacturers blamed excessive government regulations concerning emissions, fuel economy, crash worthiness, and unleaded gasoline operation as reasons they could not meet customer expectations on quality and still keep a competitive price. My first new car was a 1974 Ford Pinto. On delivery the car was missing an air vent control, the brake handle fell apart in the first month, the car needed repairs every few months to keep running, and was nearly worthless after only six years and 60,000 miles due to the Pinto’s reputation for gas tank explosions. I’m still unsure how a missing air vent control was caused by “excessive government regulations.” The situation might never have changed had not Japanese auto makers Toyota, Nissan, and Honda entered the picture offering reasonably priced cars with zero defects and meeting all regulations. The American manufacturers had to clean up their

act or go out of business.

Unfortunately, the Japanese are not able to compete with Amtrak. As far as passenger rail is concerned, Amtrak has no rail competition which leaves management complacent with no incentive to improve and a William Vanderbilt “public be damned” attitude. Amtrak does have competition, however, in the form of private automobiles and commercial airlines. While airlines have their own reliability issues, there is enough redundancy in the airline system that even after a major weather event things return to normal in a day or two. When the California Zephyr is cancelled out of Chicago it causes six days of rippling cancellations to cities on its route as the cancelled train’s equipment causes the cancellation of the return trip from California three days later. The most reliable form of transportation today is the private automobile which is one reason it holds a commanding market share lead in travel modes. And, it explains why it is so difficult to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) to combat climate change. Simply put, the automobile comes much closer to meeting passenger expectations and needs than Amtrak.

Achieving Amtrak service reliability meeting customer expectations starts with a change in attitude by Amtrak management. Solutions, not excuses, need to be found for quality issues, delays, and cancellations. Lack of an attitude change may require replacement of Amtrak management.

More Talk But No Action As Mobile AL City Council Considers Amtrak Service

By Evan Stair, President, Passenger Rail Oklahoma

Mobile City Council met to discuss whether to provide operating funds for the long discussed and proposed passenger service between New Orleans, LA and Mobile AL. The route follows what was the route of the extended Sunset Limited to Florida before it was “suspended” by Amtrak.

Quote from Trains magazine: “The meeting saw committee members express concern over a city commitment to provide over \$3 million in operating funding for the Mobile-New Orleans trains over the first three years of operation, and the potential ongoing commitment after that period.”

Our View: Anticipate a “no” vote when and if the New Orleans-Mobile Amtrak corridor comes before the Mobile City Council. It seems the carrier has developed a take-it-or-leave-it stance regarding this long-delayed Amtrak Connects US project.

Amtrak executives and managers have no one to

blame but themselves. Rumor has it that Amtrak’s chief executive, as then a congressional staffer, wrote language that became Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA) Section 209. This section barred Amtrak from using any of its annual federal appropriation for state supplemental routes (those routes of less than 750-miles) excepting of course the Northeast Corridor.

In 2020, realizing it had painted itself into a corner, Amtrak sought to encourage state interest in what had become a stagnant state program by lobbying Congress for time-limited federal matching funds for new state services. This lobbying produced the Corridor Identification and Development Program within the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) of 2021. As we predicted some states would say, ‘no thanks’ after reading the fine print. This seems to be the case in Alabama. Kansas, Oklahoma,

and Texas also seem uninterested in expansion projects, probably for a similar reason.

Our suggestion? Amtrak needs to admit defeat and ask congress to modify Section 209 to allow federal matches for annual state operations. This is how the federal government manages highway appropriations. Why not passenger rail?

Of course, for this to happen Amtrak would have to admit defeat and become a truly national carrier. We don’t see that happening under the current Amtrak regime. Amtrak’s vision to dedicate all federal dollars to the Northeast Corridor while having states pay for all other services remains unchallenged. This vision is geographically and politically discriminatory. Indeed, it is why Amtrak remains an afterthought in the national transportation system rather than a passenger carrier.

Bay Area Update

by Gerald Cauthen

P.E., Co-Founder and President, Bay Area Transportation Working Group (BATWG)

www.batwgblog.com

Steel Wheels asked BATWG President Gerry Cauthen to summarize what is happening in the Bay Area.

RM3: In January, by 7 to 0 vote the California Supreme Court ruled in favor of Regional Measure 3, which passed by 55% of the vote in 2018, instead of the 2/3rd vote previously required to approve new tax funds. That released \$4.45 billion to Bay Area transit agencies for their various capital improvement projects.

Caltrain: Proceeding with its electrification (due to be completed later this year), but without the raised platforms that were hoped would speed up loading and reduce dwell time, and without extending Caltrain beyond 4th and King. Section to the south of the Tamien Station will continue to be by diesel, supplemented by a single battery-operated train.

Caltrain Downtown Extension: Seems to be languishing. With San Francisco's downtown in the doldrums and downtown high-rise values dropping by half or more, Caltrain's ridership draw is much reduced. The Salesforce Transit Center would still be an important nexus of rail and bus lines, but with the federal tentative commitment limited to 49.5%, chances of moving head any time soon appear to be low. (ED: May 20 update, \$3.4 billion committed by the Federal Government to this project).

BART Link 21: Despite BART's 60% reduction in ridership, the Link 21 team, dominated by a plethora of profit-oriented consultants, is fixated on building a second transbay rail tube, estimated with subway connections on both sides of the Bay, to cost at least \$40 billion. Original intent of the project was to improve the entire Northern

California network of passenger and freight rail lines, but the emphasis on a second transbay rail tube seems to have pushed the rest of Link 21's objectives into the background. It is expected that the BART Board will soon be called upon to select a mode (BART or standard gauge rail), before there is environmental review and before the transit to transit connections and their costs are defined.

The VTA's BART Phase II Debacle: The project would provide six miles of BART track connection between the current BART terminal at the Berryessa Station, then under Santa Clara Street to the Diridon Station and then on to the Caltrain Santa Clara Station. The line would include 5 miles of subway under Santa Clara Street and one mile of surface travel. Back in 2003 the VTA started with a twin-bore subway which reached the 65% design stage and which lasted until the DEIS was issued in December of 2016. Then a group of noisy businessmen at the Downtown Station stated complaining about temporary construction disruption, at which point Sam Liccardo, then Mayor of San Jose and the VTA Board promptly caved in, and by the time the FEIS was issued in March of 2018, they had switched to a 43-foot single-bore tunnel. Then in 2021, having realized that 43 feet was not big enough for a single level station they decided to increase the size of the bore to 54 feet in diameter. Probably needless to add, the price went from \$4.9 billion at the time of the DEIS to \$6.9 billion, to \$9.3 billion to \$12.2 billion and, in March, to the FTA's current \$12.745 billion. Will the price go higher yet? Probably. Bottom Line: Another example of an agency with insufficient experience in tunneling and heavy engineering jumping in without knowing what it was doing. Despite the excessive costs,

construction time, degraded rider conditions and major risks associated with the large bore, VTA has plowed steadfastly ahead.

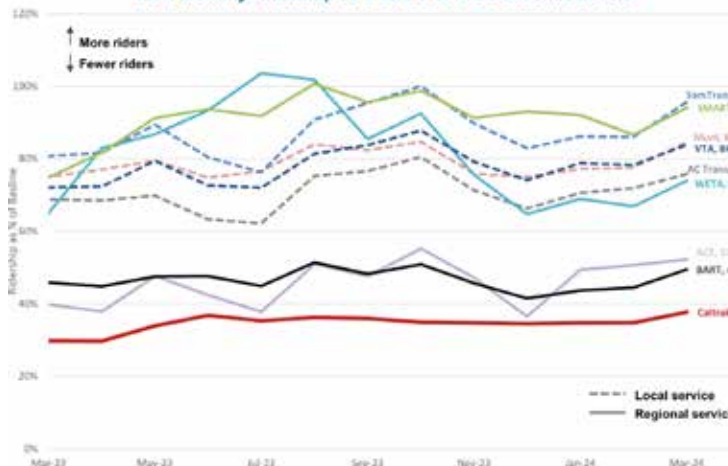
SMART: A nice ride but burdened with a truly gawky connection with the Larkspur Ferries at the south end of the line and only a moderate need for service north of that point to Santa Rosa, ridership remains low. The present plan is nevertheless to extend the service for another 3 miles to Windsor, with additional plans for further extensions.

SFMTA: has improved schedule adherence and reliability but is facing a major funding shortage (as are the other large agencies). In order to avoid overloading the downtown Muni Metro subway with too many one and two-car trains....and because it is unwilling to even talk about in-line coupling, the MTA is talking about converting the J-line into a feeder requiring transfers to the downtown subway at Church and Market and joining the K and L lines into a single feeder service, requiring their riders to transfer to the downtown subway at the West Portal. Many observers think that before going to the extreme of cutting 40% of its ridership off from a one-seat ride to the Eastern part of the city, the MTA should give coupling another try. In 2024 the LRV's, and all things technical, are just a little more advanced than they were when the Boeing Vertol cars started arriving in the 1970's.

Central Subway: In a category all by itself. Worse than any of us imagined back in 2012. Because of depth and short distances most Stockton Transit users elect to continue to travel by surface bus. And then there are the leaks. And it is definitely leaking. What's not being released is what happened and why.

From Adina Levin, Green Caltrain:

Total Monthly Ridership as a Share of Pre-Pandemic Levels



Last Friday, SB 1031, the Connect Bay Area Act to authorize a regional transportation funding measure, was halted by the bill authors and sponsor MTC.

The decision allows more time for stakeholders to build agreement for a new bill in 2025. A regional funding measure remains key to addressing the fiscal cliff facing Caltrain, BART, and other agencies, and to provide coordinated service that riders and voters want to see.

And in the meantime, there are important initiatives at an agency and regional level - to regrow ridership for Caltrain and other services, to plan the next generation regionally connected transit network, to take next steps on bus priority and coordinated fares, bringing more people to transit and building confidence in the public.

As next steps, MTC will be holding a workshop on June 12 to reset the regional discussion.

Our Train Stations - Our Project

All photos this page taken at Ventura CA station by RailPAC member Jerry Martin May 18, 2024

Our Train Stations is a project being developed by Mike Garey of Arizona. The fundamental issue is this. The train station is the first physical encounter with passenger rail for the traveler, and in too many instances it creates a negative impression. The Train Station Project plan is to recruit a volunteer



army to note and report issues at stations that should and can be easily addressed by the owner or by local agencies. Mike's efforts to date include timetable posters dated 2016 in Illinois, a station with timed automatic door locks that can lock passengers'

luggage inside, as well as all the mundane stuff of litter, poor signs, peeling paint and the like.

Recently RailPAC member Jerry Martin was in Ventura for the Strawberry festival at the County Fairgrounds adjacent to



the station. What should have been an opportunity to sell rail to many newcomers was instead a scruffy and unkempt platform (see Jerry's photos). Action has already



been begun at Ventura, proof positive that this is an effective campaign.

This is an opportunity for all RailPAC members to participate. You can report issues such

as this direct to the City, Amtrak, Metrolink etc. or for a coordinated response send the information to Mike Garey at [mikegarey@](mailto:mikegarey@cox.net)

cox.net. Mike has a database of Mayors and City Managers, the people who can get things done. This has been compiled and updated over many months by RailPAC VP Doug Kerr and is an invaluable resource.

For more information You can check out the Project at <https://OurTrainStations.net>. The listings for each Train Station include Contacts (Mayor and City Manager).

The Project can use volunteers: (Volunteers@OurTrainStations.net)

Observe and report conditions at the Train Station using a Project checklist.

Research Contacts for Train Stations to help Doug fill out the missing sections of the country

Data entry – We need volunteers to help handle the data that is coming in.



RailPAC will be holding an informal members gathering at the

Old Spaghetti Factory in Fullerton, CA,

adjacent to the Amtrak/Metrolink Station.

Saturday July 6, 2024 at 12:30pm

All passenger rail supporters welcome.

**There will be no meeting fee,
but donations are welcome.**

Buy your own lunch.

RSVP to pdyson@railpac.org.



From the Rear Platform

By Paul Dyson, Editor



Anthony Haswell, 1931 - 2024

Anthony Haswell, found of the National Association of Rail Passengers, now RPA, has died, aged 94. There have been many obituaries published in the railroad press so I have asked a friend of his, long time RailPAC member and advocate Bill Lindley to share his recollections.

I first met Anthony Haswell at a joint committee hearing at the Arizona Capitol in 1993, the subject of which, unsurprisingly, was potential passenger train service in Arizona. In the thirty-one years since I remained good friends with him: he was my mentor in understanding enough "legal-ese" to read a few sections of Federal law and in writing letters to Congressmen and Senators. He helped me and many others change from being a "Rail Fan" into an advocate.

Mr. Haswell was a lifelong Democrat, but that never gave him the slightest pause in disagreeing with a Democrat — or agreeing with a Republican.

It was perhaps fitting in that regard that although his early career was in Chicago and with the Rock Island Railroad, he later settled in Arizona; for he shared at least one trait with Senator Goldwater: you never had a single doubt what Tony believed about an important issue.

He was the founder of the National Association of Railroad Passengers, NARP, and although he had a few disagreements over the years with NARP officers and staff over their taking what he thought were political rather than passenger-oriented positions, he remained a lifelong member, albeit at a "minimum category" as he wrote to the All-Aboard list in 1997.

In the year 2000, he spearheaded the "Modern Trains" platform to reform NARP. As Mr. Haswell himself wrote on their website, Modern Trains held that "Faster and more dependable train operation is a prerequisite to effective passenger service" and that "Entities other than Amtrak should be encouraged to enter the field." As for NARP: "The organization must change from a satellite of Amtrak to a quasi-adversarial public watchdog. The Rail Passenger, not any rail-related interest group, must be chief among NARP's concerns." To the astonishment of some, Mr. Haswell then appeared at a joint RailPAC/NARP meeting in Sacramento alongside Dr. Adrian Herzog, with whom he had been

poring over Amtrak's accounting. And although Adrian and Tony held differences over the final analysis, both agreed that the conventional views of what the numbers were, and what they meant, was not quite right.

In recent years, Mr. Haswell expressed his pleasure over Brightline's starting service, even as he had reservations on its long-term viability; and he told me personally that NARP, renamed, was doing a better job than previously.

From his first years in Arizona, Mr. Haswell worked with Old Pueblo Trolley in Tucson to build and operate a heritage streetcar system, and to create the Southern Arizona Transportation Museum which today is housed in a splendidly redone S.P. depot in that city. He was a strong advocate and contributor to better trains and transit in Arizona and beyond, and he will be missed.



The late Anthony Haswell (Right) at Sacramento in 2000 with RailPAC members (l to r) Bill Lindley Anthony Lee, and the late Dr. Adrian Herzog.

Santa Barbara NEWS

By the Steel Wheel staff

Santa Barbara Comuter Train

Plans are in hand for another attempt to provide a morning and afternoon commuter friendly schedule between Ventura County and Santa Barbara. What we have learned so far is that Metrolink would run a morning train from Moorpark to Goleta, returning mid-morning to Los Angeles, and a Surfliner train would accept commuter tickets in the afternoon for the return trip. I am assuming that the Metrolink train would be one of the three which currently runs eastbound in the morning. (See "Metrolink Connections" page 2). This cooperation between Metrolink, LOSSAN, VCTC and SBCAG is to be commended. Readers will recall that a previous attempt using a retimed Surfliner from Los Angeles was plagued by poor punctuality and was withdrawn after a year of failure. With Metrolink dispatching "their own" train, and with only 2 eastbound departures from East Ventura instead of three, we hope this pitfall will be avoided. We anticipate that the Leesdale siding project (between Camarillo and Oxnard), which is inching forward oh so slowly, will soon be completed. This will give operational flexibility on this section of the VC line and will assist dispatchers in the event of any delays.

Return of the Battery Shuttle in Santa Barbara with a new route.

The popular State Street and beach electric shuttle has been out of service after the closure of State Street to make a pedestrian plaza, and also due to shortage of operating funds. Santa Barbara MTD have announced the return of the trolley for the summer (May 31st – September 2nd). The temporary shuttle service operation will be funded with limited, one-time grant funds from California's Low-Carbon Transit Operations Program fund.



The operation was previously funded by the city of Santa Barbara. Amtrak passengers can ride free by presenting their train ticket. Let's hope SBMTD can organize a permanent means of funding this useful link.

SBMTD is still putting together the pieces of a Micro transit service called The Wave which will connect Surfliner trains at Goleta with UC Santa Barbara and the Isla Vista area. Students make up a significant percentage of passengers on Surfliner trains and this service is long overdue.

None of this would be happening without the decades long perseverance of RailPAC director Dennis Story, who has kept these projects alive when others have quit the struggle. Thank you Dennis.

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1017 L Street, PMB-217
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A PUBLICATION OF THE
**RAIL PASSENGER ASSOCIATION
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