

# WHEEL CLICKS

Pacific Railroad Society Inc.

NOVEMBER 2010

## BRIEF HISTORY OF DATE NAILS

A date nail is a nail with the date stamped in its head. For example, a nail with a "41" is from 1941. Nails are usually 2½" long with ¼" shanks. Date nails were driven into railroad ties, bridge timbers, utility poles, mine props, and other wooden structures for record keeping purposes.

Most date nails are steel, though many are copper, aluminum, malleable iron, or brass. Lengths run from a paltry ¾" up to 3", with shank diameters running from 1/8" up to 5/16". The nail heads can be round, square, diamond, pentagon, as well as other rarer shapes. Over 2,000 different date nails were used by North American railroads which show the year. Add to that the nails which tell wood, treatment, and other information, and toss in all date nails used in poles and other timbers, and the total number of different nails from this continent easily exceeds 3,500.

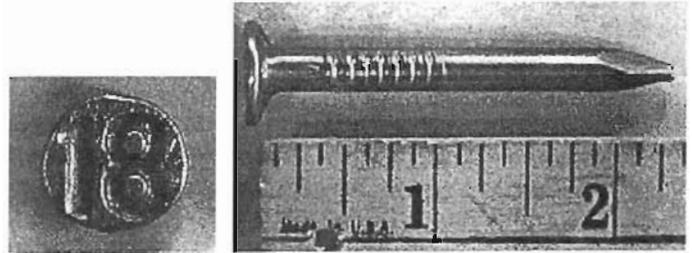
Western Europe suffered a timber shortage much earlier than North America, which is why railroads in France, England, and Germany were chemically treating ties long before companies here. Date nails were in use in France in 1870, possibly as early as 1859. Railroads monitored their investment in treating, and date nails became the most common method for this.

When North American railroads began to experiment with treated ties in the second half of the 1800s, it was not known which chemicals, treatment methods, or woods were most economical. By the late 1800s American railroads settled on the use of date nails for record keeping. The oldest known North American date nail is a 97 from the Mississippi River & Bonne Terre. It was in 1899 that major railroads began using nails to date ties. That year the Chicago and Eastern Illinois, the Great Northern, the Chicago and Burlington & Quincy, and the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie began nail use. Others soon followed.

By the 1920s nail use was the norm. It peaked in the early 1930s with over a hundred different railroads using date nails in 1931. The depression, then the second world war adversely affected nail use, and from 1950 to 1970 the number of railroads using date nails steadily declined so that for the past thirty years virtually no railroad has used them. The newest date nail in a tie in North America is an aluminum 01 (2001) from a U.S. Navy track in New Jersey. The decline in the use of date nails can be attributed mainly to two things: the perfection of treatment techniques, and the reliance of stamps in the ends of the ties for records.

Date nails were manufactured by steel companies on high speed machines. The particular nail was driven into ties either at the treating plant, to indicate the year of treatment, or at the track, to indicate the year the tie was laid. When a rotted or mechanically damaged tie was removed, the date on the nail was noted. Ties were never removed because of age, so date nails did not tell section foremen when to replace ties.

In the first decade of the 20th century railroads which used



*A typical date nail, showing head and shank. This one is 2½" long and made from steel wire ¼" in diameter. The date 18 (1918) is stamped in the head.*

date nails drove them into every treated tie. Some lines found the record obtained by this method to be a failure, so beginning in 1909 some railroads concentrated their record in special test sections. For these companies keeping track of only a few thousand ties was far more economical and accurate than tracking several million ties. By the early 1920s, however, most of these railroads had returned to the practice of placing nails in every treated tie. Each railroad conducted its own experiments, so the nails used on one railroad will not be like those on other lines.

Some railroads never used date nails, like the Southern RR. Still others used them for a short time (Monon: 1908-1910) and others for a long time (Santa Fe: 1901-1969). Often the shape of the nail head has some significance. For example, on the El Paso & Southwestern round nails were driven into zinc chloride treated ties while diamond nails were driven into creosoted ties.

The following chronology is of Santa Fe date nail use. In 1901, the Santa Fe abandoned stamps in ties for records and began using date nails in all treated ties and timbers. The nails had round heads and indented figures, and through 1909 they had a single digit representing the year. In 1910, due to the mountainous records involved, they stop using date nails in all ties and timbers. Instead they concentrated their records on special test sections of track, where date nails were still used. In 1921, Santa Fe reverted to the practice of using date nails in all ties and timbers, though they continued to monitor only those in the test sections. In 1926, Santa Fe switched to the use of nails with raised figures. The last year for Santa Fe date nails was 1969.

Even though date nails were used by the Santa Fe only in test sections from 1910 through 1920, nails from this period are not rare. The Santa Fe had over 800,000 ties under observation in these years.

[Date nail information by Tom Geer]



**WHEEL CLICKS**

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**PRS NEWS — ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES**

- Nov. 3, 10, PRM Wednesday work party, 1:00 p.m. to 5 p.m., 17, 24 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
- Nov. 5 Board Meeting, location in back of Bandshell at Fri. Alhambra Park.
- Nov. 6, 13, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10:00 a.m. 20, 27 to 4:00 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
- Sats. Committee meeting: 27.
- Nov. 6, 13, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Saunders 20, 27 Yard, Noakes & Herbert, Commerce. Regular Sats. days: 6, 20; Extra days: 13, 27. Com. Mtg.: 20.
- Nov. 12 Membership Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Alhambra Room, Fri. Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
- Nov. 19 Slide Night at Saunders Yard, 7:30 p.m., Noakes & Herbert, Commerce. All welcome, bring slides. Fri.
- Dec. 1, 8, PRM Wednesday work party, 1:00 p.m. to 5 p.m., 15, 22, 29 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
- Dec. 3 Board Meeting, **Pacific Railroad Museum**, 210 Fri. W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
- Dec. 4, 11, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10:00 a.m. 18, 25 to 4:00 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.

- Sats. Committee meeting: 25.
- Dec. 4, 11, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Saunders 18, 25 Yard, Noakes & Herbert, Commerce. Regular Sats. days: 4, 18; Extra days: 11, 25. Com. Mtg.: 18.
- Dec. 10 **PRS HOLIDAY PARTY**, 7:30 p.m., Alhambra Fri. Room at Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.

**MEETING PROGRAM** by **RUSS DAVIES**

November 12: **Steam! Santa Fe's 3751 to the Grand Canyon** for the NRHS convention at Williams, Arizona. **Tom Grose** will share his CD of this historic event with us. Be there, and bring *digital* briefs!

**MILEPOSTS** by **MARTI ANN DRAPER**

I finally have the opportunity to talk with you about a PRS activity for which I am currently the committee chair: Excursions. But first, I want to clear up a mistake I made in my last column which concerned the volunteers at our museum, a mistake of the type I call "being left on the cutting room floor."

**Tom Geer's Co-workers Rally**

Many of his co-workers called me to task for not mentioning Tom Geer as one of the stalwarts of the museum. Actually, his name was in my notes and due to the haste with which I put together the last column, I left his name out by accident.

The disappointment among the museum guys was enormous. It reminded me of a time back in 1981 when PRS leased six of our cars to a movie production company to use in the film, "Under the Rainbow." One scene involved Chevy Chase and Eve Arden getting onto a train in Chicago. No expense was spared to make this sequence. It was shot using a false high platform several cars long built at Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal over one of the regular platforms. Amtrak supplied the locomotive and an eight-car train, including our six, dressed up for the movie. The interiors were dressed with fabric using period prints and the lighting carefully done to give everything an early Technicolor cast. Over 50 extras were dressed up in authentic 1939 garb and sat in the meticulously dressed-up *National Forum* and *Cajon Pass* during three long days of filming, during which the train was pulled into and out of the station countless times. We all worked very hard to make sure the production came off as written.

As part of our compensation, members of the private car committee were invited to the premiere of the movie and we anxiously took our seats, eager to see all the labor play out in magnificent shots of our cars in all their mid-century makeup. Our faces fell and our spirits dropped when we came to the part where the train was supposed to depart Chicago and we saw that the entire sequence had been left out of the movie! Such is the cruel fate of someone whose well-intentioned efforts are left on the cutting room floor.

I am informed by Tom Geer's fans that in addition to being present when the museum is open, Tom has assumed the job of being the organizer of our "stacks," that is to say, the off-site storage facilities where our archives, back issues of magazines, and artifacts reside because space in the museum is minimal. Some of these items are like those in the cozy corners of your attic, where great treasures sit alongside the piles of things you

stuck there in a hurry because “I might need this someday.” It takes a firm hand and steady mind to tackle this accumulation, and Tom is bravely taking it on. In addition, we see him regularly at Board of Directors meetings. If you don’t attend these meetings regularly, you may not be impressed. However, the experience can be quite torturous and the fact that Tom takes this on, without having to, demonstrates his exceptional commitment.

### **PRS as an Excursion Club**

I have always enjoyed rail excursions and have thought of them as being an essential part of PRS. Many years ago, I thought about becoming the Excursion Director but because of the many other things I was doing knew I didn’t have the time necessary to devote to the job. After Barbara Sibert passed away and Vince Cammerano left to pursue job opportunities in the midwest, there was no one willing to take on the job. So, I decided to try to put on some excursions using a bunch of people, perhaps with each one of us taking on the “Director” mantle for a particular excursion.

The first trip we did was the “Big Dome to the Bay” in January. I wanted this trip to illustrate what I thought a PRS excursion should be: educational, showcasing equipment or experiences you could not get on regular Amtrak trains, offered at an economical price so that many people could participate, and fun for all participants. Although there are some things we learned and now might do differently, I think that trip was a success and encouraged me that PRS can still run excursions.

Some of you have told me that you think PRS’s days as an excursion club are over. You point to the state of the economy, note that a large number of our members cannot afford to go on excursions. It is hard to persuade railroads to allow passengers on non-traditional routes or schedules. Other entities are offering excursions which are well-received and you see no need for PRS to do them. You point out that the majority of our hard-working volunteers would rather work at the museum than help put on trips and you urge me to throw in the excursion towel.

My personal opinions are these. Getting together to run trips which provide excursion opportunities that individuals cannot arrange on their own is one of the primary reasons PRS exists. The fact that many of us cannot afford excursions does not mean that none of us should go on them. It does mean we need to keep the prices as low as practical and we need to be creative about how we can come up with inexpensive excursion experiences, such as our “Metrolink Ramble” done in June. The fact that other entities, both for-profit and non-profit, are offering excursions illustrates that there still are people who enjoy taking them. The “competition” helps to keep the quality of the trips high and motivates us to put on the best trips we can, so that people will know that a PRS trip will give you good value for your ticket price, as well as making you part of a movement – railfans working together to inform each other and show rail travel is a viable travel and entertainment option.

### **History and Future of Excursions**

On February 14, 1937, PRS ran the first railfan excursion in the western United States. The Metrolink Ramble was excursion number 540. We are now in the planning stages of Excursion 542, the *Railroad Boosters Diamond Jubilee Special*. As conceived, the train will be a two-day special train over Tehach-

api Pass to Bakersfield and return. Again, it is my own personal opinion that PRS exists to offer this kind of experience to the railfan community here in Southern California: an educational, entertaining trip on a special train over non-regular trackage with like-minded people out to have an experience they will remember all their lives.

The *Diamond Jubilee Special* will be run over the weekend of April 2 and 3, 2011. Details still have to be worked out so that we can make the ticket price as low as possible and still break even, but we already have seven people who have sent in a deposit of \$100 apiece in order to reserve their places onboard. If you would like to reserve your place, you can send a \$100 deposit which is fully refundable up to March 1, 2011, if you later think the ticket price is too high or your plans change. This way, we can gauge how many of you are interested in taking such a trip.

Again, some of you have said you think that I am too ambitious. My answer is that the reason you have a large railfan club with the accumulated experience of 75 years and the top volunteer professionals in the business is so that you can run exceptional trips like this. If we can’t do it, I will humbly admit I was wrong and will take it to heart in February when it comes time to nominate our officers again.

### **FAMINA CONVENIENCE STORE**

There is a new store at Los Angeles Union Station. It opened about 3:17 p.m. on October 12, and will be open 24-7. Ken Ruben was the first customer in and the first to exit past the second of two cashiers. Many customers visited the first day.

The store is located in a redesigned area, which used to be rest rooms, next to the ticketing counters. They sell soft drinks, fresh fruit, sandwiches, toiletries, water, and other miscellaneous items for the train passenger.

### **CALTRAIN NEWS**

**by MIKE GONDON**

In 2001, Caltrain installed a series of suicide prevention signs along the right-of-way of its entire route. Though it can be argued that the signs had little, if any effect, Caltrain is spending \$110,000 to install 250 representative signs, which they believe will be more effective in discouraging people who are contemplating suicide.

One of the changes involves the 1-800 number that was provided. The former number used letters, but because that memory device is not useful on newer phones, the new 1-800 number will use numbers.

The 250 new signs will not cover the entire route, but only a ten mile stretch between Mountain View and Menlo Park. That stretch includes the city of Palo Alto, where a number of high profile suicides occurred between May 2009 and January 2010. The signs will be placed on fences, gates, at grade crossings, on station platforms, and along the property line.

In a related incident, Caltrain service was disrupted for several hours on the evening of October 4, when a southbound Union Pacific freight train struck a trespasser at San Bruno Avenue in San Bruno, in an apparent suicide. The fatality is the eighth of the year on the Caltrain tracks, and the sixth suicide.

At its October meeting, the Caltrain board voted to discontinue four more trains and increase fares by 7.2 percent. The

trains to come off are southbound Train No. 236, leaving San Francisco at 9:37 a.m., southbound Train No. 256, leaving San Francisco at 2:37 p.m., northbound Train No. 237, leaving Tamien at 9:33 a.m. and northbound Train No. 257, leaving Tamien at 2:33 p.m.

The reduction in service leaves Caltrain with hourly service between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., and reduces the number of weekday trains to 86, down from a high of 98 trains as recently as summer of 2009. The changes are expected to take place in January 2011, and further cuts may be on the way by next summer if the budget gap continues to grow as expected.

On the bright side, one of the suggestions made at public hearings Caltrain held was to run Baby Bullet express service on weekends. Apparently the Caltrain board has decided to give it a try. Caltrain will begin running two Baby Bullet round trips on Saturdays and Sundays for three months to determine if they can pay for themselves. At this time, it is not known when the experiment will begin.

### HIGH-SPEED RAIL SYSTEM

Two years ago, voters approved Proposition 1A and it appeared that everything was set to build a high-speed rail line from San Diego to Los Angeles to San Francisco. The idea was that you could get from downtown Los Angeles to San Francisco in two hours and 38 minutes without flying. Bullet trains could run between 90 and 110 mph in urban areas and accelerate to 220 mph in rural locations.

Today there are as many questions as answers on this project. Cities from north to south have asked for a slowdown in construction plans. Some have even said don't build it here.

Then there's the problem of money. Proposition 1A authorized nearly \$10 billion and Congress has allocated about \$1.8 billion – an additional \$400 million went to San Francisco for a new terminal – in stimulus money. But the project is expected to cost about \$42 billion. Still, officials for the California High-Speed Rail Authority say they believe the money can be raised and the state needs a high-speed train.

The Rail Authority is counting on raising \$15 billion more from the federal government, \$12 billion in private investments and \$5 billion from local governments. Valerie Martinez, a spokeswoman for the authority, said they're working to get federal money. "There is a desire to get a national high-speed rail system moving," Martinez said. "California is leading the charge and we're working closely with Congress."

There also are questions about whether private money can be raised. "There are segments of the line that you could run sensibly, principally L.A. to San Diego," state treasurer Bill Lockyer said. "I hear from the world of Wall Street investment bankers about what they think makes sense," Lockyer said. "And almost universally, they're convinced that no one can finance the routes from L.A. to the Bay Area, that it just will never work economically, certainly in the foreseeable future."

There also are questions about ridership. Officials with the authority have asserted a bullet train will make money. The authority expects 41 million riders and \$2.87 billion in annual revenue by 2035.

However, a new study by researchers at the Institute of Transportation Studies at UC Berkeley said the authority's

forecasts aren't reliable because they are based on an inconsistent model. "We found that the model that the rail authority relied upon to create average ridership projections was flawed at key decision-making junctures," said the project's principal investigator, Samer Madanat, director of the institute and UC Berkeley professor of civil and environmental engineering.

Many cities – up and down the state including much of the San Gabriel Valley – are either opposed to the project or are asking rail officials to slow down and answer their questions. The authority is considering three possible routes – Union Pacific Railroad, 60 Freeway and the 10 Freeway through the Valley.

Union Pacific in May notified the authority it will fight any attempt to put a track next to its own line. "Locating the high-speed corridor adjacent to Union Pacific's right-of-way raises serious safety issues and creates a barrier against any future rail-served development on that side," stated a four-page letter from the company.

The proposed route from Anaheim to Los Angeles that goes through La Mirada, Santa Fe Springs and Pico Rivera and which would follow the BNSF Railway, has drawn criticism from local cities.

A route proposed to run along the 10 Freeway has also drawn ire from some cities, whose residents say the project will displace homes and businesses, lower property values and create unwanted noise. Rosemead earlier this year passed a resolution opposing any route that would displace property owners.

Also Alhambra held two public meetings during which residents lined up against the route, City Manager Julio Fuentes said. Alhambra officials are gathering the technical expertise they need to oppose the route, and are considering hiring additional legal help, if necessary, Fuentes said.

Another concern is the tight timeline the authority is on to secure federal stimulus money. An environmental impact report must be completed by Sept. 30, 2011, construction of the track – it doesn't have to be electrified – must be done by 2017 and trains need to run by 2020.

Stimulus money is being used on four portions of the proposed line: Los Angeles–Anaheim, Bakersfield–Merced, Merced–Fresno, and San Jose–San Francisco. There is some question whether the authority can meet these deadlines – in light of concerns such as aesthetics, noise, safety, vibrations from the train and the possible need to condemn homes or businesses.

The Palo Alto City Council unanimously declared in a September 20 resolution that it had no confidence in the proposed \$43 billion San Francisco-to-Los Angeles bullet train project. The council wants state and federal officials to pull funding. The *San Jose Mercury News* says the no confidence resolution calls on the governor and legislature to stop funding the project unless the rail authority's governing body is removed.

The council also amended the resolution to ask the Federal Railroad Administration to pull funding. The council is urging the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board, which operates Caltrain, to aggressively and publicly protect the interests of communities along the corridor and not accept above ground rails in cities that oppose it.

[Info. from *Pasadena Star-News*]

## PASSENGER TRAIN UPDATES by CHARLES VARNES AMTRAK

Amtrak set a new annual ridership record of 28,716,857 passengers for the fiscal year ending September 30 and collected a record \$1.74 billion in ticket revenue.

A year-over-year comparison of FY 2010 to FY 2009 shows total Amtrak ridership grew by 5.7 percent, or about 1.55 million passengers, and all Amtrak business lines experienced growth including the Northeast Corridor (up 4.3 percent), long-distance trains (up 6.6 percent), and state-supported and other short-distance routes (up 6.5 percent). Over the same period, ticket revenue increased 9 percent, or more than \$140 million.

Factors that contributed to Amtrak's success in FY 2010 include a moderately improved economic environment allowing some recovery of business travel along the Northeast Corridor, the increased appeal and popularity of rail travel, effective marketing campaigns, the introduction of Wi-Fi on the high-speed Acela Express trains and sustained high gasoline prices.

In addition, continued difficulties with air travel and consumer dissatisfaction with air service are moving passengers from planes to trains particularly along the Northeast Corridor, where Amtrak now enjoys a 65 percent share of the air-rail market between Washington and New York and a 52 percent share of the air-rail market between New York and Boston.

Since FY 2000, Amtrak ridership is up nearly 37 percent. To continue this long-term trend, Amtrak is pursuing several initiatives including partnering with states to expand existing services and establish new routes, buying 130 new single-level long-distance passenger cars to modernize its equipment fleet, and beginning the process to expand capacity along the Northeast Corridor to support growing demand. Amtrak is also promoting its vision for a world class next generation high-speed rail service capable of achieving 220 mph (354 kph).

### Confidential Close Call Reporting System

Amtrak HS joined the Federal Railroad Administration's Confidential Close Call Reporting System (C3RS), a safety pilot project that permits rail employees to voluntarily and anonymously report "close call" incidents that could have resulted in an accident or injury but did not.

Examples of reportable "close call" incidents include those with low safety consequences such as leaving a piece of equipment unsecured and ones with high safety consequences like a train operating beyond its track authority. Incidents that result in an accident or injury still must be reported through the traditional reporting structure.

Amtrak is the fourth railroad to join the C3RS program along with the Canadian Pacific Railway, Union Pacific Railroad, and New Jersey Transit. Under the program, employees can report "close call" incidents that did not result in an accident without fear of sanction or penalty from the railroad or the federal government.

In order to participate, Amtrak, the United Transportation Union, and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen each ratified an agreement with the FRA to allow employees to make confidential reports of close calls.

The agreement covers Amtrak employees in yards and terminals in the Northeast Corridor, and the Chicago, Miami, Seattle and Los Angeles areas. Amtrak anticipates adding its

mainline routes to the C3RS program in the future, thus covering the entire Amtrak system.

"Close call" events will be reported to the National Aeronautic and Space Administration which has years of experience with the risk-reduction approach to safety and has contracted with the FRA to process the confidential reports. Then, a Peer Review Team with representatives from Amtrak, FRA, BLET, and UTU will analyze the "close call" incident to determine appropriate corrective action to mitigate or eliminate that risk in the future.

### Historical On-Time Performance

The September 2010 historical on-time performance percentages for selected routes were:

Route	September 2010	Last 12 Months
Sunset Limited	87.2%	79.6%
Texas Eagle	63.3%	65.9%
Southwest Chief	68.3%	75.4%
California Zephyr	51.7%	48.5%
Empire Builder	82.5%	77.6%
Coast Starlight	90.0%	91.2%
City of New Orleans	76.7%	85.1%
Pacific Surfliner	74.8%	75.2%
San Joaquin	92.5%	90.4%
Capitol Corridor	97.8%	93.0%
Amtrak Cascades	83.6%	71.4%
Illinois Service	72.3%	76.8%
Michigan Services	47.3%	60.7%
Hiawatha	91.5%	89.0%
Missouri River Runner	93.3%	90.7%
Acela Express	87.2%	79.6%
Northeast Regional	81.8%	74.4%

### New System Timetable

The Fall 2010/Winter 2011 Amtrak 2010 System Timetable is effective November 8.

### INTERCITY TRAINS

#### Southwest Chief

In August the BNSF Ry. reduced the speed limit on its route between Hutchinson, Kan., to 22 miles west of that city, from east of Dodge City, Kan., to west of Garden City, Kan., and from Syracuse, Kan., to Las Animas, Col. from 79 mph to 60 mph. As a result of the speed restriction the *Southwest Chief* began operating on a new, slower schedule on Oct. 18. The train now departs from Chicago at 2:45 p.m., and from Los Angeles at 6:15 p.m., 30 minutes earlier.

### WESTERN CORRIDORS

#### Cascades

The second *Amtrak Cascades* trains to Vancouver, B.C., will continue to operate through Oct. 31, 2011.

The trains were added beginning on Aug 19, 2009, as a pilot project in conjunction with the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympics Winter Games.

When the service was inaugurated the Canada Border Services Agency wanted to charge a \$1,500.00 per day fee for clearing passengers of the train at Vancouver's Pacific Central Station. Anticipating the Winter Olympics the fee was waived through March 2010, later through Sept. 30 and finally through the end of October. On Oct. 14 the Canadian government announced that the train will receive a one-year extension

without the fee being imposed.

[Info. from Ken Ruben, Ed Von Nordeck]

## AAR STORED FREIGHT CARS REPORT

by CHARLES VARNES

The Association of American Railroads reported that on Oct. 1, 2010, 331,074 freight cars, equaling 21.6 percent of the fleet, were stored. This is a decrease of 17,638 cars from Sept. 1, 2010. In its September 2010 Rail Freight Cars in Storage report the AAR stated that "September's decline was the largest since April 2010."

For the first eight months of 2010 the number of freight cars stored (and the percentage) was: January, 448,555 (28.7); February, 439,631 (28.2); March, 418,552 (26.9); April, 387,029 (25.0); May, 369,090 (23.8); June, 368,343 (28.3); July, 365,279 (23.7); August, 359,471 (23.4); September, 48,712 (22.7).

In 2009 the number of cars stored on the first day of the month (and percent of the total fleet) was: March, 437,547 (27.5); April, Not reported; May, 493,879 (31.5); June, 502,021 (31.9); July, 502,853 (31.9); August 489,469 (31.1); September, 478,046 (30.4); October, 462,410 (29.4); November, 541,112 (28.8); December, 451,096 (28.8).

Figures are for the entire North American rail freight car fleet and include rail cars owned by railroads, leasing companies, shippers, and others. The total freight car fleet changes from month to month as new cars are added and old cars are scrapped.

[Info. from AAR Rail Time Indicators]

## URBAN RAIL TRANSIT

by DICK FINLEY

### LOS ANGELES METRO RAIL RIDERSHIP

August 2010	Red Line	Blue Line	Green Line	Gold Line
Weekday Ave.	150,435	81,126	41,172	35,247
Saturday Ave.	101,190	52,018	23,094	24,269
Sunday Ave.	82,843	49,006	17,910	21,157
Monthly Total	4,128,552	2,237,870	1,087,718	978,287

[Info. From Metro via Ken Ruben]

### GOLD LINE FOOTHILL EXTENSION

The Gold Line Foothill Extension Construction Authority opened bidding on August 31 on Phase 2A of the light rail's extension toward Azusa, a project officials estimate will cost more than \$450 million. Under a public-private partnership, the winning contractor will design, build and finance the project. The capital costs would be repaid through funds from Measure R, the half-cent county sales tax voters approved in November 2008 to fund transportation infrastructure improvements.

Phase 2A includes light rail alignment work, including 11.5 miles of track, utilities, crossings and systems; six stations, several bridges, and a 25-acre maintenance facility that will service about 80 to 100 vehicles.

The Foothill extension is the first project to break ground under Measure R. It is also spearheading a trend toward public-private partnerships in California. The idea is to front-load the costs and build sooner in order to save money, officials said.

Measure R guarantees full funding for the Gold Line extension – minus a "gap" of \$500,000 – but was scheduled for a completion date of 2017. With help from private investment,

however, completion can be moved up to 2013, officials say.

"We knew we would get the Measure R funds on a funding stream over a nine-year period," said Habib Balian, CEO of the Construction Authority, "and we knew we could build it in four." Even compared with the interest Metro will have to pay back, the savings are dramatic. Advancing the project by three years, Balian said, will save around \$80 million.

"This may cost \$30 million or \$50 to finance, (but) it may cost \$80 million or \$100 million if we built it more slowly," he said, adding that a savings of around 4 million car rides each year is "probably more valuable than the money."

Bob Schraeder, business development manager for Shimmick Construction Inc., a company in the bidding that has previously worked with Metro on the Orange Line and Eastside Extension, said the design-build-finance concept is a new one for the United States.

Mike Aparicio, vice-president of transit and operations in Los Angeles for Skanska, another company that won the first contract in Phase 2A for an \$18-million bridge project, said "there are many potential public-private projects throughout California being talked about – but the Foothill Extension is one of the first that has matured to procurement."

Balian noted the bridge project awarded to Skanska came in well under the Construction Authority's estimate of \$24 million. Construction of the extension to Azusa will be completed in 2014; to Montclair in 2019; and Ontario in 2021. Balian called it "lightning speed" for a project of its size.

Proposals are due Jan. 27 and the Construction Authority says it anticipates an award in April.

[Info. from Pasadena Star-News]

### PROPOSED WESTSIDE SUBWAY EXTENSION

Though the proposed Westside subway extension is expected to provide substantial benefits for transit users, the multibillion-dollar project – contrary to one of its selling points – will do little to relieve traffic congestion in West Los Angeles or the county, a new environmental review shows.

Released September 3, the subway's draft environmental impact report states that the project will give transit riders more options and allow them to travel across town much faster than the buses that serve the densely populated corridor along Wilshire Boulevard. Transit officials estimate that a one-way subway trip from downtown Los Angeles to Westwood would take about 25 minutes, something that is now difficult to do in a car at rush hour. Buses make the trip in at least 50 minutes, a time that will only lengthen as Wilshire and parallel thoroughfares become increasingly choked with traffic in the future.

The report shows that in 2035, the subway extension will result in only a tiny reduction in automobile use. It notes that the San Diego Freeway, the Santa Monica Freeway and major streets along the line will remain heavily congested because of population growth and a lack of road improvements.

"Remarks that transit relieves traffic congestion are common, but they are without a factual basis," said Tom Ruben, an independent transportation consultant and former transit agency executive in Southern California who was not involved in the report. "The roads in Los Angeles are so over capacity, it is difficult to get improvement from new transit projects."

Traffic relief has been one of the goals of the light-rail and subway projects planned and built by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority. Elected officials and MTA board members have repeatedly said that the Westside subway extension, as well as other proposed rail projects, are needed to alleviate congestion and gridlock.

Though traffic congestion will remain a vexing problem, MTA officials say the subway extension will nevertheless provide a large incentive for motorists to break their automobile dependency because of shorter travel times and a longer route with stops at job centers, tourist attractions, cultural institutions and UCLA.

The report states that by 2035, the overall reduction in vehicle trips in the county will range from 10,000 to 18,000 a day, depending on the option that is built. However, that would be an insignificant amount considering that automobile trips are projected to increase to more than 26 million a day in the county by 2035, according to the Southern California Assn. of Governments.

The subway would do little to offset the increases in automobile travel predicted over the next 25 years in the county and the Wilshire Boulevard area. Fueled by population growth, the miles driven by motorists will rise almost 66% in the county and 26% in the area served by the subway extension. Already, highways, intersections and streets in West Los Angeles are among the most congested in the county.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

#### EXPO LINE DELAYS

This summer the Expo Line was supposed to be whisking commuters between Culver City and downtown Los Angeles. Instead, a series of delays has pushed the opening of the first phase of the rail line to the summer of 2011. And even then, only part of the line will be open and trains won't reach the Westside. Officials are trying to decide how long that segment will be, and they face what they admit are two unsatisfactory options: opening Expo as an approximately 5½-mile line from downtown L.A. to Crenshaw Boulevard or having it run about two miles farther west to La Cienega Boulevard.

Planners said neither alternative is ideal because neither gets commuters to the line's original terminus in Culver City. At best, the line will initially fall about a mile short of that goal. It's the latest setback for Phase 1 of the Expo Line, which has faced several delays and is now projected to cost \$900 million. Originally, the price tag was \$640 million, but costs have risen because of design changes, surging construction expenses and safety enhancements.

The Construction Authority, which is building the line for the MTA, has dealt with a series of problems, including the relocation of the line's maintenance facility, unanticipated ventilation issues with the below-grade portion of the line at Figueroa Street and the need for safety improvements where the Expo Line ties into the Blue Line. Those problems have all been resolved, according to Richard Thorpe, the Construction Authority's chief executive.

The Construction Authority also struggled to gain safety approval for the part of the line that crosses Farmdale Avenue, adjacent to Dorsey High School. It was required to revise its

plans and add a grade-level station at that intersection. The California Public Utilities Commission granted construction approval in July 2010. Thorpe said it will take 18 more months to complete the Farmdale station, which is between the Crenshaw and La Cienega stops.

The second phase of the project, which has an estimated cost of \$1.5 billion, will take the line from Culver City to Santa Monica. Major construction will begin in about a year and half, Thorpe said, and its scheduled for completion in 2015.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

#### FEDERAL LOAN TO LOS ANGELES

The City of Los Angeles won a major federal loan October 15 that will speed construction by perhaps of as much as 10 years of a light-rail transit line from the Crenshaw District to a station near Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). Work is expected to begin late next year and finish no later than 2018, about a decade ahead of schedule, said Art Leahy, chief executive officer of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA).

The \$546-million loan is the first federal commitment to Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's so-called 30/10 initiative, which seeks to speed completion of a dozen transit projects proposed by the MTA, including the Westside subway extension. "This is a substantial down payment," said Villaraigosa, who recently was in Washington, D.C., to lobby for federal assistance. "The money alone will help create about 5,000 jobs, free up funds for other projects, and allow us to move ahead with 30/10 at an accelerated rate."

The loan will cover more than a third of the planning and construction costs of the Crenshaw light-rail project, which is estimated to cost \$1.4 billion. The line would run about 8½ miles from Exposition and Crenshaw boulevards to the Green Line station at Aviation Boulevard near LAX. The 30/10 plan is designed to obtain federal funding from grants to low-interest loans made available by the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act, which is being used to fund the Crenshaw line.

MTA officials hope the effort will pare up to 20 years off the completion dates of 12 transit proposals funded by Measure R, the county's half-cent sales tax for transportation projects. They say the tax revenue can be used to cover the debt payments on the federal loans, which can quickly provide large sources of capital. The 30/10 initiative has gained support in the Obama administration and among California's congressional delegation, including U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer. "This is the first confidence-building measure to make 30/10 a reality," Boxer said. "It means jobs and real improvements."

The Los Angeles County Economic Development Corp. estimates that the Crenshaw line will generate about 15,100 jobs directly related to the project and those created by the MTA and project workers spending money in the economy. "This corridor will be the way we move people from one region to the next. It will connect to LAX. This is just smart business," said Ridley-Thomas, who is also an MTA board member. "We have done what we said we would do."

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]



*Tom Geer is holding a date nail removed from an old Santa Fe tie on the Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension right-of-way in Arcadia, in June 2010.*  
Photo by Jim Blum



*Metro Exposition Line is seen during track work (construction) on Flower Street immediately south of Washington Boulevard.*  
Photo by John L. Whitmeyer



*Metro Blue Line is seen with open track, looking eastward on Washington Boulevard at Flower Street on July 30, 2010.*  
Photo by John L. Whitmeyer



*The Expo Line is seen in a view looking eastward at Crenshaw Station on July 24.*  
Photo by John L. Whitmeyer



*Metro Expo Line in a southward view during a pour on Flower Street on November 21, 2009.*  
Photo by John L. Whitmeyer



*The Culver City terminus of the Expo Line is seen with columns and falsework at Venice and Robertson boulevards in August 2010.*  
Photo by Dick Finley