

WHEEL CLICKS

Pacific Railroad Society Inc.

APRIL 2009

RICHARD FLEMING AND MARTI ANN DRAPER

There was once an engineer on the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway out of Los Angeles named Richard (Dick) Fleming. Not too long after Amtrak began on May 1, 1971, Dick had taken a regular run on Amtrak's San Diegan. On one trip, they had assigned a UP E unit to the train.

At first Dick thought he would have trouble with this engine, as he was arriving at all the stations on time, but he couldn't quite get the speedometer to the maximum speed of 90 miles per hour. When he got the train on straight track, he put the throttle in run 8 and maxed it out.

Dick then used his stop watch and found out that when the engine showed on the speedometer that it was doing 89 MPH, the train was really doing 103 MPH. So he kept his mouth shut about it and wouldn't you know that he got the same engine on his run for the next several weeks.

In today's world, you wouldn't ever try to do this, as you would not only have been fired, but your employment would be terminated on the spot. It should be noted that Dick Fleming was one of the charter members that started Pacific Railroad Society in Los Angeles back in 1936.

Dick passed away some time ago. The Society is still going strong, while his daughter, now Marti Ann Draper, is an Amtrak Conductor out of LA. She bends over backwards to do all she can for the railroad group that her dad helped create.
[Info. from Anonymous]

RUNAWAY TRAIN ON EASTSIDE EXTENSION

On March 10 about 6 a.m. when a truck began pulling a Gold Line train out of the tunnel on the Eastside Extension, where it had been stored for the night, a coupling device that attached the train to the truck broke. According to Dave Satero, a spokesman for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the train – with an operator on board but without power – began rolling back into the tunnel. Satero did not say how far the train traveled or how it was halted. But he said that no one was hurt and that the runaway train was not on the street-level section of the tracks.
[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

UNION PACIFIC BAY AREA STEAM SPECIAL

The Union Pacific Railroad will run a steam-powered special train to the Bay Area in April, 2009, pulled by its famous 844 Northern.

The special's schedule is: April 11, Cheyenne to Rock Springs, Wyo.; April 12, Rock Springs to Ogden; April 13, Ogden to Elko, Nev.; April 14, on display at Elko; April 15, Elko to Sparks; April 16, Sparks, on display; April 17, Sparks to Roseville, Calif.; April 18, Roseville, on display in conjunction with the Roseville Centennial celebration; April 19, Roseville

for UP Family Day; April 20, Roseville to Oakland; April 21, Oakland, on display; April 22, Oakland to Stockton; April 23, Stockton, on display; April 24, Stockton to Roseville; April 25-30, Roseville, on display; April 30, Roseville to Oroville; May 1, Oroville, on display; May 2, Oroville to Portola; May 3 and 4, Portola, on display at the Western Pacific Museum; May 5, Portola to Winemucca, Nev.; May 6, Winemucca to Elko; May 7, Elko to Ogden; May 8-9-10, for the 140th anniversary of the driving of the Gold Spike; May 11, Ogden to Rock Springs, Wyo.; Rock Springs to Cheyenne with a stop at Medicine Bow in conjunction with its centennial celebration.
[Info. by Charles Varnes]

SHORTAGE OF TRAINS IN CHINA

The travails of travel around the week-long Lunar New Year festival, China's most important annual holiday, are more than a passing irritant to the 188 million Chinese who'll board trains during the 40-day peak period. They're also of concern to China's leaders, who worry that holiday emotions could turn ugly and trigger social unrest at railway stations.

As in past years during the holiday, complaints have mounted this year of under-the-table sales by rail employees to scalpers. One angry traveler took a video on his cell phone of a railway employee refusing to sell him a ticket. The video clip, which spread rapidly around Chinese Web sites, shows the stone-faced railway employee ignoring angry travelers outside the window as he prints out tickets. Postings with the video accused the employee of intending to sell tickets on the black market.

Deputy Railways Minister Wang Zhiguo said 30,000 police officers were keeping order at railway stations, and that they had detained 2,390 scalpers and confiscated 78,200 tickets. At root, the problem is a lack of rail capacity to handle the throngs who want to travel at this time of year. The railway ministry said 232 million Chinese want to travel during the Spring Festival period, but 44 million of them would not be able to buy tickets.

China's railways are the busiest in the world, handling a quarter of the world's cargo and passenger travel. Yet the system has only about 49,000 miles of track, a third of that in the U.S., a country of similar geographic size but with a fraction of the population. The U.S. rail network, however, almost exclusively carries freight.
[Info. from McClatchy Newspapers]

LOS ANGELES COUNTY RIDERS

During the month of January 2009, the average number of weekday riders traveling on trains going to, from, or within Los Angeles County, other than on Amtrak, was 313,513. This was an average increase per day from December of 7,232 riders or about 2 percent.



WHEEL CLICKS

APRIL 2009 VOLUME 73, NO. 1

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SUSTAINING MEMBER \$50.00 per year
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LIFE MEMBER \$500.00

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PRS NEWS — ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

April 3 Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Valencia Room, Joslyn Fri. Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
 Apr. 4, 11, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10:00 a.m. to 18, 25 4 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
 Sats. Committee meeting: April 25.
 Apr. 4, 11, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Saunders 18, 25 Yard, Commerce. Regular day: 4, 18; Extra day: Sats. 11, 25. Committee Meeting: 18. For more info., phone Will Walters, 714-637-4676.
 April 10 Membership Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Alhambra Room, Fri. Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
 April 17 Slide Night at Saunders Yard, 7:30 p.m., Noakes & Fri. Herbert Streets, Commerce. Everyone welcome.
 May 1 Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Valencia Room, Joslyn Fri. Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
 May 2, 9, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10:00 a.m. to 16, 23, 30 4 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
 Sats. Committee meeting: May 23.

May 2, 9, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Saunders 16, 23, 30 Yard, Commerce. Regular Day: 2, 16; Extra day: Sats. 9, 23, 30. Committee meeting: 16.
 May 8 Membership Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Alhambra Room, Fri. Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.

MEETING PROGRAMS

by **RUSS DAVIES**

April 10: **Matt Wiles, our youngest Museum regular** will present a program of images from his **long distance Amtrak trips, 2002-2008, coast to coast!** This will be a presentation of digital images, from Matt's digital camera. Be there, and **bring digital** rail news briefs!

May 8: **Traction Night, featuring the Pacific Electric!** This evening we'll see two carousels of **PE slides**, still in the same slots as we received them at your Museum. One is from the **Bill Volkmer Collection**, the other from the collection of, and mostly taken by, **the late Ted Damon**. Many of the images from both collections have never been published, and will be new to you. **Be there, and bring slide briefs!**

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

by **VIRGINIA GRUPP**

At the Board meeting on March 6, Stephen Brandt was voted into PRS with membership number 479.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The tally of ballots by PRS members for Fiscal Year 2009-2010 was counted at the meeting on March 13, 2009. The Election Committee counted 9 miscellaneous votes for various offices in addition to the listed votes. New officers take office on April 1. Approximately 33 percent of the membership voted.

President	Will Walters	150
Vice-President	Marti Ann Draper	153
Secretary	Bill Smith	152
Treasurer	Nick Teel	147
Director	David Housh	120
Director	Ken Ruben	76
Director	Virginia Grupp	75
Director	Charles Stone	14

CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL

An Environmental Impact Report/Statement (EIR/EIS) is being prepared for the San Jose to Merced section of the proposed High-Speed Train system. The Notice of Preparation, meeting dates and locations of scoping meetings for public input are available at <http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov>. Comments can be made via mail to Mr. Dan Leavitt, Deputy Director, ATTN. San Jose to Merced, California High-Speed Rail Authority, 925 L Street, Suite 1425, Sacramento, CA 95814, through close of business April 10, 2009. [Info. from TRAC]

ARMED GANG HOLDS UP TRAIN

A gang of about 20 men armed with assault rifles robbed a train in the western Mexican state of Michoacan and carted off some of its freight, the state prosecutor's office said December 27, 2008. The gang parked a pickup truck across the tracks the day before, forcing the train to stop. The assailants then threatened the train's crew and opened some of the freight

containers it was carrying.

A statement by the prosecutor's office did not specify what the gang stole from the train, operated by Kansas City Southern, a subsidiary of the U.S.-based railway company.

[Info. from Margo Petros]

CALTRAIN NEWS by **MIKE GONDON**

On February 26, Caltrain and local government dignitaries gathered at the Palo Alto and California Avenue stations to mark officially the completion of a 15-month, \$35-million, improvement project for both stations. The most noticeable improvement is the elimination of the "hold out" rule at California Avenue, where only one train at a time could occupy the platform because of only one boarding platform between the two tracks. The new configuration features two outside platforms and a pedestrian underpass which allows two trains to occupy the station at the same time.

At the downtown Palo Alto station, where 3700 riders board each weekday, platforms were extended from 691 feet to 750 feet and renovations were made to have the station comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Palo Alto already permitted two trains to occupy the platform at one time. In fact, for many years when Southern Pacific ran the line, Palo Alto was the only intermediate station where two trains could occupy the platform at the same time.

Yielding to pleas from the bicycle lobby, Caltrain has agreed to expand bicycle capacity on its trains. Crews soon will begin removing seats that will expand bike capacity on the older gallery cars from 32 to 40 and from 16 to 24 on the newer Bombardier cars. A total of 272 seats will be removed which will increase the total available bike slots for the entire day by 28 percent from 4000 to 5152. The project will cost \$200,000 and should be completed by May.

On March 2, Caltrain made some minor adjustments to its southbound schedule. Weekday Train Nos. 192, 194, and 196, departing San Francisco at 8:30 p.m., 9:30 p.m., and 10:30 p.m., respectively, will now depart 10 minutes later. In addition, Saturday Train No. 454, departing San Francisco at 12:01 a.m. Sunday morning, will now leave 15 minutes later.

Also on March 2, the new 8 Ride ticket officially replaced the 10 Ride ticket. Any 10 Ride tickets purchased before March 2 will be honored for 60 days from the purchase date.

PASSENGER TRAIN UPDATES by **CHARLES VARNES**
AMTRAK

Security and Counterterrorism Exercise

During the week of March 2, 2009, members of the Amtrak Police Department, Amtrak Office of Security Strategy and Special Operations, and British Transport Police (BTP) jointly patrolled several train stations along the *Northeast Corridor* as a part of the first major U.S. and U.K. exchange of railroad security and counterterrorism practices. The BTP visit was designed to solidify a security partnership between Amtrak and U.K. rail police, by sharing lessons learned and best policing methods and practices to protect rail passengers on both sides of the Atlantic.

Beginning in Washington Union Station, several uniformed BTP sergeants, constables and the Superintendent witnessed first

hand Amtrak's security operations on board trains and at train stations. The security operations were conducted by police and tactical forces, counter surveillance personnel, and K-9 detection units.

The joint patrol was conducted at Washington Union Station on March 2, Philadelphia 30th Station and Baltimore Penn Station on March 3, and New York Penn Station on March 5.

BNSF Amtrak On-Time Performance Percentages

The latest Amtrak On-Time Performance Percentages posted on the BNSF News web page before column deadline were:

Amtrak On-Time Performance	2008-03-09	
TRAINS	MTD OTP	YTD OTP
Long-Distance Trains	90%	90%
Short-Distance Trains	97%	97%
Pacific Surfliners	98%	98%

INTERCITY TRAINS

Sunset Limited

On March 1, one car of eastbound *Sunset Limited* derailed west of the Palm Springs depot. The portion of the train which did not derail continued to San Antonio, where it was terminated.

On March 8, both the westbound and eastbound *Sunsets* skipped their Palm Springs stop due to Union Pacific tie and switch work on the Garnet siding, the location of the Palm Springs depot. No alternate transportation was provided for passengers planning to get on or off the train there.

WESTERN CORRIDORS

Capitol

Capitol Corridor fares were increased 3 percent effective March 10, 2009. The Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority increases fares by smaller amounts periodically to maintain its service levels rather than institute large fare increases less often.

Selected new one-way fares include: Auburn, Rocklin, Roseville, and Sacramento-San Jose, \$35.00; Sacramento-San Jose, \$32.00; and Oakland Jack London-San Jose, \$14.00.

Selected new 10-Ride/45 Day fares include: Auburn, Rocklin, Roseville, and Sacramento-San Jose, \$192.00; Sacramento-San Jose, \$144.00; and Sacramento-Oakland Jack London, \$144.00; and Oakland Jack London-San Jose, \$84.00.

Selected new Monthly fares include: Auburn, Rocklin, Roseville, and Sacramento-San Jose, \$512.00; Sacramento-Oakland Jack London, \$384.00; and Oakland Jack London-San Jose, \$240.00.

Between Feb. 16 and March 15, 2009, the Union Pacific scheduled bridge work and the installation of new ties between the Suisun/Fairfield and Sacramento stations. During course of the track work, some early morning trains did not operate between the Suisun/Fairfield and Sacramento stations. Connecting buses carried passengers between the stations. Trains operated on the remainder of the route on a modified schedule.

Cascades

Ridership on Amtrak *Cascades* grew substantially in 2008, carrying a total of 774,431 riders, a 14.4 percent increase over 2007. It was the highest annual ridership since the commencement of Amtrak *Cascades* service 10 years ago.

Other achievements included improved on-time performance, revenue growth, and the addition of connecting bus services in north Puget Sound communities.

NORTHEAST CORRIDOR

Acela Express

Beginning March 3, Amtrak began offering a new low fare on its premier *Acela Express* trains, saving passengers up to 25 percent on previous lowest fares. *Acela* Business class tickets will be priced as low as \$99 between Washington, DC and New York and \$79 between New York and Boston.

The new low fares are available for purchase for travel between March 3 and June 26. A 14-day advance purchase policy applies, and availability is limited. The tickets are one-way and nonrefundable, but can be exchanged. Tickets purchased at the low fare are not eligible for an upgrade to First class accommodations. Until now, the lowest fare available on Acela between WAS and NYP was \$133, and \$93 between BOS and NYP.

DEPOT DOINGS

BROWNING and **EAST GLACIER**, Mont. The stations are seasonal stops on the *Empire Builder* route. The ski season Browning stop will be discontinued on April 30, 2009, and replaced by the East Glacier stop on May 1, 2009.

[Info. from Ken Ruben, Ed Von Nordeck]

TRANSIT ASSOCIATED CONSTRUCTION

NIKKEI CENTER

Developers of a proposed mixed-use project are still negotiating with the city of Los Angeles to purchase the 4.5-acre site at First and Alameda streets. The site is part of a 10-acre property that the city purchased in 2002. It also holds an under-construction Metro Gold Line station, expected to be complete by this summer. Plans call for 390 apartments, with 110 designed for seniors and low-income households, 80,000 square feet of largely Japanese-themed retail, an office tower, 1,286 parking spaces and public gardens.

ONE SANTA FE

Construction documents are almost complete and should be submitted to the city for plan checks by April, said Chuck Cowley, a partner with One Santa Fe developer, the McGregor Company. The project should break ground this fall, he said. The \$140 million, 500,000 square foot apartment complex would include 439 units above 70,000 square feet of ground-floor retail, commercial and live-work space.

The five-story development would stand on a four-acre site that currently houses an MTA lot. The property is bounded by Santa Fe Ave., the First and Fourth street bridges and Metrolink service tracks adjacent to the Los Angeles River.

BLOSSOM PLAZA

The 262-unit, \$165 million mixed-use project hit a snag after its partner decided to back out of the deal, said Lillian Burkenheim, the Community Redevelopment Agency project manager responsible for Blossom Plaza. Bond Companies, the developer, is looking for a new partner with groundbreaking at least a year away. Blossom Plaza would include two residential towers, 43,000 square feet of retail space and a 372-car garage. It would connect the Chinatown Metro Gold Line station and Broadway. The development would offer 20% affordable housing and include a 17,500-square-foot plaza for cultural events. The city is contributing \$41 million to the effort.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Downtown News*]

S. CALIF. COMMUTER RAIL

Metrolink weekday, systemwide, average trips during January 2009 were 43,988, which was an increase from the previous month of 1,224 or about 3 percent. Average daily Metrolink monthly passholders on Amtrak were 1,881, which was an increase from the previous month of 221 or about 13 percent.

Metrolink weekday, systemwide, total schedule adherence (less than 5 minutes delay) was 95 percent.

[Info. from Metrolink via Charles Varnes]

ENGINEER AND TEEN BECAME FAST FRIENDS

Metrolink commuter train engineer Robert Sanchez and a young rail fan became fast friends with their constant chatter in text messages about their shared love of trains. Sanchez exchanged dozens of messages with the teenage boy while driving his locomotive and even made plans to let him take the controls. "I'm REALLY looking forward to getting you in the cab and showing you how to run a locomotive," Sanchez wrote about the plan.

But it never happened. While they texted about the final details, the commuter train ran a red light and collided head-on with a freight train, killing 25 people and injuring at least 130 others. Sanchez died in the collision.

The messages revealed that Sanchez had allowed him and a friend to ride in the cab and sit at the controls four days before the crash. They also showed that Sanchez intended to let the teen drive the train between four stations on Sept. 12, the day of the crash, even though unauthorized ride-alongs are considered a serious violation of safety regulations.

Sanchez sent and received 43 text messages while on duty that day, including one to the teenager about an apparent meeting place that came 22 seconds before the collision.

The teenager told the National Transportation Safety Board investigators that he met Sanchez last May through a group of train enthusiasts. He said he and Sanchez communicated by phone and text messages once or twice a week, mostly about train operations. But the transcripts told a different story, showing the two stayed in close touch the week before the crash.

[Info. from *Pasadena Star-News*]

RAILWAY HISTORY AT RAILFEST 2009

Railfest 2009 arrives at March 28 and 29 in Fillmore. It is presented by the Santa Clara River Valley Railroad Historical Society (SCRVRHS) in conjunction with Fillmore & Western Railway Company. Take a "So You Want to Be an Engineer?" ride down the tracks, climb aboard a group of Metrolink cars, relax in a vintage dining car, and view a restored 1906 railroad turntable.

The free-admission Railfest also offers paid attractions such as speeder rides and vintage-train trips as well as food and arts-and-crafts vendors. Take a trip between Santa Paula and Fillmore on a train featuring vintage cars from the 1920s to 1940s – including a diner car, a baggage car, and coach cars – and powered by a new hybrid diesel-electric engine. Tour the historic Fillmore Railroad Depot, or be one of the first memorialized with your name on a brick in the paved area around the newly restored 1906 turntable by donating to SCRVRHS during the festival.

The nonprofit, volunteer-run SCRVRHS exists to preserve

and restore the historic railroad corridor between Montalvo and Saugus, which helped the Southern California citrus industry thrive. In addition to organizing Railfest, SCRVRHS volunteers annually help travelers get from Metrolink stations to the Ventura County Fair.

Railfest 2009 takes place March 28 and 29 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Learn more at www.scrvrhs.com or by calling (800) 773-8724 or (805) 524-2546.

COMET CARS

Comet cars from the 1970s and '80s are expected to arrive at Metrolink stations, but not likely until spring. Metrolink leased 10 cars from Utah Transit Authority and 14 cars from New Jersey Transit, but none of the cars are ready for service yet. The Utah cars, which have a distinctive red-and-blue color scheme, have not arrived. Metrolink is currently fixing some comparability issues with the gray New Jersey cars. All are needed to replace leased passenger cars due to be returned to Seattle-area transit provider Sounder Commuter Rail.

Once the Comet cars are ready to begin carrying passengers, no more than one car will be used in a train set. The Comet car will be situated behind the locomotive, with accessibility only from the Metrolink passenger car directly behind the Comet car. Comet cars are not double-deckers nor accessible to the disabled, and do not have operating restrooms.

[Unlisted Info. from *Metrolink Matters*]

NEW CHAIRMAN

The Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA) board, which oversees Metrolink commuter rail service, recently elected Keith Millhouse as chairman. A Moorpark City Council member since 2000, Millhouse has served on the SCRRA board for four years, representing the Ventura County Transportation Committee. He previously served as the committee's chair and currently serves as vice chair of the Southern California Association of Governments' High Speed Rail Authority. He succeeds outgoing Chairman Ron Roberts, who has served on the board since 1999.

[Info. from *Progressive Railroading*]

ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN RAILROADS FREIGHT TRAFFIC REPORT by CHARLES VARNES

Railroad carloads are a measure of economic activity in the United States. Each Thursday the Association of American Railroads issues a report of carloads, rail intermodal traffic (which is not included in carloads), and estimated ton-miles for the previous week and a cumulative year to date summary. Similar data for the major Canadian and Mexican railroads is reported, also. Estimated ton-miles are reported only for U.S. railroads

Canadian rail carload traffic includes both the Canadian and U.S. operations of CN and Canadian Pacific, the two largest Canadian railroads.

Mexican rail traffic originations include Ferrocarril Mexicano and Kansas City Southern de Mexico.

January 2009 marks the third straight record monthly decline for U.S. rail traffic, as the severe recession is now negatively affecting every major rail market. Carloads originated were down 17.2 percent, and the number of intermodal units originated was down 12.9 percent from the same period in 2008.

In November 2008 U.S. railroads carloads were down 10.1 percent, and the number of intermodal units originated was down 7.9 percent compared with the same period in 2007.

In December 2008 U.S. railroads carloads were down 14.2 percent, and the number of intermodal units originated was down 7.9 percent compared with the same period in 2007.

2009 TRAFFIC ORIGINATED

Cumulative, 4 Weeks Ending January 31, 2009

	2009	2008	Change
Major U.S. Railroads			
Carloads originated	1,067,548	1,288,974	-17.2 %
Intermodal units originated			
Trailers	139,668	194,401	-28.2 %
Containers	648,447	710,537	-8.7
Total	788,115	904,938	-12.9%
Estimated Ton-Miles (Billions)	113.3	134.8	-15.9 %

Major Canadian Railroads

Carloads originated	243,031	294,720	-17.5 %
Intermodal units originated			
Trailers	6,139	7,166	-14.3 %
Containers	162,437	185,120	-12.3
Total	168,576	192,286	-12.3 %

Major Mexican Railroads

Carloads originated	42,155	49,804	-15.4 %
Intermodal units originated			
Trailers	138	380	-63.7 %
Containers	17,813	23,140	-23.0
Total	17,951	23,520	-23.7 %

Cumulative, 8 Weeks Ending February 28, 2009

	2009	2008	Change
Major U.S. Railroads			
Carloads originated	2,176,583	2,586,496	-15.8%
Intermodal units originated			
Trailers	273,842	389,301	-29.7%
Containers	1,240,616	1,409,588	-12.0
Total	1,514,418	1,798,889	-15.8%
Estimated Ton-Miles (Billions)	231.1	270.9	-14.7%

Major Canadian Railroads

Carloads originated	500,196	613,031	-18.4%
Intermodal units originated			
Trailers	12,197	14,520	-16.0%
Containers	320,431	367,797	-11.4
Total	332,628	376,317	-11.6%

Major Mexican Railroads

Carloads originated	87,963	101,480	-13.3%
Intermodal units originated			
Trailers	235	707	-66.8%
Containers	37,884	47,306	-19.9
Total	38,119	48,013	-20.6%

This article contains both the Cumulative 4 Weeks ending on January 31, 2009, and the Cumulative 8 Weeks ending on February 28, 2009, reports due to its omission from the February Wheel Clicks because of space limitations. Ed.

URBAN RAIL TRANSIT

LOS ANGELES METRO RAIL

RIDERSHIP

January 2009	Red Line	Blue Line	Green Line	Gold Line
Weekday Ave.	140,943	74,803	35,641	22,543
Saturday Ave.	87,840	54,625	20,736	15,569
Sunday Ave.	80,206	52,625	17,162	12,661
Monthly Total	3,800,027	2,107,110	937,953	614,556

NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER FOR MTA

Arthur T. Leahy, CEO of the Orange County Transportation Authority for the past eight years, was named on March 5 to lead the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA or Metro). The MTA is the nation's third-largest transportation agency. It boasts a \$3.4 billion annual budget, has more than 9,000 employees and operates about 200 bus routes and five subway and light rail lines. Leahy, 60, will begin his new job April 6 and will be paid an annual salary of \$310,000.

MTA's current CEO, 63-year-old Roger Snoble, announced his retirement in December after heading the transit agency for seven years. He has said that he wants Metro to have an executive who will commit to staying with the agency for the next four or five years as new projects are started with the tax funds from Measure R, the recently approved county half-cent sales tax to fund transportation projects. Collection of Measure R funds will begin in July.

[Info. from *Pasadena Star-News*]

TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

The recently-passed \$787 billion federal stimulus bill could amount to as much as \$700 million in transportation funds for Los Angeles County, according to the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). In addition, the Gold Line Foothill Extension could receive some other federal funds granted directly by federal transportation agencies. In San Bernardino County, area cities and agencies have submitted requests for \$3 billion worth of projects.

A committee of MTA met in February to discuss a preliminary plan for how to distribute the funds in Los Angeles County. The preliminary plan would give about \$371 million to transit operators throughout the county, including the Foothill Transit Agency and Montebello Bus Lines. It would allocate about \$113 million to individual cities to spend as they see fit. The plan also lists \$116 million in earmarked projects throughout the county.

The agency also lists \$90 million for rail infrastructure projects. Since the list adds up to more than \$700 million, the agency still has to make a lot of changes to where the money goes, said MTA Planning Chief Carol Inge.

L.A. County is also requesting \$150 million for Phase II of the Exposition Line project that would run a light rail transit continuation from Culver City out to Santa Monica.

[Info. from *Pasadena Stat-News*]

DOWNTOWN REGIONAL CONNECTOR

The MTA Board of Directors voted in January to move forward with an environmental review of a proposed two-mile downtown transit link. The project would unite four light rail lines that run through downtown Los Angeles, but do not converge. These are the existing Blue and future Expo lines to the existing Gold and future Gold Eastside extension lines. The existing lines can transfer passengers now by way of the existing Red line subway.

The two main alternatives for the Downtown Connector, to be examined as part of the environmental study, are an estimated \$800 million, street-level light rail line; and an estimated \$910 million subway. They would go to other parts of Downtown than the existing Red Line.

The MTA has not begun to seek funding for the project, though it is expected that some money would come from Measure R, the countywide half-cent sales tax approved by voters last November. The environmental review is expected to take two to three years.

[Info. partially from *Los Angeles Downtown News*]

GOLD LINE EASTSIDE EXTENSION

The Gold Line's extension from Downtown to East Los Angeles is on schedule and completion is expected by this summer, said Jose Ubaldo, a spokesman for Metro. Trains have been tested on the rails, and the installation of the overhead power lines is nearly complete, as are the platforms and canopies for some of the stations.

The \$899 million LRT will extend the Gold Line from Union Station, creating eight new stations and culminating at Atlantic Blvd. Officials say the extension could carry 23,000 riders a day by 2020.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Downtown News*]

SOME ANSWERS ABOUT EXPO

- Safety is the top priority. The Expo Authority is spending millions on safety improvements along the line, including the Farndale Avenue crossing next to Dorsey High School.
- The Expo Authority has held over 200 community meetings and stakeholder briefings since the project began, and responded to 1000's of questions and concerns from community members. As a result, the Expo Authority has added more soundwalls, fencing, street lighting, and walkways along the alignment.
- The Expo Line will provide affordable, convenient and safe transportation services to a community that has waited a long time for such a project. By providing affordable transportation from Downtown L.A. to the westside, residents will have better access to job opportunities, health care services, shopping and entertainment. The project also provides numerous contracting opportunities for local, women and minority owned businesses.
- The Expo Authority has not needed to use eminent domain for the Expo Line project.
- The Expo Line is incorporating the same technology and safety features as the Metro Gold Line to Pasadena, which is one of the safest light rail lines in the country. Of the 38 schools within one mile of the Gold Line, not one child has been injured since the launch of the line in 2003.
- There are two grade-separated crossings along the line from Vermont Ave. to La Cienega Blvd. The two aerial crossings are located at La Brea Ave. and La Cienega Blvd.

EXPO STATION ARTISTS

The Expo Line is a "Transit Parkway" which includes bike paths, extensive landscaping and art at each station. Metro has a policy which dedicates one-half of one percent (0.5%) of rail construction costs to the creation of original art works. The Expo Project received over 200 submittals from artists around the state and artists were then selected through a peer review process with community and stakeholder input. Here are the selected artists.

23rd Street Station – Christofer Diederoff
 Jefferson Station – Samuel Rodriguez & Matthew Rodriguez
 Trousdale Station – Robbert Flick
 Vermont Station – Jessica McCoy
 Western Station – Ronald Llanos
 Crenshaw Station – Willie Robert Middlebrook Jr.
 La Brea Station – Jose Lozano
 La Cienega Station – Daniel Gonzalez

EXPO CONSTRUCTION

Demolition is taking place on the east side of Flower Street, from Washington to Exposition boulevards, in preparation for utility relocation and upgrades, said Greg Starosky, a spokesman for the \$808 million project. Once those are complete, street improvements such as new curbs, sidewalks, street signs, traffic signals and street lighting will be installed. The eight-mile route will share two stops with the Blue Line and will add nine new stations.

[Rest of info. from Metro]

KEY EXPO LINE CROSSING

The California Public Utilities Commission on Feb. 20 approved one of two disputed street crossings of the planned Exposition Light Rail Line. Residents and school officials objected to the crossings near Dorsey High School and Foshay Learning Center, saying they would be unsafe for students.

On a 4-1 vote, the commission approved the crossing near Foshay, where there is already a pedestrian tunnel the tracks would go over. The Board required transit officials to make some improvements to the tunnel, including better lighting.

At Dorsey High, the PUC required that the Farmdale Avenue crossing of the tracks next to the school be fenced off. That means Farmdale will no longer be a north-south through street. Instead, a pedestrian bridge will probably be built at a cost of about \$8 million. Expo Chief Operating Officer Samantha Bricker said construction at Foshay would begin as soon as possible.

According to Expo Line officials, the line between downtown L.A. and Culver City probably won't be open next year as scheduled and may be pushed back to summer 2011. It's possible that the train will run between downtown and Crenshaw Blvd. in 2010, with the rest of the line opening a year later.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times* and *Los Angeles Wave*]

PORTLAND, OREGON

Portland Transit Mall

On January 26 crews began testing the tracks at the new Portland transit mall. They used a big truck to pull a MAX car along Fifth and Sixth avenues. The test run started at 8 a.m. and ended at 3 p.m. Crews wanted to make sure the trains would clear platforms, tree branches, and transit lane striping without problems.

TriMet said it would launch an aggressive education campaign about the new driving rules before the transit mall opens in September. The new Green Line will run from Portland State University north to Union Station, across the Steel Bridge, east to eventually connect to the nearly complete Interstate 205 light rail line south to Clackamas Town Center.

The Yellow Line, like the Green Line, running every 7.5 minutes, will go north to connect to North Interstate Avenue.

Westside Express Service

Oregon's first commuter rail line, the Westside Express

Service, opened to provide weekday rush-hour service along a 14.7-mile route linking Beaverton, Tigard, Tualatin, and Wilsonville. January 21 was the ceremonial opening; regular service began February 2. Tualatin officials have fielded complaints about noise from the trains, which are required to blow their horns four times at each road crossing.

TriMet General Manager said WES will provide commuter convenience to an area difficult to serve with buses. Officials expected 2,400 riders a day on regular runs. The line will operate every 30 minutes during weekday rush hours. The fare is \$2.30.

Unlike the MAX light rail trains that link Portland's suburbs to the city core, heavy-rail trains such as WES are required by federal rules to sound horns four times at public-crossings in Tualatin, where trains pass residential neighborhoods. Safety improvements at railroad crossings could eliminate the whistles. But Tualatin city leaders say they can't afford the \$4 million to \$5 million fix. Policymakers are hopeful that stimulus money can help fund safety upgrades.

Port of Coos Bay

The Oregon Economic and Community Development Commission approved \$12.6 million in loans February 5 to enable the Port of Coos Bay to buy a 120-mile rail line to Eugene. Central Oregon & Pacific Railroad closed the line in September 2007, citing safety concerns and repair costs. The U.S. Surface Transportation Board approved the Port's purchase last fall, as an alternative to seeing it abandoned. With financing in hand to buy the rail line to Eugene, officials in Coos Bay are turning to getting money to do repairs.

[Oregon info. from *The Oregonian* via Caroline Hobson]

VANCOUVER, WASHINGTON

Columbia River Crossing, an agency with Oregon and Washington planners, includes mass transit as one component of proposals to replace the Interstate 5 bridge across the Columbia River. Several public agencies in Clark County, including the Vancouver City Council, the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council, and C-Tran, the county's public transit agency, have told Crossing officials that they prefer extending North Portland's MAX Yellow Line as the mass transit option.

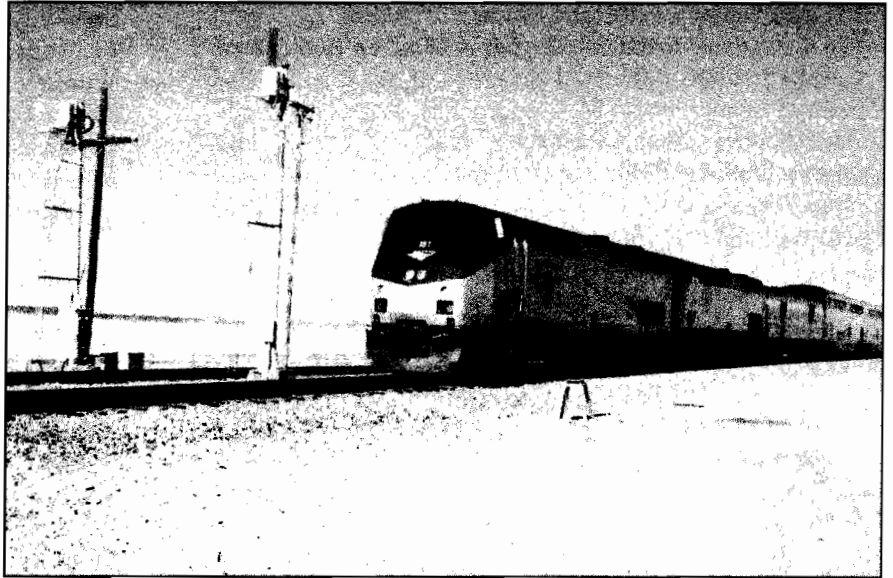
Several potential roadblocks remain, however:

- Funding for the \$3.1 billion to \$4.2 billion project has not been secured, though the Northwest congressional delegation will be fighting for the project's inclusion in the six-year Federal Transportation Authorization Bill that is expected to be written in 2009.
- Of that amount, \$750 million is expected to be spent on light rail in Vancouver. But that Federal Transit Authority money is not assured.
- Tolls should be part of the overall funding package, the Crossing staff has recommended. Both Washington and Oregon legislatures would need to approve bridge tolls, Crossing spokeswoman Carley Francis said.
- C-Tran would need to ask voters to approve a sales-tax increase to pay light rail's operating expenses. While it has been more than a decade since Clark County voters resoundingly rejected light rail, the issue is sure to be a hot button in the more urban C-Tran district.

[Info. from *The Oregonian* via Caroline Hobson]

Amtrak No. 3, the Southwest Chief, approaches the old-style semaphore signals at the east switch of Levy, New Mexico, on the BNSF Raton Subdivision at 79 mph. This line is the old so-called "passenger" line. It now sees little or no traffic except for the daily Amtrak Southwest Chiefs.

Photo by Brian Black



UP 6936 leads the June 2008 Engineering Department special between Granby and Sulphur on the Moffatt Tunnel Subdivision.

Photo by Brian Black



The Engineering Dept. Special, that was operated in June 2008 for Chief Engineer Bill Wimmer, is approaching King's Crossing Road, just west of Winter Park, Colorado, on the Moffatt Tunnel Subdivision. The west portal of the Moffatt Tunnel is about three miles ahead.

Photo by Brian Black

