

WHEEL CLICKS

Pacific Railroad Society Inc.

FEBRUARY 2010



A view of the late-Tom Nelson and Mary Anne Nelson.

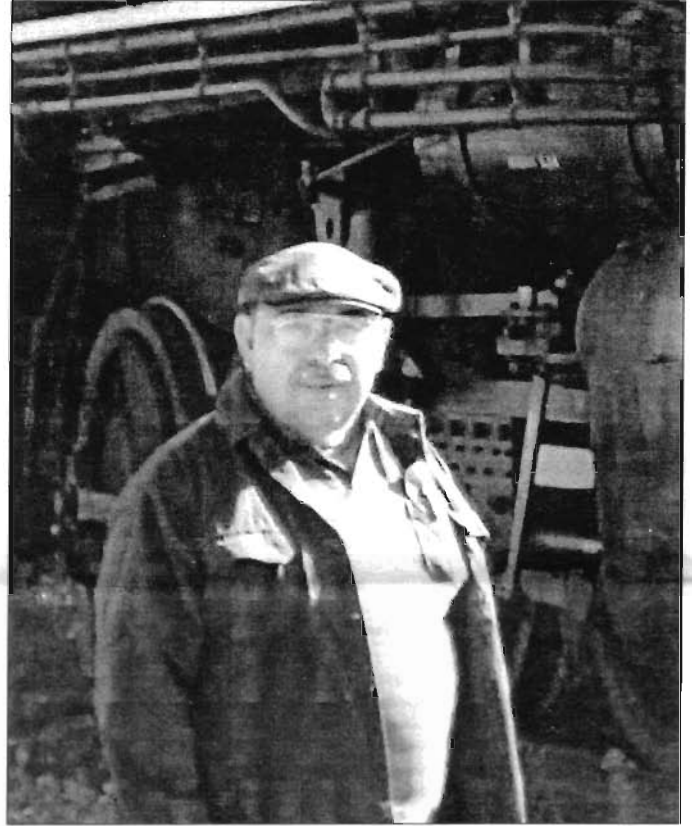
THOMAS NELSON

Tom Nelson was born on August 26, 1921, in Berkeley, California and died December 27, 2009, in Los Angeles. Interment is at Forest Lawn Memorial Park-Hollywood Hills.

Tom was one of the earliest members of Pacific Railroad Society, having seniority number 12 a few years ago. He was a director (two terms) of PRS in 1977-79 and 1982-84. Tom was Editor of *Wheel Clicks* for part of 1980 to 1984, and 1987 to part of 1994. He was a consistent member of the mailing party, which monthly puts together the issues of *Wheel Clicks*, including any flyers for excursions and administrative information.

Tom was Vice-President for 1986 and President for 1987-88. He traveled all continents of the world having railroads, writing interesting articles and taking many photographs. As an electrical engineer, Tom had much railroad knowledge.

Tom was Editor and a major contributor to "50 Years of Railroading in Southern California 1936 — 1986 (Plus Updates Through 1996)" 204 Pages. The book can be purchased, as can also other items, through the Pacific Railroad Museum, listed in the Masthead.



The late-Mel Goyen is seen beside a steam locomotive.

MELVIN GOYEN

Mel Goyen was born on October 19, 1937, in Bell, California and died January 5, 2010. His home was in La Puente, California. Services were held at Rose Hills Memorial Park Chapel on January 16, 2010. It is assumed that his heart gave up because he was distressed at home and called 911.

Mel was a Navy veteran (1955 to 1957) and studied electronics at Mt. San Antonio College. We wish him fair winds and following seas on his journey.

Mel was working on the Pacific Railroad Society Museum video and audio archives. He was fun when we went to lunch. A few months ago, his former neighbor and El Monte High School classmate recognized Mel at Roady's while we were having beans and he reported Mel was popular then.

Mel was Sales Manager for Casio Office Products until he was forced into retirement by a stroke that left him aphasic and crippled in 1980. In his retirement he successfully strove to recover medically. His three sons carry on the hard striving tradition and family devotion. Mel's recent activity is mentioned in the *Wheel Click's* column for Pacific Railroad Museum.



WHEEL CLICKS

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PRS NEWS — ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

Feb. 5 Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Valencia Room, Joslyn
 Fri. Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
 Feb. 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: February 27.
 Feb. 6, 13, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Saunders
 20, 27 Yard, Noakes & Herbert Sts., Commerce. Regular
 Sats. Days: 6, 20; Extra Days: 13, 27. Com. Mtg.: 20
 Feb. 12 Membership Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Alhambra Room,
 Fri. Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
 Feb. 19 Slide night at Saunders Yard, 7:30 p.m., Noakes &
 Fri. Herbert Sts., Commerce. All welcome, bring slides.
 Mar. 5 Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Valencia Room, Joslyn
 Fri. Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
 Mar. 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, March 27.
 Mar. 6, 13, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Saunders
 20, 27 Yard, Noakes & Herbert Sts., Commerce. Regular

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 Fri. Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.

MEETING PROGRAM

by **RUSS DAVIES**

February 12: **Traction Night!** Roger Fogt will share his images of **Portland, Oregon, traction** and the late, great **Key System**. This will be a digital presentation made from his slides taken in the **50s and 60s**. **Be there, and bring digital briefs!**

March 12: **Railfair 1981 at Sacramento, California**. The Pacific Railroad Museum staff will present a DVD from the **California State Railroad Museum**. **Be there, and bring digital briefs!**

PACIFIC RAILROAD MUSEUM

by **LINDSAY SMITH**

Melvin Goyen

Our friend, museum co-worker, and frequent excursion traveler has passed away. Mel worked hard on everything he found important. He ordered, inventoried, and augmented the video collection. The list of this collection will be posted on our web site shortly.

Mel noticed we had a complete collection of Blackhawk 8 mm silent railroad movies. He caused this part of the collection to be saved as DVDs and made them available to our members. There is an introductory segment showing the museum interior that he and Tim Muck created.

Recently Mel produced another DVD from the Robert Peterson estate 35 mm slides and audio tape recordings; it is titled "Railfair 1981." Mel made CDs from the museum vinyl record collection. He kept the television displays in the museum operating to entertain and inform visitors.

Railfair 1981

Robert (Bob) Peterson has left us a scrapbook memory of Railfair 1981. You can visit Railfair and the opening of the California State Railroad Museum in video and audio on the Museum's latest DVD release. Bob's 35 mm photos are in a Kodak Cassette and his voice comments are originally recorded on a audio cassette. The late-Mel Goyen, our video collection docent, has produced a DVD using the material from Bob's estate.

The pictures are still, but Bob recorded the sounds of the engines and some of the music from the festival, and added comments about the scene. Steam engine bells, whistles and chuffs make the pictures more than just still images. You can see the steam, rods, and wheels in the drive bys. You also get to visit the interior of the great hall. In the great hall you can see the interior of the Railway Post Office car and watch mail sorting operations.

Other interior shots record the former days of rail glory. The Tom Thumb replica, Santa Fe Little Buttercup 5, Cooke 4-4-0, Climax #10, UP 8444 Consolidation, SP 4449 in color, V&T #13 Empire 4-6-0, Santa Fe 1010 (Death Valley Scotties record setter), and several other steam locomotives.

Also pictured are SP Daylight and WP F-7 California Zephyr locomotives. One scene includes a red Santa Fe caboose that was current in 1981. Robert recorded some of the pageant music. The SP cab ahead in the great hall and the historic

locomotives and cars keep you entertained. The pageant was probably the largest collection of operating steam engines ever assembled. The program lasts 32 minutes.

Copies of the Robert Peterson Railfair 1981 DVD are available at the Museum. For USPS Priority Mail shipment outside California, the cost is \$25.00. If you come to the Museum, the DVD cost is \$19.95 plus \$1.85 tax equals \$21.80. We process checks, money orders or credit cards. Please mark your envelope "Railfair."

The program is suitable for a group presentation; show it to your luncheon club or dinner meeting group. There are several more programs from the Peterson Estate that will be converted in the future. The funds for making the collection available to the members with DVDs were donated with the material by the Estate.

CALTRAIN NEWS by **MIKE GONDON**

Caltrain's *Holiday Train*, which ran over the weekend of December 5-6, in conjunction with the United States Marine Corps Reserve's Toys for Tots Program, received a total of 4045 donated toys and books from visitors to the stations where the train stopped. \$2304 in cash donations was also collected. Since 2001, when the first Holiday Train ran, a total of 43,755 gifts have been collected for needy Bay Area children.

On December 26, Caltrain ran a special train from San Jose to San Francisco, making all local stops for the Emerald Bowl football game between the University of Southern California and Boston College. Following the game, two specials were run back to San Jose. The first train ran nonstop to San Carlos, then made all stops. The second train ran as a local, making all stops.

On December 31, Caltrain again offered free rides after 11 p.m. to encourage partygoers to use the train as their designated driver. Caltrain also ran four post-midnight extra trains from San Francisco to San Jose on January 1, 2010. The trains left at 12:45 a.m., 1:15, 1:45, and 2:15 a.m. All trains ran as locals, making all stops.

In the "now I've heard everything" department, a gentleman named Steve Raney has come up with an idea to install air bags on the leading end of Caltrain locomotives and cab cars, which he thinks will prevent anyone being struck by a train from being killed. The air bags would be 15 feet long by 7 feet high.

In theory, they would act as a cushion when it first strikes a person. Then form into a firm wedge, scooping up the person as the train stops. Raney plans to ask the Federal Transportation Research Board for \$450,000 in assistance for design development and implementation.

Caltrain officials say they don't have the resources, staff, or facilities to get involved at this stage, basically telling Mr. Raney "good luck with that."

The air bags would have been tested on December 23 when Train No. 264 struck a trespasser at the San Antonio station in Mountain View. The fatality, Caltrain's 17th of the year, was ruled a suicide.

Two days earlier on December 21, the evening commute was again snarled when Train No. 280 struck an SUV at Bellevue Avenue in San Mateo. The vehicle was totally destroyed, but the driver, who was attempting a u-turn on the tracks and got stuck, was able to get out of the vehicle and was unharmed.

PASSENGER TRAIN UPDATES by **CHARLES VARNES**
AMTRAK

Amtrak set a first quarter ridership record carrying nearly 7.2 million passengers during the first three months of fiscal year 2010. Ridership as reported by Amtrak for the first quarter of FY 2010 were: Northeast Corridor 2,691,515; State Supported and Other Short Distance Corridors, 3,392,827; Long Distance, 1,077,880.

Historical On-Time Performance

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

| Route | January 2010 | Last 12 Months |
|-----------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Sunset Limited | 88.9% | 84.7% |
| Texas Eagle | 83.9% | 82.9% |
| Heartland Flyer | 88.7% | 91.0% |
| Southwest Chief | 80.6% | 87.8% |
| California Zephyr | 29.0% | 65.1% |
| Empire Builder | 58.9% | 77.2% |
| Coast Starlight | 80.6% | 87.1% |
| City of New Orleans | 72.6% | 82.1% |
| Pacific Surfliner | 81.9% | 83.0% |
| San Joaquin | 93.0% | 90.6% |
| Capitol Corridor | 92.7% | 92.4% |
| Amtrak Cascades | 75.7% | 73.2% |
| Hiawatha | 85.7% | 88.4% |
| Illinois Service | 73.3% | 71.9% |
| Missouri River Runner | 92.7% | 88.6% |
| Acela Express | 75.3% | 86.5% |
| Northeast Regional | 66.2% | 80.1% |

BNSF Amtrak On-Time Performance Percentages

The Amtrak On-Time Performance Percentages posted on the BNSF News web page on Jan. 11, 2010 were

| TRAINS | MTD OTP | YTD OTP |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|
| Long-Distance Trains | 76% | 76% |
| Short-Distance Trains | 95% | 95% |
| Pacific Surfliners | 99% | 99% |

The decrease in OTP performance of long-distance trains in January can be attributed to severe weather early in the month.

Advertising

Recently the author received a picture of an Amtrak advertisement taken in the Midway Airport Southwest Airlines concourse. The large, bright orange, banner contained an image of an Amtrak train with a city skyline in the background and the message "WINDOW or AISLE: every seat has a great view."

At Chicago's O'Hare International airport Amtrak advertisements have been placed in the plastic bins at airport security checkpoints. The messages in the bins are "Wear mismatched socks - we'll never know," and "Upgrade to Coach."

The advertising campaign is trying to appeal to airline customers fed up with flight delays, escalating checked-bag fees and cattle-car seating. It is appropriate for the Chicago region market because of the many Midwest corridor trains arriving and departing from the city daily.

INTERCITY TRAINS

Sunset Limited

The January Passenger Train Updates column reported on Dec. 27, the eastbound *Sunset Limited/Texas Eagle* operated on an alternate route between Pomona and Palm Springs, Calif., and

did not stop at Ontario, Calif., due to track work being performed by Union Pacific Railroad. Since that time additional information became available.

On that date a 12-hour work window was placed at the Colton crossing to permit the replacement of the crossing diamonds. To bypass the area the *Sunset/Texas Eagle* was rerouted from the UP Alhambra Subdivision to its Los Angeles Subdivision west of Pomona. At Pomona passengers boarded the train at the Metrolink depot, across from the usual Pomona stop. From there the train ran to West Riverside, entered the BNSF San Bernardino Subdivision and continued toward the Colton crossing. Near the crossing the train returned to its usual route on the UP Yuma Subdivision via a BNSF to UP connecting track.

Texas Eagle

Effective Jan. 8, 2010, the *Texas Eagle* and *City of New Orleans* began operating as run through trains. A Lounge Car has been added to the *City of New Orleans* making both the *Texas Eagle* and the *City of New Orleans* consists identical. The *City of New Orleans Cross Country Café Diner/Lounge* will operate as a regular Dining Car offering the All Day menu.

Lake Shore Limited

On Dec. 14, 2009, Amtrak restored dining car service on its *Lake Shore Limited*. Modified Café Cars have operated on Lake Shore Limited since September 2007.

NORTHEAST CORRIDOR

Effective Jan. 18, *Northeast Corridor* schedules changed for many trains operating between Boston and New Haven, Springfield and New Haven, New York and Washington, and New York and Philadelphia.

[Info. from Ken Ruben, Ed Von Nordeck]

SISKIYOU RAIL PASSAGE

In an effort to get freight trains rolling again over the Siskiyou, the city of Ashland is working with the California towns of Weed and Montague to lease or buy the Central Oregon and Pacific Railroad (CORP) line that was shut down by its owners in 2008 after shippers balked at rate increases. The cities have drafted a joint powers of authority agreement as the Siskiyou Regional Railroad Authority, and they are seeking \$16 million to acquire the 90-mile right-of-way., said Ashland City Councilman David Chapman.

Chapman said Ashland is seeking state money from the Connect Oregon 3 fund, and California towns are looking for \$3.5 million in matching funds. In 2008 shippers balked at CORP's rate increases, and it closed the line. Shippers asked for relief from the federal Surface Transportation board, which is still reviewing the case.

Eliminating rail service over the Siskiyou Mountains has pushed additional freight traffic onto Interstate 5, Chapman said. If the trend continues, the freeway will reach its carrying capacity and a third lane in each direction would have to be built – a project that could cost more than \$1 billion. The cities' goal is to acquire the lease on the Ashland to Weed line and then either hire a rail company to operate it or buy it and “put it in the public realm,” Chapman said. “But right now, someone has to make it happen. It won't work unless CORP wants to cooperate and shippers want to ship.”

[Info. from *Medford Mail Tribune* via Gordon Nunnally]

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COMMUTER RAIL RIDERSHIP

Metrolink weekday, systemwide, average trips during November 2009 were 40,813, which was a decrease from the previous month of 2 percent. Metrolink weekday, systemwide passholders on Amtrak during November were 2,009, which was an increase from the previous month of 3 percent.

[Info. from Metrolink via Charles Varnes]

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The head of Southern California Commuter Rail Service was replaced on December 11 in a management shake-up that officials hope will better position the agency to tackle major safety and financial challenges in the wake of last year's Chatsworth disaster. David R. Solow, the five-county Metrolink agency's CEO for more than a decade, agreed to step down and take a new advisory position guiding deployment of a complex safety system intended to prevent a repeat of last year's crash, which left 25 dead and 135 injured.

As part of the transition, Eric Haley, the former top executive at the Riverside County Transportation Commission, will serve as Metrolink's interim chief. He will direct the search for Solow's permanent replacement.

At federal hearings on the collision earlier this year, Metrolink's image was badly damaged by further revelations of safety rules violations by train crew members and allegedly lax oversight of operations. “The guy at the top always has to take some of the blame,” said board member Art Brown, an Orange County representative who recently was involved in Solow's confidential evaluation.

On December 11 board member Brown said Solow himself had acknowledged feeling overwhelmed and said he preferred to focus on technical matters. In a prepared statement read by board Chairman Keith Millhouse, the public emphasis on that day was on Solow's technological expertise and the contributions he can make to ensuring rapid deployment of a \$200-million collision avoidance system, known as positive train control. With Solow focused on such matters, Metrolink can “usher in the era of dramatic enhancements in rail travel in this region and the country,” Millhouse said.

Board Vice Chairman Richard Katz praised Solow and said the management change was seen by all sides as “the best way for the agency to move forward when we are doing a lot of things.” Among the immediate challenges, he said, are managing a transition to a new train operating contractor, dealing with costly legal cases arising from the Chatsworth crash, and fulfilling a commitment to have the pioneering crash avoidance system up and running in three years.

Final terms of Solow's contract, which will keep him at the agency full time until at least next June, were not available. But Katz said Solow would continue to receive his current pay, which is \$220,000 a year. Solow will report both to Haley, who is expected to earn slightly less than his predecessor, and the board.

FARES & TRAINS

Metrolink fares will hold steady as of early January, but weekend service in Riverside and Orange counties will be sharply reduced in February to deal with a budget crunch caused by a fall in ridership and revenue. The board of the five-county

commuter train system, which has been struggling with unprecedented, recession-driven financial turmoil for months, also voted January 8 to cut two off-peak weekday trains on the Inland Empire/Orange county line. All of the trains being eliminated averaged less than 100 passengers as of October, officials said.

“We’ve reduced bus service really drastically,” said Metrolink board member Art Brown, who represents the Orange County Transportation Authority. “It’s not fair to reduce bus service and keep riders on these trains.” Among other things, counties are grappling with state transportation fund cuts and a dip in transit sales tax collections.

Potential weekday cuts on the Ventura County line and other branches of the service were averted when Los Angeles County officials agreed to at least temporarily increase subsidies for those trains, which heavily serve stations and employers within the county limits.

In all, 10 trains will be cut. Half of the weekend service in Orange County on the route near the 91 Freeway will be eliminated. And only one train will continue to run on Saturdays and Sundays on the San Bernardino-Riverside County portion of the line. Other spending cuts approved on January 8 include suspending time-off accruals for Metrolink employees and imposing a “hard” hiring freeze. The actions are only expected to carry the agency until June.

Eric Haley, Metrolink’s new chief executive, warned that an even bigger budget deficit, now estimated at \$15 million, looms for the 2010-11 fiscal years. “We’re not even out of the weeds yet,” he told the board. As a result, more service cuts and fare increases may have to be considered in the next several months.

The trains being eliminated beginning in February are the 857, 858, 859, 860, 653, 654, 655, and 656 on the Inland Empire/Orange County line on weekends, and the 852 and 853 on that line on weekdays.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

CORONA TRANSIT HUB

Official groundbreaking ceremonies were held in November for the new Transit Center Project in Corona. The new facility will serve as a hub for CommuterLink express bus service and integrate with Corona North Main Metrolink Station. The project has been six years in planning and will incorporate bus bays, a covered pedestrian plaza, driver facilities, parking and an elevator served pedestrian bridge connection to the Metrolink station.

[Info. from *Pasadena Star-News*]

UPDATED RAIL CARS

Southern California’s commuter rail service will soon take delivery of new high-tech, crash-resistant cars, officials announced December 17th. Two of the new-generation cars, the first of their kind in the nation, are to be unloaded from a ship in the Port of Long Beach in mid-January and will be put into service as early as next summer.

The cars, which are arriving several months behind schedule, have energy-absorbing ends designed to distribute the force of train-on-train collisions. Other features include breakaway interior tables.

The Southern California Commuter Rail Authority is purchasing 117 of the cars at an estimated cost of \$229 million. Final assembly of the cars, which are manufactured in South

Korea, will take place at Metrolink’s Eastern Maintenance Facility in Colton, creating about 60 skilled jobs.

While promoting the cars’ crash-worthiness, officials said that avoiding accidents with layers of new safety improvements and technologies in their primary goal. The groundbreaking cars will go through extensive field testing before they carry passengers.

Responding to a Times report, officials said they would review a 13-year-old federal waiver that allowed Metrolink to forgo installing simple safety signs intended to avoid crashes. The signs were intended to remind engineers to proceed slowly, watching for signal status after they stop at stations that are between trackside control lights.

Officials insisted their signage and signal system are safe. They said the decision not to place the placards at stations was made with the approval of federal regulators. Among other things, the signs could be confusing for freight and Amtrak train engineers using the same tracks, Metrolink officials said. Those trains often do not stop at Metrolink stations.

The staff of the state Public Utilities Commission, which also regulates some Metrolink operations, concluded in mid-December that the signs provide important safety benefits and should be installed at commuter rail systems across the state.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

URBAN RAIL TRANSIT

LOS ANGELES METRO RAIL

RIDERSHIP

| | Red Line | Blue Line | Green Line | Gold Line |
|---------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| November 2009 | | | | |
| Weekday Ave. | 139,140 | 73,048 | 36,238 | 28,478 |
| Saturday Ave. | 88,415 | 48,879 | 19,226 | 13,155 |
| Sunday Ave. | 73,514 | 44,068 | 15,764 | 10,507 |
| Monthly Total | 3,577,534 | 1,920,896 | 896,258 | 685,223 |

[Info. from Metro via Ken Ruben]

CRENSHAW/LAX TRANSIT CORRIDOR

A light-rail system through South Los Angeles and the South Bay was approved by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) board December 10. The 8½-mile line is the biggest beneficiary to date of Measure R, the half-cent sales tax for transportation projects that L.A. County voters approved last year. MTA officials said Measure R revenues would provide most of the estimated \$1.7 billion needed for the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor Project, which would pay for a relatively bare-bones version of the line.

The line would run from Exposition Boulevard to Imperial Highway, following Crenshaw Boulevard and the BNSF right-of-way along Florence Avenue and near Aviation Boulevard by Los Angeles International Airport to the Green Line. Officials said they hope to break ground on the project in 2012 or 2013 and open the line in 2018. Some believe the line could be open as early as 2016. “It’s a huge victory for the Crenshaw community and the South Bay community,” Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas said. Ridley-Thomas also said, he is fighting to get more of the Crenshaw line built underground, and that the MTA is going to study building an additional segment on Crenshaw Boulevard between 48th and 59th Streets underground. This is near Crenshaw High School.

Building underground is much more expensive than at street

level, and officials said they don't know where the money for Ridley-Thomas' plans would come from. Ridley-Thomas estimated that the project would need about \$400 million in extra funds to build the line as he would like it.

Officials said the rail line would provide a critical north-south route for commuters between downtown L.A. and the Westside. Right now, the only north-south rail line south of downtown is the Blue Line, which goes to Long Beach. The Crenshaw line, planners say, would make it possible to get to more places by rail, because the line would connect to the Expo Line (service to downtown and the Westside) and the Green Line (service from Norwalk to Redondo Beach). Officials hope that the line might take some motorists off the 405 and 110 freeways. [Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

GOLD LINE CONSTRUCTION

Construction of the Gold Line Foothill Extension will create nearly 7,000 new jobs and pump nearly \$1 billion into the region's economy, according to a new study of the project. The study completed by the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corp. projects about 2,600 new construction jobs will be needed to extend the rail line from its current in Pasadena to the Azusa-Glendora border.

LAEDC economists anticipate the extension will create another 400 or so jobs directly, for a total of about 3,000 jobs. The rest of the employment will come from what economists call indirect jobs – jobs created from supplying the materials to build the line – and “induced jobs” that would be created when all those new workers begin spending their new wages.

The study comes at a time when the Foothill Extension Construction Authority, the independent transit board tasked with building the line, is trying to secure an agreement on funding with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. If the Construction Authority gets its way, it will receive enough funding up front to get the project started in June and completed by 2013. The MTA, on the other hand, is estimating the line won't be completed until 2017.

San Gabriel Valley officials are hoping the job-creation benefits of the extension will count in their favor, said Habib Balian, CEO of the Construction Authority, “We've been saying all along that we're the project that's ready to go,” said Balian. “this study tells us just how much the project can do for the region over the next three years.”

Shahzad Amiri, the head of the MTA's San Gabriel Valley division, said her agency is well aware of the job creation benefits of the Gold Line. She said MTA hopes to be able to deliver on the 2013 timeline, but said that the agency's first priority has to be to guarantee that all the Measure R projects voters approved are completed on time. On the ballot measure, the Gold Line was scheduled to be completed by 2017.

GOLD LINE BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION

Gold Line Foothill Extension Authority officials on December 18th unveiled a San Gabriel Valley-themed design for a rail bridge honoring local wildlife and native cultures. The 739-foot bridge will stretch diagonally across the 210 Freeway to Santa Anita Avenue in Arcadia.

It will be adorned by four basket-shaped columns that pay tribute to the basket-weaving of local indigenous peoples, specifically the Chumash, who lived along the coast. The

columns will contain bright lights to illuminate the dark areas under the bridge. The bridge itself will have individual grooves resembling the scales of a snake to pay homage to local wildlife, said artist and designer Andrew Leicester.

“I had lots of other ideas and designs, but this is the one that got the best reception,” he said. Officials estimate the bridge will cost \$20 million to \$25 million. The art was announced at a 10-year celebration of the Gold Line Foothill Extension Authority.

EAST LOS ANGELES TO WHITTIER

Grass-roots pressure, not money hiring expensive consultants, is the way city officials plan to promote a light-rail line from East Los Angeles to Whittier, officials say. Whittier City Councilman Owen Newcomer said he doesn't believe his city needs to match the planned spending – as much as \$70,000 – of six San Gabriel Valley cities supporting a line along the 60 Freeway ending in South El Monte.

“In our opinion, the analysis Metro did supports Washington Boulevard,” Newcomer said, referring to a route that would end in Whittier at Presbyterian Intercommunity Hospital. “We have the facts on our side.” Newcomer was referring to a Federal Transit Administration minimum “user benefit” figure and the fact that the Washington Boulevard route would have higher ridership than along the Pomona Freeway.

The Washington Boulevard route calculates at about \$85 per rider and the 60 Freeway route is more than \$130, said Tham Nguyen, assistant project manager. The figure is developed through a formula dividing the cost by benefits, which includes ridership numbers. In addition, the 9.3-mile Washington Boulevard route would have a projected 15,660 riders per day, while the 6.9-mile 60 Freeway line would have an estimated 12,270 riders per day.

The Washington Boulevard line would cost an estimated \$2.2 billion, while the Pomona Freeway alignment would cost \$1.8 billion. As a result, what Whittier needs to do is mobilize its residents, Newcomer said. Still, the cities of El Monte, Industry, Monterey Park, Montebello, Rosemead, and South El Monte have formed a coalition and are planning to lobby Metro in favor of the line along the freeway.

[Info. from *Pasadena Star-News*]

MID-CITIES EXPOSITION LIGHT RAIL

The completion of the Mid-Cities Exposition Light Rail will likely be delayed until perhaps next year. “There have been several issues that have resulted in the delay of the opening of the Expo Line,” said Samatha Bricker, chief operating officer of the Exposition Construction Authority. “In addition to the additional costs of the construction of the aerial station in Culver City, there is also the reconfiguration of utility lines at La Brea Avenue and the issues surrounding the Farmdale crossing at Dorsey High School.”

Bricker added that Metropolitan Transportation Authority officials have not officially given a timeline for the anticipated light rail line's arrival in Culver City, which would be the last stop on the first phase of the mass transit line. She said the line could open later this year or early 2011 at Crenshaw Boulevard. “We are exploring different options at a variety of locations.”

The Dorsey High controversy has been an ongoing debate between South Los Angeles transit advocates, the Los Angeles

Unified School District, and Metro over the type of crossing that should be approved near the school. The local activists have asked that an overpass be built near the high school instead of an at-grade crossing. The Public Utilities Commission is currently evaluating the merits of the construction of an overpass, which residents say would be much safer than the at-grade crossing.

Bricker said an overpass would cost millions of dollars to build and would further set back the opening of the light rail line. A number of commercial and residential projects near Washington and National boulevards might also be affected by the likely delay in the Expo Line. The Culver City Redevelopment Agency was planning to build a mixed-use, transit-oriented project that would feature commercial, retail and residential space near Venice and Robertson boulevards, the site of the aerial station. Now that the arrival date has shifted, what this will mean to the city's balance sheet and the potential commuters remains to be seen, according to an ex-city leader.

The original environmental impact report cleared the Venice/Robertson site for an aerial station, but funding was not available then. A temporary station was approved near National, but later dropped from Metro's plans. To date, Culver City has not paid its \$5 million contribution to Metro. Santa Monica and Los Angeles, the other cities to be featured on the Expo Line, have already made financial contributions on land purchases.

[Info. from *Culver City News* via Ken Ruben]

EXPO. CORRIDOR TRANSIT PROJECT – PHASE 2

The Exposition Construction Authority has completed the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the Expo Phase 2 project, which is the proposed extension of the Expo Light Rail Line from Culver City to Santa Monica. The FEIR is available for public review online at BuildExpo.org, under the Phase 2 tab, at the Exposition Construction Authority Office at 707 Wilshire Blvd. 34th Floor, Los Angeles 90017, and at the following libraries: Los Angeles Central, Culver City Julian Dixon, West Los Angeles Regional, Palms-Rancho Park Branch, Mar Vista Branch, Robertson Branch, and Santa Monica Main. For more info., call the Expo Hotline at 213-922-3976.

On February 4, 2010 at 2:00 p.m., the Exposition Construction Authority's Board of Directors will conduct a public meeting to consider whether to certify the FEIR under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This meeting will be held in the Board of Supervisor's Hearing Room on the third floor of the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration located at 500 W. Temple Street, Los Angeles, 90012.

IMPROVING SOUTH BAY TRANSPORTATION

The BNSF Harbor Subdivision seems to be a forgotten piece of right-of-way from Los Angeles International Airport to Los Angeles Harbor. Its potential does not appear on Metro's horizon as yet. Commuter rail is realistic. Turning it over to Metrolink to operate now makes it shovel-ready to improve immediately. Electrification should be part of every rail line and hopefully will be so on Metrolink routes. Failing to update these visions, the 19th-century origin of this line denies its potential for moving high-value, time-sensitive freight between LAX and the ports.

Since its 2003 debut, route improvement of any extension of the Pacific Electric replica Waterfront Red Cars route has been

lacking to make it more useful or connect to the Metro's network to serve downtown San Pedro, Wilmington, Long Beach, or the Harbor Subdivision.

[Info. from *Random Lengths* and John Whitmeyer]

AAR STORED FREIGHT CARS REPORT

by CHARLES VARNES

In March 2009 the Association of American Railroads began measuring the number of freight cars stored. A freight car is deemed to be "in storage" if it has not had a loaded revenue move in more than 60 days.

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).

On January 1, 2010, 448,555 freight cars, 28.7 percent of the total fleet, were stored.

In a healthy economy two or three percent of the railroads' freight cars are stored.

[Info. from AAR Rail Time Indicators]

VIRGINIA & TRUCKEE RAILROAD

On December 8, 2009, Governor Jim Gibbons of Nevada, a Republican and often a critic of what he deems wasteful spending, defended the inclusion of the Virginia & Truckee Railroad in the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the stimulus law.

Senators John McCain of Arizona and Tom Coburn of Oklahoma included a \$2 million expenditure on behalf of the historic rail attraction on a list of "silly or wasteful" stimulus projects. "Not so fast," said Gibbons. The governor says the revival of the tourist rail line between Carson City and Virginia City after decades of dormancy has been a boost to the Northern Nevada economy.

"I respectively disagree with their characterization," Gibbons said of Coburn and McCain. "Nevada has a tourist-based economy. These funds would be used for a project that will create jobs and bring more tourists to Nevada. Creating jobs and getting more tourists to Nevada are two of my highest priorities."

The V&T rail line was among the most profitable in the nation in the 1860s when it was a busy route for ore and mining supplies between the two Nevada towns. The line was abandoned in 1938. In 1974 a private operator revived the line for a short span in Virginia City.

Efforts to revive it further as a tourist line gained steam in the 1990s. The project raised \$5 million from room taxes in Carson City and an additional \$6 million from sales taxes, according to backers. Senator Harry Reid, D-Nev., helped set aside \$10 million in a 2005 federal highway bill for the train. The train started running on a 12-mile segment August 14.

The stimulus money will help the Nevada Commission for the Reconstruction of the V&T extend the line 1.1 miles further into Carson City. The group is seeking another \$30 million in stimulus money to go even further into Carson City with the line and construct a new depot and maintenance facility.

[Info. from *Las Vegas Review-Journal* via Dennis Gilkey]



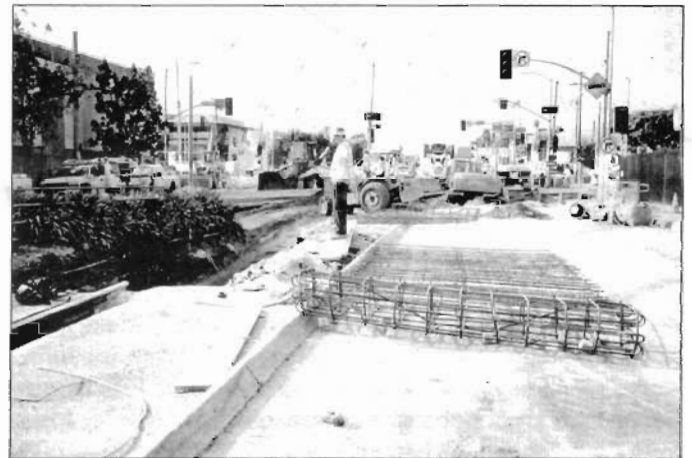
A Metro "safety ambassador" is at the Little Tokyo/Arts District Station to help pedestrians cross tracks. Photo by Dick Finley



Seen on Nov. 21 are concrete ties and temporary track panels for Metro Blue Line track renewal. Photo by John Whitmeyer



The Atlantic Station of the Gold Line Eastside Extension is seen on November 23, 2009. Photo by Dick Finley



Metro Blue Line track renewal shows curve beyond at Washington/Flower Streets on Nov. 21. Photo by John Whitmeyer



A Metro Gold Line train is inbound for Union Station from Atlantic Blvd. on Nov. 21, 2009. Photo by John Whitmeyer



Track renewal of Metro Blue Line is seen at Washington/Flower Street curve in Los Angeles. Photo by John Whitmeyer