

# WHEEL CLICKS

Pacific Railroad Society Inc.

JANUARY 2010

## SAN DIEGO MODEL RAILROAD MUSEUM

The world's largest operating model railroad museum – The San Diego Model Railroad Museum – is located in the lower level of Casa de Balboa in Balboa Park. SDMRM was incorporated in 1980 after San Diego Model Railroad Club, housed in the park's House of Charm, and La Mesa Model Railroad Club lost their spaces at about the same time, said John Rotsart, SDMRM's executive director.

The clubs combined forces, asked the city's Park and Recreation Department for help finding a new home, and by spring 1982 opened in the city-owned building, according to Rotsart, who has led SDMRM since its beginning.

Twenty-seven years and 3 million visitors later, the museum has more than 27,000 square feet filled with trains from the historically accurate to whimsical. There are examples of all the popular – and lesser known – sizes, including O, HO, N and Z. While train cars of all sizes are on display in glass cases along the museum's walls, the real attraction is the five exhibits built and operated by volunteers who belong to model railroad clubs.

With the exception of the Toy Train Gallery, which has trains running on four separate main lines in Anytown, U.S.A., all other exhibits are based on San Diego or West/Southwest locales. Rotsart said landscapes are designed to primarily show life in the late 1940s through mid-1950s, prior to steam engines ceasing operation in Southern California.

The Cabrillo Southwestern exhibit is a 2,000-square-foot display, created by San Diego Model Railroad Club in O Scale (1/48 actual size). The exhibit shows an imaginary route between San Diego and Sacramento. Features include a trolley line and an operating brass-sculptured water fountain.

The San Diego & Arizona Eastern exhibit features the San Diego harbor circa 1940 and route that connected San Diego with El Cajon and El Centro. The Club members built it in HO scale (1/87 actual size), which since World War II has been the most popular size among model railroad enthusiasts. "HO is popular because you can get the most model railroad layout in a certain space," Rotsart said. "It is also easier to work and to build models."

The Southern Pacific-Santa Fe Tehachapi Pass exhibit features the Tehachapi Range in the Sierra Nevadas, part of the 70-mile route between Bakersfield and Mojave. When complete, the exhibit will include the famous Tehachapi loop and every curve and switch integral to its real-life counterpart. La Mesa Model Railroad Club members are building it in HO scale, using photos of the area as a guide.

The Pacific Desert Lines exhibit is built in N scale (1/160 actual size) by San Diego Society of N Scale members. Its design is based on a 19th century route through the county that was never built, but features many buildings local visitors are sure to recognize.

On display surrounding the Toy Train Gallery are cars from rare and popular toy trains, including Lionel, American Flyer, MTH, K-line and Atlas-O.

The museum also includes a reference library, which has 476 railroad and model railroad magazines, 4,000 books, 1,550 videos and DVDs, 150 pictures of the Santa Fe Railway and 1,100 museum artifacts. The collection's list can be viewed online.

For information on the museum, its events or the model railroad clubs, go to [www.sdmrm.org](http://www.sdmrm.org) or call 619-696-0199. [Info. from Elizabeth Marie Himchak via Dorothy Appleby]

## CALIFORNIA HIGH SPEED RAIL

The Los Angeles City Council on December 2 unanimously urged the California High Speed Rail Authority (HSRA) to consider two proposed alternatives for the bullet train stop at Los Angeles Union Station. The two alternatives are an aerial stop at Union Station where the bullet train would be stacked above Metrolink tracks or a stop on the east side of Patsaouras Transit Plaza, along Vignes Street. A city planner said the second option could minimize intrusions into communities north and south.

California voters approved a \$10-billion bond measure for the bullet train in 2008, and the state is seeking additional federal money in the hope of beginning construction on a first phase between Anaheim and Los Angeles as early as 2011. Councilman Ed Reyes said he is concerned that the likely route north from Union Station along the Los Angeles River would destroy the city's plans to rehabilitate the river as well as disrupt the lives of residents in communities including Lincoln Heights, Cypress Park and Elysian Valley.

Valerie Martinez, Southern California communications director for the HSRA, assured Reyes that the draft environmental impact report would include a second alternative. [Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

## FUTURE ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The time is approaching when Pacific Railroad Society will be re-electing its group of officers. Those taking office on April 1, 2010, will be for President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and, this year, one Director. At the membership meeting on February 12, nominations will be accepted from the floor by the nominating committee. With a statement of purpose from nominees, ballots will be mailed with the March issue of *Wheel Clicks*.

Ballots will be counted during the membership meeting on March 12. If you want to be a more active member, become a nominee for some office. Committee chairpersons will be appointed after April 1, 2010.



## WHEEL CLICKS

**JANUARY 2010 VOLUME 73, NO. 10**

**EDITOR** ..... **DICK FINLEY**  
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**PARTICIPATING MEMBER** ..... **\$35.00 per year**  
**SUSTAINING MEMBER** ..... **\$50.00 per year**  
**CORPORATE MEMBER** ..... **\$100.00 per year**  
**LIFE MEMBER** ..... **\$500.00**

**PACIFIC RAILROAD MUSEUM** is operated by Pacific Railroad Society at 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas, CA 91773. Telephone: (909) 394-0616. Museum e-mail: PRSTrainman@aol.com Open Saturdays. 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; Wednesdays 1-5 p.m.

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### PRS NEWS — ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

Jan. 2, 9, 16 Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.  
 Sats. Committee meeting: January 23.  
 Jan. 2, 9, 16 Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Saunders Yard, Noakes & Herbert Sts., Commerce. Regular Day: 2, 16; Extra Day: 9, 23, 30. Com. Mtg.: 16.  
 Sats. Board Meeting, 6:00 p.m., Valencia Room, Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra. Precedes membership meeting.  
 Jan. 8 Membership Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Alhambra Room, Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.  
 Jan. 16, 17, Excursion No. 538 Big Dome to the Bay  
 18. Sat., Leaves LAUS on Sat. at 10:15 a.m.  
 Sun., Mon. Returns LAUS on Mon. at 8:45 p.m.  
 Feb. 5 Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Valencia Room, Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.  
 Feb. 6, 13, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10:00 a.m. 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 Yard, Noakes & Herbert Sts., Commerce. Regular Sats. Day: 6, 20; Extra Day: 13, 27. Com. Mtg.: 20  
 Feb. 19 Slide night at Saunders Yard, 7:30 p.m., Noakes & Herbert Sts., Commerce. All welcome, bring slides.

### MEETING PROGRAM

by **RUSS DAVIES**

January 8: **The Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension Construction Authority** people will be with us and will give us a presentation about their plans and progress. Some of us saw a similar presentation at the November R&LHS meeting. The personally narrated digital presentation is very interesting and timely. **Be there, and bring digital news briefs!**

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 news briefs!**

### CALTRAIN NEWS

by **MIKE GONDON**

At long last, Caltrain riders will finally be able to get real-time delay information when service disruptions occur. In late November, Caltrain officials announced that they had reached a deal with a private vendor to install global positioning system (GPS) trackers on Caltrain's locomotives, and use the sensors to provide real-time information to riders. The expected arrival times of trains will appear on existing electronic signs at all station platforms between San Francisco and San Jose, and on 511.org.

The project will cost \$1.8 million and is part of Caltrain's \$8.7 million initiatives to install a new rail operations control system. It is unknown when the GPS system will start running.

On November 21, Caltrain ran two special limited-stop trains from San Francisco to Stanford for the annual football game between Stanford and the University of California. The trains left San Francisco at 2:02 p.m. and 2:46 p.m. and returned to San Francisco immediately following the game. Regularly scheduled trains also made special stops at Stanford station, which is located about a half-mile from the stadium.

Palo Alto police have hired a private security guard to watch the West Meadow crossing where four high school students had committed suicide this year in four separate incidents. Also as insurance, a guard has been stationed at the Charleston Road crossing, about a quarter mile to the south.

The move comes after a citizen group of volunteers called Track Watch was formed to monitor activity at the West Meadow crossing. The security guards will work during the day, while the Track Watch volunteers will continue their shifts at night.

A new coffee shop opened at the Palo Alto station on December 11, the first such facility there since the 1970s. Named Caffe del Doge, the Venetian coffee roasting company has locations only in Tokyo and Cairo, plus one other location in Palo Alto. The hope is to integrate the depot area between Palo Alto and Stanford, as well as serve the 3700 Caltrain passengers per weekday who use the station.

On November 25, Caltrain #270 struck a motor home, which

had been towing an SUV, at Palm Avenue between Coyote and Morgan Hill. The driver, an elderly man from Oregon made a wrong turn off Monterey Highway, then got stuck on the tracks while trying to back up. The motor home was destroyed, but fortunately, the driver and his wife both got out in time and were unhurt.

### THE APACHE RAILWAY by DENNIS GILKEY

In 1972, I went to Tucson, Arizona, to visit relatives. Before I came home, my cousin and I drove to McNary to ride the Apache Railway. We went to the main headquarters to buy tickets, but they were closed due to the Labor Day weekend. We drove to the Yard and talked to the Security Guard, who said the crew would be there in a few minutes.

When the crew arrived, we told them our desire to ride the train. We couldn't get tickets, but the Conductor wrote releases on two pieces of paper and had us sign them.

The Apache Railway carried ticketed passengers. The passengers rode in the units of which the Apache owned three at the time. They were Alco RS32s (DL-721s) Lo-nose & one piece windshield #s 700, 800 & 900. I think we had 700 & 900. We got on board, the crew introduced themselves, and we headed out.

The units had Nathan M5 air horns. We got to McNary around 5:00 p.m. The engineer was like a tour guide and told us about the area and all of the towns we passed through.

We went round trip from McNary to Holbrook, picking up and dropping off cars en route. One of the towns we passed through was Snowflake, where we stopped at a freight station so the crew could pick up some orders. Once on the trip, the crew stepped out to check something while we were moving. My cousin and I saw that nobody was at the throttle. The Apache Railway had real cheap trackage. The units rode like somebody rocking the boat.

Somewhere en route, we moved to the other unit before the return trip. I was tired and when we went into the cab, I dropped a carton of milk, spilling it. Then, the brakeman got some old jackets and put them on the floor to make into a bed. He said it was time for me to take a nap.

We got to Holbrook and had to wait for a Santa Fe eastbound with an F45 on the point. When we were cleared, we pulled out onto the Santa Fe mainline and did some switching. The units rode a lot different on the Santa Fe mainline. I bent over to get my sack lunch and heard the engine rev up. I didn't know we were moving until I looked out the window.

When we were through switching, the crew checked the units and a new crew came on board. They wondered who we were. I told them and they wanted to make sure nobody said anything about us being there.

We headed out and arrived back in McNary about 5:00 a.m. They dropped off the cars, backed the units into the shop, and shut them down. We climbed off and thanked the crew. We told the new Security Guard who we were, and he said okay and we left.

My cousin and I stopped for breakfast. When we get back on the road, she said I should get some sleep, but I wouldn't admit to being tired. I dropped her off at the Greyhound bus station in Phoenix, so she could go back to Tucson

I headed back to my home, stopping in Yuma for lunch and gas. In California, I paralleled the San Diego and Arizona Eastern line, but didn't see anything running on the line. I stopped for gas in San Diego and went up Highway 101 next to the Santa Fe Surfline.

I saw a couple of Santa Fe eastbounds (southbound). One was coming into San Diego with an F45 on the point. The other one was at San Onofre with all EMD (GM) Lo-nosed road units. It was going at passenger train speed. I got home late in the afternoon and called my cousin to let her know I made it back okay.

Note: There are no tracks in McNary anymore.

### S. CALIF. COMMUTER RAIL RIDERSHIP

Metrolink weekday, systemwide, average trips during October 2009 were 41,776, which was an increase from the previous month of 4 percent. Metrolink weekday, systemwide passholders on Amtrak during October were 1,944, which was a decrease from the previous month of 4 percent.

#### AUTOMATIC TRAIN STOP TECHNOLOGY

Metrolink activated Automatic Train Stop (ATS) technology at 49 priority locations throughout their rail system during October. There are now 105 ATS inductors on Southern California Commuter Rail Authority's (SCRRA) member agency-owned routes in Orange County, San Gabriel Valley, Antelope Valley, and Ventura County.

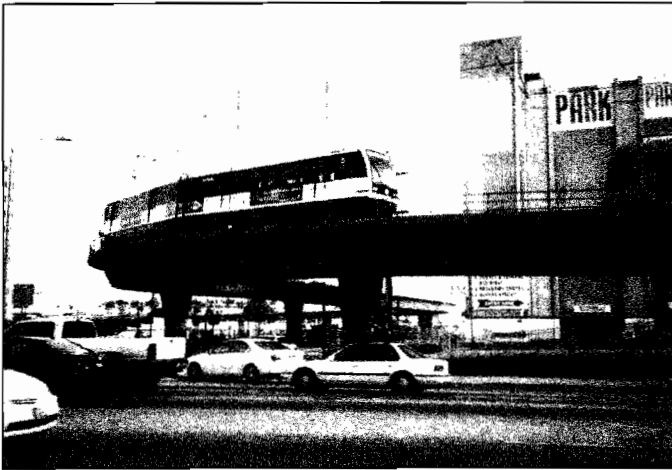
The ATS system includes magnetic inductors placed next to the track at locations where trains approach a curve or permanent speed change. The ATS system sounds an alarm and triggers a flashing alert on the engineer's control panel when the train passes over the inductor. If the engineer doesn't push a button acknowledging the alert within approximately eight seconds, the train brakes are automatically applied. ATS will provide greater awareness for Metrolink engineers and will create a higher level of protection for their trains.

Metrolink received expedited approval from the Federal Railroad Administration for this expanded ATS program as another important safety measure. They continue to fast-track the development and deployment of Positive Train Control – the ultimate train-stopping technology – which is not yet available for complex urban markets like Southern California.

#### HOLIDAY TOY EXPRESS

Over 1,000 revelers joined Santa Claus, Southern California Firefighters, and ABC Channel 7 at the opening night of Metrolink's Holiday Toy Express on November 21, launching the 47-city tour for the 13th consecutive year. Rancho Cucamonga hosted the grand ceremonies with live music, carolers, food, a vintage fire truck and hundreds of unwrapped new toys collected for the "Spark of Love" Toy Drive. Every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights until December 20, the 450-ton train with 50,000 holiday-themed lights and decorations, went to other communities in the six counties of San Bernardino, Riverside, Ventura, Orange, San Diego, and Los Angeles.

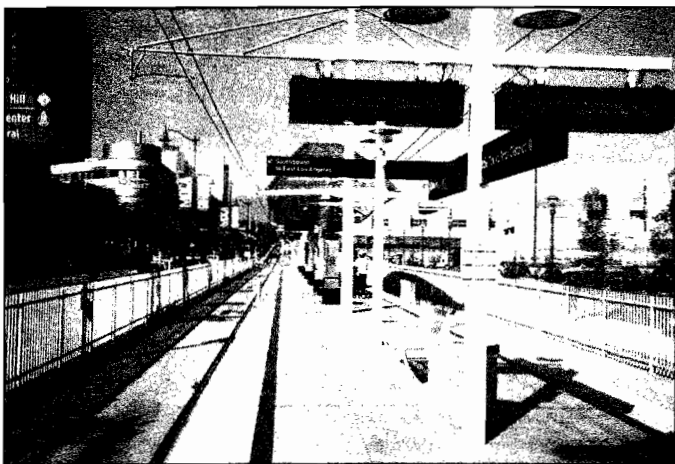
[Nonridership info. from *Metrolink Matters*]



*A Metro Gold Line train outbound from Los Angeles Union Station for East Los Angeles rounds the elevated section at Commercial and Alameda Streets. Photo by John Whitmeyer*



*Mariachi Plaza platform is in a tunnel under Boyle Heights.*

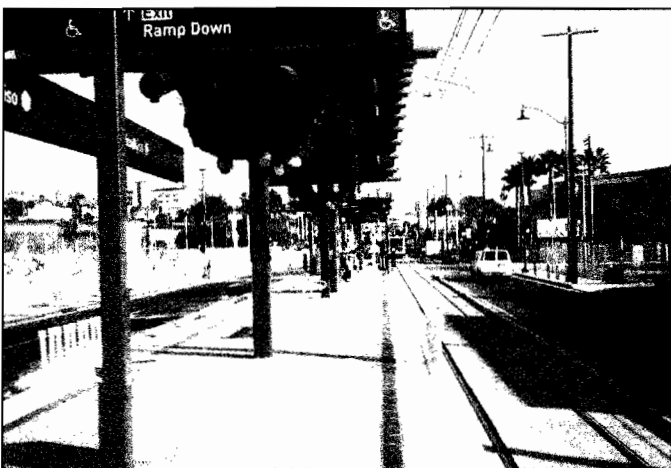


*Little Tokyo/Arts District Station is beside Alameda Street. A train is coming off the elevated section in the distance.*

*This photo and all unsigned photos by Dick Finley*



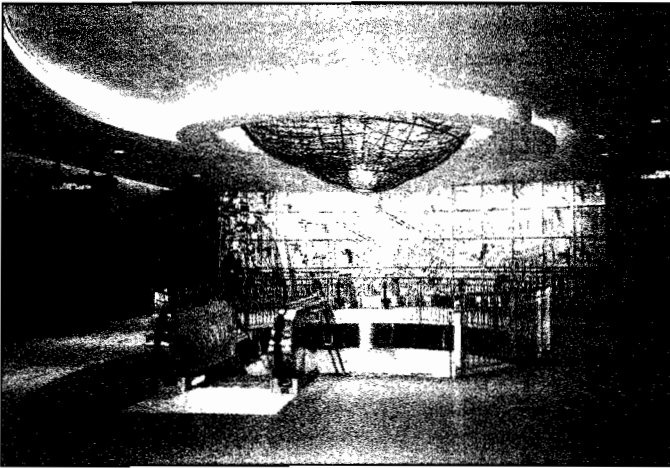
*A new concrete gazebo is at Mariachi Plaza.*



*Outbound (east) at Pico/Aliso Station along First Street.*



*The gazebo at Mariachi Plaza is beside the Station entrance structure to the tunnel and Gold Line below.*



*A mural occurs on the mezzanine of Mariachi Plaza Station.*



*Maravilla Station is on Third Street near several cemeteries.*



*Soto Station structure is at southwest corner of First and Soto Streets. Entrance to tunnel and Gold Line is from other side. Ken Ruben is to left front.*



*East L.A. Civic Center Station is near many public activities.*



*Indiana Station is between Indiana Street (left) and Ramona Opportunity High School. Ken Ruben is at center platform.*



*Atlantic Station is a Gold Line terminal at the intersection of Atlantic and Pomona Boulevards. Photo by John Whitmeyer*



**PASSENGER TRAIN UPDATES by CHARLES VARNES  
AMTRAK**

During the 2009 Christmas season a model Amtrak passenger train, circled the National Christmas Tree in Washington, D.C.

Working with the National Park Service, the National Park Foundation, and the National Christmas Tree Railroad, Amtrak provided one of several model trains that circled the 42-foot Colorado Spruce several thousand times during the holiday season. Located on the Ellipse, just south of the White House, the National Christmas Tree has been a part of the holiday season since 1923.

The Amtrak model train is 1:22.5 in scale and includes two GE Genesis P42 diesel locomotives and four single-level *Amfleet* coaches plus a café car. The model represents Amtrak *Northeast Regional* service south of Washington, D.C. and Midwest Corridor service where the trains operate using this type of equipment.

**Record-Breaking Thanksgiving Travel**

Amtrak had a record-breaking Thanksgiving 2009 holiday travel week carrying 685,876 passengers, including 127,577 on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving.

This year's ridership was up four percent over last year's 659,184 and surpassed the previous record of 666,716 riders set in 2007.

Comparing Thanksgiving 2009 to Thanksgiving 2008, there was a 5.5 percent increase in ridership on the Northeast Corridor, a 2.9 percent increase on state-supported trains and other short distance corridors, and a 4.7 percent increase on long-distance trains.

The Thanksgiving holiday travel week extended from Nov. 24 through Nov. 30. In preparation for the anticipated heavy passenger volume, Amtrak added extra trains along the *Northeast Corridor* and the Pacific Northwest and increased capacity on trains operating in California and the Midwest.

**BNSF Amtrak On-Time Performance Percentages**

The Amtrak train On-Time Performance Percentages posted on the BNSF News web page Dec. 12, 2009 were:

TRAINS	MTD OTP	YTD OTP
Long-Distance Trains	89%	90%
Short-Distance Trains	95%	95%
Pacific Surfliners	98%	98%

**INTERCITY TRAINS**

**Sunset Limited**

At copy deadline, it was reported that the Amtrak Board of Directors had authorized negotiations with Union Pacific for daily Amtrak service on the Los Angeles-New Orleans *Sunset Route*.

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.

**WESTERN CORRIDORS**

**Pacific Surfliner**

Currently, every Saturday until further notice Goleta-San Diego *Pacific Surfliner* Tr. No. 796 will terminate in Los Angeles due to track work being performed by Metrolink. Motorcoach service will be provided for passengers traveling to

or from the following stations: Fullerton, Anaheim, Santa Ana, Irvine, San Juan Capistrano, Oceanside, Solana Beach, San Diego - Old Town, San Diego. For the record, the train operated on holiday Saturdays Nov. 28, Dec. 5, Dec. 26 and Jan. 2, was stopping at all stations on the route.

**Capitol**

In November 2009 David Kutrosky was appointed Managing Director of the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority (CCJPA) replacing its Managing Director. Eugene (Gene) Skoropowski, who retired effective Dec. 6, 2009, ending his successful 10-year career managing the Capitol Corridor intercity passenger rail service.

The CCJPA is a partnership among the six local transit agencies in the eight county (Placer, Sacramento, Yolo, Solano, Contra Costa, Alameda, San Francisco, and Santa Clara) service area which shares the administration and management of the Capitol Corridor. The San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART) provides day-to-day management support to the CCJPA.

Winter cold impacted the *Capitol Corridor* on Dec. 8, 2009. The frigid temperatures froze many of the switches at the Sacramento Station overnight, and the switches had to be defrosted and manually aligned by qualified railroad staff before trains could depart. This caused late starts of up to 40 minutes for morning trains out of Sacramento

On Dec. 5 and 6, eastbound Tr. Nos. 724, 728, 734, 736, 742 and 744 and westbound Tr. 723, 727, 733, 737, 741 and 743 operated on an alternate route between Fremont-Centerville and Oakland-Jack London Square and did not stop at Hayward, due to track work being performed by Union Pacific Railroad. Motorcoach service was provided to and from Hayward.

On Nov. 16 one-way fares increased by 2 percent which corresponds to a maximum increase of some fares by \$1; other one-way fares remain unchanged. Due to feedback from passengers and current economic factors, the price for multi-ride tickets will remain the same. The fare increase for multi-ride tickets will be postponed until March 2010. At that time, multi-ride ticket fares will increase by an average of 5-8 percent, depending upon city pairs.

**Amtrak Cascades**

From Feb. 1, 2010 to March 31, 2010, Vancouver, B.C. - Seattle Amtrak Cascades Tr. No. 517 will run 2 hours later.

**NORTHEAST CORRIDOR**

**Fare Discount Promotion Continued**

Amtrak has extended its fare promotion on *Northeast Regional* service between Washington, DC, New York and Boston through March 31. The promotion offers up to 25 percent off the lowest published coach fare between either Washington, DC and New York or New York and Boston.

The discounted fares are available for purchase through March 31, 2010. Reservations are required and must be made 14 days in advance of travel. Upgrades to Business Class for Coach tickets purchased at this promotional price are not available. Seats are limited and fares are not available on all trains. The fares are not available for travel on January 3-4, February 12, and February 15. Other restrictions may apply.

The 25 percent off fare promotion is also available on service south of Washington, DC to Newport News; on Amtrak's

*Vermont* service between Springfield, Mass. and Washington, DC; on the *Keystone* service between Philadelphia and New York; and on the new *Northeast Regional* service between Lynchburg, Va., Washington, D.C. and points along the Northeast Corridor.

**DEPOT DOINGS**

ST. LOUIS, Mo. Amtrak has opened a long-term parking facility on Amtrak-owned property at 421 South 16th Street, at the corner of 16th and Poplar Streets in Downtown St. Louis. The secure 42-space parking area is paved, fenced, well-lit and monitored by security cameras. It is fully automated, only accepting credit or debit cards. The parking rate is \$6 for up to 24 hours and \$6 for each succeeding 24-hour period. Amtrak will add to the current 42 spaces in the paved lot as demand warrants.

**RENO SNOW AND FUN TRAINS**

Key Holidays will operate its annual *Reno Snow Train* and *Reno Fun Train* in February and March 2010.

The *Snow Train* will depart from Emeryville on Tuesdays Feb. 9, 16, 23 and March 2, 9. It returns from Reno on the following Friday.

The *Fun Train* will depart from Emeryville on Fridays Feb 19, 26 and March 5, 12, 19. It returns from Reno on the following Sunday. As in previous years passengers on the *Fun Train* must be age 21 or older.

Travel can be purchased from its sponsor, Key Holidays, or your travel agent.

**SHASTA SUNSET DINNER TRAIN TERMINATED**

After 13 years the *Shasta Sunset Dinner Train* ceased operating on Jan. 1, 2010 as a result of declining ridership. It did not run from January to mid-April in 2009. The train's last run was its New Year's Eve Dinner Party Special. The author and his wife rode the Dinner Train several years ago and enjoyed a splendid meal during a beautiful ride.

[Info. from Ken Ruben, Ed Von Nordeck]

**URBAN RAIL TRANSIT**

**LOS ANGELES METRO RAIL  
RIDERSHIP**

October 2009	Red Line	Blue Line	Green Line	Gold Line
Weekday Ave.	141,302	74,311	36,453	21,322
Saturday Ave.	98,380	56,648	20,467	14,083
Sunday Ave.	78,589	49,766	17,274	12,226
Monthly Total	3,914,908	2,117,152	973,392	588,413

[Info. From Ken Ruben]

**EXPO LINE**

The Expo Line is \$220 million over its original budget and more than a year behind schedule. The line was supposed to open this summer, running from downtown Los Angeles to Culver City at a cost of \$640 million. But the cost has risen to \$862 million. Transit officials say their goal for next year is to open just a portion of the route – only as far west as Crenshaw Boulevard. Officials are unsure when the Expo Line will reach Culver City or how much the total cost will be upon completion. Richard Thorpe, chief executive of the Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority, said that although he hopes \$862.3 million will be the final price, the project possibly could need tens of millions of additional dollars.

The 8.6-mile line has been touted by planners as a fast and cost-effective route for rail service to the Westside because it is being built mostly on an abandoned Pacific Electric right-of-way. A variety of factors have held up what was supposed to be a relatively quick project and added to the costs. Among them, construction delays where the Expo and Blue lines meet on Flower Street, the decision to add a station at USC, and safety improvements next to public schools along the route.

Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) officials said they do not yet know how the agency will pay for more Expo Line costs if needed or whether those costs would get money slated for other projects, which include a subway along Wilshire Boulevard and an extension of the Gold Line into the San Gabriel Valley. The delays are prompting concern from communities along the route and elsewhere on the Westside, which was supposed to be a main beneficiary of the Expo Line.

One of the more vexing problems is occurring where the Expo and Blue lines meet near the Los Angeles Convention Center. Planners originally believed that tying the two lines together would not be a major effort. But officials said the section was delayed initially because the design was incomplete and was delayed further when portions of the existing track needed to be replaced because of inadequate Blue Line track insulation, in addition to other changes requested by officials.

MTA approved the building of an elevated station in Culver City. Thorpe said the original plan called for a temporary station in Culver City, with an elevated platform planned for later. Officials decided that it made more sense to build the elevated platform right away. Though no specific date has been set, officials hope to have the Culver City station running by the end of 2011 or the beginning of 2012.

More money probably will be spent on safety improvements. Over the last few years, activists have complained that the route poses risks to students at Dorsey High School and Foshay Learning Center, among other campuses near the line. They have called for costly improvements to protect pedestrians, including running the line above or below street level. The state Public Utilities Commission, which has regulatory authority over rail lines, is now deciding which safety improvements are needed near Dorsey High.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

**GOLD LINE EASTSIDE EXTENSION**

Approximately 75,000 people were on hand to celebrate Sunday, November 15, the opening of the Edward R. Roybal Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension. The 6-mile light-rail extension, which cost \$898 million, opened November 15 with free rides and entertainment. When it opens to the public, the Gold Line will run from Pasadena to East Los Angeles. There are eight stations along the extension's route: Atlantic, East L.A. Civic Center, Maravilla, Indiana, Soto, Mariachi Plaza, Pico/Aliso, and Little Tokyo/Arts District. The extension terminates at Los Angeles Union Station, where riders can connect to the Red Line subway or Purple Line or stay on the Gold Line to Pasadena.

From the beginning, residents and politicians on the Eastside pushed for the Gold Line extension to be built completely underground. In the end, transportation planners decided to make a roughly 1.7-mile portion of the Gold Line a subway – the

part that runs underneath Boyle Heights. The majority of the route runs above ground.

Anyone could ride the Gold Line from one end to the other at no cost on opening day. At the East L.A. Civic Center Station, there was live music, a farmers market and activities for children. At the Mariachi Plaza Station, there was live mariachi and contemporary music, including the group Quinto Sol. At the Little Tokyo/Arts District station, there was karaoke and food from nearby restaurants. And at Union Station, Santa Clause made a visit more than a month early.

By the end of the first year it is open, officials expect 13,000 people to ride the extension each day. Some people, including Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina, have expressed concern about pedestrians near the light-rail line, which runs through heavily populated areas. But MTA officials said the line is safe. They noted that the agency set aside an additional \$4.5 million for safety enhancements, including about two miles of pedestrian fencing. Two dozen "safety ambassadors" were helping residents navigate tricky spots on the line. Los Angeles police, the California Highway Patrol and Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department officials were to be on the lookout for people jaywalking over the tracks.

Construction on the light-rail line began in 2004. In 2005, workers found markers of Chinese workers buried near the Evergreen Cemetery more than a century ago. Chinese headstones and burial bricks were found between two and six feet underground. They were scattered among the remains of the 128 bodies. Chinese American historians said the find shed light on the earliest Chinese immigrants who came to California to help build the railroads and perform other jobs.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

#### DOWNTOWN CONNECTOR LINE

Little Tokyo is thriving with a multicultural mix of businesses and visitors, but county transportation officials had proposed to plow a light-rail connector line through the historic heart of Southern California's Japanese American community. Community members fear that the construction, noise, traffic, and specter of hundreds of trains running through the neighborhood could kill off businesses, devastate property values and discourage visitors to the museums, cultural centers and other community institutions. However, late in November, county transportation officials surprised the community by presenting a new concept that would keep the entire connector line underground through the key intersection of 1st and Alameda streets.

Before the new concept surfaced, Metro had officially selected four alternatives to close the two-mile gap through downtown in the regional light-rail system. The aim is to connect the 7th Street/Metro Center stop and Los Angeles Union Station to allow a transfer-free ride from Pasadena to Long Beach and from Culver City to East Los Angeles.

The project is expected to reduce the number of transfers at Union Station by 17,000 a day and to save riders both money and time – as much as 20 minutes per trip, said Dolores M. Roybal Saltarelli, manager of the regional connector project for the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority. Metro is completing an environmental impact study and expects to issue its recommendations for a plan next fall, she said.

Two of the four alternatives involve building a connector

through downtown. An above-ground route would weave from Union Station to 7th Street/Metro Center along Temple, Main, Los Angeles, and 2nd Streets. In a preliminary analysis, the route was estimated to cost \$700 million in 2008 dollars.

An underground route would travel east on 2nd Street and surface on a lot at Central Avenue, where Office Depot and several restaurants sit. Then the trains would cross at 1st and Alameda above ground. Cars would run along Alameda on a submerged road, and pedestrians would cross on an overhead pass. The route was estimated to cost \$900 million.

The underground plan in particular horrified many community members. A projected 526 trains a day would run through the 1st and Alameda intersection, Metro says. The plan could kill the liveliest part of Little Tokyo, critics said. The lots bounded by Central, Alameda, 1st and 2nd streets, which the county would buy, are currently occupied by 300 parking spaces and popular restaurants.

In October, the Little Tokyo Community Council voted to oppose both plans. But Roybal Saltarelli said that Metro heard the concerns. Among other steps, the agency offered to retain the Central Avenue restaurants and move tunnel boring equipment away from Little Tokyo.

Metro's latest underground plan had been one of the agency's final eight proposed designs. But it was put aside in part because planners did not want to affect the proposed Nikkei Center, a Japanese American development on the northeast corner of 1st and Alameda, Roybal Saltarelli said. After the Nikkei Center developer expressed a willingness to discuss ways to coordinate the connector line with his development, planners were able to bring back the idea for exploration, Roybal Saltarelli said.

The new plan is simply a rough concept, but it has thrilled members of a Little Tokyo working group, all of whom are on the community council.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

#### ARTIFACTS FOUND NEAR MISSION

About the middle of July, archaeologists unearthed part of an area near an old mill and other artifacts used by priests and Indians near the San Gabriel Mission as early as the 1770s. The digging was part of an ongoing environmental survey by archaeologists contracted by the Alameda Corridor-East Construction Authority, which is working on a project to lower train tracks at the site into a trench.

Archaeologists knew that across from the mission, buried somewhere underground, were the remnants of a grain mill used by the Gabrieleno Tongva Indians to grind corn. Now that artifacts have been uncovered, John Dietler, principal investigator at SWCA, an environmental consulting firm based in South Pasadena, and Cheryle Hunt, a lab technician with the firm, have become part-time historians searching for new details.

Besides a brass medal, inscribed with what investigators think is abbreviated Latin, were about a dozen pieces of broken pottery made in a method common to Indians, not the European style, which used a wheel. They're from the mission period, between 1771 to 1834, Dietler said. Railroad tools found on the last day of the dig are most likely from after that period, possibly when the railroad was built in 1874, he said.