

WHEEL CLICKS

Pacific Railroad Society Inc.

JULY 2010

HIGH-SPEED RAIL IN OREGON

Transportation officials say moving the Amtrak trains to a westerly, lightly used, parallel line once run by the Oregon Electric Railway would allow the state to add high-speed trains more cheaply and efficiently. Passenger trains between Portland and Eugene now run on Union Pacific tracks

The state's consideration of a possible high-speed rail line linking Portland and Eugene with 12 daily trips straight through the heart of Lake Oswego and its northside residential neighborhoods worries a number of residents. High-speed trains, which would replace Amtrak's current trains could reach speeds of at least 110 miles per hour, which isn't possible now north of Wilsonville. They would reduce the travel time between Portland and Eugene to two hours, saving about half an hour from today's train-travel time. The state also hopes to increase on-time performance from Amtrak's current 68 percent to at least 95 percent by 2030.

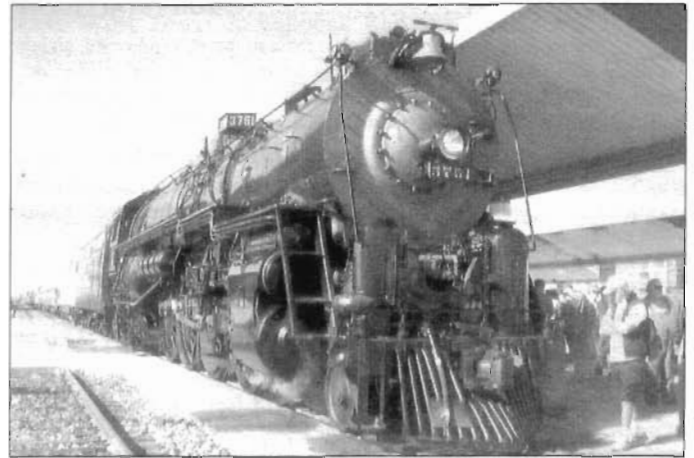
The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) hopes to tap into unprecedented levels of federal funding made available recently to develop the nation's high-speed rail lines, including the stretch connecting Eugene and Portland.

In Oregon, Amtrak's Cascades route now travels south from Portland's Union Station through Milwaukie and Oregon City on Union Pacific tracks. The other existing railroad is the Oregon Electric alignment, which travels across two of Lake Oswego's busiest main roads. The trains also would speed through the entire horizontal mid-section of the city through tree-lined neighborhoods.

ODOT in May applied for a \$4 million federal grant to fund a portion of the \$10 million, two-year analysis of alternatives, said Betsy Imholt, the department's rail-study director. The state would pick up the remainder of the cost if it receives the federal grant. The study is a required part of the decision-making process and would evaluate the two existing lines as well as possible alternative alignments that do not exist today. ODOT hopes to begin the study by the end of the year and has hired some contractors for the project, Imholt said.

Replacing tracks on existing rail beds to suit high-speed rail would cost about \$1 million per mile. Building new tracks on a new bed could cost as much as \$2.5 million per mile. Even if the state ultimately wins federal money for the project, the state still would need to pony up about \$400 million to see the project become reality.

For now, Lake Oswego residents just want to ensure their voice is heard as decisions are being made, said Joy Strull, treasurer of the Evergreen Neighborhood Association, whose family lives next to the tracks. "For the most part, what you will find is that the neighborhood is supportive of the concept," Strull said. It's the concept of whether this is the right place for it when you're talking about an urban neighborhood that's got this



Steam locomotive 3751 at Los Angeles Union Station on May 1, 2010, before trip to San Diego. Photo by Dennis Gilkey

kind of density."

OREGON CITY STATION

When Oregon City finishes work on its Amtrak station in June, the town will have invested more than \$3 million in the passenger stop. The city is adding parking spaces and relocated an old freight depot to the 6-year-old Amtrak stop. The old building and new landscaping give Oregon City a picturesque place to catch the four trains – two northbound, two southbound – that provide daily service between Portland and Eugene.

During the opening day in April 2004, an Amtrak official predicted the Oregon City station would add 10,000 to 15,000 riders annually. Those passengers never arrived. The station averaged about 3,700 riders a year from 2004 to 2009, according to Amtrak statistics.

Convenience is the sticking point, said Oregon City Mayor Alice Norris. The depot building will be leased as office space and there are no immediate plans to open it for passenger use. Freight trains have priority and often sidetrack passenger trains, which frequently run behind schedule. But the biggest problem is the limited service. The state underwrites the Portland-Eugene trains and doesn't have the money for expanded service.

There is a long-shot proposal that could totally upend Oregon City's rail plans. ODOT is considering a long-term plan to shift Amtrak service to another rail line west of the Willamette River. That means the trains would bypass Oregon City. Norris said she isn't losing sleep over the proposal. "It's not going to be in our lifetime," she said.

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



WHEEL CLICKS

JULY 2010

VOLUME 74, NO. 4

EDITOR DICK FINLEY
 TECHNICAL EDITOR CHARLES VARNES
 MAILER JOHN STALLKAMP

Opinions expressed in unsigned articles are those of the editorial board, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Society, its officers or directors. Opinions in signed articles are those of the author only. All rights reserved. ISSN: 0043-4744. ©2010 BY PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY, INC.

Published monthly by PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY, INC. The Society is a California chartered, nonprofit organization of those who share an interest in railroad operations, travel and history. Address and telephone are the same as for Pacific Railroad Museum.

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.

MUSEUM COMMITTEE CHAIR LINDSAY SMITH

EXCURSION DIRECTOR MARTI ANN DRAPER

WEBMASTER RUSSELL HOMAN
 INTERNET Home Page: <http://www.pacificrailroadsociety.org>

BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY, INC.

PRESIDENT MARTI ANN DRAPER
 VICE-PRESIDENT WILL WALTERS
 SECRETARY BILL SMITH
 TREASURER NICK TEEL
 DIRECTOR (2008-2011) DAVE ABBOTT
 DIRECTOR (2009-2011) VIRGINIA GRUPP
 DIRECTOR (2009-2012) DAVID HOUSH
 DIRECTOR (2009-2012) KEN RUBEN
 DIRECTOR (2010-2013) LINDSAY SMITH

PRS NEWS — ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES

July 2 Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Valencia Room, Joslyn
 Fri. Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
 July 3, 10, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10:00 a.m.
 17, 24, 31 to 4:00 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
 Sats. Committee meeting: 24.
 July 3, 10, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Saunders
 17, 24, 31 Yard, Noakes St. & Herbert, Commerce. Regular
 Sats. days: 3, 17; Extra days: 10, 24, 31. Com. Mtg.: 17.
 July 9 Membership Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Alhambra Room,
 Fri. Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
 July 16 Slide Night/Saunders Yard, 7:30 p.m., Noakes St.
 Fri. & Herbert, Commerce. All welcome, bring slides.
 Aug. 6 Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Valencia Room, Joslyn
 Fri. Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
 Aug. 7, 14, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10:00 a.m.
 21, 28 to 4:00 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
 Sats. Committee meeting: 28.
 Aug. 7, 14, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Saunders
 21, 28 Yard, Noakes & Herbert, Commerce. Regular

Sats. days: 7, 21; Extra days: 14, 28. Com. Mtg.: 21.
 Aug. 13 Membership Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Alhambra Room,
 Fri. Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.

MEETING PROGRAM

by RUSS DAVIES

July 9: **Oh Canada!** A digital presentation from your humble Program Chair. This will be a “composite journey” Trans-Canada, covering intercity and urban lines from **Toronto to Vancouver** on the CP lines via Calgary, and return on CN lines via Edmonton. We’ll also do side trips to **Churchill** on Hudson Bay, and to **Montreal**. Most of the images will be from my visits to Canada in the late 80’s and early 90’s, spiced up with some historic “thens.” **Be there, and bring DIGITAL briefs!**

August 13: **On the road with YOUR National Forum!** A slide presentation from the Pacific Railroad Museum archives. We’ll go **Coast to Coast** in the good old USA, as well as trips to **Canada and Mexico**. Many of the images will be from “our Dear Departed” members, **David Cameron, Bill Farmer, and Richard Melin**. **Be there, and bring slide briefs!**

MILEPOSTS FROM MARTI ANN

by MARTI ANN DRAPER

What is PRS? On the eve of our Diamond Jubilee Year, and in a time of recession for both the country and for non-profit organizations, the question is far from moot. Have you thought about this recently?

The other day, I happened to see an old excursion flyer with a brief description of PRS as “An independent non-profit organization of individuals with a common interest in railroad operations, technology, and history.” That sounded pretty accurate to me.

Our Articles of Incorporation define our purposes as follows: “To promote and foster research into railroad history; to collect, preserve, and study historic materials related to railroading and the railroad industry; and to advance the study of modern railroads and their operations.”

I have been told that PRS is now having problems because we are unable to define our mission. I disagree. I think that the mission is well defined. Where we struggle is in the means of accomplishing this mission. By that, I mean marshaling the resources to accomplish the goals we set forth. And by resources, I do not primarily mean money, although that is necessary. Far more necessary is the human component.

Some of you have said to me that since we no longer have Barbara to arrange our excursions, and because putting on excursions is hard to do and expensive, we should abandon this activity. After 74 years of rail excursions of all types, we should admit that we can’t do it anymore, give up, and just put out *Wheel Clicks* and staff our museum.

I have always looked forward to going on excursions, even though there have been many that weren’t to my taste or didn’t fit my budget. Part of my motivation for proposing the *Big Dome to the Bay* Excursion was to show that even in 2010, PRS can put on an excursion which gives the participants a unique chance to ride historic equipment, an educational experience, a good value for your ticket price, and a great time with friends.

I hope that those of you who went on that excursion agree that we succeeded.

One objection to continuing excursions has been that they are expensive. Unfortunately, the basic price of operation and lodging has gone inexorably upward. This is without regard to the fact that most people's retirement pensions have not gone up or have decreased, and the values of stocks and bonds that make up many people's retirement "nest egg" are uncertain. Still, I believe there are enough people who can afford excursions that we are remiss to not offer them when the opportunities arise. Other organizations and private for-profit operators continue to prove that there is a market for the types of trips that once were PRS's specialty.

Yet, the expense of excursions is a realistic concern. Because of this, we are now going to run a very inexpensive trip. At \$25 per person, the all-day *MetroLink Ramble* should be affordable to just about everyone. This is a pure railfan adventure, like PRS used to have back in the early days. With this trip, which will include some special features you could not have just taking the train by yourself, we will come full circle back to the early days of PRS excursions.

Whether PRS should abandon its history of offering the unique experience of rail excursions to its members in the future will be decided by your support of the excursions we are offering now.

HIGH-SPEED RAIL CONFERENCE

Elected officials and business leaders from around the world were to gather in the middle of June at Universal City for a major rail conference. The U.S. High Speed Rail Association Conference was to offer a closer look at the plans and proposed routes for what could become the largest public works project in California history.

The conference was also to give leaders a chance to explore the long-term impacts, including the potential seizing of residential and business property to make room for tracks between Los Angeles, Palmdale and Anaheim. Under one proposal, the Palmdale-to-Los Angeles route would follow State Route 58/Soledad Canyon from Palmdale to Sylmar and then along the MetroLink railroad line to Los Angeles Union Station. Potential station locations include Palmdale, Sylmar and Burbank.

Some critics see high-speed rail as an expensive waste of money at a time when government funds are drying up amid big budget deficits and a weak economy. "We are hearing extravagant promises, but this is just going to run us deeper into debt. We are a state with the lowest bond rating in the nation, have the third-highest unemployment rate and this is an extravagance we can't afford," said Kris Vosburgh, executive director of the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association.

President Obama recently announced that California will receive \$2.3 billion in stimulus funds to help build an 800-mile-long, high-speed rail line linking Sacramento and the San Francisco Bay Area to Los Angeles and San Diego.

Proponents say the project – envisioned as part of a national high-speed rail system – will create 600,000 construction jobs, including 125,000 to build the Palmdale-to-L.A. leg and 92,000 to extend the line to Anaheim.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

SOUTH AFRICAN HIGH-SPEED TRAIN

For South Africans, the Gautrain (pronounced howtrain), traveling at 100 miles per hour and linking the area's airport with Sandton, is a powerful symbol of modern Africa. The section linking Sandton to the airport opened June 8, 2010. When it's finished, the nearly \$4-billion Gautrain linking Pretoria, Sandton, Johannesburg, the airport and other locations will have 10 stations. Three of them will be underground with nearly seven miles of underground track. It's not exactly the sprawling Paris Metro, but there's nothing else like it in sub-Saharan Africa.

The train isn't affordable for the poor. It costs nearly \$6 a day for people from Alexandra township to get a bus to a nearby Gautrain station and then go onward to Sandton and back. Critics contend that the Gautrain will turn out to be a white elephant. They believe the money could have been better spent upgrading transport infrastructure for poor blacks.

But despite the debate, the excitement of the Gautrain's launch seized the country's imagination. People rose at 4 a.m. to be among the first passengers. They tweeted from the train, took cellphone photos, uploaded video and crowed that it was "the most beautiful train in the world." Nearly 11,000 people clambered aboard the Gautrain on Day 1, mainly eager South Africans taking an hour of two off work for the trip.

The train ride from Sandton to O.R. Tambo International Airport took 15 minutes, less than half of what it might have taken by car. If the train substantially cuts traffic between Pretoria and Johannesburg – a 45-minute drive that stretches to about two hours during peak traffic time – it could be worthwhile for South Africa's economy, said Spokozi Meyoli, a manager in a government department.

As the train pulled into Sandton station, one white-haired Afrikaner woman burst into joyful applause. "Come on, give it a hand!" she shouted. Everyone joined in, clapping and laughing. No one cared whether a little noise broke the rules against gambling, begging, loud noises, shouting, fighting, informal trading or similar disturbances.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

CALTRAIN NEWS

by MIKE GONDROU

On May 16, San Francisco held its annual Bay to Breakers foot race. Usually, Caltrain runs one or two special trains for the event, but this year, four specials were run. The first special began in Santa Clara at 6 a.m. and ran nonstop to San Francisco. The second special left San Jose Diridon at 6:05 a.m. and stopped only at Mountain View, Palo Alto, Redwood City, and San Mateo. The remaining two specials left San Jose Diridon at 6:10 a.m. and 6:15 a.m. and ran as Limited Stop trains to serve the remaining stations.

This year, two southbound specials were also run, leaving San Francisco at 2:10 p.m. and 3:10 p.m. These trains ran nonstop to San Carlos, then made all local stops to San Jose Diridon.

Construction has begun on improvements to San Jose Diridon and Santa Clara stations. Improvements at San Jose Diridon include construction of four platform tracks and two new boarding platforms, plus new turnouts and improvements to the signal system.

At Santa Clara, improvements include extension of the

southbound platform by 150 feet, construction of a new center boarding platform, and a new pedestrian underpass. This will allow two trains to occupy the station at one time, eliminating the “hold out” rule where one train must “hold out” of the station if another train is occupying the platform.

The cost of these projects is \$73 million and construction is expected to take about two years. Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority and Altamont Commuter Express (ACE) are helping to fund the projects. It is expected that ACE trains will begin stopping at Santa Clara when that project is completed, providing a better connection for passengers transferring between ACE and Caltrain.

With ridership and revenue down because of the poor economy, the Caltrain Marketing Department is undertaking a campaign to increase those numbers. The campaign targets high density housing within a quarter-mile of Caltrain stations. Residents were mailed a post card, asking them to take a brief survey in exchange for a complimentary trip on Caltrain. There is no information yet on the success of the campaign.

PASSENGER TRAIN UPDATES by CHARLES VARNES AMTRAK

Historical On-Time Performance

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

Route	May 2010	Last 12 Months
Sunset Limited	80.8%	88.0%
Texas Eagle	61.3%	63.2%
Southwest Chief	87.1%	82.7%
California Zephyr	66.1%	61.2%
Empire Builder	91.1%	81.3%
Coast Starlight	91.9%	92.4%
City of New Orleans	84.5%	85.2%
Pacific Surfliner	74.1%	79.0%
San Joaquin	89.5%	89.5%
Capitol Corridor	95.9%	91.6%
Amtrak Cascades	67.73%	67.3%
Illinois Service	77.4%	80.1%
Michigan Services	67.4%	69.6%
Missouri River Runner	91.9%	95.2%
Acela Express	84.3%	80.7%
Northeast Regional	77.6%	75.3%

NORTHEAST CORRIDOR

Free Wi-Fi Now Standard On Acela Express

Following a successful three-month trial Amtrak is making free Wi-Fi® a standard service offering for every passenger traveling on its high-speed Acela Express trains operating between Washington, D.C. and Boston.

Known as AmtrakConnectSM, the Wi-Fi service has been delivering fast, reliable and consistent connectivity to Amtrak customers since March 1 when the trial program began. Recent on-board surveys reveal that about 115,000 *Acela Express* passengers per month have logged-on, or about 39 percent of ridership. In addition, 76 percent of those polled had a favorable or strongly favorable opinion of the service and with overall system performance.

Schedule Adjustments

Minor schedule adjustments of up to 10 minutes may be

made to *Northeast Regional* and *Acela Express* trains between New Haven, CT and Boston, MA due to bridge and track maintenance beginning on June 13 and continuing through the end of August.

DEPOT DOINGS

Chicago Union Station

Effective May 27, the Amtrak Police Department began periodically conducting random screening of Amtrak passengers and their carry-on baggage at Chicago Union Station.

Randomly selected Amtrak passengers and their baggage, handbags, backpacks or other personal items may be screened or inspected as they board trains. The inspection will be completed as quickly as possible – usually less than a minute – in a manner designed to respect passengers’ privacy as much as possible.

In addition to the carry-on baggage screening, Amtrak Police explosive detection dogs will continue to patrol on the platforms, on-board trains, and throughout the station. Some of these K9’s are trained to detect specific materials on or around passengers.

A passenger who does not consent to the inspection or other security procedures will be denied access to Amtrak trains. In such cases, an Amtrak Police Officer will accompany the passenger to the ticket office, where a full refund may be given, without fee or penalty, even if the ticket is ordinarily non-refundable. The ticket may be refunded in cash, credit or travel certificate, depending on how it was paid.

Screening and other security activities will be done on an unannounced and unpredictable basis. Therefore, no further public announcements regarding this type of screening are anticipated.

An average of 55 Amtrak trains come and go from Chicago Union Station every day, with more than 8,500 Amtrak passengers using the station daily. With more than 1.5 million passengers, it is the fourth busiest station in the Amtrak system.

[Info. from Ken Ruben, Ed Von Nordeck]

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COMMUTER RAIL

RIDERSHIP

Metrolink weekday, systemwide, average trips during April 2010 were 40,419, which was essentially no change from the previous month. April 2009 averaged 42,686, so April 2010 was a decrease from the previous year of 5 percent.

Metrolink weekday, systemwide passholders on Amtrak during April 2010 were 1,946, which was an increase from the previous month of 2 percent. April 2009 averaged 1,984 passholder trips, so April 2010 was a decrease from the previous year of 2 percent.

AAR STORED FREIGHT CARS REPORT

by CHARLES VARNES

In June 2010 the number of freight cars stored on the first day of the month was 368,343, equal to 23.8 percent of the total fleet, the Association of American Railroads reported. The decrease of 747 cars from May 1, 2010, represented the smallest decline in cars in storage since December 2009.

In its June 2010 Rail Freight Cars in Storage report the AAR stated that the number of cars in storage had declined for 11 straight months, totaling more than 134,000 cars out since that time.

For the first five months of 2010 the number of freight cars stored (and the percentage) was: January, 448,555 (28.7); February, 439,631 (28.2); March, 418,552 (26.9); April 387,029, (25.0); May 369,090 (23.8).

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

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

[Info. from AAR Rail Time Indicators]

URBAN RAIL TRANSIT by DICK FINLEY
LOS ANGELES METRO RAIL

RIDERSHIP

April 2010	Red Line	Blue Line	Green Line	Gold Line
Weekday Ave.	152,507	77,966	38,985	32,315
Saturday Ave.	104,869	52,018	21,823	25,453
Sunday Ave.	82,792	49,006	18,036	19,844
Monthly Total	4,105,794	2,119,339	1,017,114	892,107

[Info. from Metro via Ken Ruben]

METRO FARES

Metro fares are increasing on July 1, 2010. The regular single trip fare will increase from \$1.25 to \$1.50; a day pass will become \$6; the Metro weekly pass will be \$20; a monthly pass \$75; and the EZ transit pass \$84. There will be no change in discounted fares for seniors, students, the disabled, and Medicare recipients.

FREE PARKING ON EASTSIDE EXTENSION

A new parking garage with 266 free parking spaces has opened at the Metro Gold Line Atlantic Station in East L.A. The three-story structure is located at Atlantic Boulevard and Pomona Avenue, just across the street from the station.

EXPO LINE

A dispute over the safety of the Expo light-rail line where it passes Dorsey High School is before the California Public Utilities Commission, which must decide whether to approve a controversial grade crossing. The final design effort to build the Expo Line is at Farmdale Avenue and Exposition Boulevard – a small intersection near the east side of Dorsey High in central Los Angeles. If state regulators sign off on a grade crossing and station there, it will clear the way for completion of the first modern rail link between downtown Los Angeles and the West side.

But the plan to lay track at street level at the intersection has run into intense opposition from neighborhood associations, students, teachers, Dorsey alumni and community activists who have fought for almost four years to change the project's design. Unless the rails are elevated or put below ground like at some other sections of the project, they say the line will create an unacceptable risk for pedestrians and motorists, especially when students head to class in the morning and leave campus in the afternoon. The school has about 1,600 students.

Critics of the project are concerned because at certain times of the day, hundreds of Dorsey students cross Exposition at Farmdale as parents drive past on their way to pick up or drop off their children. Plans call for light-rail trains to pass through the intersection every few minutes.

If done today, the estimated cost to put the line underground at Farmdale would be at least \$100 million, and an elevated section would cost at least \$30 million. The amount does not include \$1 million for every month of delay to complete the project.

The Expo Construction Authority revised its original plan for the Farmdale grade crossing and submitted it for approval to the California Public Utilities Commission. The commission rejected for safety reasons the authority's first design for the grade crossing in February 2009 but allowed project officials to amend their plan. The initial proposal called for a pedestrian area and vehicle gates to control the intersection where trains would pass.

The revision includes traffic signals, warning signs, the latest vehicle and pedestrian gates, a pedestrian holding area and two station platforms, which will require trains traveling in both directions to stop before reaching the intersection. The station, which can be used by students and residents, was not in the original plans. In addition, Expo officials say trains will not enter the intersection unless it is clear, and the line will have an automated system to prevent trains from going faster than 15 miles per hour across Farmdale.

The intersection is the only one of Expo's 38 grade crossings that still needs commission approval. Authority officials hope to receive a ruling by July. Estimated to cost almost \$900 million, the Expo line will run 8.6 miles from downtown Los Angeles to Culver City via Figueroa Street and Exposition Boulevard – a 30-minute trip one way. Construction is scheduled to be completed next year.

Just east of the University of Southern California, the tracks descend into a 1,000-foot-long trench to avoid the heavy traffic on Figueroa and Flower Street. The line resurfaces at Exposition and Trousdale Parkway and proceeds at ground level to La Brea Avenue, where the tracks and a station are elevated. The line and stations also are elevated over La Cienega Boulevard and at the line's present terminus at Venice and Robertson boulevards in Culver City.

Despite the crossing's revised plan, critics are not convinced the intersection at Farmdale and Exposition will be safe. They cite light-rail accidents in Los Angeles County and that students, adults and motorists can get around crossing gates. They note that serious accidents have occurred on the county's Gold Line and Blue Line light-rail systems at speeds of 15 mph or less.

Expo's supporters have told the commission that light-rail lines have operated safely near schools for years and Expo's revised plan is a substantial improvement over earlier proposals, including one that called for the closure of the intersection and a pedestrian bridge.

"This will benefit students and the community," said Darrell Clarke of Friends 4 Expo Transit. "This will be safer than the Gold Line, which has had zero accident deaths."

"It's time to move forward. We've been dealing with this

issue a long time,” said Samantha Bricker, an Expo spokeswoman. “We feel we’ve gone beyond what has been done on other light-rail lines.”

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

GOLD LINE FILLMORE STATION PLAZA

The plaza next to the Fillmore Station had a grand opening on June 5. The \$220,000 project transformed a short dead-end stretch of asphalt into a plaza with energy-efficient lighting, gardens and more bicycle parking. The project was paid for from a fund for Gold Line projects the city of Pasadena received before the line’s opening in 2003. The plaza is on the South Raymond Avenue side, which is to the west of the Fillmore Station.

The new plaza includes a radial decorative walkway, an information kiosk, concrete seat, walls with wood accents, furniture, and drought-tolerant landscaping. There are six new bike parking racks, each of which can accommodate two bikes. There are also massive decorative pots that each house planted trees.

Most of the zoning in the area is for light commercial uses and a lot of the local office space is dedicated to medical offices, since the station is near Huntington Hospital, said Eric Duyshart, the city’s economic development director.

GOLD LINE FOOTHILL EXTENSION

Transit authorities are preparing to go forward with the Gold Line Foothill Extension to the Azusa-Glendora border, and local cities still have plans to place residential and commercial developments along the line. The first phase of the extension is expected to be completed by 2014, adding new stops in Arcadia, Monrovia, Duarte, Irwindale and Azusa.

But with a down economy, flat real estate market, and cities suffering from a recent raid of local development funds, some plans for transit-oriented developments could end up being scaled back. “You have a lot of hurdles with these developments that weren’t there before,” said Jack Kyser, the chief economist of the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corp.

While money has been secured and approved to design and build the extension from Pasadena to Azusa, two significant agreements still need to be settled for the first phase of the extension. Among them is making a deal with the BNSF Railway.

For years the freight line – once known as Burlington Northern Santa Fe – has run along stretches that parallel the line where Metro wants to run its extension of light-rail trains. Metro wants to use rights to BNSF’s portion of rail – a 4.7-mile stretch from Santa Anita Avenue to Irwindale – and shared-use rights for a 3.5-mile stretch east of Irwindale.

“It’s critical to our deal,” said Habib Balian, CEO of the Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension Construction Authority. BNSF officials say they are willing to work with Metro, but they want assurance that it’s not at the expense of their shipping points along the railroad.

Balian said he was not aware of any reason why BNSF wouldn’t cooperate with Metro’s requirements for BNSF to discontinue its operations between Arcadia and Irwindale. That is especially so since the railway has no business west of the

MillerCoors Brewing Co. in Irwindale, Balian added.

As it stands, Metro was scheduled to break ground June 26 on the initial phase of the extension: a bridge that would take Gold Line passengers from the middle of the east and westbound 210 Freeway over the eastbound lanes and into Arcadia. At that point, a stretch of rail with crossings, stations, bridges and signals, called the alignment, would begin and go to Azusa. The alignment’s design and construction is scheduled to last from the middle of 2011 until September 2014.

[Info. from *Pasadena Star-News*]

GREEN LINE EXTENSION

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) is exploring ways to provide commuters with an alternative to the 405 freeway by extending the Metro Green Line. The MTA is currently conducting an environmental review of a more comprehensive South Bay transportation network that, according to an agency fact sheet, would improve mobility in southwest Los Angeles County by assessing “the regional rail network through connections to the Metro Blue Line” and the potential Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor.

According to Renee Berlin, an executive officer in MTA’s planning department, the MTA board recently adopted L.A. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa’s 30/10 plan for metro transit, which directs transportation providers to find funding for all the Measure R projects, to expedite their delivery, and to deliver 30 years’ (worth) of projects in 10 years.

According to Metro’s Web site, \$272 million worth of Measure R funds will go toward funding the Green Line extension. Some city residents wonder why the extension can’t be run down Hawthorne Boulevard instead. “Back in the late 1990s, the MTA and the South Bay did a route refinement study,” Berlin said. “We looked at Hawthorne Boulevard at that time. Since then, there have been a lot of changes and redevelopment on Hawthorne Blvd. We own the rail right-of-way, which was purchased specifically for a transit corridor. There would be far less impact (on views and traffic) if we use the existing rail lines. Since we own the asset, we’d like to use it.”

The Green Line now runs north and south from the LAX airport area and ends at Marine Avenue. The proposed extension would travel through Lawndale, Redondo Beach and Torrance. “The railroad tracks were originally, exclusively freight line tracks. Then they build the Alameda Corridor and the MTA got the rights to put passenger service on the tracks, Redondo Councilman Steve Diels said. The Alameda Corridor – a 20-mile railroad express line that connects the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles to the transcontinental rail network east of downtown L.A. – opened in April 2002.

The MTA will review and analyze four new options. The first, a Light Rail Alternative, would extend the Green Line from its current Redondo Beach Station terminus to the proposed Torrance Regional Transit Center. The second is a Freight Track Alternative, which would provide new rail service on upgraded Harbor Subdivision railroad tracks from Century/Aviation boulevards to the planned Torrance RTC. The third, a No-build Alternative, would allow for a transportation network without the proposed project. Finally, a Transportation Systems Management Alternative would provide lower-cost

capital and operational improvements, such as improved signal synchronization designed to improve bus speed.

[Info. from *The Beach Reporter* via John Whitmeyer]

PORTLAND FREE RAIL ZONE

After more than three decades, TriMet voted last August to eliminate free bus service in Fareless Square, which covers downtown, Old Town, the convention center, and Lloyd Center. The area, where MAX light rail and the streetcar are still free, will be called the Free Rail Zone.

The square was created in 1975 to reduce emissions and auto traffic in the downtown area. Though it has attracted transit users, the square has been faulted for encouraging crime and annoyances on buses and trains. It also made it difficult to collect fares from bus riders who may board in Fareless Square but continue on beyond the zone. TriMet says the new system will help the agency by bringing in additional revenue.

Riders who don't pay a fare on buses starting January 3 could face a \$175 fine, though the agency will have a grace period to focus on educating riders, said TriMet spokeswoman Denise Woodward. TriMet offers a \$10, two-year pass for senior citizens and people with disabilities to use on buses within the zone.

PORTLAND FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION

A panel that controls federal transportation spending in the region approved on December 10, 2009, a 25-year plan required by state and federal agencies. The plan's \$20 billion in projects includes.

\$6.2 billion to expand the light-rail system and bus service. High ranking projects include a light-rail line to Tigard, southwest of Portland in Washington County. Another line to Gresham via Southeast Powell Boulevard. Also, to replace WES commuter rail line with light-rail.

\$1.3 billion for sidewalks, bike facilities, and completing gaps in regional trails. Some projects would improve access to mass transit.

OREGON IRON WORKS

Oregon Iron Works, a Clackamas County manufacturer, should close its second contract to make a modern streetcar after Tucson, Arizona, won a federal grant in February 2010. The U.S. Department of Transportation awarded the city \$63 million to build a 3.9-mile streetcar line to connect its downtown with the University of Arizona campus.

The grant will plug a funding gap in the \$150 million project and should allow Tucson to finalize its contract with an Oregon Iron Works' subsidiary, United Streetcar LLC, said Chandra Brown, the streetcar company's president. The company previously announced it had won the contract to supply Tucson with seven streetcars. With the grant awarded, Brown said she expects to finish the roughly \$30 million contract in the next few weeks or months.

United Streetcar also has a \$20 million contract to supply six streetcars for Portland's rail expansion from downtown into the Lloyd District. Those cars are currently being designed.

Brown said the company is in the midst of a multimillion-dollar expansion at its Clackamas factory to handle what it expects will be future orders. The company has been in talks with Seattle and Washington, D.C., and expects to talk with

Dallas, which also received a grant for its streetcar project in February.

SISKIYOU RAILROAD PLAN

Members of Oregon's congressional delegation continue to support a shippers' proposal to restore rail service along the Siskiyou Line despite a competing plan from a public California agency. Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley and Rep. Peter DeFazio said they will continue to encourage the Federal Surface Transportation Board to grant a request by Roseburg Forest Products and Timber Products Co. of Yreka, Calif. to have West Texas & Lubbock Railway operate the 218-mile Siskiyou Summit line between Dillard near Roseburg on Interstate 5 and Black Butte, Calif. near Weed.

The shippers' request came after Roseburg-based Central Oregon & Pacific Railroad, which leases the line from Union Pacific, curtailed southbound service between Ashland and Weed and cut northbound service from five days a week to two.

The Siskiyou Regional Railroad Authority, formed by the cities of Weed and Montague, is working to buy an 80-mile section of the line from the Union Pacific Railroad, including about 14 miles of track on the Oregon side of the border to Ashland. The authority said the proposal would benefit the shippers and would also allow for the establishment of passenger service and tourist excursion trains over the Siskiyou Mountains.

The Siskiyou authority has applied for a \$13.4 million grant from the ConnectOregon III program operated by the ODOT for infrastructure improvements. The grant, which would require \$3.3 million in matching funds, would be used to buy the line and provide for six months of operational costs.

DeFazio said he was skeptical of the group's chances of winning a grant. "Connect Oregon is not going to give a grant of money to these cities in California to establish a new fragment of a line when we need a complete line from California to Oregon," he said.

SEATTLE

The Port of Seattle has completed the purchase of a rail corridor from BNSF Railway for \$81 million after nearly two years of negotiations. The Port said the deal, finalized December 21, 2009, will preserve the line for transportation and recreation uses.

Six local governments and utilities formed a partnership to preserve the 42-mile rail corridor between Snohomish, north of Seattle, and Renton, southeast of Seattle and Lake Washington. The other partners are King County, Sound Transit, city of Redmond, Puget Sound Energy, and Cascade Water Alliance.

King County plans to build hiking and biking trails on the line south of Woodinville and east of Lake Washington. Freight service will continue between Snohomish and Woodinville through an agreement between the Port and a third-party operator.

[Portland and Seattle info. from *The Oregonian* via Caroline Hobson]



A city park is beside Angels Flight, Hill Street and the Red Line Pershing Square north entrance. Photo by Dick Finley



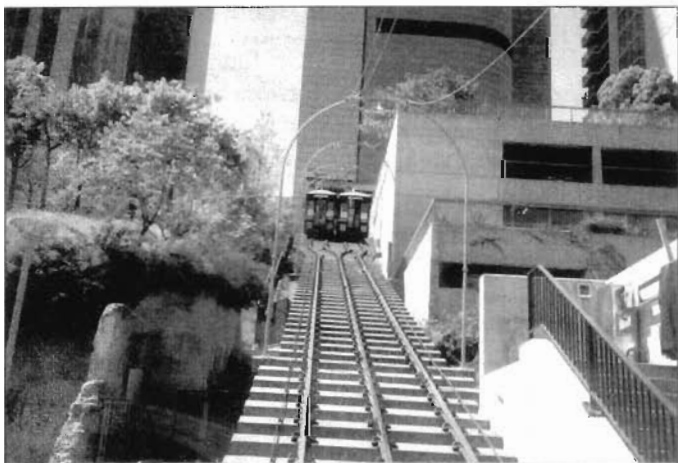
View of Angels Flight from Bunker Hill with Hill Street at right angles to track beyond lower station. Photo by Dick Finley



One of the two cars of Angels Flight at lower station adjacent to Hill Street. Photo by Dick Finley



Exposition Line junction connection with Blue Line at Washington Blvd./Flower St. (view south). Photo by John Whitmeyer



View of Sinai and Olivet passing at mid-point with the upper station just discernible beyond cars. Photo by Dick Finley



Expo Line connection with Blue Line at Washington/Flower (view north) in May 2010. Note concrete ties for turnouts and wood ties for crossing diamond. Photo by John Whitmeyer