

# WHEEL CLICKS

Pacific Railroad Society Inc.

JUNE 2011

## HIGH-SPEED RAIL

### GRAPEVINE ROUTE

In a surprising and controversial move, California bullet train planners on May 5 revived a long-discarded route option following Interstate 5 over the Grapevine. This could save billions of dollars and eliminate a sweeping dogleg through Los Angeles County's high desert towns. The sudden reversal comes after years of planning focused on a circuitous path south of Bakersfield crossing the Tehachapi Mountains to serve Palmdale and Lancaster.

The vote on May 5 by the California High-Speed Rail Authority board ignited new political conflicts for an agency struggling to scrape together billions needed to complete the first 500-mile leg of the voter-approved system between the Bay Area and downtown Los Angeles Union Station. The Grapevine has a number of potential benefits, state officials say. It is nearly 30 miles shorter, would cut travel time, reduce tunneling and save \$1 billion and perhaps more, they say.

Construction is slated to begin next year in the Central Valley, but critics warn the project could be derailed by high costs and opposition to additional funding from Republicans in Congress. The plan to study the Grapevine option, which will take several months, was unanimously approved by the rail authority board. But Chairman Curt Pringle cautioned that the vote could invite demands to revisit issues already decided elsewhere in the state.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

### HIGH-SPEED RAIL PROJECT

Money designated for a now-canceled rail line in Florida was distributed among nearly two-dozen projects around the country on May 9. California, Illinois and 13 other states, along with Amtrak, will share \$2 in federal grants aimed at developing high-speed rail service. The bulk of the \$2 billion is to go to the congested Washington-New York-Boston corridor, where \$795 million in improvements should allow trains to run at 160 mph on a stretch where they are currently limited to 135 mph. Another \$404 million will go toward increasing speeds to 110 mph between Chicago and Detroit. The projects being funded by the diverted money range from a train station in Ann Arbor, Mich. to elevated tracks in Washington state, platform improvements in Rhode Island and engineering studies in Texas. "These are tremendous transportation projects and investments that America cannot do without," Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood told reporters at a news conference in New York's Pennsylvania Station, the nation's busiest train depot.

Only about \$300 million will immediately go toward true high-speed railroads like those in Europe and Asia. That money is earmarked for a 220-mph link planned between Los Angeles and San Francisco. Almost \$3.5 billion in federal funds has been committed for the California bullet train project – the first

segment of which is planned for the Central Valley. Combined with state matching funds, rail officials say the state will have \$6.33 billion to invest in the line.

A separate grant of \$68 million will be used for 15 high-performance passenger rail cars and four quick-acceleration locomotives for the Pacific Surfliner, San Joaquin and Capitol corridors in California, the federal Department of Transportation stated.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times* and *Pasadena Star-News*]

### STATE REPORT CRITICIZES MANAGEMENT

In a report released on May 10, the state Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) warns that the \$43-billion effort – thought to be one of the nation's most developed – has inadequate management and a governing structure in need of sweeping reform, as well as funding uncertainties and conditions attached to almost \$3.5 billion in assistance from the Obama administration further threatening the proposal as it heads into its first phase of construction in the Central Valley.

The report recommends that the Legislature strip the nine-member California High-Speed Rail Authority board of its decision-making powers and that responsibility for the line's development be shifted to the California Department of Transportation. Until the organizational issues and federal funding restrictions are resolved, analysts called on the Legislature to cut funding for the bullet train from \$185 million to \$7 million in the proposed 2011-2012 state budget.

"The LAO report is just an opinion, issued without a full knowledge and understanding of what it takes to plan and build a high-speed train system," said Cathleen Galgiani (D-Tracy) defending the authority, who wrote the high-speed rail ballot measure approved by voters in 2008. "I believe this project has been successful thus far because it has strived to operate more like a private business than a typical government bureaucracy," said Roelof Van Ark, the rail authority's chief executive.

The legislative analyst questions whether the authority will be able to secure enough federal, state and local funding to complete the project. Researchers say the assumptions in the project's business plan are optimistic and it is unclear whether state government, due to ongoing budget deficits, can afford debt payments on the \$9.95 billions in bonds that voters authorized.

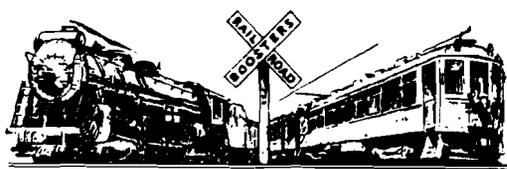
[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

### NEW NIBBLERS RESTAURANT

by KEN RUBEN

Denny's Restaurant to the east of Los Angeles Union Station was recently converted about April 18 to a Nibblers Restaurant. Most of the restaurant staff has been retained and two of the chefs from Nibblers in Beverly Hills are now working here. The menu is more pricey and the hours have changed from 24/7 to 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. until further notice.

[Partial info. provided by Tom Grose]



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JUNE 2011

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### PRS NEWS — ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES

June 1, 8, PRM work party, 1:00 p.m. to 5 p.m., 210 W.  
 15, 22, 29 Bonita Ave., San Dimas.  
 Weds.  
 June 3 Fri. Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Colonial Kitchen,  
 1110 Huntington Dr., San Marino. Dinner on  
 your own at 6:30.  
 June 4, 11, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10:00 a.m.  
 18, 25 Sats. to 4:00 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.  
 June 4, 11, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?,  
 18, 25 Sats. Saunders Yard, Noakes & Herbert, Commerce.  
 June 6, 13, PRM open, 12 p.m. to 5 p.m., 210 W. Bonita  
 20, 27 Mons. Ave., San Dimas.  
 June 10 Fri. Membership Meeting, 7:30 p.m., MTA Building  
 Board Room on 3rd Floor.  
 July 1 Fri. Board Meeting, see July *Wheel Clicks*.  
 July 2, 9, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10:00 a.m.  
 16, 23, 30 to 4:00 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas  
 Sats.  
 July 2, 9, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?,

16, 23, 30 Saunders Yard, Noakes St. & Herbert Ave.,  
 Sats. Commerce.  
 July 4, 11, PRM open, 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., 210 W.  
 18, 25 Mons. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.  
 July 6, 13, PRM work party, 1:00 p.m. to 5 p.m., 210 W.  
 20, 27 Weds. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.  
 July 8 Fri. Membership Meeting, see July *Wheel Clicks*.

### MEETING PROGRAMS by RUSS DAVIES

June 10: Santa Fe's "final run" of steam power over Cajon  
 Pass, February 6, 1955! Tom Grose will share a CD of  
 this event with us. Locomotive 3759, now on display in  
 Kingman is the featured player. The historic event was  
 filmed by noted railfan photographer J. Allen Hawkins.  
 Be there, and bring digital briefs!

### MEMBERSHIP MEETING DETAILS

Once again we'll be meeting at the MTA Building. The  
 MTA Building is adjacent to Union Station. Parking is  
 available in the underground lot shared by the MTA and Union  
 Station. The probable cost, \$5, or the maximum, \$6, depends  
 on timing.

**NOTE: Denny's has been sold, and is now a Nibbler's. We've been unable to contact the new management. If you've been eating at Denny's, and leaving your car there, and wish to do the same at Nibbler's, YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN! Talk to the on-duty manager at Nibbler's, and confirm that its OK to leave your car there!**

To get to the meeting from Denny's, for safety, cross the  
 street at the traffic signal, and walk right into the covered MTA  
 garage and parking. Then follow the signs in the garage to the  
 MTA Building elevators, to your right.

You can also take any of the Metro rail lines, or Metro  
 and "MUNI" bus lines, that serve Union Station, and Metro-  
 link.

### MEMBERSHIP REPORT by VIRGINIA GRUPP

There were no late renewals. On May 6, 2011, the following  
 with seniority numbers were voted into PRS. Brian Rubino,  
 442; John Thorup, 443; Harold Swenson, 444; Thomas Carter,  
 445; Ken Martin, 446; Kim Curtin, 447; Alan Feinstein, 448;  
 Gary Miller, 449; Frank Greenwalt, 450; Bob Lucas, 451;  
 Robert Thompson, 452; Reda Anderson, 453; and Terry Haller,  
 454.

**NATIONAL TRAIN DAY** was on May 7, 2011 at Los Angeles  
 Union Station. PRS had a table at the event with members Marti  
 Ann Draper, Ken Ruben, John Ulloth, and Tom Geer serving the  
 public.

### TRAINS TO HAUL TRASH by LINDSAY SMITH

The *San Gabriel Tribune* headline on the front page of the  
 April 11, 2011 issue was over pictures of the half-complete  
 "massive waste by rail" project. The \$450 million project may  
 be complete by 2012. It is not really needed until November 1,  
 2013, when the Puente Hills Landfill license to accept trash will  
 expire. The current economic depression has significantly  
 reduced the trash coming to the Material Recovery Center on

Workman Mill Road, so the need for permanent or long-term storage of trash is not forcing a rapid completion of the facilities to load trash on rail cars. The dumping at Puente Hills Landfill will stop on November 1, 2013, even if capacity is not reached. Then the rail route must function.

It is planned to load two 4,000 ton loads per day on Union Pacific trains at an intermodal yard for transport 200 miles to Mesquite in Imperial County. There will be an additional 12,000 tons from other locations. The Intermodal Yard will be located at 2500 to 2520 Pellissier Place in Industry, Los Angeles, CA. The Intermodal Yard property was purchased for \$40 million. There is a cross-under to allow movement of containers from the recovery facility to the rail yard.

The Mesquite dump was purchased for \$42 million, and they have to make seals and unloading facilities at the end of the rail journey. Mesquite is expected to accept trash for 100 years. The capacity estimate is 600 million tons. The Southern California Sanitary Districts will comprise a major railroad industry across the state of California. The Liberty Mine dump is held up by court action to protect the desert turtle and water shed.

Trash is collected by the trash hauling companies. Some of the trash companies remove recyclable material and sell it. The material remaining must be sent to the Puente Hills Landfill dump and other locations. The newspaper article states that the current cost to the trash hauler to dump at the Material Recovery Facility is \$30.00/ton. This cost is tempered by the recovery and sale of recyclables. When the Puente Hills Landfill closes in 2013, the cost to dump is estimated to be \$80.00/ton. Currently the trash collectors seek lower cost alternative dumps away from the Los Angeles Sanitary Districts facilities. It is forecast that the alternative dumps will fill soon.

## CALTRAIN NEWS

by **MIKE GONDON**

After promises of drastic cuts to Caltrain service, which would have resulted in 48 weekday rush-hour trains, closed 16 stations, and eliminated all weekend and Gilroy service, the Caltrain Board offered a plan that would have kept 76 weekday trains, including Gilroy service, closed only three stations, and retained limited weekend service. The plan was voted down and board members were able to secure additional funding to cover all but \$3.5 million of Caltrain's \$30 million budget shortfall.

This means that all 86 weekday trains will remain, no stations will close, and weekend and Gilroy service will continue as at present. Funds to fill the remaining \$3.5 million have been tentatively identified, but are subject to ongoing discussions with Caltrain's partner agencies and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.

To keep their existing service, Caltrain passengers will pay an extra 25¢ per zone fare hike and an additional \$1 a day to park. Much of the money identified to close the budget gap is being borrowed from the 2013 fiscal year. In the meantime the Caltrain Board is hoping to come up with a steady funding source, which probably means an additional tax. Given the public's anti-tax mood, and the 2/3 approval requirement to pass a new tax, the saga is far from over.

Ironically, Caltrain is enjoying its highest ridership ever. In March, 41,442 people rode Caltrain, in spite of the still de-

pressed economy. Of course, a big reason for that is the \$4+ price for a gallon of gas. In addition, Caltrain is one of the best transit agencies in the Bay Area for farebox recovery. According to 2009 figures, Caltrain received 47.4% of its revenue from fares. That is second only to BART, which received 62.3% of its revenue from fares.

If and when high-speed rail is ever built in California, part of that plan is to quadruple track the Caltrain line between San Jose and San Francisco. That plan is running into a lot of opposition for a number of reasons, including cost. An alternate plan has been proposed that would improve the existing double track system for a quarter of the cost and be up and running as much as 15 years sooner. The downside is only about half as many trains could be run, and trips would take 10-15 minutes longer. The High-Speed Rail Board is expected to push this plan so that service can begin sooner.

## PASSENGER TRAIN UPDATES by CHARLES VARNES AMTRAK

In May Amtrak celebrated its 40th anniversary. It began operating May 1, 1971.

### APRIL RIDERSHIP

Amtrak's April 2011 ridership was its best ever and marks 18 consecutive months of year-over-year ridership growth. The streak of 18 consecutive months of year-over-year ridership growth began in November 2009. Ridership for April 2011 was nearly 2.7 million passengers which represents an increase of 9.9 percent over April 2010 and keeps it on track to set a new annual ridership record.

### Northeast Corridor Ridership

April 2011 ridership in the Northeast Corridor was 991,543 vs. 902,331 in April 2010, a 9.9 percent increase. October-April FY 11 ridership was 6,263,098 vs. October-April FY 10's 5,977,836, a 4.8 percent increase.

### State Supported and Other Short Distance Corridors

April 2011 ridership in state supported and other short distance corridors was 1,317,189 vs. 1,190,262 in April 2010, a 10.7 percent increase. October-April FY 11 ridership was 8,286,260 vs. October-April FY 10's 7,662,083, an 8.1 percent increase.

### Long Distance Train Ridership

April 2011 ridership aboard long distance trains was 380,223 vs. 353,172 in April 2010, a 7.7 percent increase. October-April FY 11 ridership was 2,562,112 vs. October-April FY 10's 2,562,112, a 5.6 percent increase.

### SPRING-SUMMER TIMETABLE RELEASED

The Amtrak 2011 Spring-Summer System Timetable took effect on May 9. It is now available in stations and can be ordered online at Amtrak.com.

### HISTORICAL ON-TIME PERFORMANCE

The April 2011 historical on-time performance percentages were not available by the column deadline.

### EXPRESS MEALS

To solve the problem of shortened meal periods or hurried service aboard Amtrak long distance trains which depart from their initial terminal or arrive at their destination during dining hours, Amtrak began serving express meals on some trains in mid-April. The express meals are selected items from dining car

menus that can be easily served.

Dining car hours are: breakfast 6:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., lunch 11:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., and dinner 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Dining cars on the following trains now serve express meals.  
*Sunset Limited* (Train 1/2) arriving Los Angeles, breakfast; arriving New Orleans, lunch. .

*Southwest Chief* (Train 3) arriving Los Angeles, breakfast.

*California Zephyr* (Train 6) arriving Chicago, lunch.

*Crescent* (Train 19/20) arriving New Orleans, dinner; arriving New York, lunch,

*Texas Eagle* (Train 22) arriving Chicago, lunch.

*Capitol Limited* (Train 29/30) arriving Chicago, breakfast; arriving Washington, D.C. lunch.

*Lake Shore* (Train 49) arriving Chicago, breakfast

*City of New Orleans* (Train 58/59) arriving Chicago, breakfast; departing Chicago dinner.

*Silver Star* (Train 91/92) arriving Miami and New York, dinner.

*Silver Meteor* (Train 97/98) arriving Miami, dinner; departing Miami, breakfast.

[Info. from Ken Ruben, Ed Von Nordeck]

## AAR MAY STORED FREIGHT CARS REPORT

by CHARLES VARNES

The Association of American Railroads reported that as of May 1, 2011, 276,228 freight cars – 18.2% of the total fleet – were in storage, a decrease of 7,421 cars from April 1, 2011. On April 1, 18.7 percent of the fleet was in storage.

In their May 1 report the AAR stated, “Recent additional AAR analysis allows us to estimate how the North American rail car fleet has changed since July 2009, when cars in storage peaked. At that time, there were 1.603 million cars in the fleet. As of May 1, 2011, there were 1.533 million cars in the fleet – a reduction of 69,997 cars. From July 2009 through April 2011, 30,783 new cars were installed (based on the cars’ “built date” in the freight car database). Adding the 69,997 and the 30,783 yields 100,780 net cars scrapped or otherwise removed. Cars in storage on July 1, 2009 totaled 502,853. Cars in storage on May 1, 2011 were 276,228, for a net reduction in cars in storage since July 2009 of 226,625. Subtracting the 100,780 net cars scrapped or otherwise removed yields 125,845 freight cars returned to service.

[Info. from AAR Rail Time Indicators]

## URBAN RAIL TRANSIT

### METRO EASES LIMITS ON BIKES

Metro has repealed its peak-hour restrictions for taking bicycles aboard trains. Metro’s previous policy was that bikes could not be taken aboard Blue, Gold, Red, and Green Line trains in certain directions between 6:30 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. and could also not be taken aboard from 4:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. in all areas within the central business district.

Some seats will also be removed from Gold, Green, and Blue Line trains to accommodate bicycles. Seat removal on the Red/Purple Line has already occurred, Metro said.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

### GOLD LINE FOOTHILL EXTENSION

Claremont’s Metrolink station will be relocated one block to the east if the Metro Gold Line is extended to Claremont and

Montclair. The historic downtown train depot will then become the station for the Gold Line. That proposed light rail route – 12.6 miles from Azusa to Montclair – is under environmental review.

Gene Kim, senior planning manager at the Metro Gold Line Foothill Construction Authority, said the changes would minimize traffic delays on Indian Hill Boulevard because trains would stop at the new Metrolink station several hundred yards to the east.

A parking garage with 1,120 spaces would also be built to the north of College Avenue. The garage would include a pedestrian overpass to connect it to Metrolink platforms and nearby Little League fields on the south side of the tracks, officials said. Habib Balian, chief executive officer of the Foothill Extension Construction Authority said he was hopeful construction could start in 2015 or 2016.

Metro Gold Line officials also announced in mid-April an agreement in which the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway will abandon its rights to use the rail corridor between Arcadia and Irwindale along the proposed Gold Line route.

[Info. from *Pasadena Star-News*]

### LEIMERT PARK VILLAGE

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas wants the Metropolitan Transportation Authority to upgrade the planned Crenshaw/LAX transit corridor, moving more of the light-rail line underground and adding a station closer to Leimert Park Village. It’s hard to make the financial case for the extra tunneling, but it makes sense to put a station closer to the heart of Leimert Park.

The Crenshaw/LAX project would run southwest from the Expo Line at Crenshaw Boulevard, meeting the Green Line near Los Angeles International Airport. The current plan calls for just one segment along Crenshaw to be at street level, from 48th Street south to 59th Street. For an estimated \$219 million, Ridley-Thomas wants to put the entire route along Crenshaw underground.

The potential boon to the local economy argues in favor of putting a station closer to Leimert Park Village, a historic center of African American life in Los Angeles. The MTA’s plan calls for an underground station near the shopping mall and bus stops at Crenshaw and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, less than half a mile from the center of Leimert Park. Ridley-Thomas wants to build a second underground stop at Vernon Avenue, a little more than half a mile down Crenshaw, for about \$120 million.

The least expensive approach would be to move the planned station at King closer to Vernon. The supervisor has proposed shifting funds away from other projects, including a portion of the \$200 million that is to be allocated for a possible extension of the Crenshaw and Green Lines toward LAX. Officials hope to have the Crenshaw Line open by 2018. Metro predicts between 12,000 and 20,000 riders each weekday.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

### METRO INCREASES SECURITY

Transportation officials are planning a number of security upgrades along Los Angeles County’s network of rail lines over the next year, including a chemical detection system and many new surveillance cameras. The improvements were planned before U.S. officials announced they had found evidence that

Osama bin Laden was planning some type of attack on U.S. rail systems. But officials said the roughly \$10-million worth of safety upgrades comes at an opportune moment.

Security measures have been scaled back in recent years as Metro faced budget shortfalls and large operating deficits. Officials said there was money available in the new budget for some enhancements. Metro plans to spend \$400,000 on fiber-optic connections, \$100,000 for their closed-circuit television system, and \$609,000 to centralize Metro's rail and bus operation centers. Metro plans to spend \$399,000 for an early warning system that could detect chemical weapons.

That will add to other post-9/11 security measures, which include increases in uniformed and plain-clothes officers and 14 bomb-sniffing dogs. At least 10 fixed cameras were installed on each subway train after the attack and Metro added platform cameras that tilt, pan and zoom.

Most rail systems are hesitant to create the same security environment as airports because part of the attraction of rail is that you don't have to take your shoes off, said Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris of UCLA's Institute of Transportation Studies. She and several colleagues published a paper on transit security in the wake of the Madrid bombings that argued that the U.S. was behind many European cities in their approach to security on surface transportation systems.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

#### SOUTH BAY METRO GREEN LINE EXTENSION

Metro is conducting an environmental review of the South Bay Green Line Extension. The study examined options for extending rail service using an existing railroad right-of-way (ROW) known as the "Harbor Subdivision." Three alternatives will be analyzed. Light Rail – An extension of the Metro Green Line from its current terminus at the Redondo Beach Station to the proposed Torrance Regional Transit Center (RTC). No Build – Transportation network without the proposed project. Transportation Systems Management – Essentially involving synchronized traffic signals and making other minor street improvements to accommodate buses more efficiently. A plan to run Metrolink along an existing freight train line was abandoned because of a lack of public support and other issues.

The Torrance RTC is immediately north of the Crenshaw Blvd. underpass. Most of the construction will be at ground level alongside the BNSF freight track, there being adequate ROW. Two grade crossings will be closed in the Lawndale area with two elevated segments involving stations as well as crossings of busy intersections.

With the pending Crenshaw Line stretching south from the Exposition Line to LAX and connecting with the Green Line, logic tells us to make the south leg of the Green Line a part of the Crenshaw Line., thus establishing a true North-South Line. This may develop, affording a more direct route to downtown Los Angeles and Union Station with its tie-in to the Exposition Line. In any event, the South Bay Green Line Extension will hopefully get approval for construction with an in-service date by 2018

Metro is also analyzing four potential sites for a maintenance facility to support an 8.5-mile light-rail line in the Crenshaw District along Crenshaw Boulevard from Exposition Blvd. to the Metro Green Line. The sites being considered are located in the

cities of LA, Inglewood, Hawthorne, and Redondo Beach. The project received a \$546 million federal loan to accelerate construction, which will be repaid over the next 30 years with funds from Measure R.

[Info. from Metro, *Daily Breeze*, and Jack Whitmeyer]

#### PRS 75TH ANNIVERSARY GOLDEN JUBILEE TRAIN REPORT

by BOB JOHNSON

I can't believe how time just moves along. It was now time to celebrate PRS's 75th Anniversary, and what better way to do it than ride a special train over a very special route that doesn't see a passenger train operating over it regularly.

On the morning of Saturday, April 2, 2011, PRS members and guests boarded the Amtrak Special Train at Los Angeles Union Station for a great trip via the Los Angeles Basin, Cajon Pass, and the Tehachapi Mountains to the San Joaquin Valley city of Bakersfield.

The train, spotted on Track 10, consisted of the following equipment: 1. Amtrak locomotive 156, a model P-42BH built by GE, that had just been shopped at Beech Grove, Indiana shops and freshly painted in Amtrak's Phase 1 Heritage Paint Scheme to celebrate their 40th Anniversary taking place this year. Amtrak had arranged for this unit to lead our train this weekend, and it had arrived in the consist of Train #3 from Chicago the day before; 2. Amtrak locomotive 510, a model P32-BWH built by GE; 3. *Pony Express* Entertainment Car PPCX 800320, a former Canadian Pacific baggage car that had been converted so passengers could look out the side doors; 4-6. Amtrak Amfleet Coaches numbers 82570, 82720, and 82500; 7. Amtrak Great Dome *Ocean View* 10031, the only dome car left in its fleet, a former Great Northern Railway Dome; 8-9. Amtrak Amfleet Coaches 82710 and 82560; 10. San Luis and Rio Grande's Big Dome SLRG 511, a former Santa Fe Dome; 11. *Silver Lariat* standard Dome Coach/Lounge Car RPCX 800190, owned privately by Bert Hermey and Al Bishop, a former Chicago Burlington and Quincy Dome; 12. *National Forum*, PRS's own 6-4-6 Pullman PPCX 800204, former Union Pacific. Note: Reporting marks PPCX stands for Private Passenger Car, RPCX stands for Revenue Passenger Car, and X on the end of those marks stands for cars not owned by a Railroad Company.

The last two domes in the consist were reserved for passengers paying an extra \$200 for premium services. PRS's *National Forum* was reserved for a few more of those paying for premium services, but mainly it carried crew members from Amtrak and volunteers from PRS, as well as the rear oscillating red marker light and drumhead with PRS's 75th Anniversary logo on it.

PRS volunteers were waiting at Union Station's main entrance to hand out boarding passes to arriving passengers, starting about 8 a.m. For accounting purposes, Amtrak assigned our train No. 966.

After a small delay to load a handicapped passenger, the train departed at 9:08 a.m., 8 minutes off the advertised. It proceeded as an eastward train, 1.3 miles via Metrolink's Terminal Lead of its River Subdivision to Yuma Junction. Here we entered Union Pacific's Alhambra Subdivision for the 54.5 mile trip to Pepper St. at the East End of UP's West Colton Classification Yard.

After passing through El Monte, we paralleled Metrolink's

San Gabriel Subdivision to Bassett, where it crossed over us in that segment on a flyover bridge. Right before we got to that bridge we passed Metrolink Train 353, running on schedule and heading for the stop at El Monte.

Passing Hamilton Ave. in Pomona where UP's Los Angeles Subdivision then parallels our line to Montclair, we observed a UP Eastbound Double Stack Container Train stopped on that line waiting to follow us. We then made a scheduled station stop at Ontario to take on more passengers. After waiting about 15 minutes, we departed on time at 10:15 a.m. We proceeded to the UP "Administration Building" at Cedar Ave., stopping there at 10:28 a.m., where we picked up our UP Pilot Crew and then the Amtrak crew all got together to have a required "Job Briefing". We departed about 10 minutes later and proceeded to Pepper St.

#### PALMDALE-COLTON CUTOFF

Next we entered the Palmdale-Colton Cutoff known to the UP as the Mojave Subdivision for the 178.3 mile run to Kern Junction in Bakersfield. At this location, we would change directions and become a Northward Train. Climbing the Cutoff, we would parallel the BNSF Railway's Cajon Subdivision from Dike to Hiland. Several BNSF and UP Westbound freights were observed between these two points.

After leaving the "Cactus Castle" city of Phelan and the passing track there (This is what UP calls them or passes, not sidings.), we noticed a helicopter chasing our train to Wash passing track. We would later learn that "Trainorders.com" leased this helicopter to video our train in honor of our 75th Anniversary and the running of this very special train. A few miles later, at the rock quarry called Vulcan Minerals, where the UP has recently installed a new spur track, a northbound UP Rock Train was observed, loaded and ready for a crew to come get it.

Around the passing track at Palmdale, box lunches were passed out to passengers riding in the Amfleet Coaches. We then paralleled the Metrolink Valley Subdivision on the west side of our train from Palmdale Jct. to Lancaster, but no trains were scheduled to run on it. We made a special stop at the south end of Oban passing track at 12:44 p.m. for about 3 minutes to hand up box lunches to our UP and Amtrak Crews on the lead locomotive

We continued on, passing South Mojave with the UP yard to the left and junction of BNSF's Mojave Subdivision line to Barstow to the right and then the UP Lone Pine Subdivision to Searles. At Marcel, we entered the passing track and met BNSF 4463 South, an intermodal train with a Norfolk Southern unit in its consist. We stopped at 1:48 p.m. and moved again at 1:55 p.m.

The Tehachapi Loop was next at Walong passing track and everyone on the train had smiles, taking pictures as we went around it. The mountains were beautiful all the way with green.

We entered Main 2 for the run from Bena to Kern Jct. Bena used to be the site of a helper engine spur, where heavy southbound trains used to get their helper engines cut in for the run to Tehachapi Summit. Distributed Power Units have eliminated the need for manned helpers and we observed that the spur had been taken completely out.

Between Bena and Edison, a distance of about 9 miles, we passed 4 southbound freight trains: First was UP 5437, a

General Merchandise; then UP 4404, a Double Stack Container Train; then BNSF 5181, a Coil Steel Train, and finally BNSF 7495, a Double Stack Container Train. It is not known if the UP Dispatcher in Omaha held these trains for our special, or if it just happened to work out that way.. Either way, we fans had much to look at and enjoy.

We arrived at Kern Jct. at 3:17 p.m. and our UP crew got off. A BNSF Bakersfield Yard Engineer got on, who would be our pilot for the run to the Amtrak Station on BNSF's Mojave Subdivision, 2 miles away. We would change direction again and become a westward train. Arrival at Bakersfield was 3:37 p.m., ending a 6 hour and 29 minute trip. Passengers detrained and made their way to two different hotels for the stay.

That night at the Marriott Hotel, an Italian Buffet was served to several hundred people to celebrate PRS's 75th Anniversary Golden Jubilee. President Marti Ann Draper said a few words, including a thank you to members for making PRS what it is today, and also to Amtrak for running the train and providing Lead Locomotive 156 and wishing them a Happy 40th Anniversary.

The show was turned over to PRS Member Russ Davies, who did a video presentation of PRS Excursions of the past that included pictures taken by late members Dave Cameron and Bill Farmer. Several pictures were shown of the last PRS Special Train that ran to Bakersfield 32 years ago.

#### RETURNING TO LOS ANGELES

On the morning of April 3, the same equipment listed above was taken west on BNSF's Bakersfield Division to the wye at the west end of town called Jastro for turning. Today the train would take the same route as the day before back to Union Station. For accounting purposes, Amtrak assigned us Train No. 967. Passengers were loaded and the train departed at 9:05 a.m., five minutes late. We were an eastward train.

The train arrived at Kern Jct., the BNSF Yard Pilot got off and the UP Pilot crew boarded the lead locomotive. The Amtrak crew walked up once again for a required job briefing. While this was taking place a San Joaquin Valley Railroad general merchandise local freight proceeded north off the UP Mojave Subdivision on to their line that goes to Buttonwillow.

We departed at 9:23 a.m., now a southward train proceeding up track 1 to Bena. A Northbound UP General Merchandise train was in the passing track for us at Rowen. Once we passed the North switch, he wasted no time leaving. Going around the Tehachapi Loop at Walong once again put smiles on every face.

We stopped at the replica Tehachapi Station for a newspress photo shoot at 10:57 a.m., departing at 11:03 a.m. While running on main track 1 between Monolith and Cameron we would be treated to a unique surprise. A short, UP Northbound Double Stack Train on main track 2, reportedly headed from Long Beach to Oakland, would pass us with one KCS (Kansas City Southern Lines) Heritage Painted Unit on the head end and one KCS Heritage Unit on the rear! Now that was a treat.

Lunch was once again served to passengers in the Amfleet coaches as we were passing Mojave. The train stopped again at the South End of Oban passing track at 11:56 a.m. to hand box lunches to the crew on the lead unit, departing at 11:59 a.m. Between Blue Cut and Dike, we would overtake a BNSF general merchandise train on the parallel BNSF Cajon Subdivision. This

was another special treat for the fans.

At Pepper St. we would come off the UP Mojave Subdivision and enter the Alhambra Subdivision, becoming a westward train. We stopped at Cedar Ave. for two minutes to let the UP Pilot Conductor off. The UP Pilot engineer would deadhead home on our train to Los Angeles. We arrived at Ontario at 2:17 p.m., discharging some of our passengers here, then departed at 2:24 p.m. We stopped at Valley Boulevard in Los Angeles at 3:09 p.m. to wait for Amtrak Train No. 2, the *Sunset Limited*, to pass.

After about a 10 minute wait, we were moving again, just to pull down to a stop for three minutes at UP's Los Angeles Transportation Center, also known as the "Shops" to let our deadheading pilot engineer off. We then entered the Metrolink Terminal Lead of their River Subdivision at Yuma Jct. for the run to Union Station. Arrival at Union Station was at 3:39 p.m., ending a 6 hour and 34 minute trip. A trip that will be remembered by all that were on it for a long time to come.

#### TRIP COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS

A big Thank You goes out to all the PRS volunteers on this very special trip. Without you, we wouldn't have been able to have such a great time enjoying our rail hobbies. Another big Thank You goes to both BNSF Railway and Union Pacific Railroad for approving the running of this train on their lines. Thanks also to Metrolink, as we traveled on a small portion of their tracks to get into and out of Los Angeles Union Station. Another big Thank You goes to Amtrak for providing the locomotives, especially Heritage Painted 156 to lead out train, Amfleet Cars and Great Dome car, crew, including Lead Service Attendant in the Dome. Amtrak did a great job of making sure the equipment was serviced and prepped for a problemless two-day trip. Another Thank You goes out to the owners of the private cars on the train for providing them and making us feel right at home. As you can see, everyone above worked together at a team to make this trip happen.

Thanks to our club President and Excursion Director Marti Ann Draper, who I encouraged about two years ago to look into seeing if this trip was possible and then making many of the arrangements to have it happen. Thanks to PRS Member Rolland Graham who handled most of the ticketing and acted as an advisor for the trip. Thanks to PRS Member Andy Novak who handled the coordination of the PRS volunteers. Thanks goes to Amtrak Operating Officer Eric Smith for riding along each day and supervision his crews, although they know their jobs so well he just watched with pride. Thanks to PRS Member Russ Davies for providing the picture show at the Golden Jubilee Anniversary gathering on Saturday Night.

There are too many other people to name here, but a big Thank You to everyone involved, including paying passengers. Again this is what teamwork and PRS is all about and none of this would have been possible without you.

The one-way trip was made each day in about six and a half hours. If some of the delays could have been cut out, we could have made it in less than six. However, on a trip like this, getting there is half the fun and there was no need to hurry.

Our engine crew and pilots ran our train at maximum authorized speed. The maximum speed we would reach was no faster than 70 mph. Between Cameron and Mojave there is a separate

speed for passenger trains, even though this segment does not see one on a regular basis. We ran at Passenger Train Speed each day in this segment.

One comment was made by me and several others, "Where are all the freight trains?" This was part of the reason we made such good time – there was hardly any freight traffic on the trip to slow us down. With the economy still recovering, the fact that manned helper engines are almost no longer needed on heavy freight trains, and freight trains are getting longer, all mean there aren't as many freight trains as there were in the past. With less freight traffic, there were more slots for our train. One example was on Saturday, as soon as we cleared the single track at Bena, four southbound freight trains back-to-back passed us without a stop. They were all out of our way by the time we reached Kern Jct., and we were not delayed by any of them.

Another thing I was glad about was that everyone showed respect and responsibility for each other. This was not only on the entire train, but for the fans chasing us each day. At no time did I observe any misconduct or unsafe acts by anyone. PRS had a trip and job briefing the week before with the volunteers and this helped tremendously. All our volunteers were professional and courteous. Thanks again, as this is what will allow these types of special trains to continue in the future. Many passengers, including myself, feel it was worth every penny we paid to be a part of such a great ride and experience.

#### SOME OF OUR PRS PEOPLE

I would like to take this time to name some members that make our club so special. Three of them are Al, Stephanie, and Andy Novak. A family of volunteers. Andy handled the coordination of the volunteers on this train. Al and Stephanie were volunteer car attendants.

Marti Ann Draper's husband, Barry, had planned to be a passenger, but when asked to volunteer, jumped at the chance. Way to go, Barry.

Longtime PRS Member Jim Minor rode the train with his wife, Glee. Jim had suffered a stroke that left him with a permanent coordination and speech limitation, but that didn't stop him from the trip.

PRS Member Mary Anné Nelson was along for the ride. Her husband, Tom, was a previous *Wheel Clicks* Editor and PRS Officer who passed away recently.

In closing, this was one of the best PRS trips I have been on in years. There is a connection to an old UP Commercial from the 50s and 60s that says, "Come take the Union Pacific for a Happy Trip!"

#### WOMAN ARRESTED OVER USE OF CELL PHONE

A passenger was taken off the *Coast Starlight* on May 15 following a disturbance over her continued and loud cell phone use, according to Salem, Oregon, police. The northbound Amtrak train was stopped in Salem until the police came and arrested the passenger, a 39-year-old woman from Tigard, and charged with disorderly conduct. A fellow passenger had mentioned to her that she was not to use her cell phone on the train, as had been announced, then the woman got verbally aggressive. Officers took her into custody and called family members, who came to pick her up.

[Info. from *Democrat-Herald* via Ken Ruben]



*Amtrak Train #966 sits in Los Angeles Union Station on April 2, 2011 with Amtrak Engine 156, painted in Phase 1 Heritage Colors, ready for departure. To the left is an extra Amtrak locomotive in the release track used in Pacific Surfliner Service.*

Photo by Bob Johnson



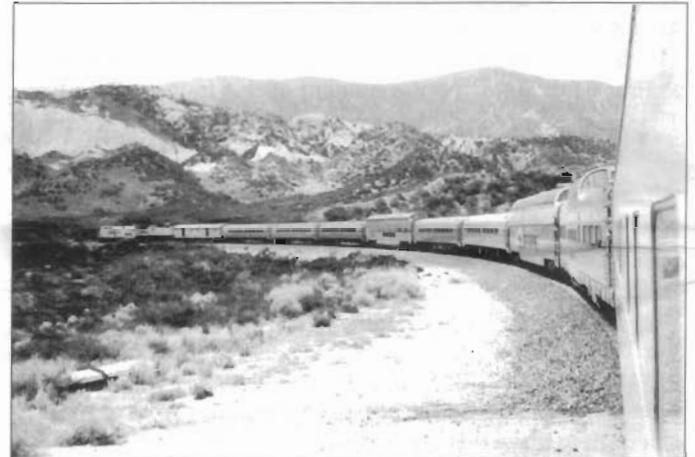
*On April 3, 2011, we are returning as Amtrak Train #967 and pass by the Vulcan Materials Spur, a fairly new one on this line. We are near the desert town of Little Rock with two UP locomotives waiting for the next assignment.*

Photo by Bob Johnson



*UP 5437 leads a Southbound General Merchandise Freight at Bena, as seen from Entertainment Car Pony Express. In the distance to the left of the locomotive, are three more locomotives being used in Distributed Power Configuration, which has eliminated the need for manned helpers.*

Photo by Bob Johnson



*Amtrak Train #967 rounds a curve as it descends Cajon Pass on the approach to Canyon Passing Track as viewed from the back of PRS Private Car National Forum.*

Photo by Bob Johnson



*Westbound just east of Edison we pass our third Southbound, BNSF 5181, a Coil Steel Train. A passenger at the Pony Express door waves to its crew.*

Photo by Bob Johnson



*From the top end of Amtrak's Great Dome Ocean View, we wait at Valley Bl. in Los Angeles for Amtrak Train #2, the Sunset Limited, to pass before we resume the last leg of our journey to Los Angeles Union Station.*

Photo by Bob Johnson