

# WHEEL CLICKS

Pacific Railroad Society Inc.

SEPTEMBER 2012

## PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

by NEIL BJORNSEN

Some good news. . . As a result of the July 14, 2012, PRS Board meeting held at "Saunders Yard," located in the City of Commerce (PRS' Railcar Museum location), the Board, at a subsequent Board meeting on August 3, authorized formation of a work plan and development of cost estimates to make the PRS owned ex-AT&SF high-level transition car No. 545 operable, road-worthy and "AMTRAK legal" for use in future excursion service. What a companion car this unique car would make to run with our ex-UPRR Pullman sleeper, *National Forum*! The Board is looking for a few good volunteers to assist in developing the work plan for the restoration of No. 545. Please contact me at [PRS.Exec@ymail.com](mailto:PRS.Exec@ymail.com) if you are interested in providing assistance.

Remember, PRS is YOUR organization.

Have you taken the opportunity to visit the PRS Museum lately and introduce yourself to the museum's newly acquired, fully uniformed Pullman Conductor? He is a full-size mannequin kindly donated by Paul & Susan Kirby, owners of the "Train Stop" model railroad shop located across the street from the PRS Museum.

The only detail missing is that this Pullman Conductor is lacking a name! Therefore, it has been decided to conduct a "Name our Pullman Conductor" contest. Please watch for further details in *WHEEL CLICKS*.

## THE SAN GABRIEL TRENCH PROJECT

Walsh Construction Company was awarded a \$172.6 million contract on July 23 to build a 1.4-mile trench that will route Union Pacific freight and Amtrak passenger trains below ground level. The contract, awarded by the Alameda Corridor East (ACE) Construction Authority, is part of ACE's program to create 22 grade separations and safety improvements at 39 crossings throughout the San Gabriel Valley.

The improvements are designed to improve safety and reduce the vehicle congestion and emissions that occur when cars and trucks are forced to wait while trains pass by. The trench project is ACE's largest single undertaking and it is expected to create nearly 9,000 jobs over its nearly five years of construction.

"I talked to the project manager and he said we'll haul out 500,000 yards of dirt," ACE spokesman Paul Hubler said. "That's equal to about 30,000 truckloads." ACE has submitted designated routes to the city that the excavation trucks will be required to use. "We will also install sound blankets during the construction process to reduce the noise," Hubler said.

ACE received a total of six construction bids for the project in late June, and all were below the ACE engineer's initial estimate of \$266.8 million. Walsh Construction's bid came in at 35 percent below the estimate.

"We're excited," said Bill Heathcott, business group leader for the Chicago-based company which maintains a regional office in Walnut Creek. "This will provide many opportunities for employment. One of our largest subcontractors, Steve Bubain Construction, is right up the road in Monrovia. Heathcott said his company's biggest challenge will be maintaining safety while working in and around the railroad tracks. The construction is being funded from Prop 1B transportation bonds approved by California voters in 2006. Other project elements will be paid for by MTA Measure R and other federal and local funds.

The entire 2.2-mile project will result in the lowering of Union Pacific railroad track in a 65-foot-wide, 30-foot-deep, 1.4-mile-long trench through San Gabriel. Street bridges will be built at Ramona Street, Mission Road, Del Mar Avenue and San Gabriel Boulevard. Those streets collectively carry nearly 90,000 vehicles a day. Work on the Ramona, Mission and Del Mar bridges will necessitate road closures. Hubler said, but the San Gabriel Boulevard bridge will be done in stages to allow traffic through during construction. Each road closure is expected to last about three months.

"This project is a great opportunity," said City Councilman David R. Gutierrez, who chairs the ACE board. "It will have a significant impact regionally because it will open up those crossings, and it will also have a role in reducing emissions." Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, an ACE board member and current MTA board chairman, said the project is "an important link in our regional strategy of moving cargo containers by train rather than in diesel trucks on our freeways."

Relocation of utilities along the project route has already begun. Work to move fiber optic lines will begin in September. The entire trench project is expected to be completed in late 2017.

[Info. from *Pasadena Star-News*]

## McCLOUD RAILWAY

by ROGER TITUS

[Photographs with this article are on page no. 8]

The three Dinner Train Cars are going to St. Marys, Idaho to be used for Milwaukee Railroad Historical Society at the end of June. The two Via Cars are going to Short Line in Eastern Oregon.

The Dinner Train Cars *Shasta* and *Siskiyou* (not seen) remain in McCloud for possible use on the McCloud-Mt. Shasta Line some time in the future.

Roger Titus was conductor on the McCloud Railway from 1997-2007 and on Yreka Western Railroad from 2006-2008. Perhaps his last run as conductor on the McCloud was June 20, 2012 as a conductor was needed to run locomotive #37 and caboose #102 from Mt. Shasta to McCloud 16 miles.



**WHEEL CLICKS**  
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**PR NEWS — ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES**

Sep. 1, 8, PRM open Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
 15, 22, 29 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.  
 Sep. 1, 8, Saunders Yard open Saturday, 8:30 a.m. to ?,  
 15, 22, 29 Noakes St. & Herbert Ave., Commerce.  
 Sep. 3, 10, PRM open Monday, 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
 17, 24 210 W. Bonita Ave. San Dimas.  
 Sep. 5, 12, PRM open Wednesday, 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
 19, 26 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.  
 Sep 7 PRS Board meeting, 7:30 p.m., Valencia Room,  
 Friday Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.  
 Sep. 14 PRS Membership meeting, 7:30 p.m., Alhambra  
 Friday Rm., Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel, Alhambra.  
 Sep 26 Wheel Clicks Mailing, 10:00 a.m., 1240  
 Wednesday Dominion Ave., Pasadena, CA 91104

**PROGRAMS**

by **RUSS DAVIES**

September 14: PRS Member Harvey Laner will present a video about **Railroading in North Korea!** This will be rare and timely footage. We all know how secretive North Korea is, and how difficult it is to gain access to their information (we're unable to provide the name of the photographer at this time). **Be there, and bring digital briefs!**

**MEMBERSHIP REPORT**

by **VIRGINIA GRUPP**

At the Board Meeting on August 3, five Late Renewals were reported.

**JOHN "JACK" WHITMEYER JR.**

John Whitmeyer passed away peacefully at home in Redondo Beach. Jack was born in San Francisco in 1921. After graduating from Riverside Jr. College in 1941, Jack enlisted in the US Navy. He was on the Heavy Cruiser USS Canberra when it was struck by an aerial torpedo off Formosa. He returned to Boston until VJ Day. Jack worked 34 years on the Santa Fe Railroad as a chainman, draftsman, civil engineer and expert witness, retiring in 1981.

Jack was a member of Pacific Railroad Society and the Orange Empire Railway Museum. Today his photos of steam engines, cable and trolley cars, stations and depots are found in many books and online. Jack was also an active member of the Los Angeles Maritime Museum, where he was a volunteer until his passing. Burial was at Green Hills Memorial Park in Rancho Palos Verdes.

**LOS ANGELES VOTERS TO DECIDE ON STREETCAR**

Downtown Los Angeles voters will decide on a \$125 million effort to bring a trolley system back to Los Angeles after the City Council agreed July 31 to have residents to vote on the property tax by mail-in balloting in November. The council approved formation of a taxing district that encompasses about 7,000 registered voters and 397 acres of land downtown. The measure needs a two-thirds majority to pass.

Under the proposal, property owners would pay a tax proportional to the square footage of their property and its proximity to the streetcar lines. The city will also seek \$52.5 million in federal grants. The four-mile streetcar line would run seven days a week and serve the Civic Center, Grand Avenue, L.A. Live, the Convention Center, Pershing Square and the city's historic core.  
 [Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

**ALAMEDA CORRIDOR SIMULATED ACCIDENTS**

Alameda Corridor on March 11 conducted a simulated accident to train for emergencies along the Alameda Corridor, the major transportation hub linking the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach to rail lines in downtown Los Angeles. The drill, set in Vernon, simulated smoke emanating from a cargo container loaded aboard a train passing through the 20-mile Corridor trench, a fire on one of the rail cars, a leaking tank car and injured railroad personnel.

The drill included members of the Los Angeles City and County fire departments and seven other fire and police entities. About 42 trains run through the Alameda Corridor daily,

carrying about 300 cargo containers each, according to officials with the Alameda Corridor Transportation Authority.  
[Info. from *The Daily Breeze* via Mike Palmer]

### BLUE LINE SAFETY TO BE PROBED

With 22 accidents and six fatalities so far this year, officials say the Blue Line – one of the busiest light rail lines in the nation – is on pace to have more deaths in 2012 than any other year in its 22-year history. This is a considerable feat given the line's checkered safety record of striking passing cars or pedestrians, or as a place where some go to commit suicide with four of the fatalities this year ruled suicides.

The Blue Line, which has 26 million riders annually, opened as the county's first light-rail line in 1990. It averaged 50.9 accidents during the first dozen years of operation, but that number dropped substantially over the next decade with an average of 27.9 accidents annually. In 1999, the line earned the dubious standing as California's deadliest rail transit route as 10 people were killed and 40 others were injured in 50 accidents that year, most involving collisions with motor vehicles at street crossings.

Over the years Metro has taken several steps to improve safety, including placing photo enforcement cameras at street crossings to discourage drivers from trying to race through intersections before a train can pass. Officials said the improvements contributed to a sharp decline in accidents.

The line had some of its lowest accident totals between 2008 and 2011, but "things have changed this past year," according to county Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, a board member of the Blue Line's operator, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority. "If numbers generated in the first half of the year are any indication, by year's end there could be more fatalities and twice as many suicides than any other year in the history of the rail line. Suicides alone account for a major portion of the increase in overall accidents," Yaroslavsky wrote to colleagues, calling for a deeper investigation.

"This has been an ongoing open sore for the MTA," Yaroslavsky said in an interview. "No other line that we operate, anywhere... has this kind of fatality statistics... Frankly, I think it's long past time to take a look at what's going on." Yaroslavsky said "a good number" of the accidents are suicides "but we need to look at what we can do to make it harder for people to commit suicide, to get on the tracks, and identify where the accidents are occurring" and what can be done to avoid them.

The Blue Line task force created August 6 by the Metro board will make its report in November. Officials also ordered the agency to do a better job of informing riders about accidents and breakdowns along the lines. But officials on August 6 did not focus only on the Blue Line; they also discussed recent problems with the Expo Line, which some board members said was also a treat to safety.

As for the Blue Line, the number of issues we have had on this line... is alarming," said Metro board chairman Michael D. Antonovich, a county supervisor. But, he said, "we cannot look at these lines in isolation, or pit one against the other, we have to look at safety as a whole."

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

### CULVER CITY IS URBAN HUB BUT MAY STALL

Light-rail passenger service returned to Culver City recently after a nearly 60-year break, speeding the evolution of the formerly insulated bedroom community into an urban hub of business and revelry. Hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of real estate development are in the pipeline, including a project linked to the new Expo Line that would contain apartments, stores and a hotel. Restaurant operators have been so keen on opening in the gentrifying downtown that rents for retail space didn't decline during the economic downturn as they did in most markets.

The renaissance is at risk of stalling, however. City leaders are worried that because state officials dissolved local redevelopment agencies earlier this year, Culver City will be unable to support development that would capitalize on the rail line. "We are in limbo trying to determine whether the state will require more from us or whether we can go ahead with these projects," Councilman Jim Clarke said.

The low-key linear city evolved along railroad lines and roads connecting downtown Los Angeles with Abbot Kinney's resort-city Venice, making it a self-contained outpost in the early 20th century. Its personality, however, lost luster after World War II as it was engulfed by sprawling Los Angeles. With the cessation of train service in the 1950s and the 1965 opening of the Santa Monica Freeway, Culver City became a bit of an island, Clarke said, with its own police force and conservative sensibility.

In the mid-2000s, Clarke said, "I left this sleepy bed-room community, and I came back four years later and there were three wine bars." Others followed and a Culver City scene emerged that attracts a young crowd to its bars and restaurants. But Clarke and other leaders want downtown to be more than a food-and-beverage playground. It needs other retail outlets such as stores not typically found in nearby malls.

Several real estate developments were planned before the state swooped in on community redevelopment funds and created doubts about whether developers would be able to get title to land they hoped to buy from the city. One of the largest planned developments is at a triangular site at Venice, National and Washington boulevards where the Expo Line stops. Train passengers can't see much there now but Los Angeles developer Lowe Enterprises was selected by the city to build a 5-acre complex with stores, offices, apartments and a 150-room hotel. If the process goes as expected, Lowe will complete its development plans in the fall, navigate the city's approval process and deliver the yet-to-be-named project by 2015 or 2016.

Right now Culver City is the last stop for Expo Line trains from L.A.'s financial district, but construction is underway to bring service to Santa Monica by 2015. "Once the line goes all the way to Santa Monica, we are going to be a stop on the line like any other," Clarke said. "we can attract people from downtown and the Westside, or we will just be a parking lot or another stop along the way."

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

### NOT ALL IS QUIET ON THE EAST SIDE

City and County officials celebrated the opening of the Culver City station. But for a group of Culver City homeowners, the potential of the light rail to improve the lives of residents has

had the opposite effect on them. Liz Weiner says she has lost sleep due to noise from the train since the station opened on June 20. "There are times when the train operator makes an announcement that the train is coming into Culver City on the loudspeaker after midnight," recalled Weiner, a teacher with the Los Angeles Unified School District. "And there are times in the morning when it comes by really fast and wakes me up."

"We're in the midst of contracting for a noise analysis to determine if the project is exceeding noise limits specified in the environmental impact report, City Manager John Nachbar told the Culver City News. The city manager was referring to the environmental analysis that was signed by the Culver City Council in 2005. Ron Gilbert lives approximately 75 feet from the rail tracks. "The worst part is when the trains switch and there is this clacking noise, like a dump truck," said Gilbert. I can feel the vibrations all the way in my house."

"We have been advised that Expo has retained an independent third-party to perform noise measurements/ analysis. Their report should be available sometime before the end of July," said John Rivera, Culver City Public Works Senior Analyst. Rivera is the liaison between Culver City and the Expo Construction Authority, the entity in charge of building the Expo Line. [Info. from *Culver City News* via Ken Ruben]

#### **TORRANCE REGIONAL TRANSIT CENTER**

Torrance has finalized the design of its new \$21 million regional transit center on Crenshaw Boulevard. The City Council signed off August 7 on the 16,500-square-foot structure. The center features a "signature" white canopy over a pedestrian walkway that will be lighted from underneath, reminiscent of the white roofs at Carson's Home Depot Center.

Officially dubbed the Torrance Transit Park and Ride Regional Terminal, the 15-acre site will have room for 300 cars in a surface parking lot and serve as a transit hub for the South Bay. Torrance has not had a transit center since the one at Del Amo Fashion Center closed in 2005 as the mall began to develop the east side of the shopping center.

The new transit center is strategically located so that an extension of the Green Line will eventually connect with local bus lines at the location. A proposed retail building was eliminated from the final design and a parking structure – or two – will be built at a later date.

"We had to remove some portions of this (project) to be within our budget," Mayor Frank Scotto said. However, the elimination of the retail space means planners have carved a 6,000 to 7,000-square foot plaza out of the transit center instead. The space could be used for concerts or other events, officials said.

City officials received grants totaling \$18.1 million last year for the alterations at the 18-acre former industrial site at 465 Crenshaw Blvd. for the transit center, and related developments. Much of the money came from Measure R, the half-cent sales tax increase county voters approved in 2008 that's dedicated to transportation projects.

The transit center will occupy 5 acres of the site and the city has already received interest from developers, including companies interested in building retail space, for the remainder of the site, Public Works Director Rob Beste said. City officials hope

to break ground early next year and have targeted a summer 2014 opening for the transit center.

[Info. from *The Daily Breeze* via Michael Palmer]

#### **HIGH-SPEED TRAIN TO LAS VEGAS**

A group of private investors is making a pitch for a \$6.9 billion high-speed rail line called XpressWest from Victorville to Las Vegas, and hopes to get a massive federal loan before the end of the summer. It could be the first high-speed rail project developed in the country.

The idea is ambitious enough, but Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael Antonovich literally wants to take it farther. He is envisioning a 50-mile connection from Palmdale to Victorville via a high-speed train that could be run by Metrolink, XpressWest or other providers that would link up with existing rail lines throughout Southern California.

It would also connect at Palmdale with the state's massive \$68 billion California High-Speed Rail network, still in the planning stages, that would link Los Angeles and San Francisco, and eventually include Sacramento and San Diego.

Developers of the XpressWest (formerly called DesertXpress) have a "Las Vegas experience" that starts before passengers even board the train. That means hotel check-in services at the station in Victorville, like getting room keys and checking in bags, along with the ability to book dinner and show reservations. The ride itself – lasting about 80 minutes as the trains zip along the 185-mile route at speeds up to 150 mph – will offer entertainment options such as a "nightclub" social car.

In Las Vegas, passengers could disembark right on the Strip – planners are deciding whether to put the train station near Mandalay Bay or Bellagio and Caesars Palace. The Victorville-Vegas round-trip fare: about \$89. But first, XpressWest's private investors would have to raise the funds to lay tracks from Victorville to Las Vegas.

So far, they have put together \$1.4 billion. They need \$5.5 billion more, and quickly, if they are to meet their target completion date in late 2017 or early 2018. XpressWest chief operating officer Andrew Mack said they have applied for a loan through the Federal Railway Administration's Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing program, which they tend to pay back with interest over 35 years.

Antonovich hopes to merge the XpressWest project with existing proposals. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority is in the environmental analysis phase of a project to build a 63-mile High Desert Corridor from Palmdale to Apple Valley, passing through Lancaster, Adelanto and Victorville. That route overlaps the connection sought by Antonovich, but experts have yet to decide whether the corridor should have a freeway, expressway, tollway, high-speed rail or a combination.

Metrolink's existing Antelope Valley line stretches from Union Station in downtown Los Angeles through Burbank, the northeast San Fernando Valley, Santa Clarita and out to Palmdale. Convinced that Palmdale should link up with Las Vegas, Antonovich endorsed XpressWest to U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood during a meeting in Washington, D.C. in June.

He also got the Metropolitan Transportation Authority to formally express support for the project and its federal loan

application in July. Whether the High Desert Corridor and California High-Speed Rail network are completed remains in question, however, because of funding shortfalls. In the case of the latter project, controversies over planning have also eroded once-enthusiastic public support.

[Info. from *Pasadena Star-News*]

**CALTRAIN NEWS** by **MIKE GONDRON**

On July 1, Caltrain celebrated 20 years of Joint Powers Board (JPB) ownership, after purchasing the line from Southern Pacific in 1992. Caltrain immediately expanded from 54 to 60 trains and extended service 30 miles south to Gilroy, adding stations at Tamien, Blossom Hill Road, and Morgan Hill. Additional stops at Capitol Expressway and San Martin came later.

During the 20 years of JPB ownership, Caltrain has added trains, improved access for disabled passengers and passengers with bicycles, eliminated onboard ticket sales, and reinvented itself in 2004 with the introduction of Baby Bullet service. That service, coupled with a booming economy, helped boost Caltrain ridership to record levels. Those levels have held up during the less than booming economy of the last four years.

When the California State Legislature voted to approve funding for the state's high-speed rail program, it also authorized \$600 million of those funds to modernize Caltrain. The modernization program will allow Caltrain and high-speed rail to operate primarily on Caltrain's existing tracks, clearing the way for electrification that Caltrain so desperately wants. The modernization program will also include installation of Positive Train Control, a federally mandated safety system that is supposed to prevent collisions. If all goes as planned, electric Caltrain service could be operating as early as 2019.

In July, Caltrain began testing a real-time train information system that will inform passengers of their train's expected arrival. The system will use both visual messages and audio announcements. The new system will work in tandem with GPS technology already on Caltrain locomotives and will transmit information to Caltrain's Central Control Center. From there, it will automatically be sent to digital message signs at stations. Automatic announcements will also be made over the public address system. The message will include the train number, scheduled time of arrival, and whether the train is on time or running late.

Once the system is installed, customers will be able to go to the Caltrain website to get real-time arrival and departure information. The system is expected to begin operating by the end of the year.

**LOS ANGELES METRO RAIL RIDERSHIP**

March 2012	Red Line	Blue Line	Green Line	Gold Line
Weekday Ave.	151,757	84,952	44,025	43,136
Saturday Ave.	88,870	61,087	22,052	20,934
Sunday Ave.	69,912	46,081	16,269	14,384
Monthly Total	4,062,656	2,358,708	1,143,884	1,111,208

April 2012	Red Line	Blue Line	Green Line	Gold Line
Weekday Ave.	149,917	84,459	43,337	42,170
Saturday Ave.	95,348	67,856	24,711	22,230
Sunday Ave.	83,697	54,822	17,989	19,418
Monthly Total	3,948,138	2,319,177	1,098,869	1,071,570

May 2012	Red Line	Blue Line	Green Line	Gold Line
Weekday Ave.	163,510	89,523	46,278	47,025
Saturday Ave.	92,034	59,718	25,656	21,887
Sunday Ave.	74,864	47,599	16,504	16,293
Monthly Total	4,193,343	2,368,959	1,166,129	1,161,884

May 2012	Expo Line
Weekday Ave.	16,569
Saturday Ave.	10,612
Sunday Ave.	8,674
Monthly Total	435,701

[Info. from Metro via Ken Ruben]

**METRO TO PROBE EXPO LINE PROBLEM**

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority has asked their Inspector General to investigate an alignment problem on the new Expo Line that experts say presents a risk of derailment if left uncorrected. Art Leahy, Metro's chief executive, announced during the board meeting on July 26 that he had directed Inspector General Karen Gorman to look into the junction at Washington Boulevard and Flower Street, where the Blue and Expo light rail lines merge just south of downtown Los Angeles.

Since June 2010, Metro, the California Public Utilities Commission and the Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority have been trying to eliminate a flaw to the track layout that was damaging the wheels of Blue Line trains, creating a derailment risk on one of the nation's busiest transit routes. Because of the problem, Metro has yet to officially accept the junction work from the Expo construction authority, which built the first phase of the line and opened it April 28, two years behind schedule. Metro takes over rail operations once a segment is completed.

Last week, the utilities commission ordered Metro and the Expo construction authority to replace a key piece of track in the junction that helps guide train wheels through a switch used by southbound Blue Line trains. Officials had tried welding extra metal to the track to solve the alignment issue, but the work has had to be repeated twice in the last few months because of cracking and chipping. As officials seek a permanent solution, Metro says the risk of a permanent derailment has been eliminated for now by the repair work, a stringent inspection program imposed by the PUC and having trains slow down as they go through the junction.

Susan MacAdams, a transit consultant and track expert who once worked for Metro, said that she told the inspector general's staff about the problems at Washington and Flower almost a year ago, but that nothing was apparently done. MacAdams said on the 26th she supported Leahy's action.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

## METRO TO EXPAND HOURS ON WEEKENDS

Beginning the last weekend in July, Metro lines will run until 2 a.m. on Friday and Saturday nights to reflect the Los Angeles region's "vibrant" night life. Riders on the Red, Blue, Gold, Purple, Green, and Expo lines will be able to catch a train every 20 minutes until 2 a.m., said Marc Littman of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

The Orange Line busway in the San Fernando Valley will operate until 2:40 a.m. Friday and Saturday nights. Officials are also considering extending the hours of the Silver Line busway, which runs from Harbor Gateway through downtown and east to El Monte. The decision to extend the hours was made by Metro CEO Art Leahy, who aims eventually to run the lines 24 hours a day, Littman said. Metro tried later hours on the Red Line during the 2008 Christmas season, but the operating expenses were covered by area businesses and council offices, and the money ran out. The exact cost of extending service on all the routes this time is unclear, but Littman said it will be "marginal."

"In downtown Los Angeles, Metro's extended Friday and Saturday evening hours will allow more customers to enjoy the many exciting late-night venues we offer, said City Councilman Jose Huizar, as well as encourage more people to use public transportation."

[Info. from *Hollywood Independent* via Mary Anne Nelson]

## UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD CELEBRATION

Union Pacific celebrated its 150th anniversary with a free community-wide event July 13 and 14 at Portland Union Station, featuring a showcase of Streamliner Locomotives 951, 949 and 963B. The three are the last of Union Pacific's high-speed, diesel-electric locomotives, said Zoe Richmond, Union Pacific spokeswoman. Attendees also could climb aboard a 1960s-era baggage car called the *Promontory*. The traveling exhibit included historical information on Union Pacific and artifacts such as railroad construction tools. Community members were able to operate a locomotive simulator to learn how trains function.

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

## PASSENGER TRAIN UPDATES by CHARLES VARNES CAPITOL CORRIDOR SCHEDULE CHANGES

In August the Sacramento depot track relocation project was completed. The project completion permits the storage of an additional trainset overnight in Sacramento eliminating the need to operate an extra round-trip every day to move equipment to/from Oakland. Also, several trains have minor schedule adjustments to provide better spacing between departures.

The schedule changes became effective August 13, 2012, and affect only Monday through Friday service. There are no changes to the weekend service.

Eastbound Train 518 was discontinued and Train 520 began operating ten minutes earlier

Westbound Train 531 began operating ten minutes earlier, Train 549 began operating 30 minutes later, Train 551 began operating 90 minutes later taking over the schedule of Train 553. Train 553 was discontinued.

The new Capitol Corridor timetable is available of the Amtrak web site.

## eTICKETING LAUNCHED ON SELECT AMTRAK CALIFORNIA THRUWAY BUSES

eTicketing has launched on select Amtrak California Thruway buses beginning with routes 18A (Hanford-San Luis Obispo-Santa Maria) and 18B (Hanford-Visalia) traveling through the Central Valley and coastal communities – and routes 3 (Stockton-Sacramento-Redding/Suisun-Fairfield), 20A (Sacramento-Auburn-Reno) and 20C (Sacramento-South Lake Tahoe) in the Sacramento Valley and foothills of Northern California.

eTicketed travel to or from these California Thruway buses now connects to the two state-supported California rail corridors – the *Capitol Corridor*® (Auburn-Sacramento-Emeryville/SF-Oakland-San Jose) and Amtrak California *San Joaquin*® (Sacramento-Oakland-Bakersfield) which launched eTicketing in April.

The eTicketing program provides passengers increased flexibility when making or changing reservations and eliminates the need to obtain traditional paper tickets. Passengers now have the ability to print eTickets themselves. A receipt will be e-mailed to the passenger with the eTicket attached as a printable document. Those passengers using their smartphones can also present their eTicket to the conductor or bus driver by simply opening the eTicket document from their e-mail to display the barcode for scanning. If a customer misplaces their eTicket, they can reprint the document to present it. Passengers may also print their eTickets at Amtrak ticket offices and Quik-Trak™ kiosks.

Converting the entire California Thruway bus system to eTicketing will be undertaken in stages and will be completed before the end of fall.

Amtrak intends to develop its eTicketing capability in a gradual manner. For this reason, not all tickets will be eTicket eligible. For example, passengers will continue to receive a conventional paper value ticket if they have purchased a Multi-Ride Ticket (such as a monthly or 10-ride ticket). Similarly, they will still receive paper value tickets if they are traveling on an excluded route, such as other California Thruway buses, the Pacific Surfliner route or are traveling beyond the Capitol Corridor or San Joaquin services, on some other Amtrak service.

To meet this summer's goal for a nationwide eTicketing launch, including the *Pacific Surfliner*, Amtrak has trained its approximately 1,700 conductors. Amtrak's eTicketing project began in November 2011 on the Amtrak *Downeaster* service (Boston – Portland, Maine), followed by the launch onboard Amtrak *City of New Orleans* (Chicago – New Orleans), the *Capitol Corridor*® (Auburn-Sacramento-Emeryville/SF-Oakland-San Jose) and Amtrak California *San Joaquin*® (Sacramento-Oakland-Bakersfield).

### AMTRAK

#### Historical On-Time Performance

The July 2012 historical on-time performance percentages for selected routes were:

Route	July 2012	June 2012	Last 12 months
Sunset Limited	63.0%	53.8%	57.6%
Texas Eagle	24.2%	58.3%	62.5%
Heartland Flyer	19.4%	45.0%	58.6%
Southwest Chief	64.5%	58.3%	78.1%

California Zephyr	50.0%	45.0%	54.6%
Empire Builder	13.2%	53.0%	63.0%
Coast Starlight	67.7%	81.7%	77.1%
City of New Orleans	91.9%	91.7%	89.9%
Pacific Surfliner	58.3%	74.3%	74.2%
San Joaquin	86.6%	85.3%	88.4%
Capitol Corridor	94.2%	93.9%	93.5%
Antrak Cascades	71.8%	85.7%	73.2%
Hiawatha	79.1%	89.0%	90.3%
Illinois Service	49.3%	89.0%	78.9%
Michigan Services	47.7%	63.0%	53.2%
Missouri River Runner	57.7%	83.3%	87.3%
Acela Express	85.5%	85.0%	90.0%
Northeast Regional	81.5%	79.8%	87.1%

[Info. from Ken Ruben, Ed Von Nordeck]

[Info. from AAR Rail Time Indicators via Charles Varnes]

### EXPORTING COAL TO ASIA

The race to export Montana and Wyoming coal through Northwest ports to Asia could have a big payoff. Developers of six proposed terminals pledge private port investments topping \$2 billion if the projects reach full capacity. That would generate \$25 million a year in taxes, the developers estimate, and more than 900 permanent "family-wage" jobs, mostly union, plus construction work.

Coal business could also generate millions to upgrade rail lines, supporters say, with railroads and terminal developers chipping in millions to address stubborn bottlenecks. But the prospect of more coal trains, each with up to 145 uncovered cars in a long black line, is generating anxiety along the tracks, including Seattle, the Columbia River Gorge, Portland, Vancouver and humble Rainier.

At full capacity, the Kinder Morgan terminal could trigger 12 round-trip coal trains a day, arriving full, returning empty. Each would be 1 to 1½-miles long, running 10 mph on tracks down the middle of A Street in the town of Rainier "I'm not going to stand up and say coal's going to kill the environment," says Sloan Nelson, Rainier city councilman. "But this is a small community of 1,800 people that is not flourishing. We can't afford to have 1,400 coal cars rattling through downtown every day."

Here's the potential scale of the new traffic. In 2010, trains unloaded about 80 million tons of freight in Oregon and Washington. At full capacity, the six export projects would add more than 150 million tons of coal. That tonnage would require 50 to 60 trains a day, counting return trips, with many likely to be funneled through the gorge. The lines on each side of the Columbia – BNSF Railway to the north and Union Pacific on the south – carried 40 trains or fewer a day in 2008, state reports indicate.

Railroad officials are big on coal trains. The trains, mainly from Powder River Basin mines in Montana and Wyoming, account for more than 40 percent of the rail tonnage nationwide. A handful of coal trains already roll to coal-fired power plants in Boardman and Centralia, Wash., and to export terminals in British Columbia. Neither Oregon nor Washington exports coal now. But new terminals would come on line slowly over years, rail officials say; only three have even applied for permits yet. Given the promise of coal money, railroads can spend to keep freight and passenger trains moving.

"Capacity is not going to be an issue," BNSF spokeswoman Suann Lundsberg says. "We're going to make the improvements as we need them because we want the business." Yet concerns about crowding aren't hard to find. A 2007 national freight rail study put the gorge, Portland-Vancouver and Puget Sound in the top 3 percent of congested lines. Delays in Portland-Vancouver already are greater than in the Chicago area, one of the nation's most congested.

Coal train money could end up giving the Northwest a premier rail system, said Terry Whiteside, a rail consultant diving into coal export issues for the Western Organization of Resource Councils. Or it could generate avoidable headaches. [Info. from *The Oregonian* via Caroline Hobson]

### VICTIMS UNHAPPY TRAIN LIABILITY CAP KEPT

Victims and relatives of those killed on a Metrolink train met with an aide to Sen. Dianne Feinstein on July 27. They asked for Feinstein to press lawmakers to raise the limit on how much money railroads can be forced to pay in damages to victims and their families. In 1997, the liability was capped at \$200 million per accident. Victims of a deadly train crash in Chatsworth, Los Angeles County, four years ago have expressed disappointment in Congress' failure to increase a railroad liability cap that they believe inadequately compensates them for their pain and suffering.

[Info. from *Pasadena Star-News*]

### AAR AUGUST STORED FREIGHT CARS REPORT

The Association of American Railroads reported that as of August 1, 2012, 314,971 freight cars were in storage, a decrease of 2,710 from July 1, 2012, and equal to 20.6 percent of the North American fleet, excluding cars without a load since before 2005. With the recent improvement in coal traffic, the decrease in the number of gondolas and open hoppers in storage was sufficient to end the 9-month streak of increases in total cars in storage.

Of the 502,853 cars that were in storage on July 1, 2009 (excluding those that last moved loaded prior to 2005), only 41,907 remained in storage continuously through August 1, 2012. Nearly 92 percent of the cars that were in storage at the peak have either carried a load since then (and perhaps subsequently returned to storage) or been scrapped.

For the last 12 months the number of stored freight cars (and the percentage of the fleet excluding cars without a load since before 2005) on the first day of the month was: 2011: August, 276,943 (18.2); September, 271,404 (17.8); October, 260,317 (17.1); November, 261,695 (17.2); December 263,912 (17.3); 2012: January, 273,390 (18.0); February, 283,236 (18.6); March, 289,505 (19.0); April, 299,324 (19.6); May 307,957 (20.1); June, 312,938 (20.4); July, 317,681 (20.7).

There is a great deal of complexity in freight car usage patterns. For example, increases in demand for rail service for a particular commodity relative to another mean that some car types might be in very short supply at the same time that others are plentiful; a freight car might go through cycles where it is stored for a few months and then returned to service for a few months; and changes in scrap prices might make scrapping cars more attractive at one time than another.



Run-by of McCloud Railway on June 20, 2012 departing McCloud for Mt. Shasta, 16 miles. The consist behind #37 is three Heavyweight Dinner cars – Dance Car (used for weddings and special events on Dinner Train)/Trinity/Lassen/two Via Cars with reporting mark 'WURR {Wallowa Union Railroad)/McCloud Caboose 102. Photo by Roger Titus



Conductor Roger Titus lining switch at Signal Butte, Mile Post 5 for last 5 miles of 16 to McCloud. Photo by Cameron Titus



McCloud Railway backing to Mt. Shasta at Pierce Siding Block. The consist is the reverse of Run by photo, starting with Caboose 102, two Via Cars, etc. Photo by Roger Titus



Exposition-Western Station at eastbound platform. Crossing of Western Ave. is behind camera. Photo by Dick Finley



McCloud Railway on June 20, 2012. Retired conductor Roger Titus running another McCloud Railway Train in Caboose 102 enroute to McCloud. Photo by grandson Cameron Titus



Expo/Western Station with westbound platform beyond crossing of Western Ave. Photo by Dick Finley