

WHEEL CLICKS

Pacific Railroad Society Inc.

AUGUST 2009

PASSENGER TRAIN UPDATES by CHARLES VARNES

AMTRAK

INTERCITY TRAINS

Heartland Flyer

The Oklahoma City, Okla.-Fort Worth, Texas, *Heartland Flyer* celebrated its tenth anniversary in June. The *Flyer* was inaugurated June 14, 1999, with federal funds received by the Oklahoma Department of Transportation that were designed to initiate service in areas without Amtrak trains. The Texas Department of Transportation joined the partnership with Oklahoma and Amtrak in 2006. The *Flyer* connects daily with the Chicago-San Antonio, Texas, *Texas Eagle* at Fort Worth.

Empire Builder

June 11, 2009 was the 80th anniversary of the first departures of the *Empire Builder* from St. Paul and Seattle on the Great Northern Railway.

During its history the *Builder* operated as a Great Northern train from 1929 to 1970, a Burlington Northern train from 1970 to 1971, and an Amtrak train from 1971 through the present.

It began operating with heavyweight cars. In 1947 the train was equipped with new, lightweight cars. In 1955 the *Builder* received dome cars. In 1979 the train began operating with *Superliner* cars.

Coast Starlight

On June 22 and 29, 2009, the *Coast Starlight* and the *Empire Builder* Portland section were scheduled to detour over the Union Pacific between Vancouver, Wash., and Portland. *Amtrak Cascades* trains were to operate between Seattle and Vancouver and Portland and Eugene, Ore., with a bus bridge between Vancouver and Portland.

The reason for the detour and bus bridge was a scheduled BNSF complete shutdown of both main tracks on its Northwest Division's Fallbridge Subdivision for two 16 hour periods for a bridge replacement project between North Portland Junction (MP 8.1) and East St. Johns (MP 7.0).

WESTERN CORRIDORS

Capitol

In May the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority (CCJPA) released a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) seeking a firm that will develop and install an advanced wireless network system for its intercity passenger rail system. The wireless broadband data network will cover the Capitol Corridor Right of Way (ROW) from Auburn to San Jose, and the San Joaquin Intercity Rail ROW from Oakland/Sacramento to Bakersfield. It will be built in stages, with Internet access to passengers rolling out first, followed closely by other applications that will enhance safety and security for passengers and employees, and improve operations on the routes.

The earlier attempt to offer wireless internet access on *Capitol Corridor* trains was unsuccessful for technical and business

reasons.

DEPOT DOINGS

LEVENWORTH, Wash. Construction of its Icicle Station began in June. The depot will consist of a 600-foot-long heated platform, two shelters, lighting and a parking area. The project is expected to be completed by Nov. 1. Amtrak has agreed to a stop in Leavenworth by its *Empire Builder* when the depot is completed. The passenger train stops are expected to bring more tourists to Leavenworth from the Seattle area, especially during the winter when driving can be hazardous.

[Info. from Ken Ruben, Ed Von Nordeck]

CALTRAIN NEWS

by MIKE GONDON

This year, since July 4 fell on a Saturday, the holiday was celebrated on Friday, July 3. Many commuter lines around the country suspended all service on July 3, but Caltrain, for some reason, decided to run a full schedule of 98 mostly empty trains. From an agency that has declared a fiscal emergency, that's difficult to explain.

On Saturday, July 4, Caltrain ran its regular Saturday schedule, plus three extra trains, for Giants baseball and San Francisco's Independence Day fireworks display. The baseball special left San Jose at 10:30 a.m. and arrived in San Francisco at 12:06 p.m., making all local stops. After the fireworks, Caltrain ran two express specials, departing San Francisco at 11:15 and 11:30 p.m. The trains ran nonstop to San Carlos, then made all local stops to San Jose. Those who were not going as far as San Carlos had to wait until 12:01 a.m. for Train #454, which made all local stops.

To try and close a \$10.1 million budget gap, the Caltrain board has decided to reduce midday service to one hour headways, from the current 30 minutes, increase parking fees by \$3 per day and \$30 per month, and increase the Go Pass price from two zones to three. The Go Pass is an employer-sponsored annual pass that offers unlimited rides through all zones, seven days a week. The cost of the pass currently is the equivalent of the cost to travel through two zones. That will increase to three. These charges should cut Caltrain's budget gap by \$2.7 million.

The board recommended against any more fare increases, suspending weekend and Gilroy service, and charging an on board bicycle fee, but kept the possibility open for next year if the budget situation doesn't improve.

A few years ago, the Stockton Avenue crossing, next to the College Park station in San Jose, was closed to traffic, and temporary concrete barriers were put in place. Finally, crews have removed the barriers and finished installing new sidewalks, curbs, gutters, and street lights at the site, which completes that project. Crews now will add additional signals at the site.



WHEEL CLICKS

AUGUST 2009 VOLUME 73, NO. 5

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SUSTAINING MEMBER **\$50.00 per year**
CORPORATE MEMBER **\$100.00 per year**
LIFE MEMBER **\$500.00**

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

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EXCURSION DIRECTOR **VACANT**

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PRS NEWS — ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

Aug. 1, 8, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10:00 a.m. to 15, 22, 29 4 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
 Sats. Committee meeting: August 22.
 Aug. 1, 8, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Saunders Yard, Noakes & Herbert Sts., Commerce. Regular Sats. Day: 1, 15; Extra Day: 8, 22, 29. Committee Meeting: 15.
 Aug. 7 Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Valencia Room, Joslyn Fri. Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
 Aug. 14 Membership Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Alhambra Room, Fri. Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
 Aug. 21 Slide night at Saunders Yard, 7:30 p.m., Noakes & Fri. Herbert Sts., Commerce. All welcome, bring slides.
 Sep. 4 Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Valencia Room, Joslyn Fri. Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
 Sep. 5, 12, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10:00 a.m. to 19, 26 4 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
 Sats. Committee meeting: Sep. 26.

Sep. 4, 12, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Saunders Yard, Noakes & Herbert Sts., Commerce. Regular Sats. Day: 5, 19; Extra Day: 12, 26. Committee Meeting: 19.

Sep. 11 Membership Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Alhambra Room, Fri. Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.

MEETING PROGRAMS

by **RUSS DAVIES**

August 14: Museum regular, **Bob Washburn**, has put together a CD of his nearly **50 years of railroad photography**, and will share it with us this evening. The variety of railroads and subject matter is too vast to cover here. But as a **"Teaser,"** you can look forward to "home territory" coverage of the **PE, Santa Fe, SP, and UP**, including some **rare mileage excursions** to Fallbrook and Ojai, the latter via the former **Chandler R-O-W, now the route of the Orange Line!** And, some Midwest action as well. **Be there, and bring digital briefs!**

September 11: **"RENO The Biggest Little City In The World!"** You've all seen slides and prints of that famous arched sign. And, we'll wager that many of you have your own, **with a train in the foreground.** That lighted sign, and long, grinding SP trains running through the center of the casino area were long-time Reno icons. No longer! On this evening we'll see **John Lee's CDC** about the **Reno Trench,** and how the trains now roll through without so much as a whistle toot. **Be there, and bring digital briefs!**

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

by **VIRGINIA GRUPP**

At the Board Meeting on July 3, late renewals were assigned numbers 383 – 430. New members voted into PRS on that date were Thomas Dinger and Mylow Sese, who were assigned seniority numbers 431 and 432, respectively.

PACIFIC RAILROAD MUSEUM

by **LINDSAY SMITH**

In the July issue of *Wheel Clicks*, I reported the changes that were coming to the Museum. At the City Council meeting on the fourth Tuesday of June, the Council voted to assign the West end of the Depot to the San Dimas Rodeo Committee. The Historical Society Museum is moving to the Walker House and the rodeo Committee will replace them. The San Dimas Rodeo Committee was very active in causing the restoration of the Walker House, but after they were assigned space, it was clear the space was unsuitable. They want to sell rodeo tickets and the Walker House was not open to the public except on weekends. The vacated Walker House space was reassigned to the Western Artists Association. The next agenda item was to offer the Pacific Railroad Society an early extension of the occupancy agreement. As part of this issue they will consider participation in the restoration and maintenance of the building. I complained that there were many changes since we formed the original agreement and the Pacific Railroad Society, like the City with respect to the Walker House, has spent much more than we anticipated in restoration of the historic depot. I complained that it is not fair that as the only organization that pays for the maintenance of space, we are taxed to maintain the west end of the building that we do not use. They agreed with me. As a part of the reasoning, I believe some of the Council and the Mayor

are boosting the importance of the Rodeo Committee resulting, inadvertently, in the insults to the Railroad Society. We must continue to participate in the City events and we will have some special events to bring attention to railroading, the Museum and the City of San Dimas. Clearly, there will be more good news to report in future issues of *Wheel Clicks*.

Tim Muck has moved to Massillon, Ohio. Tim was the alternate Curator. He designed and caused the rebuilding of the Freight room into the archive and library. Tim also caused the rebuilding of the bathrooms at the entrance after the water leaks. Tim helped relocate the Chard Walker collection into the Museum. We warmly thank him for his good work and wish him fair winds and clear roads on his journey.

Larry Aandahl of Lima Heating and Air Conditioning installed an electric plug for our Verizon FIOS modem. He also changed the outside electric plug to a ground fault detector style that complies with the safety codes.

We have been in the depot for about 15 years and we have become a home for flying and ground termites. Reconciled Termite and Pest Control has treated the ground at the Museum and arranged to have the building tented on July 11. The Southern California Gas Co. does not know where our meter is and could not find our account. They insist on two days notice to turn the gas on and off. We had to reschedule the tenting from Monday to Wednesday because the mail to address, 210 W Bonita is in the same park as the meter address. 111 S Monte Vista Ave. Previously, when we had a gas leak, the technician could not find the meter; this time they could not schedule the valve movement which only they can perform. And once again, they are blameless in their value system. So we will repair the windows and sash on the area the Museum occupies after we have the new occupancy agreement approved by the City Council. Then we can paint the exterior.

Matt Wyles has returned from his Amtrak journey. He will have a program ready soon. Matt is making an inventory of the Harold Stewart black and white negatives. So far we have a wonderful collection of 1950 Southern Pacific Steam listed in the computer. In response to Stan Kistler's instructions when he gave us the collection, we gave the Southern Pacific Historical and Technical Society everything for which we had a spare.

TRIMET'S WESTSIDE EXPRESS SERVICE

by JOHN JAY ULLOTH

Start-up ridership since February 2, has been low. It took more than a decade from first idea to opening day. Trying to do "the right thing" by starting small, using mature technology and existing infrastructure, and "buying American" -- the transit agency ultimately had to rebuild 14.7 miles of the freight railroad's track/tie and roadbed, replace 15 grade crossings it uses, and sue to get a tiny fleet of 3 power cars and 1 trailer delivered, while bankrupting the manufacturer.

Finally meet TriMet's WestSide Express Service (WES), which is a self-propelled Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU), running commuter-hours-only service from WES' maintenance base in rural Wilsonville, southwest of Portland, to TriMet's Beaverton Transit Center in northwest Portland. The service runs over tracks of regional freight railroad Portland and Western (P&W) and Willamette and Pacific (W&P).

WES is considered a success! A preliminary review is being made of a prior study of potential stations and ridership to Salem (Oregon's capitol) about 25 more miles down the track. While Portland Metro's Regional Land Use and Transportation Plan is considering other freight lines for commuter rail in 30-40 years ahead.

I was late to the Tualatin WES station with just seconds to buy and validate a ticket -- the vague zone map and slow fare machine responses were frustrating. But 10-Ride tickets are for sale at supermarket chains, and another passenger on the platform quickly validated one for me (for \$2 cash), buying a time window for a round trip.

Fare compliance and no sleeping in the plush blue seats is strictly enforced (unlike MAX), "and it's a long walk back!" But the uniformed car attendants' say their main job is ride counts; each carrying a clipboard, and are employed by P&W.

The Colorado Railcars are fully Federal Railroad Administration compliant, so no time-separation is required between WES and passenger trains (unlike Escondido's *Sprinter*, San Diego's *Trolley* to San Ysidro, or Wilmington's Red Cars).

Why do the middle three stations have gantlet tracks? These are high floor Colorado Rail Cars, and level station boarding is required, but "once every five years or so" P&W needs to carry an oversized load here, necessitating either drawbridges to car doors at each station, or gantlet track.

Wilsonville is in Washington County. WES' shop and yard are on the east side of the tracks in Wilsonville, and the new Wilsonville Transit Center is on the west. "SMART Central" has bus bays for all seven of Washington County's SMART bus lines, plus two other transit providers that meet each other and the train; you can get a plush commuter bus to Salem from here. Many bike lockers and a park and ride lot complete the Wilsonville Transit Center.

[All photos in this issue of *Wheel Clicks* are by John Jay Ulloth]

FULLERTON TRANSPORTATION CENTER PLAN

The plan for a new 39-acre development bounded by E. Commonwealth, Harbor, Walnut/Truslow and Lawrence and the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway tracks has been released and is ready for review. The review period was to end June 11, 2009. The proposed project includes a mixed-use transit-oriented development within and adjacent to downtown Fullerton Central Business District.

The plan includes existing transit facilities including the OCTA bus terminal, and the Amtrak and Metrolink train station. The new development will include approximately 100,000 square feet of retail; 100,000 square feet of office space; a 120,000 square foot hotel with 120 rooms; and 1,560 multi-family residential units. The plan is expected to include public plazas, and pedestrian and bike features.

About 136,200 sq ft of property including historic buildings within the area, such as the Post Office, Spadra, Stubricks, Williams Building, Old Spaghetti Factory, Ice House, and the train station are expected to remain as is the Single Room Occupancy apartment building, a church and existing retail. There are 137 existing multi-family units located within the project site which are expected to remain and one single-family residence which is expected to be moved.

[continued on Page 6]



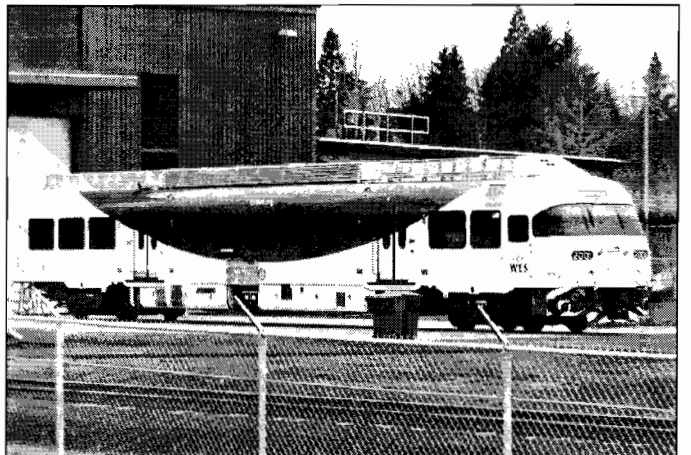
Seen March 27, is Metrolink getting new teal-color lettering and dropping its logo? The engineer exiting loco 853 at Chatsworth said he wasn't told.



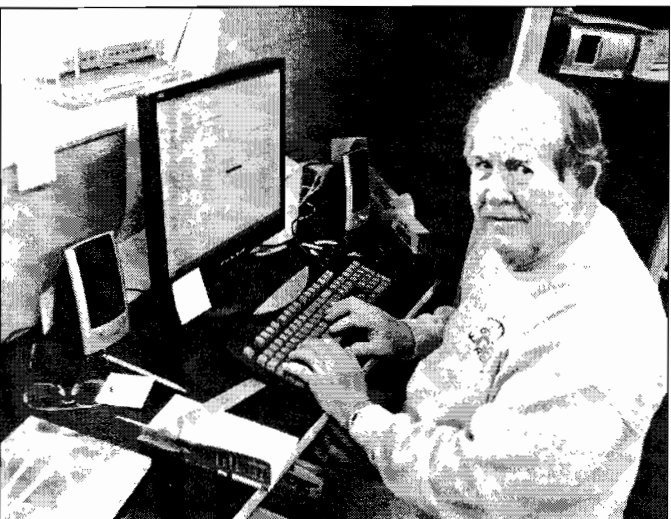
Colorado Railcar's DMU is noticeably wider than TriMet's light rail or trolley, deep blue seats are extremely comfortable.



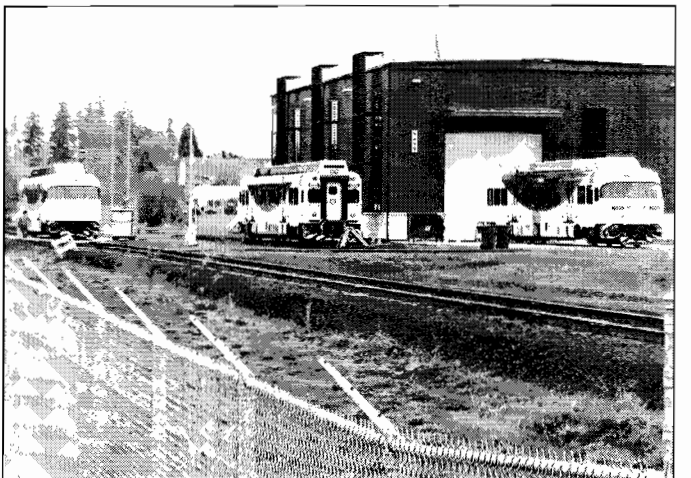
Metrolink's existing logo and lettering on car 132 are seen for comparison.



A DMU stretches outside TriMet's Westside Express Service shops, across the tracks on the eastside of the Wilsonville Station.



Tom Geer categorizes the collection at the Pacific Railroad Museum. Compiling lists of our holdings will make research easier and more complete.



Three-fourths of the DMU fleet is outside TriMet's WES shops, across from the Wilsonville Station.

A goal of the project is to provide improved access for pedestrians, bicycles, buses, and automobiles to the area by its proximity to bus and train. The project proposes a move of the OCTA bus station to be integrated with the existing train station.

After the 30 day review the draft EIR will be prepared and is expected to be available this fall. It is expected that the project will be submitted to the City Council for public hearings in late 2009.

The development will take place in two phases. Phase 1 would include development within the parcels west of Lemon St. and on both sides of Santa Fe Ave. within the central portion of the Transportation Center area. New development would include 65,000 sq. ft. of retail; 75,000 sq. ft. of office; and 500 residential units plus a six level public parking garage with 1,000 spaces and a park plaza near the existing train station. Additional above and below-grade parking would be developed to serve the proposed uses. Phase 1 will require acquisition of property not currently owned by the city or applicant and demolition of existing structures potentially including the existing public parking structure located on the corner of Santa Fe and Pomona. The completion date is estimated at 2015.

Phase 2 would include development of the parcels west of Lemon St. and properties south of the railroad tracks including a community park east of Lemon and other smaller courtyards and pocket parks for the new residents. Phase 2 might also include the hotel, 35,000 sq. ft. of retail, 25,000 sq. ft. of office, and 1,060 residential units plus parking. Phase 2 will require acquisition of property and demolition of existing structures and may be initiated prior to the completion of Phase 1. It has an estimated build-out date of 2020.

The planning and design of the project is being led by JMI/The Morgan Group which was selected by the city council/redevelopment agency Feb. 15, 2006.

[Info. from the *Fullerton Observer*]

S. CALIF. COMMUTER RAIL

More than 100 new train cars featuring state-of-the-art Crash Energy Management (CEM) technology are on the way. The entire fleet of the country's most advanced new passenger cars is expected to be in service by October 2010. Metrolink will be the first passenger-rail service in the country to place CEM-equipped cars into service.

These 117 new cars will help accommodate Metrolink's growing ridership while enhancing safety. Because Metrolink is committed to improving the safety and technology of their equipment, they have been working with the Federal Transit Administration and the Federal Railroad Authority since 2002 to develop, test, and implement CEM technology.

An automobile crumple zone is the start of understanding CEM, which implements the idea on a much larger scale. Metrolink has procured new cars from Hyundai Rotem that incorporate energy-absorbing technology. Each new cab car – the lead car equipped to operate the train when it's in push mode in their push-pull system – will be able to absorb 5 million foot-pounds of energy within the crush zones (one on each end of each car); regular coach cars will be able to absorb 3 million foot-pounds.

In the unfortunate event that a collision occurs, the CEM

technology will help minimize passenger injuries. Metrolink is building a new maintenance facility in the Inland Empire to help accommodate this fleet of advanced-technology cars.

In addition to CEM features, the new cars will have a new look. They will be made of stainless steel instead of aluminum, and they will feature new colors and seat fabric, with interiors decorated in an attractive range of blue hues.

Less noticeably but more importantly, the cars feature many new design and safety improvements. These include a state-of-the-art wireless public-address system and passenger emergency intercom, expanded bike-storage space, improved wheelchair restraints, enhanced emergency windows and door panels, rearward-facing seats in cab cars, theater seating in coach cars, higher seat backs with improved crash pads, armrests on aisle and center seats, bolted-in seat cushions, energy-absorbing tables, and other safety improvements.

Once the new cars are traveling the rails, cars from Metrolink's current fleet will be temporarily taken out of service for upgrades and rehabilitation. Improvements to existing cars will include updates and enhancements to wheelchair restraints, emergency windows, the passenger emergency communication system, bike-storage space, and more.

Meanwhile, Metrolink is meeting increased ridership demands by supplementing the current fleet with leased cars from around the nation. During the last several years, Metrolink has leased passenger cars from Sounder Transit in Seattle. These Sounder cars have been returned to their home base. To replace them, Metrolink has leased previously owned passenger cars from Utah and New Jersey.

Metrolink has leased 10 cars from Utah Transit Authority (UTA). Since these single-level cars are equipped with fewer seats than existing Metrolink cars, they have been placed throughout the Metrolink system after carefully evaluating ridership on each train to help ensure that the replacement will not cause additional crowding.

Metrolink has also leased 15 cars from New Jersey Transit. Metrolink is currently working with a contractor to modify the air-brake system on those cars for compatibility with Metrolink trains. Once those modifications have been completed – most likely by the fall – the cars will also begin carrying passengers. Metrolink wants passengers to remember that the leased cars are merely temporary.

[Info. from *Metrolink Matters*]

EASTERN MAINTENANCE FACILITY

Metrolink is working hard to ensure that they will be able to maintain the growing fleet without a hitch with the 117 new passenger cars on the way. The Central Maintenance Facility, where current cars and locomotives are inspected and serviced, won't be able to support the expanded fleet on its own – which is why Metrolink is opening a second maintenance facility this fall.

The new Eastern Maintenance Facility will be based in the Inland Empire, where two-thirds of the Metrolink fleet already spends the night. At the new facility, Metrolink will store and clean cars; service toilets, brakes, and other components; fuel locomotives; and more. They will start by servicing four to six train sets and gradually increase capacity. This facility will

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provide up to 12 equipment-service jobs and will be staffed by four train crews.

Located on 20 acres in Colton, the Eastern Maintenance Facility has been under design and construction for three years. This maintenance and storage facility will supplement the Central Maintenance Facility as well as existing San Bernardino storage and service yards. The current phase of the project includes four storage tracks, two service tracks, a car wash, an office building, and other support facilities. Metrolink expects this phase to be complete in early September, with operations beginning soon after. Later phases will add a shop building, additional storage, and more servicing tracks.

[Info. from *Metrolink Matters*]

INWARD-FACING CAMERAS

At its May 15, 2009 meeting, the Metrolink Board unanimously voted to award a \$975,000 contract to install video cameras in all of their locomotives and cab cars. This marks a step in their ongoing commitment to enhancing the safety of the rail system to passengers, crew, and residents throughout Southern California who interact with the system.

The new locomotives on some of the Metrolink trains already have forward-facing cameras, and the new contract also includes cameras for the older fleet of GM locomotives. The inward- and forward-facing cameras will be installed by Hyundai Rotem in the new cab cars, and so eventually, all of the cab cars will be camera-equipped Rotem cars.

Metrolink will become the first railroad system in the nation to install inward-facing video cameras in all of the locomotives and lead passenger cars. These cameras will record all engineer and other staff activity.

The contract was awarded to Chicago-based Railhead Vision Systems after a competitive procurement process. A total of 218 cameras and recorders are expected to be installed by the end of 2009. While the cameras are being installed, Metrolink staff and contractors will be working to develop policies and procedures that will be needed prior to activating the new cameras.

[Info. from *Metrolink Matters*]

METROLINK MAY HIRE OWN TRAIN CREWS

Prompted by the deadly crash in Chatsworth on September 12, 2008, the Southern California Regional Rail Authority moved on June 26 to hire its own train crews, a step that would end its longtime practice of using engineers and conductors provided by a subcontractor. But directors of the five-county Metrolink agency, while unanimously following a staff recommendation to end train crew subcontracting, also left the door open to partnering with Amtrak. Metrolink directors gave officials of the national passenger rail service two weeks to come up with proposals for contracting out train crews and possibly other workers.

Amtrak prefers “turn key” contracts that would give it control over all of Metrolink’s train operations, including dispatchers, but an Amtrak representative at the meeting on June 26 said his agency was open to considering an arrangement in which it would provide only train crew services.

Connex Railroad LLC, the current train crew contractor, said recently that it no longer wanted the job once its current contract expires June 30, 2010, putting Metrolink under a very tight

schedule to hire its own crews or find another contractor. Connex and Metrolink have been at odds – and have sued each other – over the Sept. 12 crash that killed 25 and injured dozens more. Richard Hartman, Connex chief executive, told the Metrolink board that his firm was committed to serving out its contract and providing the commuter rail agency and its passengers with a “seamless transition.”

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

URBAN RAIL TRANSIT

**LOS ANGELES METRO RAIL
RIDERSHIP**

MAY 2009	Red Line	Blue Line	Green Line	Gold Line
Weekday Ave.	154,355	80,175	38,301	24,550
Saturday Ave.	98,288	60,359	21,910	15,696
Sunday Ave.	84,580	55,693	18,318	13,744
Monthly Total	4,086,012	2,239,451	985,481	651,949

[Info. from Ken Ruben]

NEW BOARD CHAIRMAN

Glendale City Councilman Ara Najarian on July 1 replaced Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa as chairman of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority board of directors. Najarian will head the policy-making body for the third largest transportation agency in the United States.

Najarian’s transportation experience includes service on the Glendale Transportation and Parking Commission and the board of directors for Metrolink. The chairmanship of the MTA board rotates annually among the mayor of Los Angeles, county supervisors, and representatives from cities across the county.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

WILSHIRE/WESTERN HIGH-RISE OPENS

Metro’s latest joint development project, Solair, has been completed at the Wilshire/Western Metro Purple Line station. The glass-wrapped tower features 186 residences and penthouses along with a 40,000 square-foot retail plaza. To date, Metro has been involved in billions of dollars in transit-oriented joint development projects.

[Info. from *Metro Briefs*]

GOLD LINE EXTENSION TO WHITTIER

Most Whittier-area cities appear to be banding together to support the Washington Boulevard alternative for a light-rail line from East Los Angeles. In the middle of June, the Pico Rivera and Whittier city councils adopted resolutions in support of the Washington Blvd. route. Santa Fe Springs also adopted a resolution with some reservations. Commerce already is in support. The only holdout is Montebello, which still supports the 60 Freeway alternative.

Councilman Joe Vinatieri said Washington Blvd. is the most viable route that would benefit Whittier. “It’s got an arterial that is pretty darned wide in a lot of places and would hit one of the largest employers in southeast Los Angeles County,” Vinatieri said, referring to Presbyterian Intercommunity Hospital.

Whittier city officials ruled out the Whittier Blvd. route because it would create traffic problems or using Beverly Blvd. because it would need to go down the Greenway Trail. They also pointed out Washington Blvd. has the highest daily ridership (15,900) and the highest cost (\$1.76 billion). The freeway

route has a projected ridership of 13,500 and a cost of \$1.72 billion.

“Our big challenge is to get Montebello on board and alleviate Santa Fe Springs’ concerns,” City Manager Steve Helvey said. “We’ve made a lot of progress in getting Pico Rivera and Commerce on board.” Santa Fe Springs officials have concerns of potential loss of businesses or access to them should the line run at the street level. Montebello Mayor Rosemarie Vasquez on June 12 said her city still supports only the 60 Freeway route. “It’s the least invasive,” Vasquez said.

A number of San Gabriel Valley area cities, including Alhambra, El Monte, Monterey Park, Rosemead and South El Monte, also support the freeway route.

[Info. from *Pasadena Star-News*]

GOLD LINE FOOTHILL EXTENSION

Preliminary drilling has begun for a bridge across the 210 Freeway designed to serve as a gateway into the San Gabriel Valley. The Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension Construction Authority has solicited bids from architects to design the bridge over the freeway at Santa Anita Avenue.

Construction workers drilled about 100 feet deep on June 30 to take soil samples in preparation for the groundbreaking on the bridge project, slated for summer 2010. The samples will be analyzed, and additional preparation work will continue for the next four months.

The deadline for submissions passed the last week of June, and the Gold Line received proposals from 15 different architectural firms hoping to design the 739-foot bridge. “We feel comfortable that we have a good cross-section of artists that will be capable of carrying out this vision,” said Gold Line Foothill Extension Construction Authority CEO Habib Balian.

An 11-member panel of representatives from Caltrans, Arcadia, Azusa, Claremont, Duarte, Glendora, Irwindale, La Verne, Monrovia, and Pomona will assess the design submissions and make a recommendation to the Construction Authority’s board of directors. The board was to choose the winning bidder July 22.

The selected architects, working in tandem with an engineering firm to be chosen by Metro Gold Line, will have a \$20,000 budget to formally design the structure. The bridge itself will cost between \$20 million to \$25 million to build, Balian said.

[Info. from *Pasadena Star-News*]

EXPO LINE

Citing safety concerns for students, the board of the Los Angeles Unified School District unanimously decided on June 23 to oppose the design of the Expo Light Rail Line, which would pass at street level near Overland Avenue and Charnock Road elementary schools. Board members said they would not support the Expo Line unless the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) could eliminate all the safety hazards of operating light-rail trains near schools. They also directed the district’s superintendent to exhaust all legal options while trying to resolve the Expo Line’s safety issues.

The board resolution relates to the second phase of the project, which would run from Culver City to Santa Monica. Phase I from downtown Los Angeles to Culver City has already generated considerable controversy about street-level crossings near schools. That segment is under construction.

The resolution noted that MTA’s Blue Line from Long Beach to Los Angeles, which has street level crossings, has become the nation’s deadliest light-rail line. It also stated that the Expo Line should not be built near the two schools because it could violate the district’s 128-foot distance requirement for active rail lines.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

HARBOR SUBDIVISION TRANSIT CORRIDOR

The Harbor Subdivision is a freight rail corridor, approximately 26 miles in length, that traverses southwest Los Angeles County from Vernon to Wilmington. In the early 1990s, Metro purchased the portion of the corridor between Redondo Junction and Watson Yard, along with several other rail rights-of-way, to further develop the region’s rapid transit system.

Metro has initiated an Alternatives Analysis Study (AA) for the Harbor Subdivision Transit Corridor. The study will examine potential transit service along the Harbor Subdivision. Goals include:

- Improving mobility in southwestern Los Angeles County by introducing high-frequency transit service options.
- Enhancing the regional transit network by interconnecting existing and planned rapid transit lines.
- Providing an alternative mode of transportation for commuters currently using the congested I-405 and I-110 corridors.
- Improving transit accessibility for residents of communities along the corridor.
- Encouraging a mode shift to transit, and reducing air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

The AA will evaluate a broad range of alternatives including Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) with dedicated bus lanes, various types of rail technology such as Light Rail Transit (LRT) and commuter rail, as well as “no-build” and Transportation Systems Management improvements.

Though alternatives will generally follow the Harbor Subdivision corridor, potential alignment and improvement options outside the immediate Harbor Subdivision right-of-way will also be studied. In addition, the analysis will examine potential financing mechanisms outside the traditional funding sources commonly used for constructing and operating transit service.

At the conclusion of the AA, Metro staff will recommend a course of action to the Metro Board, including possibly proceeding with an environmental document consistent with both federal and state requirements.

The study area will encompass approximately 85 square miles including the jurisdictions of Huntington Park, Vernon, City of Los Angeles, Hawthorne, Inglewood, El Segundo, Lawndale, Torrance, Manhattan Beach, Redondo Beach, Carson, Los Angeles County, and the port areas of Los Angeles and Long Beach.

Alignment elements include bikeways, parkways, and vertical elements. Station location criteria include closeness to major destinations, neighborhood context, good access and visibility, connections to other transit, distance to next station, and potential for transit-oriented development.

For more information about the study or to learn about upcoming opportunities for public participation, please contact: metro.net/harborsubdivision or phone: 213-922-4004.

[Info. from John Whitmeyer]