

WHEEL CLICKS

Pacific Railroad Society Inc.

AUGUST 2011

ANGELS FLIGHT RESUMES TRIPS

The California Public Utilities Commission concluded on June 9 that some of the wheel flanges – rims built for strength and to keep the wheels on the rails – were worn down to less than a quarter of an inch, which is one third of what is deemed safe. The deteriorated condition of the wheels posed a safety hazard and put the rail cars at risk, said Richard Clark, director of the agency's consumer protection and safety division.

The cars run 16 hours a day, seven days a week, so maintenance is usually done late at night or early in the morning. When the operations ceased, Railway President John H. Welborne found himself hunting down eight, 12-inch steel wheels that would fit the 110-year-old funicular railway.

At 25 cents a ride, the cars collect 2,500 to 3,000 fares a day. Some people rely heavily on them to avoid making the 208-foot climb to California Plaza. On June 10, potential riders were disappointed to learn they would have to trudge up the stairs rather than hop onto the "shortest railway in the world."

Operations resumed the afternoon of July 5 after inspectors approved eight new steel wheels that replaced the older ones. [Info. from *Los Angeles Times*, Angels Flight Railway]

CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL PROGRAM

A panel charged with reviewing plans for California's \$43 billion high-speed rail project says planners need to answer serious questions about the cost, business model and expected ridership of the system before the Legislature approves construction. "It is no exaggeration to say that the next few months may offer the last chance for the governor and Legislature to assess and influence the overall plans for the project," before irrevocable construction begins, says the report by the California High-Speed Rail Authority Peer Review Group.

The first phase of the project is scheduled to start in September 2012 in the Central Valley. Critics want to start in more populated areas of Southern or Northern California in case the money runs out before the full system is finished. The six-member peer review group submitted its report in response to a request from lawmakers who were concerned about a scathing May review of the project to the state Legislative Analyst's Office.

That analysis recommended lawmakers essentially suspend the project and request more spending leeway from federal officials, as well as shift responsibility for the project to the state Department of Transportation. The group rejected both ideas but emphasized the crucial need for a detailed business plan that the California High-Speed Rail Authority is due to submit in October.

"We've been very vocal about the fact that there are huge challenges ahead for the high-speed rail project," said the rail authority spokesman Jeffrey Barker on July 8. "We've said we

need to advocate for more funding, we've talked about structural issues and the need for more staff, we've talked about the need to assure we have all the right tools within state government to have a public-private agency. None of this stuff is new or shocking or we're in disagreement with."

The report from the six-member internal group, submitted the first week of July, notes that later phases of the project rely almost entirely on federal, state, and local money that might never materialize. "This poses the clear risk that whatever is started will not be finished and whatever is finished may have only limited utility," said the report.

[Info. from *Pasadena Star-News*]

CALTRAIN NEWS

by MIKE GONDRON

July 1 marked the beginning of a new fiscal year for Caltrain, along with higher fares and parking rates. Caltrain one-way fares increased by 25 cents, with a day pass climbing 50 cents and a monthly pass increasing by \$6.75. In addition, the cost to park at a Caltrain station increased from \$3 per day to \$4, and from \$30 per month to \$40. The increases were approved by the Caltrain board in April to help offset its budget gap. It is Caltrain's sixth fare increase since 2005 and the second one this year.

In June, Caltrain completed a \$300,000 project to ensure that every train is equipped with two bike cars. Bike cars on the older gallery cars now hold 40 bikes, allowing for 80 bikes on each train. The newer Bombardier cars hold 24 bikes per car for a total capacity of 48 bikes per train. Caltrain estimates that 3600 bike riders use Caltrain on an average weekday.

This year, Caltrain has also amended its youth bicycle policy, lowering the age for children to bring a bike on board from 12 to 6. Children must be accompanied by an adult and all cyclists must be able to handle their own bike.

Caltrain will soon see a new control point placed into service between South San Francisco and San Bruno. The control point will be known as CP Scott and will be located at milepost 10.5, between Linden Avenue and Scott Street.

Located roughly half-way between CP Sierra and CP Center, CP Scott will have a speed limit of 50 mph through the cross-overs and will help greatly in expediting train movements. It is located just to the north of the San Bruno grade separation project that will elevate the tracks through San Bruno and eliminate three grade crossings.

This year, Caltrain ran three special trains from San Francisco to San Jose on July 4 to accommodate spectators at San Francisco's annual fireworks display along the Embarcadero. The first train left San Francisco at 11:15 p.m., ran nonstop to San Carlos, then made all local stops to San Jose. The following trains left at 11:30 p.m. and 12:00 midnight. They ran as locals, making all stops to San Jose.



WHEEL CLICKS

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PRS NEWS — ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES

Aug. 1, 8, Mon. PRM open, 12:00 to 5:00 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
 Aug. 3, 10, Wed. PRM work party, 1:00 p.m. to 5 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
 Aug. 5 Fri. Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Colonial Kitchen, 1110 Huntington Dr., San Marino. Dinner on your own at 6:30 p.m.
 Aug. 6, 13, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
 Aug. 6, 13, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Saunders Yard, Noakes St. & Herbert Ave., Commerce.
 Aug. 12 Fri. Membership Meeting, 7:30 p.m., MTA Bldg. in Board Room on 3rd Floor.
 Sept. 2 Fri. Board Meeting, see Sept. *Wheel Clicks*
 Sept. 3, 10, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
 Sept. 3, 10, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Saunders Yard, Noakes St. & Herbert Ave.,

Commerce.

Sept. 5, 12, Mon. PRM open, 12:00 to 5:00 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
 Sept. 7, 14, Wed. PRM work party, 1:00 p.m. to 5 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
 Sept. 9 Fri. Membership Meeting, see Sept. *Wheel Clicks*

MEETING PROGRAMS

by RUSS DAVIES

August 12: Back in the days when we were having annual Slide Contests, **Dave Abbott was often times the winner!** On this evening we'll see **"The Best of Dave Abbott," a digital presentation** of his slides. **This will be a good one. Be there, and bring digital briefs!** The meeting will again be at the MTA Board Room.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

by VIRGINIA GRUPP

Fifty late renewal members with seniority numbers 376 thru 425 were reported at the Board meeting on July 8. Also, one new member was voted into PRS at that time: David C. Dodds with number 426.

PUBLICITY

by JOHN J. ULLOTH

Kristen Campbell of the Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension Construction Authority is taking reservations for tours of the existing Gold Line. The tour will take time to highlight center-vs. side-platform stations, artwork, etc. Starting at Sierra Madre Villa station, tours will make 2-3 stops between Union Station and back, taking a couple of hours. The tours are to convince people with a reasonably open mind, and from eastern San Gabriel Valley cities who haven't had rail service in decades, what is coming! The tours are to show people what light rail does, and how it fits into the community.

Due to a maximum of 20 people per trip, confirmations will be sent (postcard or e-mail). You can bring guests, but tell us how many. There are morning or afternoon times, weekend or weekday; it's the weekdays that are filling up first. (I inquired about weekends of July 16 and 30, August 6 and September 10; and settled on July 30, 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. I was the first to sign up for that one.)

To schedule your own reservation, Kristen Campbell can be reached at (626) 305-7011.

URBAN RAIL TRANSIT

LOS ANGELES METRO RAIL RIDERSHIP

June 2011	Red Line	Blue Line	Green Line	Gold Line
Weekday Ave.	155,975	84,159	42,380	39,112
Saturday Ave.	93,465	53,922	23,188	25,708
Sunday Ave.	72,715	47,027	17,310	18,030
Monthly Total	4,096,163	2,255,300	1,094,353	1,035,420

[Info. from Metro via Ken Ruben]

GOLD LINE BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION

Construction began the first week of July on the 210 Freeway Gold Line Bridge over the eastbound lanes between Baldwin and Santa Anita avenues, including the building of a temporary retaining wall in the center median. Work will also be done on the bridge's foundation.

Intermittent partial and/or full freeway closures of the

eastbound lanes will occur in the coming months, mostly from midnight to 6 a.m. Traffic, when necessary, will be detoured along Foothill Boulevard. The carpool lane and the fast lane on the 210 East at Baldwin and Santa Anita are expected to be closed Wednesday and Thursday nights.

The bridge is the first element of the Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension light rail project to move from final design to construction. The work is scheduled to be completed in July 2012. For more information, call the 24-hour toll-free hotline at 855-446-1160.

[Info. from *Pasadena Star-News*]

GOLD LINE GETS NEW TRAINS

Beginning June 20, Metro added additional train service on the Metro Gold Line in an effort to improve the frequency of trains during both morning and afternoon peak periods. A total of five, two-cars trains were added to improve the service on the 19.7-mile line that operates between Pasadena and East Los Angeles, officials said.

Gold Line trains will operate every six minutes from 6 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. and from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Officials say the move is due to a continued growth in ridership. In May, ridership on the Gold Line reached 36,623 average weekday boardings, compared with 32,434 in May 2010.

[Info. from *Pasadena Star-News*]

EXPO LINE TRAIN TESTING UNDERWAY

Testing is being conducted on the Exposition Light Rail Line, the newest extension of the Metro Rail system running between Downtown Los Angeles and Culver City. Tests are being done along portions of the route as construction is nearly 90 percent complete.

MORE PROJECTS BY VOTER-APPROVED MEASURE R

The Metro Board of Directors approved a contract of \$4.7 million to conduct environmental studies for a transit project to connect the Green Line and Crenshaw/LAX Line to the terminals at LAX.

- The project under study would provide a connection between Los Angeles International Airport and the Aviation/Century stop for the Crenshaw/LAX and Metro Green Lines.
- alternatives to be considered include light rail, bus rapid transit and an automated people mover.
- The City of Los Angeles is currently studying a people mover project as part of its airport modernization plans and will be coordinating with Metro on this latest study.

Metro has adopted the Arbor Vitae/Bellanca location as the preferred site for a maintenance facility to support a light rail line in the Crenshaw District along Crenshaw Boulevard from Exposition Boulevard to the Metro Green Line.

- The 17.6-acre site is located in the City of LA off Arbor Vitae Street and will be incorporated in the final environmental report, which was scheduled to be submitted to the Metro Board for approval in July.
- The 8.5-mile line will connect the Metro Green Line and the Expo Line currently under construction at Crenshaw and Exposition boulevards.
- 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* via Jack Whitmeyer]

PORTLAND, OREGON

TriMet continues its post-recession roll.

In May, Oregon's largest transit agency saw record ridership for MAX and Westside Express Service (WES) commuter rail. It also experienced its first boost in weekday bus passengers in more than two years. On Saturday, June 11, TriMet moved more people than on any day in the agency's history. There were more than 285,000 boardings on buses and MAX on Grand Floral Parade day, which was a 37.5 percent increase over a typical Saturday. After two years of budget shortfalls, TriMet is operating in the black again and talking of restoring some bus service that was cut during the recession.

TriMet revises structure.

The Portland Design Commission has approved the design of an overhead structure to carry MAX trains and buses from the South Waterfront to the south end of downtown, part of the \$1.5 billion Portland-to-Milwaukie light-rail line. The design of the 1,730-foot structure features a sleek ribbon of steel and concrete.

TriMet and its design consultants appeared before the commission in March and considered the commission's criticisms of the design. The changes, including moving the train's catenary poles to the center, resulted in a cleaner aesthetic, said Tim Heron, a planner with the city Bureau of Development Services.

The approval brings to a close the city's scrutiny of the new line's design. The commission in November approved a new Willamette River bridge.

Neighbors of railyard ready for a legal fight.

As Union Pacific hopes to get a 55-year-old court injunction lifted that limits modernizing the Brooklyn Intermodal Rail Yard, neighbors are readying for a battle. Last week, the Eastmoreland Neighborhood Association (ENA) and the Sellwood-Moreland Improvement League both approved funds to jointly hire an expert witness who will help identify the impact the changes would have on the rail yard's Southeast Portland neighbors.

UP officials argue the injunction prevents a planned \$75 million modernization that would reduce noise and air pollution because fewer uncoupling maneuvers would be needed to assemble trains. But neighbors are wary. "Nobody here speaks railroad, railroad is a unique vernacular and we need an expert who can drive home our point," said Richard Pierce, outgoing president of the ENA. No court date is set for the hearing on the motion to lift the injunction.

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

AAR JULY STORED FREIGHT CARS REPORT

by CHARLES VARNES

The Association of American Railroads reported that as of July 1, 2011, 276,236 freight cars were in storage, equal to 18.2 percent of the North American fleet — 2,847 fewer cars than on June 1, 2011 when cars in storage accounted for 18.4% of the fleet.

A freight car is "in storage" if it has had a loaded revenue move since 2005, but not in the past 60 days. Rail cars are stored when they are not needed due to lack of demand; they come out of storage when demand improves. Figures are for the

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

The ARR estimates on how the rail car fleet has changed since July 2009 are as follows.

- In July 2009, 1.603 million cars were in the fleet. By July 1, 2011, there was a net reduction of 72,020 cars in the fleet.
- From July 2009 through June 2011, approximately 36,600 new cars were installed.
- Adding 72,020 to 36,600 yields 108,620 net cars scrapped or otherwise removed.
- 527,060 cars were in storage on July 1, 2009 (including cars that haven't moved since before 2005). By July 1, 2011, that was down to 290,000, for a net reduction of 237,060.
- Subtracting the 108,620 net cars scrapped or otherwise removed yields 128,440 freight cars returned to service. [Info. from AAR Rail Time Indicator]

PASSENGER TRAIN UPDATES by CHARLES VARNES
LOS ANGELES UNION STATION
PLATFORM RESTORATION

Metrolink has begun reconstructing one of the original Union Station boarding platforms, Platform 7, for use by Metrolink and Amtrak trains. The project will also include the restoration of three tracks (13, 14 and 15) that were removed from service more than 35 years ago. The project is expected to be completed in spring 2012.

The platform design will mimic the historic character of Union Station and will include both north and south stairways and accessible ramps connecting to the main passenger tunnel. Energy efficient lighting and state-of-the-art passenger information equipment will be added under the platform canopy.

As soon as Platform 7 is completed and in service, other Union Station platforms will be closed on a temporary basis so that badly needed canopy repairs can be made.

The \$8.5 million project is funded by the State of California, Department of Transportation (Proposition 1B funds); the U.S. Department of Transportation (Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program funds); and the Orange County Transportation Authority (Measure M funds).

AMTRAK
Ridership

In July Amtrak projected that for the first time ever its annual ridership will exceed 30 million passengers and in the process set a new all-time record when the current fiscal year ends Sept. 30. Amtrak is basing its projection of more than 30 million passengers on strong June ridership numbers and expected ticket sales for July, August and September. June 2011 was the best June on record with more than 2.6 million passengers for the month and marked 20 consecutive months of year-over-year ridership growth, a streak that began in November 2009.

This strong performance is part of a long-term trend that has seen Amtrak set annual ridership records in seven of the last eight fiscal years, including more than 28.7 million passengers in FY 2010.

Comparing the first nine months of FY 2011 (October – June) to the same time period in FY 2010, national Amtrak ridership

is up 6.4 percent so far this fiscal year and all three major business lines are showing gains: the Northeast Corridor up 5.6 percent, state-supported and other short distance corridors up 7.8 percent, and long-distance trains up 3.9 percent.

Factors contributing to the continuing success of Amtrak include high gasoline prices, continued growth in business travel on the high-speed Acela Express trains with free Wi-Fi service, the increased appeal and popularity of rail travel, and effective marketing campaigns.

Northeast Corridor Ridership

June 2011 ridership in the *Northeast Corridor* was 985,030 vs. 912,660 in June 2010, a 7.9 percent increase. October-June FY 11 ridership was 8,245,673 vs. October-June FY 10's 7,809,654, a 5.6 percent increase.

State Supported and Other Short Distance Corridors Ridership
 June 2011 ridership in state supported and other short distance corridors was 1,284,862 vs. 1,223,992 in June 2010, a 5.0 percent increase. October-June FY 11 ridership was 10,867,326 vs. October-June FY 10's 10,867,326, a 7.8 percent increase.

Long Distance Train Ridership

June 2011 ridership aboard long distance trains was 402,271 vs. 429,829 in June 2010, a 6.4 percent decrease. October-June FY 11 ridership was 3,362,005 vs. October-June FY 10's 3,235,718, a 3.9 percent increase.

Most of the decrease in long distance train ridership in June was due to California Zephyr and Empire Builder service disruptions caused by flooding in the Midwest.

Historical On-Time Performance

The June 2011 historical on-time performance percentages for selected routes were

Route	June 2011	May 2011	Last 12 months
Sunset Limited	80.8%	65.5%	81.7%
Texas Eagle	40.0%	50.0%	57.3%
Heartland Flyer	83.3%	75.8%	79.1%
Southwest Chief	61.7%	91.9%	75.5%
California Zephyr	30.0%	38.7%	48.0%
Empire Builder	64.2%	86.0%	41.7%
Coast Starlight	73.3%	87.1%	71.6%
City of New Orleans	65.0%	62.9%	73.7%
Pacific Surfliner	79.9%	82.0%	81.3%
San Joaquin	84.2%	88.4%	88.6%
Capitol Corridor	91.7%	96.1%	94.4%
Amtrak Cascades	75.9%	75.0%	65.5%
Illinois Service	59.2%	69.3%	70.0%
Michigan Services	9.7%	33.0%	29.4%
Hiawatha	92.2%	90.3%	90.0%
Missouri River Runner	85.8%	89.5%	88.4%
Acela Express	86.9%	87.6%	84.5%
Northeast Regional	79.6%	80.9%	79.3%

LONG DISTANCE TRAINS

Heartland Flyer

Communities along the Oklahoma City-Fort Worth route of the state-supported Amtrak *Heartland Flyer* celebrated the 12th anniversary of daily passenger rail service on Saturday, June 18, 2011. Since this Amtrak fiscal year began October 1, 2010, and through May 2011, ridership on the *Heartland Flyer* has grown

by nearly 10 percent compared with the same period a year ago. Total ridership since the *Heartland Flyer* inauguration on June 14, 1999, now totals 790,713.

Southwest Chief

A wildfire which erupted on the New Mexico side of Raton Pass on June 12 caused the rail line through Raton Pass to be closed and the *Southwest Chief* to detour via Amarillo for several days.

On June 12 the westbound *Chief* (Train 3 June 11) operated on its usual route through Raton Pass. The eastbound *Chief* (Train 4 June 11) departed Albuquerque on time and operated as far as Las Vegas, N.M. according to the Amtrak Status Maps web site. Because of the line closure the train was brought back to Albuquerque and rerouted onto the Transcon line.

Beginning with departures from Chicago and Los Angeles on June 12 both of the *Chiefs* operated via the Transcon. Service over the usual route resumed with the departure of Train 4 from Los Angeles on June 15 and Train 3 from Chicago on June 16.

California Zephyr

Track work being performed by Union Pacific Railroad near Glenwood Springs, Colo., will affect Trains 5 and 6 on the following dates: Aug 8 through Aug. 15 and Aug. 24 through Aug. 27. On the dates shown here, westbound Train 5 may encounter delays of up to 90 minutes between Glenwood Springs, Salt Lake City and intermediate stations. Eastbound Train 6 may encounter delays of up to 90 minutes between Glenwood Springs, Chicago and intermediate stations.

Empire Builder

Empire Builder service between Seattle and Portland and Chicago was disrupted by severe flooding in early June and again in early July.

Amtrak restored daily *Builder* service for its full route between Chicago and Seattle/Portland starting with the east-bound departures of Train 8 from Seattle and Train 28 from Portland, Ore., on July 17. The westbound Amtrak *Empire Builder* Trains 727 resumed service to the full route effective with the departure from Chicago on July 18.

When the *Builder* resumed service throughout its entire route there was no service to Minot, N.D. due to flood damage to the depot and platform. Repairs to the depot and platform are expected to be completed in August at which time service will be restored.

During the period when the route was disrupted by the floods, *Empire Builder* service was maintained between Chicago and St. Paul. The *Builder* operated between the cities as Train 708/808 with only coach and lounge car service. On the western end of the *Builder's* route Train 8 operated from Seattle to Havre, Mont.

The Portland-Spokane section of the *Builder* was replaced with motor coach service, or passengers could travel to/from Seattle aboard an Amtrak *Cascades* train to connect with Train 8.

During the service disruption no alternate transportation was offered to stations between St. Paul and Havre, Mont.

WESTERN CORRIDORS

Pacific Surfliner

Train 796

Pacific Surfliner Train 796 will not serve Old Town and San Diego Mondays through Fridays from June 20 through Oct. 14,

2011 because of track work being performed by the San Diego Northern Railway. On those days the train will terminate at Solana Beach at 12:11 a.m.

Passengers traveling to Old Town and San Diego will detrain at Oceanside where motorcoach service will be provided to their destination.

On July 4 and Sept. 5 Train 796 will stop at Old Town and San Diego.

New Pacific Surfliner Service Timetable

A new Amtrak California *Pacific Surfliner* timetable was issued on July 15. A notice of the new express service offered by Monday-Friday Train 563 appears on its cover. Pages six and seven display southbound and northbound California Coastal services between Sacramento, Oakland, San Jose, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Los Angeles and San Diego via Capitol Corridor train Thruway Buses and Pacific Surfliner trains. A map illustrating the service appears on page eight.

MIDWEST ROUTES

Illinois Route

The southbound Chicago-Carbondale *Illini*, Train 393, on July 5, experienced a delay when its locomotive ran out of fuel at 6:02 p.m., about ten miles south of Gilman, Ill. At 7:10 p.m. a following CN freight train began to push the disabled *Illini* to Rantoul where the locomotive was refueled. The train arrived at Rantoul at 8:12 p.m. and departed at 9:12 p.m. It arrived at Carbondale at 12:56 a.m., 3 hours, 21 minutes late.

NORTHEAST CORRIDOR

The U.S. Department of transportation awarded \$450 million to Amtrak is for a project to upgrade electrical power, signal systems, track and overhead catenary wires between Morrisville, Pa., and New Brunswick, N.J. – one of the busiest segments of the Northeast Corridor and where the densest concentration of *Acela Express* high-speed rail operations occurs. It also will reconfigure track switches at the western entrance to New York Penn Station to mitigate congestion issues. The anticipated completion date is in September 2017.

As a result, Amtrak top speeds will increase from 135 mph to 160 mph along a 24-mile section of track. Combined with new equipment acquisition currently in the planning stages, the project supports plans to add six more *Acela Express* high-speed roundtrips between New York and Washington by 2018 and a total of 15 additional roundtrips by 2022 – doubling high-speed service from current levels.

REDDING STOCKTON SACRAMENTO

THRUWAY BUSES

The Amtrak *Thruway* bus stop for Red Bluff, CA was recently relocated to the TRAX Bus & Ride. The new stop is located at Rio and Walnut Streets. The motorcoach service was moved to the transit center to make it easy for Thruway passengers to connect with Tehama County transportation services. It also lessened street congestion at the old bus stop at the Taco Bell restaurant adjacent to the high school.

The *Thruway Buses* on this route provide connecting service to and from *Capitol Corridor* and *San Joaquin* trains at Stockton and Sacramento.

DEPOT DOINGS

SANDPOINT, Id. The historic Sandpoint depot will be restored and continue as a stop for the *Empire Builder* under an

agreement brokered by the city. Under the terms of the agreement the BNSF Ry. will lease the structure and platform to Amtrak which will sub-lease it to the city. Funds to refurbish the depot will come from the Idaho Transportation Department. The restoration will begin once the agreements are signed. The depot is unstaffed and no station services are offered. Scheduled stops for the *Bulder* are: westbound at 11:49 p.m. and eastbound at 2:35 a.m.

MINOT, N.D. To protect the Minot depot during the June flood it was surrounded by a temporary earth levee which was covered with plastic sheets on its outside to prevent erosion. An aerial photograph taken on June 24 showed the depot completely surrounded by water.

ROCKY MOUNTAINEER

This year *Rocky Mountaineer* is offering a new service level option, *SilverLeaf Service*. The new service level is in addition to its *RedLeaf* (day coach) *Service* and premium level *GoldLeaf Service*.

SilverLeaf Service is offered aboard glass-topped single-level coaches on its Canadian Rocky Mountain routes. The service offers roomy reclining seats, breakfast and lunch, with a choice of entrees, served at the passenger's seat and complimentary non-alcoholic beverages and snacks.

In Aug., 2012, the *Rocky Mountaineer* plans to originate some of its tours in Seattle. The new *Costal Passage* tour will operate from Seattle to Vancouver, B.C., as the first portion of a three-day trip from Seattle to Banff or Jasper (or the reverse trip), with overnight stays in Vancouver and Kamloops. Only the *GoldLeaf* service level will be offered.

The *Rocky Mountaineer* train will operate from King Street Station in Seattle to the Pacific Central Station in Vancouver where the Canada Border Services Agency conducts its border inspections.

Onboard Service Staff Locked Out

In February, *Rocky Mountaineer* employees voted to be represented by Teamsters Local 31, and have been working without a contract since that time. Efforts to negotiate a new contract were unsuccessful, and as a result the onboard service staff served a strike notice. The company responded by serving a lockout notice declaring a lockout on June 22, 2011. The locked out onboard service workers were replaced aboard the train by company managers and replacement workers.

[Info. from Marti Ann Draper, John Lee, Ken Ruben, Ed Von Nordeck]

GUYS AND DOLLS... AND SPECIAL TRAINS

Most railroad stories improve with re-telling, maybe because of a tendency for truth to dissolve over time. The experiences of the late "Big Red" Sturtevant may fall into this category. This story came to me third-hand via the Desert Phantom, who himself has been known to embellish a tale, so the reader is cautioned that the lines between fact and fiction may have become blurred.

"Big Red" got into the operation of special trains as a by-product of his job as PR director for a major extraction and processing corporation with operations in desert regions of eastern California and the Las Vegas area. In the late 1960's he was given the task of running picnic trains for the employees at

the California plant and later for the Las Vegas operation. Having grown up around Lackawanna camelbacks in Hoboken, New Jersey, "Big Red" had always been a railfan. So it was no surprise to him that the prospect of a train ride had great popular appeal, but just how great it was caused his problems with plant management. But let him tell about it in his own words

I must tell you about the two special trains I ran for company employees and their families at two different company locations in the 1960's. The first special originated at the company town of Trona in California and operated over the company's Trona Railroad. A few months later, I operated a second special originating outside Las Vegas at Henderson, Nevada. At Trona we ran two roundtrips 32 miles to the junction with the Southern Pacific's "Jawbone" branch at Searles Station. The Henderson caper originated on the Union Pacific's Boulder City Branch, then headed east on the UP main to get to the freight-only Caliente and Pioche Branch. With the help of some writers on the Vegas papers we billed that trip as a run to set the speed record time from Henderson to Pioche, a desert routing to nowhere that any passenger agent, even one not in his right mind, would contemplate. Maybe it was the newspaper publicity that added to my problems, but I'm getting ahead of the story.

At Trona the SP had reluctantly provided a string of Harriman coaches borrowed from San Francisco Peninsula commute service to make up our train. But even these aging non-air-conditioned relics couldn't detract from the holiday mood as employees and their families boarded and presented their company-provided souvenir-excursion tickets for the first run of the day. My problem started to show up four miles into the trip as we eased to a stop at Westend to load a few more families. Clearly there were a lot more people waiting for the train than I had expected. And although, in these isolated desert communities you could draw a crowd to watch paint dry, it looked to me that a large number of these folk had come to ride, not to watch. The first nonemployee to approach me was a popular local gas station mechanic with his wife and stair-step passel of kids from three to twelve. My ticket collecting resolve started to fade fast. The corporate vice-president who had shaken the cars out of the SP was on hand, so I invited him to tell the kids to beat it. He took one look, said, "you handle it," and climbed into a car along with the plant manager who nodded, adding, "And that goes for me, too." I let the group on and, as I suspected, there were dozens waiting to see what would happen. And what happened was that I told the ticket takers to forget about tickets, welcome all aboard, and move on to their secondary job as candy butchers - free candy and soda for all!

I left an assistant to round up not only more of all the eatables and drinkables we were serving on the train but also sandwiches, salads and desserts for the picnic at Searles Station. Because we had two runs scheduled, I knew the word would really get around. And sure enough we had a full second load including not only employees but others who didn't work for the company such as teachers, postal workers, store people, and probably a bunch of employees from our competitor's Westend plant. The trip had morphed into a community relations event, everyone had a good time and I was able to soak up the excess in my PR budget so that the Plant Manager didn't have to bear

the extra costs.

However, the next spring when we started to put the Henderson trip together, the Plant Manager insisted that tickets be issued to employees based on a payroll tie. Seems he had heard about families of our competitors riding on our Trona jaunt and didn't want any free loaders on his trip. This presented me with a problem because once the story of our impending train ride got in the papers with my name appended, the lobby or bar of *any* hotel became an ambush site for would-be train riders when I walked in. As the PR corporate face in Vegas I was well known, but now as the possible source of a train ride, I had suddenly developed a new popularity. If I ever had any doubts about the universal appeal of trains, this trip cured them. Here were pit bosses, mobsters with charm, cocktail waitresses, world renowned chefs, chorus girls, and entertainers, all of whom had suddenly become my best friends. You would be amazed as to the depths of wheedling to which a tough gangster pit boss or a chorus line dancer can sink when there's a shot at an excursion train ride for them *and the kiddies!* To accommodate them and with the help of the accounting department, I created a phantom payroll number for the sole purpose of issuing tickets to my non-company "guests." It was a sneaky move on my part, but I felt certain that the plant manager would never be the wiser. I looked forward to the picnic train and scenery made even more spectacular with the addition of chorus girls from the Sands, the Riviera, and one from The Follies Bergere at Tropicana. Much to my disappointment the chorus girl from the Follies appeared in full engineer garb (overalls, work shirt, safety shoes, neckerchief and engineer's cap) and was really disappointed when the crew wouldn't let her ride in the cab. However, at our layover at Overton they allowed her up in the cab and provided a full locomotive tour, and for all I know she was running the engine on the return trip. Although my special guests included a mobster of national reputation and a recent graduate of the big house with an armed robbery degree, as railfans they were most appreciative of the opportunity to be aboard. They all showed up with their wives and kids mingled with the company employees just like a Damon Runyon script. The chorus girls, other than the "engineer," got into the spirit of things and took up news butcher trays of candy and helped out. Later at the Lake Mead picnic they even served as a volunteer Baywatch team to keep the creepy-crawler kidlets back from the drink.

My phantom payroll gave me a shoofly around the Plant Manager's authority, but I may have underestimated his powers of observation. Because there he was on the train, trying to figure out where all these people worked, and his superintendents and foremen assured him, yeah, they knew the guy in the sharkskin suit and the gorgeous brunette and several guys in what looked like three-hundred dollar suits. (Remember we're talking 1960's dollars.) The foremen must have been enjoying the "Guys And Dolls" aspect of the trip since they were able to fob off the boss's questions with references to the protective clothing worn by workers and the 24/7 nature of the operation and comments like "Gee boss, at 2 a.m. and wearing a black, rubber apron, who can tell what anyone really looks like." They must have been pretty convincing because rumors had it that for several weeks after the trip the boss would show up at the plant at odd times in search of one of the more spectacular specimens

he had met on the train.

Some time later that year I was honored by the corporation with a merit award for "a unique contribution to the company's image." To wit, turning the Trona trip into "an overwhelming successful community event." Fortunately, nothing was said about the Henderson trip. To ease my conscience, I did make an effort to provide the Plant Manager with a plaque for "Setting the Henderson-Pioche Speed Record . . . with 327 Happy Passengers." Of course, the passenger count included the guys and dolls on my phantom payroll.

GUYS AND DOLLS . . . AND SPECIAL TRAINS comes to Pacific Railroad Society from Dick Donat of Summit, New Jersey. Dick is a longtime PRS member, who came to California recently to ride on the Anniversary Trip from Los Angeles to Bakersfield.

Dick says, "The story came to me from L.T. Gotchy [another PRS member now living in Hesperia, California], who had met Big Red Sturtevant years ago at a Death Valley event where Gotchy was performing his Auto Club of Southern California duties. The two guys shared WW II experiences and found they had both survived the Hurtgen Forest in the winter of 1944 and a lasting friendship developed.

"Gotchy passed the story on to me a few years back after Big Red's death and I've taken the liberty of editing it. I'm sure that Big Red's Trona trip would have used the Trona Railway's center cab Baldwins for motive power and I have a couple of its photos in my files from PRS's 1953 excursion to Trona. [See illustration on last page of this *Wheel Clicks*.]

METROLINK SEES RECORD RIDERSHIP

With nearly 20,000 boardings over the 'Carmageddon' weekend, Metrolink experienced the highest weekend ridership it has seen in its 19-year history. The July 16-17 weekend's numbers are almost 50 percent higher than the same weekend last year and 10 percent higher than the previous weekend record set when Metrolink offered train service to and from the U2 concert in Anaheim.

[Info. from *Pasadena Star-News*]



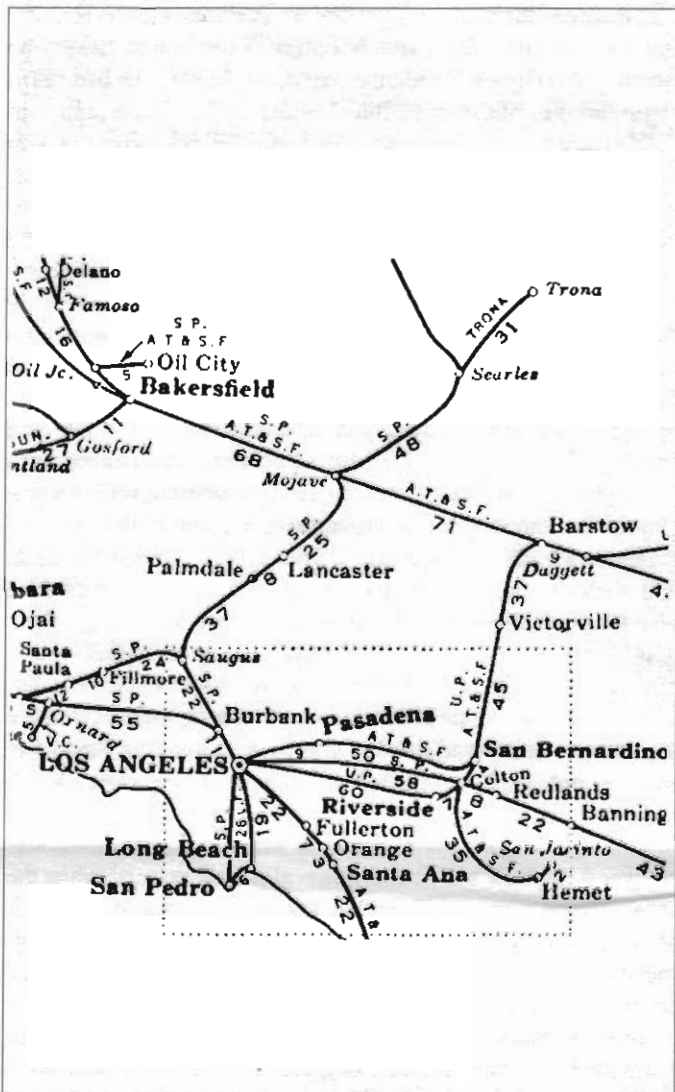
Baldwin 2000 hp center cabs 50 or 51 arrive on the Trona in 1949 and were most likely the power on "Big Red's" Trona picnic train. Photo by Dick Donat



Pacific Railroad Society Excursion #80 was on the Trona Railway on March 14 and 15, 1953, powered by Trona Railway No. 2701. Photo by Leroy Donat



Trona Railway No. 2701 was an ex-LA&SL 2-8-2, which lasted a few more years in back-up service. Photo by Leroy Donat



Railroad map in use during PRS Excursion #80 in March 1953. The Palmdale cutoff was built from April 1966 to June 1967.



On PRS Excursion #80, Trona Railway Caboose 100 is seen at Searles, California. Photo by Leroy Donat