

# WHEEL CLICKS

Pacific Railroad Society Inc.

JANUARY 2007

## UNION PACIFIC DELIVERED CHRISTMAS TREES

Union Pacific delivered the season's first rail shipment of fresh Christmas trees to Los Angeles on Nov. 15, 2006, on board a train from Portland, Ore. UP expected to transport nearly 725,000 Christmas trees to California in more than 1,000 containers or over-the-road trailers. The majority of the containers were bound for Los Angeles, the remaining shipped to Lathrop in Northern California.

Historically, the railroad moved Christmas trees in boxcars that were unloaded at various locations by a wide variety of vendors. In 1988, UP began moving the trees in intermodal containers and over-the-road trailers. Since then, the railroad has transported more than 9,600 containers and trailers loaded with more than 6.5 million Christmas trees from the Pacific Northwest.

[Info. from /www.uprr.com/newsinfo/ via Charles Varnes]

## PRS DUES INCREASE

Pacific Railroad Society dues have remained the same for the last decade. During that period the costs of operating the Society have increased substantially. Meetings, *Wheel Clicks*, the Pacific Railroad Museum, and the organization's rolling stock are the activities most-noticed by the members. In addition to the expenses for those activities, insurance, postage, telephone, and other costs have increased substantially, also.

To maintain the value of your PRS membership and to balance the organization's income and expenses, your directors and officers recommend increasing dues to \$35 beginning with the 2007-2008 year.

A vote on the dues increase will be conducted at the January monthly meeting.

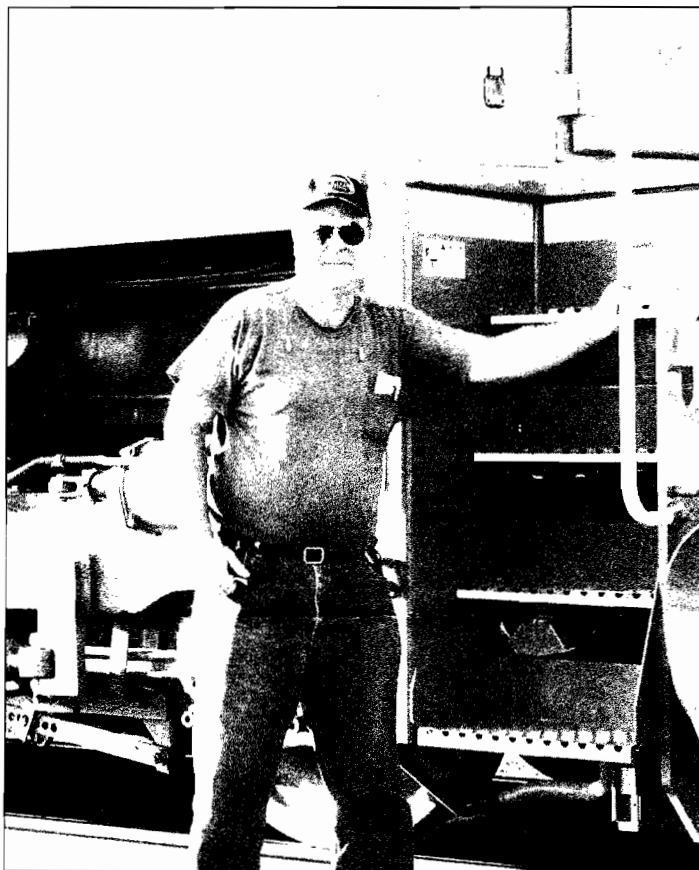
## BRIAN BLACK RETIREMENT by CHARLES VARNES

Brian Black, a second-generation Pacific Railroad Society member, retired from a 40-year career with the Southern Pacific, and the Union Pacific, at the end of August 2006. His late father, Nolan Black, was a long-time PRS member who served as a director, vice-president, and excursion director of the organization during his membership.

Brian's interest in railroading goes back to long before he hired out on the Southern Pacific. Some of his earliest childhood memories were trips to Summit with his father, and spending the night in the *Descanso*.

In the spring of 1966, Brian was looking for a summer job while attending college. His previous summer jobs were a laborer in a synthetic rubber plant and a worker in an accounting office, neither of which were too appealing; so a good friend of his named George Wagoner and he decided to try hiring out as brakemen on one of the local railroads.

They found out that the Union Pacific was only hiring



*Brian Black prepares to board a Union Pacific locomotive shortly before his retirement at the end of August 2006.*

switchmen; and the Santa Fe would not hire him because he wore glasses. Someone at Santa Fe suggested they try the Espee.

The Espee hired both of them, and they quickly learned one thing in the first five minutes of their first student trip; just because you are a railfan, don't think you know anything about practical day-to-day railroading...because you don't!

Brian and George both somehow got through their student trips without getting themselves or someone else fired. Brian marked up for service on July 1, 1966, and was quickly called for an empty reefer drag to Santa Barbara. Imagine the look on the conductor's face when he discovered Brian was making his first pay trip, the other brakeman had made about three paid trips, and George was still making student trips. They somehow made it to Santa Barbara and as luck would have it, deadheaded home on Tr. No. 76, the old *Lark*. George elected not to wait for them, so he set out for Los Angeles on an eastbound freight. Unfortunately, when he was standing in the cab door of an F-unit passing signals, the unit derailed on a tempered switch. He [continued at RETIREMENT on Page 3]



**WHEEL CLICKS**  
**JANUARY 2007 VOLUME 70, NO. 10**

**EDITOR** ..... **DICK FINLEY**  
**TECHNICAL EDITOR** ..... **CHARLES VARNES**  
**MAILER** ..... **FRED KNOX**  
**EXCURSION DIRECTOR** ..... **BARBARA SIBERT**

Published monthly by Pacific Railroad society, Inc., P. O. Box 80726, San Marino, California 91118-8726. The Society is a California chartered, nonprofit organization of those who share an interest in railroad operations, travel and history. Telephone (562) 692-4858. INTERNET Home Page: <http://www.pacificrailroadsociety.org> For excursion informaton, phone (626) 570-8651.

Opinions expressed in unsigned articles are those of the editorial board, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Society, its officers or directors. Opinions in signed articles are those of the author only. All rights reserved. ISSN: 0043-4744. ©2006 BY PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY, INC.

**Membership Dues: \$25.00 per year**

**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](mailto:PRSTrainman@aol.com) Open Saturdays. 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; Wednesdays 1-5 p.m.

**MUSEUM COMMITTEE CHAIR** ..... **LINDSAY SMITH**

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY, INC.**  
**VIC CARLUCCI** ..... **PRESIDENT**  
**ROB MARKOWITZ** ..... **VICE-PRESIDENT**  
**BILL SMITH** ..... **SECRETARY**  
**MARTI ANN DRAPER** ..... **TREASURER**  
**DAVE ABBOTT (2004-2007)** ..... **DIRECTOR**  
**OWEN DANAHER (2004-2007)** ..... **DIRECTOR**  
**DICK FINLEY (2005-2008)** ..... **DIRECTOR**  
**CHRIS PARKER (2006-2009)** ..... **DIRECTOR**  
**LINDSAY SMITH (2005-2008)** ..... **DIRECTOR**

**PRS NEWS — ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES**

- Jan. 5 Board meeting, 7:30 p.m., Valencia Room at Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
- Jan. 6, 13, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Bonita & Monte Vista Aves., San Dimas.
- Sats. Committee meeting: 27.
- Jan. 6, 13, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Saunders Yard at Noakes & Herbert Sts., Commerce. Regular
- 20, 27 Day: 6, 20; Extra Day: 13, 27. Com. Meeting: 20.
- Sats. Day: 6, 20; Extra Day: 13, 27. Com. Meeting: 20.
- Jan. 12 Membership meeting, 7:30 p.m., Alhambra Room at Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
- Fri. Board meeting, 7:30 p.m., Valencia Room at Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
- Feb. 2 Board meeting, 7:30 p.m., Valencia Room at Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
- Fri. Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Bonita & Monte Vista Aves., San Dimas.
- Feb. 3, 10, 17, 24 p.m., Bonita & Monte Vista Aves., San Dimas.
- Sats. Committee meeting: 24.
- Feb. 3, 10, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Saunders Yard at Noakes & Herbert Sts., Commerce. Regular
- 17, 24 Day: 3, 17; Extra Day: 10, 24. Com. meeting: 17.
- Sats. Day: 3, 17; Extra Day: 10, 24. Com. meeting: 17.
- Feb. 9 Membership meeting, 7:30 p.m., Alhambra Room at Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
- Fri. Board meeting, 7:30 p.m., Valencia Room at Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.

**MEETING PROGRAMS** by **RUSS DAVIES**  
 January 12: **Coast to Coast on the National Forum!** Via the

magic of **projected digital images**, Tom Greer will take us along on **PRS Excursion #525** in June and July 2006. **A first for PRS, a "Digital Slide Presentation."** (Suggestions as to what to call these will be welcome.) **Be there, and bring slide briefs!**

February 9: Veteran presenter, **Roger Fogt**, will take us on a **1985 Arizona excursion** featuring the rare Santa Fe **Peavine Line!** This **video** presentation will take us from Los Angeles to **Flagstaff**, down the **Peavine** to **Phoenix**, and back to Los Angeles. **Be there, and bring slide briefs!**

**MEMBERSHIP** by **VIRGINIA GRUPP**

At the Board meeting on December 1, 2006, Brian Moore was voted into PRS.

**PACIFIC RAILROAD MUSEUM** by **LINDSAY SMITH**

We continue to receive additions to our collection. Recently Paul Ayers of Glendale, Calif. sent us an old chart, a railroad pass for the Flying Eagle, Ltd., and "Bulletin of the Railroad Club of Southern California." The Bulletin described an Oct. 1950 trip to Eagle Mountain. The first passenger service over Eagle Mountain Railway occurred on Sept. 22, 1950. They rode a Southern Pacific passenger train to Ferrum (junction at the Salton Sea), and switched to gondolas and flats behind a Kaiser locomotive. Paul was a passenger.

Although I have written about Trash by Rail in several previous issues, I had not realized that the Eagle Mountain Railroad Project included 54.09 miles of track from Ferrum to the Mill site at the Mine. The Rise and Fall is 3,251.03 feet. The Mine to Market ruling grade is 1%, but the Empty ruling grade is 2.15%. It is level for only 2.79 miles.

The Los Angeles Sanitation Districts have purchased Eagle Mountain Mine as a trash dump. Its development is currently being held up by environmentalists from San Diego making claims in Federal Court about the turtles and other effects. The other site, Mesquite Mine, is being developed sooner since it has cleared the permit process. It may also be possible to use trucks to move containers to the Mesquite Mine from the rail.

Clearly, the use of the Kaiser Mine for Los Angeles trash will include redevelopment of the railway from Ferrum to the Mill, if not a huge fleet of trucks. The Mill and Camp will be converted to an unloading facility. Some argue that the grade may have to be adjusted to reduce the Ferrum to Cerico Summit (on I-10 between Indio and Blythe) grade that is mostly 2.0% compensated. However, the route includes about 3,350 degrees of curves, and 20 miles of 2% grade implies a huge earth moving project to get little relief.

I wish I knew more about these projects but there is very little mentioned yet in the news releases by the Los Angeles Sanitation Districts. It may not be very interesting to the citizens who are going to own and operate a huge industrial entity including a mountain railway.

In the first week of December, we collected orders for 20 DVD discs. Mel is shipping these items as I write this article. We are still selling "For the Love of Trains," pins and other items in the Company Store.

We are still looking for a roofer to retile the roof. Our previous roofer did not complete the tile approval step and abandoned the job.

**[RETIREMENT from Page 1]**

was thrown to the ground, injured his knee, and never worked for the railroad again.

Brian only worked a few weeks before getting laid off. This wasn't so bad since school was about to start. He took a spot on the extra board that protected the Los Angeles-Bakersfield district. Since it was a seniority board (the oldest man in seniority gets the most work), he could only work weekends, so that worked out just fine.

He was one of the first to work trains over the newly completed Palmdale-Colton Cutoff. The home terminal was Palmdale and ran all the way to Indio and, since there were two major mountain grades to surmount, Brian frequently ran afoul of the 16 hour law.

Brian was promoted to conductor on May 5, 1971, on the San Joaquin Mountain District. His first regular conductor's assignment was on the old Palmdale-Bakersfield Pool. This was a good job, and he learned a great deal while working this pool.

The Interdivisional Run Agreement of 1973 caused the elimination of a number of pool jobs, so he found himself back working out of Los Angeles. He worked jobs to Indio, extra passenger jobs, and numerous pools. His first love, however, was the Los Angeles-Bakersfield district. Whenever he had the seniority to work it, that's where he went. He worked both the through freight pool, and a local that did all the local work between Palmdale and Mojave. While working this job, he made frequent trips to Searles on the "jawbone" line.

In 1984, he was elected United Transportation Union Vice-Local Chairman for the district. After six years in this position, he moved up to the Local Chairman's position, and held that job for about 10 years. He considered these 16 years as the most rewarding in his railroad career. He said of the job, "There were many frustrations, but if you could keep a man out of trouble or help him in dealings with the company, you felt you were doing some good for your fellow man. As a union officer, you are more than an agent dealing with the company; you are a drug and alcohol counselor, a marriage counselor, father confessor, and who knows what all else. One time, I received a call in the middle of the night, and I had to talk a man down from suicide."

Most PRS members have heard of the famous "oil can" train that operated between Bakersfield and Los Angeles. Brian worked this train many times. Later, a leading terminal was built just south of Mojave at Fleta siding, and a regular job was established in Los Angeles to handle this business. He held this job for 2½ years before a new pipeline forced the elimination of rail service.

When the Union Pacific bought out the Southern Pacific, he commented, "It caused a sea-change in the way we went about railroading." It is outside the scope of this article to deal in detail with these changes, but suffice to say, the UP regarded anything Southern Pacific to be automatically suspect, and things were going to be done the UP way or not at all. The UP established a pool that operated between Los Angeles and Yuma, and Brian held a conductor's position on the pool until his retirement on August 31, 2006.

That date marked the end of a 40 year career. He is proud to say that his discipline record was completely clean, and he never lost a day due to injury.

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY RIDERS**

During the month of October 2006, the average number of weekday riders traveling on trains going to, from, or within Los Angeles County, other than on Amtrak, was 285,230. This was a 1 percent increase over last month.

**CALTRAIN NEWS**by **MIKE GONDON**

On December 2 and 3, Caltrain ran its sixth annual Toys for Tots train. Powered by Caltrain engine 920, and decorated with more than 40,000 lights and holiday decorations, the train stopped at eight Peninsula stations over two nights, collecting toys for the area's needy children.

Various musical groups were on hand at each station to entertain the crowds of people waiting for the train's arrival. Also, holiday music was provided on board the train by the Salvation Army brass band, as well as the Cisco Singers on Saturday and the Peninsula Harmony Chorus on Sunday. Of course, Santa was aboard the train and got off at each stop to pose for pictures with the children. The train spent about 20 minutes at each stop.

Thanks mostly to high gas prices, more people than ever are turning to Caltrain. Weekday ridership for August was nearly 37,000, a 13.6% increase over August 2005. On time performance was over 97% and farebox revenue was up 22% over August 2005.

That's the good news. The bad news is that the high fuel prices have increased Caltrain's expenses, and \$8 million in "one time" funds had to be used to balance this year's budget. That left only \$3 million to carry through to next June, so the Caltrain Board will be seeking increased subsidies from San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Clara counties in order to balance future budgets.

Visitors to the museum at the old Millbrae Caltrain station will find a new attraction to tour. It's a 1941 Pullman car named *Civic Center*, that was once used on the famed *City of San Francisco* streamliner. The car was restored to its original condition at the old Bayshore Yard, then moved to Millbrae, where it is on a long term loan.

After a successful test of high speed wireless access over a 16-mile stretch of track this past summer, Caltrain is proceeding to make the service available over its entire route. In early 2007, Caltrain will seek bidders for the installation and operation of the service, and if funding can be secured, it hopes to have the service up and running by the end of 2007.

**RAILROAD HIRING BOOM**

Union Pacific, the nation's largest freight carrier – based in Omaha, Neb. – will hire about 6,000 new employees this year, said Roy Schroer, assistant vice president for human resources. "Our hiring needs have grown dramatically," Schroer said. "I think, generally, forecasts would say, assuming a level economy or a strong economy, we're going to have a need to hire at least 5,000 people a year for the next several years."

The hiring is a marked change from the 1980s, when the railroad industry was in a rapid consolidation, combining the work forces of many railroads and prompting layoffs of some employees, usually on the basis of seniority. Union Pacific, for example, is the product of seven mergers in the past 27 years.

BNSF Railway Co., the nation's second-largest freight railroad, based in Fort Worth, Texas, faces a similar problem. "The whole rail industry is an early precursor of the retirement wave baby boomers will cause in many segments of the U.S. economy," said Steven Forsberg, a BNSF spokesman.

By the end of 2006, BNSF will have hired more than 14,000 people over the past four years, he said. Most of those hires replaced retiring workers, but some were needed due to record volume on the rail line, Fosberg said. The American Association of Railroads said freight demand is expected to drive the need for more than 80,000 new workers over the next six years.

The jobs typically pay well. At Union Pacific, an employee can become a train engineer within three to five years at a salary of \$75,000. The unionized industry also offers good benefits, and workers with 30 years of service can retire at age 60. Many rail workers are hired with little or no education beyond a high school diploma, so many start young and retire early.

To be a conductor, new employees must complete 14 weeks of classroom and on-the-job training. The conductor is the train supervisor, overseeing its crew and ensuring air hoses, braking systems and car couplings are properly attached. The train engineer drives the locomotive.

Pat McGovern, a conductor and former manager in Chicago, moved to central Iowa to be an instructor. He said the work isn't for everyone. "A few people are book smart, but they get out here and they're afraid of the equipment. It's huge," he said. "After three weeks, you can tell whether they're going to make it or not."

[Info. from *Pasadena Star-News*]

**RAIL TRANSIT TEMPO** by TOM NELSON  
SPOKANE

The two advisory ballot measures concerning Spokane Transit Authority's (STA) plan to build a light rail transit (LRT) line between downtown Spokane and Liberty Lake were defeated at the polls by a small majority on Nov. 7. (See Proposition Nos. 1 and 2 in the Nov. issue of *Wheel Clicks* and the partial vote count in the Dec. issue. The latter results did not come from Seattle's Sound Transit as implied but from the *Spokesman Review*.) Prop. No. 1 sought approval to identify funding sources, and Prop. 2 asked for approval to use existing resources for preliminary engineering and environmental study.

The incomplete tabulations released on Nov. 8 were as follows:

	<u>Proposition No. 1</u>		<u>Proposition No. 2</u>	
Yes	29,143	43.68%	30,609	45.99%
No	37,569	56.32%	35,945	54.01%

On Nov. 8 there were approximately 70,000 ballots remaining to be counted. By Nov. 17 the uncounted were down to an estimated 9,900; about 3,500 by Nov. 20. On Nov. 27 with only about 50 ballots remaining to be counted, Prop. 1 had 46% yes and 54% no; Prop. 2 had 48% yes and 52% no.

During the counting period an STA Board member received numerous phone calls from citizens who were watching the results come in. They had not bothered to vote, because they thought the measures would easily pass, and now they regret not voting. The STA Board was going to consider during the week of Nov. 13 whether or not to continue planning the LRT line, but

on Nov. 17 delayed a decision until more information would be available. Also, the Board needs to consider any effect their decision would have on going to the voters in 2007 to increase the 0.3 percent sales tax to fund bus service.

[Info. from *Spokesman Review* via Frank Mares and directly from STA]

LEWISTON, IDAHO

After two years, Don Rice of Lewiston convinced the owner of a local agricultural field to allow him to remove a deteriorating streetcar for restoration. Lewiston Clarkston (Wash.) Transit Co.'s No. 8 ran on a four-mile loop between the two cities for seven years until the rail transit line was abandoned in 1929. The 27-foot car was converted to a mobile home in a trailer park, but none of the structural part was damaged. Among items needed are folding doors, windows, and trolley lights.

[Info. from *Spokesman Review* via Frank Mares]

**S. CALIF. COMMUTER RAIL** by DICK FINLEY  
RIDERSHIP

Metrolink weekday, systemwide, average trips during October increased from September by 173 to 42,530, rounded to 0 percent change. Total system ridership increased by 3 percent over a year before. Average weekday passenger trips during October by route were:

Ventura County	4,070
Antelope Valley	7,157
San Bernardino	12,291
Burbank Turns	710
Riverside	4,960
Orange County	6,561
Inland Empire/OC	4,535
Riverside/Full/LA	2,246

Metrolink weekday, systemwide, schedule adherence during October (Percentage of trains arriving within five minutes of scheduled time) was 96 percent.

MONTCLAIR STATION PEDESTRIAN UNDERPASS

On Nov. 17 the SCRRA Board authorized Contract C3088-07 with Griffith Company for the Montclair Station Pedestrian Underpass and the East Ontario Station Platform Extension at a base price and 6 percent contingency for a total amount not-to-exceed \$4,509,856.87. The award is contingent upon approval of additional funding by the San Bernardino Associated Governments (SANBAG) and subject to resolution of any protest timely filed.

In 2001, the City of Montclair in cooperation with SANBAG and SCRRA constructed a second boarding platform to serve the No. 2 track at the Montclair Metrolink Station/Transcenter. As part of the construction, an at-grade pedestrian crossing was built to access the new platform from the parking lots located north of the right-of-way. The scope of the Montclair Station underpass project includes a 14' x 10' underpass structure, constructed beneath the existing main line tracks and parking lot modifications. During the development of the Montclair Station underpass design, SCRRA coordinated with the Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension Construction Authority, which has future plans to extend the Gold Line from its present termination in the City of Pasadena to the Montclair Station.

### EAST ONTARIO STATION PLATFORM EXTENSION

In 1993 SCRRA in cooperation with the City of Ontario and SANBAG constructed the East Ontario Metrolink Station on the Union Pacific Railroad Los Angeles Subdivision for Riverside Line service. The station is located on the north side of two main line tracks and includes a 425' main boarding platform that serves the No. 1 main track. The station also has a short center platform for emergency use in the event that the Union Pacific dispatcher is required to bring a Metrolink train into the station on the No. 2 track.

Today, Metrolink train sets can consist of as many as six cars and, in the next several years, it is expected that some Metrolink train sets will be as long as eight cars. The 425' main platform at East Ontario Station can only accommodate a five-car train set, and the center platform is only long enough for three cars. As a result, stops at the East Ontario Station are operationally challenged for the crews of longer train sets.

Under Contract C3088-07, the main boarding platform at East Ontario Station will be lengthened to 680 feet in order to accommodate future eight-car train sets. The emergency center platform will be extended for use by six-car train sets. The scope of the platform extension project also includes a new canopy, additional lighting for the main boarding platform and tube steel fencing for the center platform to direct passengers to the pedestrian crossing at the west end of the platform.

### IRVINE PARKING EXPANSION

The purpose of the project is to expand transit-serving parking facilities at the Irvine Transportation Center (ITC). The project is comprised of a new four-level parking structure accommodating 1500 parking spaces. The parking structure design accommodates 7000 square feet of commercial space fronting Ada Drive. The new structure will be constructed on the existing surface lot, located on the northwest corner of the station.

Bids were to be solicited in November 2006, and construction is expected to start in January 2007.

### TUSTIN STATION PARKING STRUCTURE

The purpose of this project is to expand transit-serving parking facilities at the Tustin Station. Currently, the Tustin Station provides 317 parking spaces in a surface lot located adjacent to the south side of the station and railroad right-of-way. The ultimate plan of the city is to construct a 500-space parking garage at the easterly end of the existing surface parking lot. As an interim solution to providing additional parking capacity as quickly as possible, the City is actively searching for nearby locations to serve as remote parking lots, with possible shuttles to provide access to and from the Metrolink station.

### SANTA ANA DOUBLE TRACK

This project, within the City of Santa Ana, will close a 1½-mile gap in a 30-mile segment of continuous double track between Fullerton and Laguna Niguel stations. Double tracking the single track section will eliminate a critical operational bottleneck and improve the capacity reliability and performance of the Metrolink, Amtrak and BNSF service.

The project includes the construction of 1.5 miles of new track, four reconstructed grade crossings, a significant amount of utility and storm drain relocation, a new bridge over Santiago Creek and neighborhood sound attenuation. Construction work

began in May of this year and is anticipated to be completed by May 2007. The project budget is \$24.2 million and is composed of State and Orange County Transportation Authority funding.

### INCREASED RIDERSHIP

Metrolink has kept many of the new riders it gained during the spike in gas prices earlier in 2006. The commuter rail system saw an 8 percent to 10 percent increase in ridership during the late spring and early summer months, Metrolink spokesman Francisco Oaxaca said in late September. As gas prices fell again, ridership has remained higher than it was before the rise in gas prices, he said.

### 100 MILLIONTH RIDER

Andrew Sanchez of Van Nuys was designated the 100 millionth Metrolink passenger as he stepped onto the platform at the Anaheim Station on October 26, 2006. He received prizes including a four-night cruise to Baja California. Metrolink anticipated reaching 100 million riders in 2007, but increased ridership throughout 2006 brought the milestone about faster. Ridership is up more than 8 percent this past year, said Metrolink chairman Art Brown. Those catching the train in Orange County alone increased 11 percent since last year. By 2009 in Orange County, trains will operate every 30 minutes, Brown said.

### ORANGE COUNTY

Santa Ana and Costa Mesa are planning on mapping new transit lines to link their cities to the Santa Ana Transportation Center. The cities will seek \$200,000 in funding under the Orange County Transportation Authority's (OCTA) "Go Local" program – an alternative to encourage cities to develop local transit connections to Metrolink after a proposed light rail transit (LRT) line fell through. Among the options are running feeder lines – which might include buses or trolleys – from the Santa Ana train depot to the Civic Center, MainPlace mall and the South Coast Metro area. The goal is to determine which feeder proposals are the most viable and apply for funding by the end of 2007 to develop those projects, said David Biondolillo, senior transportation analyst for Santa Ana.

The number of Metrolink trains in Orange County is expected to rise 90 percent by 2009, according to Michael Litschi, OCTA spokesman.

[Info. from *Orange County Register*]

### VENTURA COUNTY

Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) officials on Oct. 27 unveiled new gates and signals at two dangerous railroad crossings in Somis. Fatal accidents in April and Sept. 2002 and an injury accident in Aug. 2005 focused attention on problems at the Somis Road crossing, said Mary Travis of the VCTC. Also, there was a 2001 fatality on Sand Canyon Road.

Ventura County had 22 train-and-vehicle collisions between 2001 and 2005 on 316 railroad crossings.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

### NORTH COUNTY TRANSIT DISTRICT

During Aug '06 the ridership on the *Coaster* was 161,067, the highest in its 11-year history. The new single month record was 8 percent above Aug. '05. [Info. from *Transit California*]

Construction of the Sprinter passenger train has had some problems but is still on schedule. Don Bullock, Sprinter construction manager, told the North County Transit District

Board on Nov. 16, a freight train derailed on a newly laid section of track in Oceanside in August. He said the derailment was likely caused by a faulty brake on the rail car, and it "just chewed up a mile of our brand-new track." He estimated it will cost the district \$750,000 to \$900,000 to repair the damage.

Then a landslide undermined the track near College Blvd. in Oceanside shortly after that, forcing the district to engineer a \$2 million repair. The district expects construction insurance to cover part of the slope reinforcement, but not the derailment.

The Board vote also covered work on the Escondido Ave. station in Vista, where a curve in the original track poses a problem in getting trains close enough to the new station. Bullock said the district must straighten the curve to meet requirements of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act. This means moving the crossing several feet.

The city has also objected that putting two rail crossings onto Escondido Ave. – there is only one now – will create a dangerous bump for cars that navigate the road daily. The solution, Bullock said, is to make the surrounding roadway less steep. And that means serious road work several hundred feet both east and west of the crossing. He said this has necessitated extensive redesign and reconstruction at that location.

[Info. from Yahoo Mail and Railroad Newline via Ken Ruben]

#### HOLIDAY TOY EXPRESS AT CAMP PENDLETON

United States Marines in Camp Fallujah, Iraq, were to see their families and share a holiday experience in Camp Pendleton, California, LIVE via satellite during a special show on Saturday, Dec. 9. The 90-minute event, hosted by Southern California commuter rail system, Metrolink, and supported by Verizon Business and the Freedom Calls Foundation, would allow Marines in Iraq to experience what was occurring at Camp Pendleton as their families and friends met Santa, Mrs. Claus and other costumed characters as a part of the Metrolink Holiday Toy Express train stop.

This year was the first time the Holiday Toy Express was to stop at Camp Pendleton, headquarters of the First Marine Expeditionary Force which has 23,000 Marines in Iraq. Verizon Business made the overseas communication possible by providing large screens, communications links and technical expertise at both locations, and the Freedom Calls Foundation was providing the site-to-site satellite link.

#### YUCCA MOUNTAIN

The Energy Department is reconsidering building a rail line through western Nevada to the site of a proposed national nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, officials said. The north-south route dubbed the Mina Corridor was examined in the 1990s but shelved after the Walker River Paiute Indians refused access to their reservation. The tribe reconsidered this year.

The Energy Department has said it favored plans to build a 319-mile east-west rail line from Caliente, near the Utah border, across rural Nevada to the nuclear dump site, 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas. The so-called Caliente Corridor route could cost \$2 billion.

"The Mina corridor appears to offer potential advantages to the extent it would cross fewer mountain ranges, utilize existing rail bed and also be a shorter distance," the department said in a draft notice obtained by the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. The

Mina route would be 280 miles long and include an existing rail line between the towns of Wabuska and Hawthorne.

Draft versions of both studies would be released by the summer, department and Yucca Mountain project spokesman Allen Benson said. The state of Nevada opposed the repository plan. The Energy Department also was set to announce plans for an environmental impact statement of a redesigned industrial complex where nuclear waste would arrive and be managed at Yucca Mountain before being placed underground.

There currently is no rail line to the Yucca site, which Congress and the Bush administration picked in 2002 as the place to entomb 77,000 tons of radioactive waste now being stored at nuclear reactors in 39 states. The project has been stalled by funding shortfalls and questions about quality control work during site selection.

[Info. from *The Associated Press, The Las Vegas Sun*]

#### ALTAMONT COMMUTER EXPRESS

As the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRR) looks toward the future of service improvements and expansion of Altamont Commuter Express (ACE), HERZOG, their transit operations company, will be right along side. In over eight years of working with the SJRR, HERZOG has transported over 5.5 million passengers for ACE; and in the roughly 340,000 hours since start of operations in Stockton, Doug Warner, General Manager of HERZOG can boast an injury-free operation.

[Info. from ACE *Keeping Track*]

#### PASSENGER TRAIN UPDATES by CHARLES VARNES

The 109th Congress adjourned in early December leaving nine of 11 spending bills for 2007 incomplete. Funding for departments of Defense and Homeland Security were the only spending bills passed. Before adjourning the Congress passed a continuing resolution (CR), funding government operations at the current level through Feb. 15, 2007. It is likely that the 110th Congress, which will convene on Jan. 4, will pass a year-long CR for Fiscal 2007 and immediately begin work on Fiscal 2008 spending bills.

Funding for Amtrak will be frozen at the Fiscal 2006 level of \$1.29 billion, at best, and could be cut to the current CR level of \$1.1 billion.

#### AMTRAK NEWS

On Dec. 15, 2006, Amtrak President Alexander K. Kummant fired chief financial officer, David Smith; the police chief, Alfred J. Broadbent; the vice president for marketing and sales, Barbara J. Richardson; and the head of the corporate communications department, William Schulz. The railroad's general counsel and corporate secretary, Alicia M. Serfaty, was also fired, but was made a legal counsel to Mr. Kummant himself for the next three months.

This news item was received at deadline. An Amtrak reorganization plan was to be announced after deadline.

[Info. from *The New York Times*]

Express Trak discontinued operation on Oct. 30, 2006. The Express Trak refrigerated express cars were returned to Los Angeles for storage via the *Southwest Chief* and *Coast Starlight*.

#### LONG-DISTANCE TRAINS

Amtrak offered a turkey dinner special in the dining cars of

all long-distance trains, including the *Auto Train*, from Nov. 18 through 26 and Dec. 16 through Jan. 1, 2007. The turkey dinner special replaced the "Evening Special" dinner on the dining car menus. It included turkey breast, gravy, stuffing, cranberry sauce, and, from the regular menu, a starch and vegetables. Pumpkin pie was added to the dessert offerings. The meal was complementary for sleeping car passengers, as usual. The meal price for coach passengers was \$12.50 and the pumpkin pie \$3.75.

#### California Zephyr

At the end of November, the eastbound *California Zephyr* (Tr. No. 6) was made discharge only at Galesburg, Princeton and Naperville, Ill. The change was made due to the continued late operation of the train. The connection to Galesburg-Springfield Bus No. 5521 was discontinued, also. The eastbound *Southwest Chief* (Tr. No. 4), which operates approximately 40 minutes later than the *Zephyr*, will continue handling local passengers to stations between Galesburg and Chicago. The changes will be reviewed in the future if the on-time performance of the *Zephyr* improves.

#### Crescent

During January and February, the Norfolk Southern will be doing extensive rack and bridge work between Atlanta and Meridian. The work will require the suspension of train service south of Atlanta for several days each week. The *Crescents* (Tr. No. 19), originating in New York on Sundays through Wednesdays Jan. 21-24, Jan. 28-31, Feb. 4-7, and Feb. 11-14, will operate from New York to Atlanta only. The *Crescents* (Tr. No. 20) originating in Atlanta on Mondays through Thursdays Jan. 21-24, Jan. 28-31, Feb. 4-7, and Feb. 11-14 will operate from Atlanta to New York. No alternate transportation between Atlanta and New Orleans will be provided on the dates when the train operates only to or from Atlanta.

#### WESTERN COAST SERVICES

##### Pacific Surfliner

The private cars *Pony Express* and *City of Angels* made a round trip from Los Angeles to San Luis Obispo on Tr. Nos. 799/798 on Nov. 25. This was the first "official" trip for the *City of Angels* since a complete refurbishment was completed in late October. The trip was a reward for those who worked on the car. The car saw its first actual use in over four years on an excursion from Los Angeles to San Diego on Oct. 29.

The *City of Angels* is the ex-New York Central six double bedroom buffet lounge car *Laurel Stream*. The car was renamed as part of its refurbishment. It was built by Budd in 1949.

Usually private cars are placed between the locomotive and the rest of train. In this case, the cars were placed on the rear of the train behind the cab car. The placement at the rear of the train required switching the cars at San Luis Obispo. Dome Lounge 10031 operated on the train that day substituting for the Business Class coach which was reassigned to the Thanksgiving holiday single-level *Pacific Surfliner* trainset.

##### Capitol Corridor

The *Capitol Corridor* celebrated 15 years of service on Dec. 12, 2006. Service began with three daily round trips that carried about 273,00 passenger the first year. The *Corridor* has grown into Amtrak's third largest corridor (behind only the *Northeast Corridor* and *Pacific Surfliners*), carrying 1.3 million passengers

a year. To celebrate its anniversary the *Corridor* offered 15% off any *Capitol Corridor* ticket (including Multi-Rides) purchased between December 16, 2006 and December 31.

A new Capitol Corridor timetable took effect on Dec. 1. Under the new schedule, weekday Tr. No. 536 and weekend Tr. No. 746 now originate at the Oakland – Jack London station instead of the Oakland Coliseum station. Thruway bus service was affected, also.

From Dec. 1, through April 29, 2007, reservations are required on all *Thruway* buses between Sacramento, and Reno, South Lake Tahoe and intermediate points even though they connect with unreserved *Capitol Corridor* trains in Sacramento. The reason for the change is that it is necessary to obtain passenger counts for fleet planning purposes.

Also, effective Dec. 1, 2006, only one daily bus will operate on the South Lake Tahoe (U.S. 50) route. Eastbound Bus No. 3424 departs Sacramento at 10:00 a.m., arrives Placerville at 11:00 a.m., South Lake Tahoe at 12:20 p.m., and Stateline, Calif. at 12:30 p.m. Westbound Bus No. 3447 departs Stateline at 2:20 p.m., South Lake Tahoe at 2:25 p.m., Placerville at 3:45 p.m., and arrives Sacramento at 5:25 p.m. Thruway bus service to Carson City, Nev. was discontinued on that date, also.

#### NORTHEAST CORRIDOR

In December, Amtrak upgraded its First Class menu and meal service on its *Acela Express* trains. The upgrade includes freshly prepared meals, a selection of lighter fare and a rotating selection of red and white wines, all served on china with glassware and flatware.

Beginning December 6, a choice of freshly prepared hot entrées became available during breakfast and dinner time. Breakfast options include omelets – Southwest, Tuscan, Mediterranean or three-pepper – and French toast or Belgian waffles, each with a fruit compote.

The dinner menu offers pesto chicken and seared salmon with an assortment of vegetables. The "lighter fare" is a sampling of bite-sized treats such as Genoa salami, mozzarella cheese, artichoke quarter and green and black olives served with crackers. This popular dinner option has been added to the lunch fare, along with fresh sandwiches, a variety of entrée salads and soup.

A rotating selection of complimentary red and white wines is available by the glass during lunch and dinner service. The new series of Fall/Winter menus is comprised of four-week cycles to ensure that *Acela Express'* frequent travelers experience a broad assortment of meals and wines.

In addition to the new menus and improved service, some *Acela Express* trains now feature at-seat cart service offering a selection of snacks and beverages in Business class.

#### DEPOT DOINGS

SACRAMENTO, Calif. Light rail service from the Amtrak depot to Folsom began on Dec. 8 when the Sacramento Regional Transit District opened a half-mile extension of its Gold Line. Previously, the line terminated in downtown Sacramento. On Dec. 11, the *Sacramento Bee* carried an article, "Back-seat driver: Here's your light-rail link to S.F." The article pointed out that "more Sacramentans may find it convenient enough now to leave the car in the garage and ride the rails to the Bay Area." It contained a description of the Sacramento light rail system, the

*Capitol Corridor*, and how to ride the two services to the Bay area.

SEATTLE, Wash. On Dec. 11, the Seattle City Council approved the purchase of the historic, century old, King Street Station from the BNSF Ry. The railroad recently offered to sell the station to the city for \$1. Over \$40 million is available to fund the restoration once the structure passes into public ownership. As of December, 2006, workers have completed restoring King Street Station's Compass Room entry hall to its original appearance. The station is a terminal for the *Empire Builder*, *Coast Starlight*, *Cascades* and *Sounder* commuter trains.

#### OTHER PASSENGER RAIL NEWS

##### Ski Train

The *Ski Train* began its 67th season with special holiday trips on December 27, 28, 29 and 30, 2006. The regular season begins with Saturday and Sunday departures from Jan. 6 through Mar. 31, 2007. Friday departures will be added beginning Feb. 2, 2007, and Thursday departures, beginning Mar. 1, 2007. The last trip of the season will operate on Mar. 31.

The train departs from Denver Union Station at 7:15 a.m. (Boarding begins at 6:30 a.m.) and is scheduled to arrive at Winter Park at 9:30 a.m. The return trip departs from Winter Park at 4:15 p.m. and is scheduled to arrive at Denver at 6:30 p.m.

##### TRAVEL PROMOTION

##### Amtrak Winter 50% off Companion Fare

Amtrak is offering a new sales promotion designed to stimulate travel on Long Distance Trains. AAA members will receive 50% off one companion rail fare. When sleeping car trains or Business Class is available there is 25% off the best available accommodation fare.

The promotion is available for sale from Dec. 18, 2006 through Feb. 28, 2007. It is valid for travel from Jan. 3, 2007 through Mar. 15, 2007. The fare is not available from Jan. 12, 2007 through Jan. 15, 2007 and Feb. 16 through 19, 2007. The promotion code is H644.

Reservations must contain a current valid AAA membership number and AAA card must be presented at the time of ticketing and onboard. A minimum 3-day advance reservation is required. The companion and paid AAA adult must travel together at all times and have the tickets issued at the same time. The companion is subject to the same restrictions and conditions as the fare paying passenger. No refund of the regular fare ticket is permitted without the surrender of the companion ticket.

The offer is valid for travel on the following Amtrak Services:

<i>Ann Rutledge</i>	<i>Blue Water</i>	<i>California Zephyr</i>
<i>Capitol Limited</i>	<i>Capitols</i>	<i>Cardinal</i>
<i>Carl Sandburg</i>	<i>Carolinian</i>	<i>Cascades</i>
<i>City of New Orleans</i>	<i>Cescent</i>	<i>Coast Starlight</i>
<i>Illini</i>	<i>Illinois Zephyr</i>	<i>Kansas City/ St Louis Mules</i>
<i>Lake Shore Limited</i>	<i>Lincoln Service</i>	<i>Maple Leaf</i>
<i>Pacific Surfliner</i>	<i>Palmetto</i>	<i>Pennsylvanian</i>
<i>Pere Marquette</i>	<i>Piedmont</i>	<i>Saluki</i>
<i>San Joaquins</i>	<i>Southwest Chief</i>	<i>State House</i>
<i>Sunset Limited</i>	<i>Texas Eagle</i>	<i>Wolverine</i>

#### NORTH AMERICAN RAIL PASS

Amtrak and VIA Rail Canada are offering the North American Rail Pass again in 2007. The pass provides 30 consecutive travel days with unlimited rides and stopovers throughout the United States and Canada. It is valid for Coach Class, but can be upgraded to Business Class or Sleeping Car accommodations for an additional charge.

Conditions for use of the pass require travel on both Amtrak and VIA Rail Canada, and include at least one journey between the United States and Canada. Other conditions apply, also.

The cost for the pass in the Peak season is \$999.00, and Off-Peak is \$709.00. The Peak season is May 25, 2007 - Oct. 15, 2007. The Off-Peak season is Oct. 16, 2006 - May 24, 2007 and Oct 16, 2007 - May 22, 2008.

A 10 percent discount is available for seniors (age 60 and above), children (age 2-18), and students (showing the Student Advantage Card in the United States).

The North American Rail Pass may be purchased from Amtrak or a travel agent.

[Info. from Ken Ruben, Ed Von Nordeck]

#### UP SETS COAL TRAIN RECORDS IN NOVEMBER

During November, Union Pacific moved 20 million tons of coal from Wyoming's Southern Powder River Basin (SPRB) and Colorado and Utah, an increase of nearly 8 percent over November 2005. The railroad posted its third best average daily performance in the SPRB, averaging 35.7 trains per day. The movement of Colorado and Utah coal posted its best daily train numbers of the year in November, averaging 11.6 trains per day.

Union Pacific also set train size records during the months of October and November. UP trains moving coal out of the SPRB averaged 15,135 tons each – an increase of 200 tons over last year's annual average. A new wheel-changing process at Bailey Yard in North Platte, Neb. helped UP achieve the increased tonnage record. Wheels are changed without removing cars from a train, saving handling and processing time. The enhancement has the potential to increase train tonnage out of the SPRB by more than 750,000 tons next year with no additional train starts.

Additional rail line improvements are expected to boost the railroad's coal capacity in 2007. The completion of a third main line south of Reno Junction, Wyo., and five new train landing tracks just completed at the mines will help boost capacity on the Joint Line, owned by UP and BNSF, to more than 375 million tons. During 2006 the Joint Line is expected to support more than 350 million tons of coal.

Future improvements, including construction of a third main line north of Reno Junction, and a fourth main line south of Nacco Junction, Wyo. are expected to boost Joint Line capacity to more than 400 million tons per year. Grading is already underway on both of these projects and completion is expected in late 2007.

[Info. from [www.uprr.com/newsinfo](http://www.uprr.com/newsinfo) via Charles Varnes]

#### NEW UP AND GE LOCOMOTIVE SHOP

Union Pacific and General Electric commemorated the opening of a new locomotive maintenance and repair facility on Nov. 13, 2006. It is designed to reduce the amount of time that



coal trains spend at the Bailey Yard in North Platte, Nebraska – North America's largest rail yard. The new locomotive shop will support GE locomotives which carry more than 95 percent of the coal handled by Union Pacific.

The new shop uses wireless technology to monitor the health of the locomotives remotely to determine and plan for unscheduled repairs or maintenance. This crystal ball-like ability allows maintenance and repair crews to prepare and plan maintenance 24 hours in advance of the locomotives' arrival. An inbound report is generated electronically to provide data on individual locomotive needs for scheduled repairs.

The new shop is designed to perform on-going maintenance and repair work on six locomotives each day with a capacity to handle more than 2,000 GE AC locomotives each year. The facility operates 24 hours per day, seven days a week. Overall, the facility is nearly the length of a football field and is approximately 40-feet high with a 192-foot underground inspection pit to see the underside of the locomotive. The facility employs electricians, machinists, pipe fitters, fireman and oiler technicians, a shift supervisor, and a technical director.

As the reliance on rail transportation increases, there is growing pressure on Union Pacific to find ways to move trains even more efficiently. Workers responsible for refueling, inspecting and maintaining trains moving through Bailey Yard's run-through areas employ a unique pit-crew approach to reduce dwell time – average hours a rail car is at the specified terminal location – and speed up the processing of run-through trains.

[Info. from /www.uprr.com/newsinfo/ via Charles Varnes]

### GLACIER NATIONAL PARK SNOW CONTROL

After more than a year of review at different levels of government, Glacier National Park officials released a draft environmental impact statement for avalanche control in the Middle Fork Flathead corridor that skirts Glacier's southern boundary. The document examines controlling avalanches on the southern slopes that tower over the railroad's northern line and U.S. Hwy. 2, with the intent of improving safety and curbing shutdowns on the increasingly busy tracks.

One alternative is the railroad's proposal to indefinitely use explosives, including military artillery, to reduce avalanche hazards, along with extending two existing snowsheds that protect the tracks.

The park's preferred alternative would ban the use of explosives and instead recommend that the railroad build about a mile of additional snowsheds to protect the tracks. Snowsheds are built over the tracks, diverting snow downslope while keeping the railway clear.

A third alternative would allow the use of explosives, but not artillery, to reduce avalanche hazards for 10 years, while requiring the railroad to build snowsheds and pay for a resource monitoring program.

The final alternative calls for no action to address avalanche hazards. The public now has until Dec. 22 to comment on the various approaches.

[Info. from BBS Railroad Newsline via Ken Ruben]

### GERMANY'S TRANSPRAPID PROJECT

The high-tech train crash on Sept. 22 in northern Germany

that killed 23 people has been blamed on human error, but it marks a big setback for the Transrapid magnetic levitation technology. A decision on building a Transrapid airport shuttle in Munich is on hold pending a security review into what caused the accident in which the train hurtled into a maintenance vehicle at 120 miles per hour on a test track in the Emsland region near the Dutch border. Twenty-three people were killed and 10 survived, some of them seriously injured.

ThyssenKrupp executive Olaf Berlien said Germany must decide in the next 18 months whether it will use the Transrapid technology or not. If the Munich shuttle doesn't get the green light in that time, the consortium may sell its patents to China.

German engineers have been refining the technology since the 1970s and the test track has been in operation since 1983, frequently offering tours to visitor groups like the one that was traveling it during the accident in Sept. The elevated monorail train is propelled at speeds of up to 450 km/h (270 mph) by a frictionless electromagnetic system. It was developed by Transrapid International, a joint venture between Siemens and ThyssenKrupp.

The Transrapid has a dangerous weakness – it travels automatically without a driver and lacks a system to stop the train if there is an obstacle ahead. The collision might have been avoided if the test track had been better equipped. For example, the staff in the maintenance vehicle weren't able to monitor radio communication between the Transrapid and the control center. If they had been, they would have heard the train getting permission to start and might have been able to avert the crash.

The Transrapid has so far failed to find buyers in Germany. Despite numerous proposals for its use across the world, the only train of its kind in commercial use is a shuttle from the center of Shanghai, in China, to the city's airport.

The lack of commercial use in Germany has lessened its export chances. In the wake of unification there was a plan to build a Transrapid link between Berlin and the northern city of Hamburg, a distance of 180 miles. But the project was abandoned after eight years of debate. The only buyers have been the Chinese, possibly motivated by a desire to copy the difficult technology and develop their own train, although with a driver and a reliable anti-crash system.

[Info. from BSS Railroad Newsline via Ken Ruben]

### JAPANESE SUPERCONDUCTING MAGLEV TRAIN

Note: Maglev trains – short for magnetic levitation – use powerful magnets that allow the train to skim along its guideway without touching it, reducing friction and increasing speeds.

In April 1997, the Central Japan Railway Company (JR Central) began running tests of the Superconducting Maglev train on an 18.4 kilometer-long (11.4 mile) priority section. In March 2005, authorities acknowledged that the foundational technology for the Superconducting MagLev was established for practical application as a result of running these tests. On Sept. 25, 2006, the JR Central Board of Directors voted to expand the length and increase the speeds of Japan's experimental MagLev train. The Yamanashi Maglev Test Line will have new main features:

- Extend the line along the remaining sections of its allotted course of 42.8 km (26.6 miles).

- Upgrade the ground coils and electric facilities appropriate for longer train sets.
- Introduce 14 new test vehicles and conduct running tests of longer trainsets at 500 km/h (311 mph).
- Set up a maintenance system for the vehicles and ground facilities.
- Create a mockup version of a deep underground environment and conduct technical studies in such an environment.

Construction will start at FY 2007.3 (the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007) - FY 2017.3. Testing will extend approximately three years from the end of FY 2014.3

The Yamanashi MagLev Test Line trains use superconducting magnets which allow for a larger gap, and repulsive-type "Electro-Dynamic Suspension" (EDS). In comparison, Transrapid, the type in Germany, uses conventional electromagnets and attractive-type "Electro-Magnetic Suspension" (EMS).

On the Yamanashi Test Line, trains JR-Maglev MLX01 have reached 581 km/h (361 mph), which is faster than wheeled trains. Japan has experimented with the high-speed maglev line for years, but commercial use has yet to be approved.

[Info. from Destination : Freedom Newsletter via Ken Ruben]

**LINKING TRAILS IN WASHINGTON STATE**

In Snohomish County, Washington, trail advocates' dreams of connecting trail networks in three counties are getting closer to reality. "It's our job to make sure that more and more trails are developed in places where people live and that they connect to places where people need to go," said Marianne Fowel, senior vice president of policy of the Rails to Trails Conservancy.

The Centennial Trail, which runs for 17.5 miles in Snohomish County, could expand to almost 50 miles, linking networks in Skagit, Snohomish and King Counties, if proponents and the railroad can come to an agreement.

Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF) is considering abandonment of a 47-mile section of their corridor that runs south of the Centennial Trail in Snohomish County and connects with 33 miles of track in King County. Recently King County and the Port of Seattle announced a major, complex deal among numerous players, including the state and BNSF. Part of the deal would allow King County to own the entire 47 miles.

"The important thing is to make sure that BNSF doesn't sell it off or break it up," said Snohomish County Councilman Dave Somers. The BNSF corridor crosses the Sammamish River Trail, which to the west becomes the Burke-Gilman Trail and to the east connects with the East Lake Sammamish Trail. The Centennial Trail could yet join with other railroad corridors.

[Info. from Destination : Freedom Newsletter via Ken Ruben]

**URBAN RAIL TRANSIT** by DICK FINLEY  
**LOS ANGELES METRO RAIL**  
**RIDERSHIP**

October 2006	Red Line	Blue Line	Green Line	Gold Line
Weekday Ave.	121,752	72,295	35,153	18,035
Saturday Ave.	80,975	52,328	21,823	10,096
Sunday Ave.	68,068	42,303	15,924	8,302
Monthly Total	3,342,785	2,011,322	940,285	478,665

**LOS ANGELES UNION STATION**

If your company's tastes run more toward Champagne, you

might want to rent out a space at the glamorous and fabled Los Angeles Union Station. "A lot of holiday planning for parties is done in March or April but you do get a lot of last-minute people in November," said Jeff Cooper, who handles bookings at the Art Deco train depot through Hollywood Locations.

With more than 150 events a year, Cooper knows what the space will do and has even made a party happen with only a 24-hour notice, though he recommends a bit more time. For the typical office party, Cooper suggests using the old Fred Harvey restaurant, which can accommodate 200 people seated or up to 400 standing.

The standard rate for the room is \$4,200 a day, which includes security, the services of a site rep and post-event cleaning. For events of 500 or larger, guests can book the station's main concourse. Though Cooper acts as the property agent, he says he offers an extensive list of caterers and rental companies.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Downtown News*]

**PERSONNEL**

John Catoe, the second in command at the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)(Metro), plans to take a job as head of the transit agency in Washington, D.C., which is the second-busiest subway system in the country, officials said in mid-Dec.

"It's a huge loss. One of the great things about John is that all the employees respect him and like working with him. He is an operations guy and understands this business top to bottom," said Richard Katz, a Metro board member. Catoe gained trust of some of Metro's fiercest foes, who credit him with improving bus service. Under his watch, Metro was recognized by APTA in 2006 as the nation's best transit agency.

The \$280,000-a-year executive is credited with decentralizing Metro's operations into five service sectors and a governance council that gave local communities greater control of transit lines.

[Info. from *Pasadena Star-News*]

**PUBLIC ART OPPORTUNITIES**

Metro is seeking artists to create artworks for major mezzanine walls in the Los Angeles County Metro System. For information regarding submittal requirements and Metro, request a mailed copy of "Artist Opportunities," by calling 213-922-4ART and leave a voice message.

**GOLD LINE**

According to a new schedule put into operation Oct. 29, Gold Line trains will run about every 10 minutes during rush hours. The improvements are the result of Metro Rail Operations system modifications and train control upgrades.

On the new schedules, the run time for Local Service between Sierra Madre Villa and Union Station will drop from 34 minutes to 29 minutes. The new Express Service run time between the two stations, already in effect, decreased from 29 minutes to 24 minutes.

More and more Rose Parade viewers are using the fast and convenient Gold Line. The Memorial Park, Del Mar, Lake and Allen stations are all just a short walk from the parade route. The Gold Line will run overnight New Year's Eve, with trains running as often as every 8 minutes beginning at 6 a.m. on Monday, Jan. 1.

Special shuttles to the float viewing area in Victory Park will be running from the Sierra Madre Villa Station following the parade. The shuttle will run from 12:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. on the day of the parade and from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 2.

#### GOLD LINE EASTSIDE EXTENSION

Passing another tunnel construction milestone, the eastbound earth pressure balance machine (EPB), nicknamed Lola, reached its final destination at the East Portal just west of Lorena St., its final destination. The breakthrough on Nov. 16 marked the completion of one of two subway tunnels, eventually connecting East Los Angeles to downtown. A second tunnel being excavated by a similar boring machine, dubbed Vicki, still had about 1,000 feet to go at that time before being completed in the next few weeks.

After being launched in Feb. 2006 from the Mariachi Plaza Station, Lola mined its way through 7,000 feet of dense sands and soft-to-hard clays. Much of Lola's work occurred below the groundwater table about 60 feet below ground because the streets of Boyle Heights are too narrow for the light rail trains. The EPBs, which weigh more than two million pounds each and are 344 feet long and 22 feet in diameter, excavated and then lined the tunnel with precast concrete panels. Each EPB leaves behind a 21-foot-diameter tunnel containing 1,400 concrete rings, weighing about 42,000 lbs. each.

Lola's tunneling resulted in ~~no measurable surface settlements, and the Contractor~~ detected no impacts to infrastructure or private properties. Lola exceeded all project expectations, especially considering Lola mined the shallow urban tunnel through alluvial (deposited by flowing water) soils.

Upon completion of the tunnels, the Contractor will begin construction of the two underground stations at Boyle and Soto in early 2007. Construction of the West and East Portals are well underway. The bridge structure, being built by Caltrans for Metro, now spans the 101 Freeway from Union Station to Commercial St. The last segment spanning Commercial St. will be completed by Feb. 2007. Utility rearrangements along the project's six-mile route will continue through 2007.

Construction of the Little Tokyo/Arts District station, the first ground-level station to be constructed, began Nov. 2006. Construction of the remaining ground-level stations are planned to start in 2007.

#### EXPOSITION LIGHT RAIL PROJECT

Construction on the Exposition Line began in fall 2006. The first construction work includes utility and corridor improvements on Flower St. from 18th St. to 23rd St. in Downtown LA. Utility relocation along the alignment from 23rd St. to Vermont Ave. will also begin this fall.

The Urban Design Committee has been meeting monthly at different locations along the alignment to provide input into the urban design elements of the Exposition Line. This feedback and direction is provided directly to the project's designers and community relations team. The committee will also host meetings in the community to get feedback on the design and aesthetics of the project.

Final design for the project is well underway and will continue until next summer with major construction scheduled to begin in spring 2007. The community relations team will be holding meetings along the alignment in late fall to discuss key

design elements, upcoming construction activities, schedule and timeline for the project.

#### SAN DIEGO

The passage of Proposition 1B last Nov. includes an estimated \$164 million in new State Transit Assistance formula funds for the Metropolitan Transit System (MTS). Staff has estimated that \$340 million (escalated costs to year of expenditure) would be needed to complete near-term capital improvements to the trolley system. Eligible projects include the acquisition of new low-floor vehicles, the rehabilitation of existing trolley vehicles, signal upgrades, and station upgrades on the Blue and Orange Lines to provide platform retrofits for low-floor vehicles and shelter modifications.

A total of \$176 million in TransNet funds to match the \$164 from MTS could be used to support these improvements. Since Prop. 1B funding is designed for expenditure within 10 years, completion of a study in FY 2007 of more precise project estimates and a prioritization schedule is recommended before an implementation plan is brought to the MTS Board.

In April the MTS Board received a report concerning Centre City Development Corporation's C Street Master Plan. MTS interest in this corridor falls into three categories:

Access Each new low-floor vehicle is approximately 10 feet longer than its predecessor. A 3-car low-floor train is approximately 30 feet longer than existing train lengths in the C St. corridor, which brings the length of a consist to 274 feet. Downtown block dimensions along C St. are currently ~~only 200~~ feet.

Safety C St. has several safety challenges. Train operations in this heavily congested area are provided at grade, and there are 16 locations for auto traffic and pedestrians to cross the tracks. These circumstances contribute to the corridor's high number of accidents in relation to other parts of the MTS system.

Efficient Operations It is important to assure that trains can traverse C St. in a timely manner so that additional trains are not needed to be put into service to maintain schedules. The ability to add cars to trains allows for increased capacity, which will help meet the projected demand for future growth in an operationally efficient way. If travel times become longer, the service becomes less attractive. Signal pre-emption can significantly improve efficiency.

Based on MTS staff analysis, a number of outstanding issues remain and continue to be explored by various agency staffs.

#### PORTLAND, OREGON

##### Washington County Commuter Rail

A machine, P811, is removing and installing track along the 14-mile route that will stretch from Wilsonville to Beaverton, Oregon. The second construction phase, which includes building five rail stations, will begin in 2007 with a projected service launch date in September 2008.

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

#### MAJOR FREIGHT RAIL COMPANIES

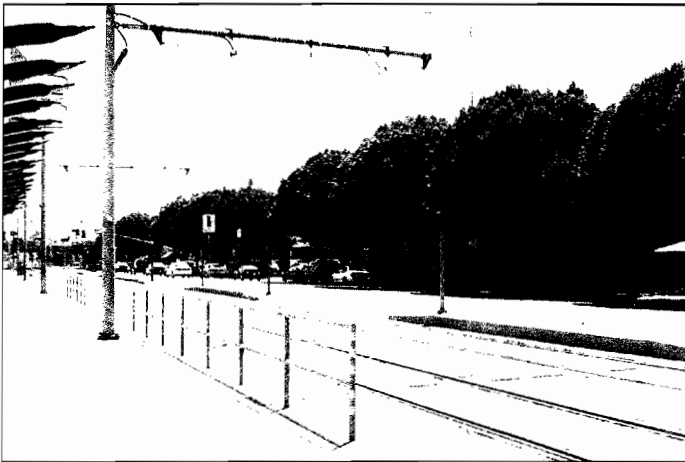
Union Pacific; Hdqrs.: Omaha, NE; 2005 Revenue: \$13.6 billion; Track miles operated: 32,400; Freight cars: 107,000.

CSX; Hdqrs.: Jacksonville, FL; 2005 Revenue: \$8.6 billion; Track miles operated: 22,000; Freight cars: 105,000.

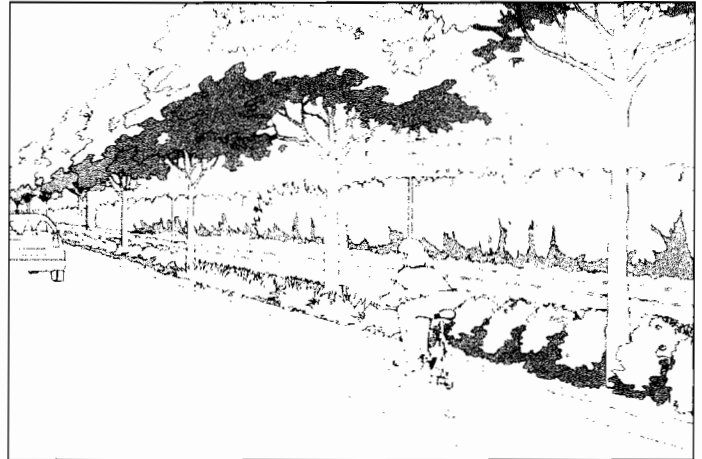
BNSF Railway Co.; Hdqrs.: Ft. Worth, TX; 2005 Revenue:

\$13.0 billion; Track miles operated: 32,000; Freight cars: 220,000.

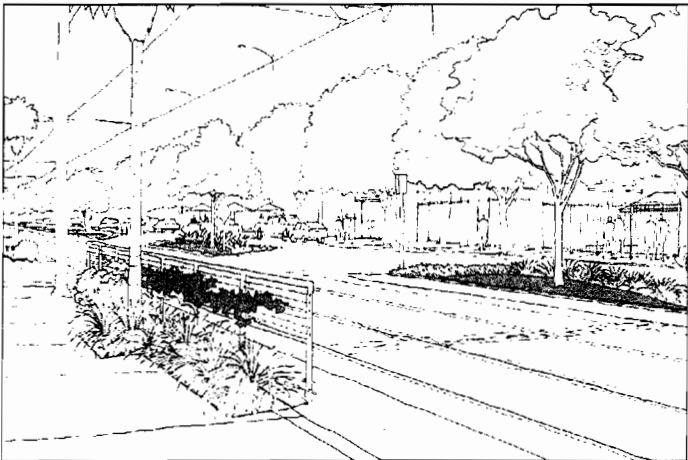
Norfolk Southern; Hdqrs.: Norfolk, VA; 2005 Revenue: \$8.5 billion; Track miles operated: 38,235; Freight cars: 99,454. [Info. from BBS Railroad Newsline via Ken Ruben]



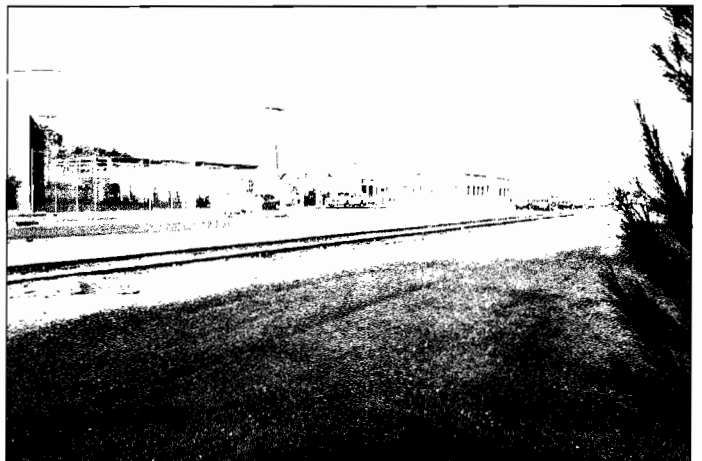
Existing conditions in Los Angeles with Blue Line along Flower Street north of Washington Boulevard. Photo by Metro



A vision for the alignment along Exposition Boulevard around 3rd Avenue in Los Angeles. Rendering by Metro



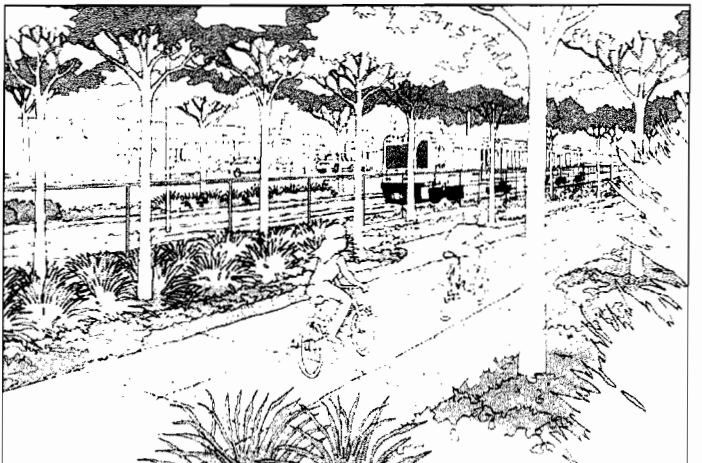
A vision for Flower Street improvements north of Washington Boulevard with Blue and Expo Lines. Rendering by Metro



National Boulevard in Culver City, west of Ballona Creek, showing typical existing conditions. Photo by Metro



Typical existing conditions along Exposition Boulevard around 3rd Avenue in Los Angeles. Photo by Metro



A vision of National Boulevard in Culver City, west of Ballona Creek, showing the LRT alignment. Rendering by Metro