

WHEEL CLICKS

Pacific Railroad Society Inc.

JANUARY 2009

CALTRAIN NEWS

by MIKE GONDON

Early November brought delays to Caltrain's morning service, caused by train/vehicle and train/trespasser incidents. The first incident occurred on November 6 when train No. 217, the first Gilroy departure of the day, struck a vehicle at an unprotected crossing north of Morgan Hill. As a result, Train Nos. 221 and 227 were annulled and a bus bridge was set up between Morgan Hill and San Jose. Trains departing Tamien and San Jose made extra Peninsula stops to accommodate the Gilroy passengers.

The following day, Train No. 103 struck a trespasser south of the Mountain View station. This resulted in single tracking between CP Mary and CP Mayfield, further delaying operations. Both tracks were re-opened around 7:30 a.m., after about two hours.

On November 22, after about a year of construction, Caltrain opened its new northbound platform and pedestrian underpass at the California Avenue station in Palo Alto. The new platform is equipped with shelters, ticket validators, station boards, electronic messaging signs, a public address system, and a ticket vending machine.

Construction work will continue on the southbound platform until the end of February when the station project will be complete. Work also continues on Palo Alto's main University Avenue station.

Caltrain ran its annual Holiday Train over the weekend of December 6-7. Decorated with over 40,000 lights, the train is a crowd pleaser every year, but its main objective is to collect toys for the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve's Toys For Tots Program and the Salvation Army. The train departed San Francisco at 5:00 p.m. each night, making stops at Burlingame, Redwood City, Menlo Park, and Sunnyvale on Saturday, and at San Bruno, San Mateo, Mountain View, and Santa Clara on Sunday. On board were Santa Claus, Mrs. Claus, and other holiday favorites.

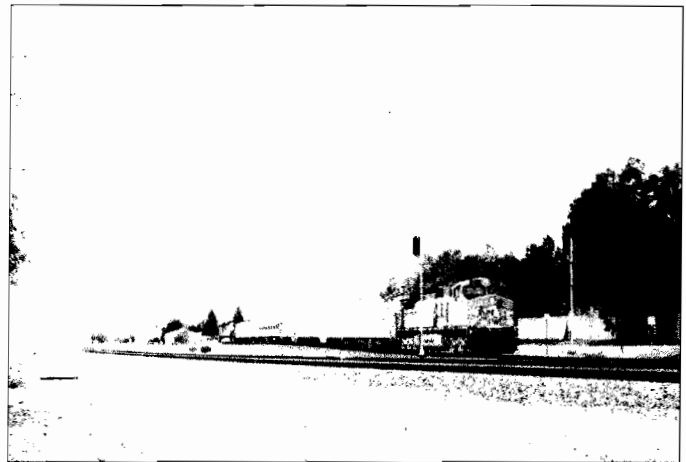
BARACK OBAMA — TRANSPORTATION

When President-elect Barack Obama says he wants to get the economy moving again, he means it quite literally. Solve road congestion, Obama's reasoning goes, and you put people to work. Use less gasoline and help clean the air. Build better trains and move goods more efficiently. Get people out of their cars and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

[Info. from *Pasadena Star-News*]

LOS ANGELES COUNTY RIDERS

During the month of October 2008, the average number of weekday riders traveling on trains going to, from, or within Los Angeles County, other than on Amtrak, was 342,888. This was an average decrease per day from September of 4,813 riders or about 1.4 percent.



The eastbound 18th annual BNSF Santa Claus Express is about to enter the Metrolink San Gabriel Subdivision Main Track 1 from its Pasadena Subdivision as it passes between the eastbound signals at CP Cambridge on the morning of Dec. 7, 2008.

Photo by Charles Varnes



Eastbound Metrolink Tr. No. 356 passes CP Cambridge on its San Gabriel Subdivision Main Track 2 on Dec 7, 2008, moments after the eastbound 18th annual BNSF Santa Claus Express entered Main Track 1. CP Cambridge is located on Main Track 1 at MP 32.3. Its eastbound signals are visible behind Tr. No. 356.

Photo by Charles Varnes

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA COMMUTER RAIL

At the elections in November 2008, Marin and Sonoma counties passed by a two-thirds majority a bill to build commuter rail service on an existing right-of-way. The line will take four to five years for construction, terminating on San Francisco Bay with ferry access to San Francisco.

[Info. from George Thow]



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JANUARY 2009 VOLUME 72, NO. 10

EDITOR DICK FINLEY
TECHNICAL EDITOR CHARLES VARNES

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PRS NEWS — ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

- Jan. 2 Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Valencia Room, Joslyn Fri. Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
- Jan. 3, 10, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10 a.m. to 4 17, 24, 31 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Avenue, San Dimas.
- Sats. Committee meeting: January 24.
- Jan. 3, 10, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 to ?, Saunders Yard, 17, 24, 31 Noakes & Herbert Sts., Commerce. Regular day: Sats. 3, 17; Extra day: 10, 24, 31. Committee Mtg.: 17 For more info., call Will Walters: 714-637-4676.
- Jan. 9 Membership Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Alhambra Room, Fri. Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
- Feb. 6 Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Valencia Room, Joslyn Fri. Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
- Feb. 7, 14, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10 a.m. to 4 21, 28 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Avenue, San Dimas.
- Sats. Committee meeting: February 28.
- Feb. 7, 14, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 to ?, Saunders Yard, 21, 28 Noakes & Herbert Sts., Commerce. Regular day: Sats. 7, 21; Extra day: 14, 28. Committee Mtg.; 21

- Feb. 13 Membership Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Alhambra Room, Fri. Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
- Feb. 20 Slide Night at Saunders Yard, 7:30 p.m., Noakes & Fri. Herbert Sts., Commerce. Everyone welcome.
- Feb. 25 *Wheel Clicks* Mailing Party with Ballot Package at Wed. Dick Finley's residence. Telephone: 626-794-0783.

MEETING PROGRAMS

by **RUSS DAVIES**

January 9: **Roger Fogt** will present a **PowerPoint slide show** of the D&RGW Narrow Gauge from Alamosa, Colorado, to Durango and Silverton. The images are from Rocky Mountain Railroad Club excursions in 1962, 1963, and 1964. The scenes are mostly Roger's, from his personal collection. **Be there, and bring news briefs!**

February 13: **The Santa Fe Ice Plants – Part 2. Charlie Schultz** will present the second part of his presentation on the Santa Fe ice plants. It will include slides and information on the mechanical icing machines, precooling operations at San Bernardino, use and production of clear ice, an overview of each of the nine Santa Fe ice plants, and the closing of the plants. If you found his first presentation interesting, you are sure to like this one. **Be there, and bring news briefs!**

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

by **VIRGINIA GRUPP**

At the Board meeting on December 5, 2008, F. James Futterer and Patrick Malone were voted into PRS with Seniority Numbers 476 and 477, respectively.

PACIFIC RAILROAD MUSEUM

by **LINDSAY SMITH**

It is a new year and the Museum continues to grow. Jim Baker and Bob Washburn donated a new HP Presario Computer to replace the old, slow office computer. Since the office computer is now the residence of the Treasurer's records and other files are kept for the Society, the old, slow machine is retained as a network workstation for the museum staff. It is not unusual for the staff to be working on more than five computers at one time. I usually bring in my lap top so as to be able to work on the collection inventory or make letters. The new machine will also support the image management and digitizing selected images.

The Museum has been the work station for the distribution of Ed Saalig's new book, "The Amazing Journey of Santa Fe's RDC Cars." The book supply is in the Museum until we store more at the Museum storage center. In addition to the books we have the packing peanuts, plastic bubble wrap, Priority Mail boxes and labels. Our volunteers slave for the good of the Society, so that we will have more funds for the restorations of the RDC car. Marti Ann Draper has shipped almost 300 books thus far. Sell Books, please!

Jim Baker has been using Ralph Melching's photo enlarger table with a digital camera to make positive prints from Ralph's black and white negatives. We will use a new HP printer/copier to see if we get a better copy. There are still many electric railroad fans who want images of trolleys and steam locomotives. Jim Baker, Otto Kroutil and others have been active on the Yahoo groups. John Smatlack, OERM Collection Chairman, has asked for photographs of the Descanso interior when it was still with the LARy. We have several photos from Summit but

I have not found any interior shots from the LARy period.

We have moved some of the library surplus book to the main exhibit space and, as a result, we have been selling surplus books. We reinvest the surplus sales into currently marketed books and to repairs on the building. Many of the books will recycle back to the Museum in the future. David Housh, Tom Geer and Bob Washburn lead this effort.

For the historians, The Mexican Fan palm tree in the Metro right-of-way next to the front door has a new look. The palm tree has been growing since PRS moved in. It is now about 50 feet tall. It had become a threat because the City of San Dimas was reluctant to work on Metro's tree. The dead fronds were falling down whenever the wind blew. The City asked Metro to trim the tree and over the Thanksgiving week, the skirts were removed. Before November 2008 the tree was skirted, now it is trimmed.

The first Wednesday in December, we helped light the City Christmas Tree in Rhodes Park. The Historical Society and the service clubs usually host this affair. We are looking forward to the San Dimas Historical Society moving to the newly renovated Walker House. They plan to move their office from another building before they move their Museum from the Depot. They need to make preparations for the exhibits. We are not scheduled to take over their space yet. However, it is likely to happen next year. We will keep in touch with the Chamber of Commerce and assist in the Christmas Tree Lighting on the first Wednesday in December 2009.

Charles Schultz, our resident Ice Plant Historian, has been cleaning the Depot and hauling our trash away. Our Museum is very clean and sharp. The City had to remove the trash can from the park because it became dangerous. Many strange and illegal chemicals were dumped in the container, so it was removed. Now we have to haul our own trash away.

On Nov. 8, we held a celebration of life of Barbara Sibert at the park beside the Museum. Mary Lee Von Nordeck led us in remembering Barbara's service to the Society.

Come and join us for noontime lunch on Wednesdays and Saturdays!

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

Metrolink weekday, systemwide, average trips during October were 46,655, which was a decrease from the previous month of 727 or 1.5 percent. Average daily Metrolink monthly passholders on Amtrak were 1,974, which was an increase from the previous month of 129 or 7 percent.

Metrolink weekday, systemwide, total schedule adherence (within 5 minutes of scheduled time) during October was 96 percent.

{Info. from Charles Varnes}

TRAINS TO SLOW FOR RED-LIGHT ALERTS

Metrolink officials said on Nov. 24 that they had ordered their engineers to slow down on approaching possible red lights. This is a new safety regulation developed after a Metrolink train in Rialto was going nearly 70 mph before it ran a red light and sideswiped a freight train and two months after the fatal head-on collision in Chatsworth that killed 25 people. Under the rule, which was put into place Nov. 21, Metrolink trains must slow immediately to 40 mph or less when they are alerted that a light

ahead may be red, the agency said.

Metrolink engineers are required to call out all signal colors over the radio to alert other crew members, as well as other trains operating in the area, about the lights, according to agency regulations.

In interviews with investigators, the Metrolink engineer and a second crew member in the cab said they discussed the light at Rialto but did not announce it over the radio because they were trying to hit their brakes to avoid ramming the freight train. Investigators would conduct tests to determine why the crew failed to stop the train in time. The commuter train was allowed to go up to 79 mph that day, said Ted Turpin, the National Transportation Safety Board investigator supervising the crash inquiry.

The accident on Nov. 24 injured five people and was the second time in less than three months that a Metrolink engineer failed to announce a red light before hitting a freight train. Investigators probing the fatal Chatsworth collision in Sept. have said the engineer and conductor failed to communicate a red light before colliding with an oncoming freight train.

"One of the advantages of calling signals via radio is for other trains in that area to hear and compare that information to what they are running on," said an internal memo by the private contractor that operates Metrolink trains.

Also on Nov. 24, U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein called on the Federal Railroad Administration to expedite approvals for new collision avoidance technology on the Metrolink system. Federal rules require all freight railroads sharing Metrolink track to install compatible equipment before commuter trains can begin using the safety devices, Feinstein said.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

AUTOPSY IN CHATSWORTH TRAIN CRASH

No evidence of illegal drugs, alcohol or medication was found in the autopsy of the Metrolink engineer at the controls of the train that crashed in Chatsworth on Sept. 12, killing 25 people, according to a coroner's report released December 3.

Engineer Robert M. Sanchez's cause of death was listed as massive trauma injuries from the accident. He suffered an egregious loss of blood and multiple fractures in his torso and lower body, according to the report from the Los Angeles County coroner.

Federal investigators say Sanchez sent and received dozens of text messages the day of the crash, including one just seconds before he collided with the freight train. Also, federal investigators are looking at why the red signal may not have been as clear as it should have been, although the investigation is not expected to be completed for months.

The coroner's autopsy also includes notes that the coroner's office took from National Transportation Safety Board investigators Dave Watson and Darryl J. Smith. Based on interviews, the coroner's report states that "... The engineer of the UPRR train had engaged the emergency braking system seconds prior to the crash, while the Metrolink engineer had not."

The coroner's report also says that the Metrolink locomotive was pushed 54 feet into the passenger car behind it. The length of that passenger car was 89 feet.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

COMET CARS

Comet cars from the 1970s and '80s should show up on Metrolink trains in December. They will replace leased passenger cars from Sounder Commuter Rail in the Seattle area that must be returned. Metrolink leased the Comet cars to accommodate passenger demand despite the departure of the Sounder cars. Ten cars in a distinctive red and blue color scheme were leased from Utah Transit Authority, and 14 cars in gray were leased from New Jersey Transit.

No more than one Comet car will be used in a train set. Each will be located behind the locomotive and will be accessible only from the Metrolink passenger car immediately behind the Comet car. The Comet cars are not double-decker or ADA-accessible, and do not have operating rest rooms. They do have luggage racks.

These flashback cars will help Metrolink flash forward to the future. They will be replaced by the most advanced Crash Energy Management (CEM) passenger cars available in the United States. The first of Metrolink's 117 CEM cars is expected to arrive in mid-2009. Comet cars will be removed from service as the cutting-edge cars begin carrying passengers, equipped with new features that distribute the forces of collisions more effectively.

[Info. from *Metrolink Matters*]

NEW METROLINK SAFETY SYSTEM

The Federal Railroad Administration will consider letting Metrolink install automatic train-stopping devices that local officials believe will help prevent accidents until a better system is in place, federal officials announced Dec. 2. The 1950s-era system triggers the brakes on trains that run through stop signals.

Metrolink officials estimate the installation could be completed in nine months, and have set aside \$1.1 million. The automatic train-stop system is not a replacement for positive train control, the method long sought by federal officials that uses satellites and computers to slow or stop trains in danger of colliding.

Automatic train stop would only apply to Metrolink trains. Union Pacific, BNSF and Amtrak trains would not be outfitted with the system, because officials said sufficient safety measures are in place and they prefer to concentrate on having positive train control by 2012.

The Railroad Administration must hold a public comment period before approving automatic train stop for Metrolink. Officials said Dec. 2 they would shorten the normal 45-day period to 30 days following pleas from Metrolink and U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif. The comment period began Dec. 2.

Railroad Administration spokesman Steven Kulm noted that Metrolink's proposal indicates it will take nine months to bring the automatic train-stop system online. Federal officials are not opposed to the system if it is used merely as a stopgap solution until it can be replaced by positive train control, Kulm said.

Speed and distance play huge roles in averting accidents, something positive train control is better equipped to gauge because it tracks the movement of both trains, not just the Metrolink train. That's why officials contend positive train control is better. Using global positioning systems, the computers can stop or slow trains that pass warning and stop signals and also track speed and movement of the trains and report information back to a control center.

Some types of automatic train stop sound warnings to alert the driver but do not apply the brakes on the train. Those passive systems are less complicated but also less able to avert catastrophe because they cannot stop the train, only warn the operator of the red signal. Metrolink spokesman Francisco Oaxaca said the agency is still working on the specifics of installing the stop system.

Metrolink's board approved \$12.6 million in improvements in October, after the Chatsworth crash. Most of the money went to adding a second operator to all Metrolink locomotives, as well as other staff additions such as added security. Prices vary, but Metrolink officials estimated the most comprehensive systems cost up to \$100,000 per location, while passive systems cost \$22,000, including costs to outfit trains that operate along the route.

BNSF is not adding automatic train stop, in favor of working on positive train control, said spokeswoman Lena Kent. "This important goal will be best achieved if time and resources are focused exclusively on state-of-the-art positive train control technology," Kent said.

Oaxaca, the Metrolink spokesman, said the agency does not believe installing the automatic train stop system will prevent Metrolink from getting positive train control by 2012.

[Info. from *Press-Enterprise*]

PORT OF COOS BAY TO BUY RAIL LINE

The Port of Coos Bay, Oregon, has agreed to buy the Coos Bay rail line from Central Oregon & Pacific Railroad. A port attorney filed notice Dec. 1 with the federal Surface Transportation Board (STB) of its decision.

"We are pleased that they're going to move forward," said Bob Ragon, spokesman for the Coos-Siskiyou Shippers Coalition, whose members include businesses who depend upon the rail line before it was shut down for safety reasons in September 2007.

In November, the STB set a value of \$16.6 million, based upon the scrap value if the line was abandoned. The port now has until Feb. 18 to arrange financing to complete the sale.

The port has already hired a rail consultant to examine the tunnels along the line and determine the scope of work needed to allow trains to use them once again, port spokesman Martin Callery said. Conditions inside the tunnels deteriorated to the point they were no longer safe, causing the line closure.

Previous estimates envisioned a cost of between \$6 and \$7 million to make repairs inside the tunnels. RailAmerica, parent company of the Roseburg-based Central Oregon & Pacific Railroad, said a total of \$23.3 million in repairs and infrastructure improvements were needed to bring the line into good running operation. Callery did not say how long he envisioned it might take to make the tunnel repairs and get the full line operational. "I'm hopeful that [repairs] can be done by mid-summer to late summer," Ragon said.

The port is also considering how it will go about selecting a short line rail operator to run the railroad, including a 19-mile section between Eugene and Vaughn that wasn't affected by the shutdown. The port has received inquiries from several companies that have expressed interest in operating the line, Callery said.

[Info. from John Sowell]

**PASSENGER TRAIN UPDATES by CHARLES VARNES
AMTRAK**

On Nov. 4, 2008, Alex Kummant resigned as Amtrak president and chief executive officer. Following Kummant's resignation, Chief Operating Officer William Crosbie was appointed as acting CEO by the Amtrak Board of Directors. On Nov. 26, Joseph Boardman, administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration, was appointed CEO. He will serve for one year while the Board conducts a search for a permanent CEO.

Historical On-Time Performance

The November 2008 historical on-time performance percentages for selected routes were:

Route	November 2008	Last 12 Months
Sunset Limited	73.1%	38.5%
Texas Eagle	50.0%	19.3%
Southwest Chief	86.7%	64.1%
California Zephyr	66.7%	26.9%
Empire Builder	85.8%	75.5%
Coast Starlight	90.0%	64.2%
City of New Orleans	90.7%	54.8%
Pacific Surfliner	77.0%	75.3%
San Joaquin	90.8%	83.1%
Amtrak Cascades	83.7%	67.1%
Illinois Service	76.4%	53.1%
Missouri Routes	36.7%	20.5%
Acela Express	85.1%	84.3%
Northeast Regional	74.4%	75.2%

BNSF Amtrak On-Time Performance Percentages

The latest Amtrak On-Time Performance Percentages posted on the BNSF News web page before column deadline were:

Amtrak On-Time Performance	2008-12-08	
TRAINS	MTD OTP	YTD OTP
Long-Distance Trains	90%	75%
Short-Distance Trains	90%	86%
Pacific Surfliners	96%	94%

LONG-DISTANCE TRAINS

As it has in past holiday seasons, Amtrak offered a turkey dinner special and pumpkin pie in its long-distance train dining cars. The meals were offered Nov. 20-29, and Dec. 20-Jan. 1.

Crescent

The Norfolk Southern Railway will be renewing rail, ties, and switches between Atlanta and New Orleans in January and February, 2009.

To accommodate the work, the *Crescent* (Tr. No. 19) which departs from New York on Sundays through Wednesdays on Jan. 25-28, Feb. 1-4, Feb. 8-11, and Feb. 15-18 will terminate at Atlanta on Mondays through Thursdays with no alternate transportation provided between Atlanta and New Orleans.

The *Crescent* (Tr. No. 20) which departs from New Orleans on Mondays through Thursdays will originate instead in Atlanta on Jan. 26-29, Feb 2-5, Feb. 9-12, and Feb. 16-19. No alternate transportation from New Orleans to Atlanta will be provided.

Auto Train

The Lorton, Va.-Sanford, Fla. *Auto Train* was canceled Nov. 19 through Nov. 21 after cracks in its auto carrier underframes were discovered. Cracks in the auto carrier frames were discovered late Tuesday, Nov. 18, as Amtrak car inspectors made an in-depth inspection of the area above the truck of one of the cars

that was not in service. This discovery led to inspections of other cars, revealing other cracks, which caused the immediate decision to cancel the trains until repairs could be made.

To make repairs and restore service as quickly as possible, Amtrak dispatched materials from Indiana and Delaware and deployed welders to join forces with personnel at the *Auto Train* terminals in Virginia and Florida. The repairs continued around the clock until the cars were repaired. The repairs involved welding steel plates to the cracked area of the frames.

After the late-day decision on Nov. 18 to cancel the train, Amtrak offered *Auto Train* passengers the option of remaining on the trains they had boarded for meal service and use of the accommodations they had reserved, without charge. Full ticket refunds were also offered. Amtrak also provided hotel vouchers to those passengers who chose to rest over night before driving their cars to their destinations.

WESTERN CORRIDORS

Amtrak Cascades

Amtrak began handling checked baggage on all trains serving Bellingham, Wash., on Nov. 24. *Cascades* Tr. Nos. 516 and 517 now handle checked baggage at intermediate stations north of Seattle.

Cascades trains and stations where checked baggage is handled are:

- Tr. No. 510 - Seattle, Edmonds, Everett, Bellingham, Vancouver (B.C.)
- Tr. No. 513 - Bellingham, Everett, Edmonds, Seattle, Tacoma, Centralia, Vancouver (Wash.), Portland
- Tr. No. 516 - Portland, Vancouver (Wash.), Centralia, Tacoma, Seattle, Edmonds, Everett, Bellingham
- Tr. No. 517 - Vancouver (B.C.), Bellingham, Everett, Edmonds, Seattle

DEPOT DOINGS

St. Louis, Missouri

Amtrak trains began operating from the new multimodal St. Louis Gateway Transportation Center (GTC) on November 19, 2008. Its grand opening was celebrated on Nov. 21, 2008.

The new GTC is the depot for Amtrak trains and Greyhound buses. The MetroLink (light rail) Civic Center station is located immediately adjacent to the GTC and the Metro Bus terminal is located just east of it.

The GTC is located at 430 South 15th Street. Its Amtrak ticket office is open from 3:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m.

The new St. Louis depot has free WiFi access, a Metropolitan Lounge for *Texas Eagle* sleeping car passengers and a food court offering deli sandwiches, snacks and other foods and beverages.

The GTC is served by the *Texas Eagle*, and *Lincoln Service* and *Missouri Service* trains.

Texarkana, Arkansas

The Texarkana, Ark. station was restaffed on Nov. 10. Ticketing and checked baggage service is offered. Package express service will be added at a later date.

RENO FUN/SNOW TRAINS

The popular *Reno Fun Train* and *Reno Snow Train* will operate again during the months of February and March 2009.

The *Fun Trains* will depart from Emeryville at 9:45 a.m. on Fridays Feb. 6, 13, 27, and March 13. The Feb. 20 and March

6 trains will depart at 2:00 p.m. The return train departs from Reno at 10:30 a.m. on the following Sunday. Passengers on this train must be age 21 or over.

The *Snow Trains* will depart from Emeryville at 9:45 a.m. on Tuesdays Feb 3, 10, 17, 24, March 3 and 10. The return train departs from Reno at 10:30 a.m. on the following Thursday.

Passengers can board both trains at Martinez, Suisun, and Sacramento, also.

Tour packages including rail travel, transfers, and hotel accommodations, or only rail travel are offered.

Bookings and more details are available from Key Holidays at (800) 783-0783, www.keyholidays.com, or your travel agent.

BNSF SANTA CLAUS EXPRESS

The 18th annual BNSF *Santa Claus Express* train traveled through Southern California between Dec. 4th and Dec. 8th. At least 1,000 invited children and adults were selected for the free rides by charitable organizations throughout the region. BNSF employee volunteers hosted the children and helped Santa Claus deliver gifts and refreshments during each of the trips.

The BNSF special's consist was five cars with a locomotive on each end of the train.

The train's schedule was: Dec. 4, depart BNSF's Commerce Diesel Facility at 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.; Dec. 5, depart Banning's Landing Community Center at 10:00 a.m.; Dec. 6, depart the former Santa Fe San Bernardino depot at 9:00 a.m. and 1 p.m.; Dec. 7, depart the City of Hope Hospital at 10:00 a.m.; Dec. 8, depart the Victorville Amtrak platform at 10:00 a.m.

[Info. from Ken Ruben, Ed Von Nordeck]

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

October 2008	Red Line	Blue Line	Green Line	Gold Line
Weekday Ave.	154,935	80,577	41,746	24,004
Saturday Ave.	96,204	55,631	22,562	13,898
Sunday Ave.	85,915	54,023	17,953	11,831
Monthly Total	4,291,990	2,291,891	1,122,214	665,006

RAIL OVERHEAD CONTACT SYSTEM

At the Metro Board meeting on Sept. 25, a life-of-project budget was established for the Rail Overhead Contact System (OCS) Rehab & Repair Equipment Capital Project in the amount of \$4,700,000. To keep pace with maintenance, emergency response and rehabilitation due to wear of the OCS systems, Metro must procure specialized equipment to meet all these demands. Also, Metro must maintain the OCS systems on all light rail lines with minimum impact to daily revenue operations, which is within the four-hour work window available during non-revenue hours. The Blue Line, Metro's oldest light rail system, is due for major rehabilitation of its OCS system, which will begin in FY '09.

The Rail OCS Rehab & Repair Equipment project will allow for the procurement of three specialized heavy-duty high rail platform/bucket trucks. Each truck will be equipped with a double articulated three-man basket, rotating & elevating work platform (two trucks), two-way transmission, a light rail vehicle-style pantograph to measure and align the overhead wires (one truck), a generator and area lighting package (two trucks), a jib

crane (one truck), and a hybrid electric drive (one truck). One truck will be equipped with a specialized opto-electronic system installed on the roof known as MAGIC-SC to make precise measurements (height, stagger and wear) of the existing OCS that is needed to plan rehabilitation work and to provide advanced warning of potential weak points before failure occurs.

Presently, Metro uses a combination of non-specialized hi-rail vehicles owned by Metro together with specialized equipment that is rented when required. Metro's current support equipment can only perform repairs to small segments of the wire without major down time impacting revenue service.

In the recent past, there have been several OCS breakdowns, which resulted in lost revenue service hours. At present Metro is seeking proposals for professional services to perform optical scanning of the OCS on all three light rail lines. This is necessary to investigate the cause of repetitive OCS failures and prepare a remedial action plan. The estimated cost for this one-time service is \$200,000, which is one-third of the cost of the MAGIC-SC system. The Contracting Officer will negotiate and award a contract to purchase three specialized rehab and repair vehicles at a fair and reasonable price.

GOLD LINE CAR 243

At the Metro Board meeting on October 23, the CEO was authorized to award a contract to Siemens Transportation Systems, Inc. to repair Gold Line Car 243 for an amount not to exceed \$250,000, which represents Metro's insurance deductible portion. The total estimated proposed cost to recover the vehicle is \$1,013,590. The car was scheduled to be completed by the end of Nov. 2008, and back in revenue service shortly thereafter.

On Sept. 21, 2007 a Siemens P2000 Gold Line rail car #243 was involved in a serious accident with an automobile. The SUV collided with the light rail car at a grade crossing and immediately upon impact fire severely damaged the rail car's:

- Interior operator's compartment
- Numerous electrical equipment and controls
- Coupler and Under-car wiring
- Exterior paint
- Under-frame structure (due to the intensity and duration of the fire the integrity of the main under-frame structure has been compromised resulting in major metal rework).

The CEO was authorized to award a contract with Union Switch & Signal, Inc. for Automatic Train Protection (ATP) and Train to Wayside Communication (TWC) spare parts for the P2550 AnsaldoBreda Light Rail Car Fleet, for an amount not to exceed \$522,476. The ATP/TWC package serves as the electronic safety/protection system that is on every light rail car.

The ATP provides speed enforcement and system safety for the Braking Propulsion Door, Control and Vehicle Direction Control. The ATP also stops trains from running into each other from behind or head on, by electronically reducing the speed or stopping a train if it is within a certain distance from another train. It will also not allow the doors to open at the platform if the trains are not at their proper markers on the track of the platform.

The TWC provides safe train separation and has the ability to control the performance levels of the train through the tracks, and also allows control from the Rail Operation Control facility. This procurement will ensure that the required parts for the

ATP/TWC package are available when necessary.

The CEO was authorized to enter into a twelve-month service agreement to introduce a dual Visa payWave - TAP smart card for a 12-month pilot program. The under-served, unbanked community in Los Angeles will have a unique opportunity to participate in the electronic financial economy with a TAP Prepaid Visa card that can be used to ride public transit, as well as for use as a general purpose payment card.

Visa has proposed an innovative approach to introduce a prepaid card that has similar characteristics similar to "gift cards" which are ubiquitous in our economy.

BUS AND RAIL RIDERSHIP

Metro's bus and rail ridership has remained strong on a year-to-year basis – despite the continued reduction in local gasoline prices – with the Gold Line logging a 30-percent increase. Average weekday boardings on the Gold Line reached 25,511 in September, which is more than a 30-percent increase compared with September 2007. The Red Line subway and Blue Line both experienced a nearly 10-percent increase in boardings, and the Green Line boardings grew by almost 12 percent.

Conan Cheung, DEO, Operations of the Gold and Orange lines, noted that the parking facilities along the Gold Line are usually finned by 8:30 a.m., particularly the Sierra Madre Villa station parking structure.

[Info. from *MetroPeople*]

EXPO LINE

Phase 1 of the Exposition Light Rail Transit Line (Expo Line) will travel between Downtown Los Angeles and Culver City. It will share tracks and two stations (7th St./Metro Center and Pico) with the Metro Blue Line as it leaves Downtown Los Angeles. It will then travel along the Exposition right-of-way to the recently funded aerial station at Venice/Robertson. In addition to the station at Venice/Robertson, the new stations will be located on Flower St. at 23rd St. and Jefferson Blvd., and on Exposition Blvd. at Trousdale Parkway, Vermont Ave., Western Ave., Crenshaw Blvd., La Brea Ave., and La Cienega Blvd.

Construction of the Expo Line continues moving forward with utility and street improvements along Flower St. from Washington to Exposition Blvds. With the completion of the installment of 95 concrete girders weighing 50,000 pounds each, the trench near University of Southern California/Exposition Park has achieved a monumental milestone. The next step is to excavate the trench from both ends, which should be completed within the next year.

The contractor has begun excavating the right-of-way from Vermont to La Brea Aves. to prepare the right-of-way for the light rail track bed. These activities include utility relocation and installation, overhead catenary system (OCS) foundation installation, pole and cable installation, sound wall construction, track foundation and concrete tie installation, and curb and gutter installation.

Additional construction activities in the West End portion of the alignment include reconfiguring the traffic on Jefferson Blvd. to accommodate work at the Ballona Creek Bridge from Oct. through Dec. 2008. Traffic traveling on National Blvd. will be re-directed into new lanes and detoured to side streets such as Eastham Dr. and Hayden Ave.

Phase 2 of the Expo Line is currently undergoing the

environmental planning process. Over the past year, the Expo Authority and its contractor, FCI/Fluor/Parsons (FFP), have developed a comprehensive Expo School Safety Program. Also, Authority staff and the environmental consultant have worked closely with the communities along the Phase 2 corridor and have conducted meetings at strategic milestones during the planning process. Per the current project schedule, the DEIS/DEIR document will be available for public comment this coming fall, with the adoption of a Locally Preferred Alternative following shortly thereafter.

[Info. from Expo Construction Authority]

GOLD LINE FOOTHILL EXTENSION

After weeks of careful counting, Los Angeles County officials finally certified the passage of Measure R to fund transportation projects. With the passage of a half-cent sales-tax measure, construction on an extension of the Gold Line could begin as soon as 2010, officials said December 3.

Construction on the \$458 million segment is expected to begin in the middle of 2010 and to be completed before the end of 2013. The light rail train, which begins at Los Angeles Union Station and continues now to East Pasadena, would stop in Arcadia, Monrovia, Duarte, Irwindale and Azusa near Glendora.

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) will begin to collect the tax in July and begin to see serious revenue about this time next year, officials said. The Gokl Line project is estimated to receive about \$735 million in Measure R funding and about \$24 million in matching funds from local cities. Between \$100 million and \$200 million of that will be used for a rail yard.

Any leftover money will be used to extend the line farther east, possibly to San Dimas, said Habib Balian of the Gold Line Foothill Extension Authority, a state-created agency that oversees construction of the line. The extension is legally cleared to go to Claremont, though Measure R only guarantees enough funding to get the line to the Azusa/Glendora border, officials said.

The Extension Authority had wanted MTA to fund construction of the line to Claremont, and still has ambitions to build the line to Ontario Airport. In fact, the Extension Authority released a draft copy of a study the first week of December proposing two possible rail routes from Claremont to the airport.

"Everyone in San Bernardino County has been very positive about funding the line from Claremont to Ontario," said Balian. Still, San Bernardino transit officials will not commit any funding to completing the line to the airport until they are certain it will get as far as Claremont, Balian added.

Roger Snoble, the MTA chief, has a differing view of the future of the project. He has suggested finishing the line with a Metrolink commuter train to connect from Azusa to Claremont, an idea that Balian, along with city officials all over the San Gabriel Valley, don't want to see.

[Info. from *Whittier Daily News*]

SAN FRANCISCO

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) announced early December that the Central Subway project, which is Phase 2 of the Third Street Light Rail Project, has received a Record of Decision (ROD) from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The ROD, which was issued on

Nov. 26, 2008, represents the final environmental clearance for the project.

The SFMTA board of directors has also approved a \$147 million contract for program and construction management of the Central Subway that moves San Francisco one stop closer to extending the existing Third Street Light Rail line from 4th and King Streets to Chinatown.

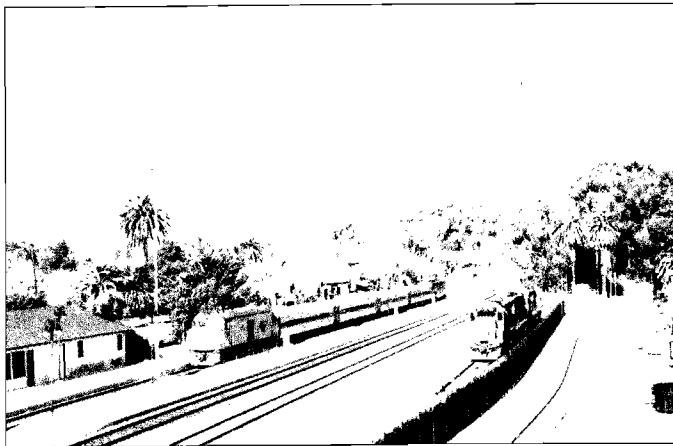
The \$1.3 billion Central Subway project has been favorably evaluated by the FTA as a "New Starts" project and is receiving federal funding from Congress. Construction is expected to begin in 2010, with service to the public starting in 2016.

[Info. from *Metro Magazine*]

track conditions have helped cut the number of derailments by more than two-thirds. (In 1975, U.S. railroads had 6,328 derailments.) In addition to visual inspections of the track twice a week, railroads usually run ultrasonic tests at least once a year to determine whether rails have cracks that can't be seen by humans. A tool called a "gauge restraint measurement system" vehicle measures the strength and geometry of the rails as it passes along the track.

Likewise, improvements in the construction of rails has reduced the number of so-called "rock 'n' roll" derailments. Rock 'n' roll derailments are caused when the interaction between a train and its track creates harmonic motion. At speeds between 12 and 24 miles per hour, a freight car can resonate to start rocking back and forth violently. But, with changes in how rails are joined together, rock 'n' roll has become a less frequent source of derailment, accounting for just 34 accidents last year.

[Info. from *Metrolink*]



Amtrak Pacific Surfliner Tr. No. 798 is moments away from its 2:00 p.m. departure from San Luis Obispo, Calif. on Dec. 1, 2008. The empty track on the extreme right in the picture is the passenger train layover track. Photo by Charles Varnes

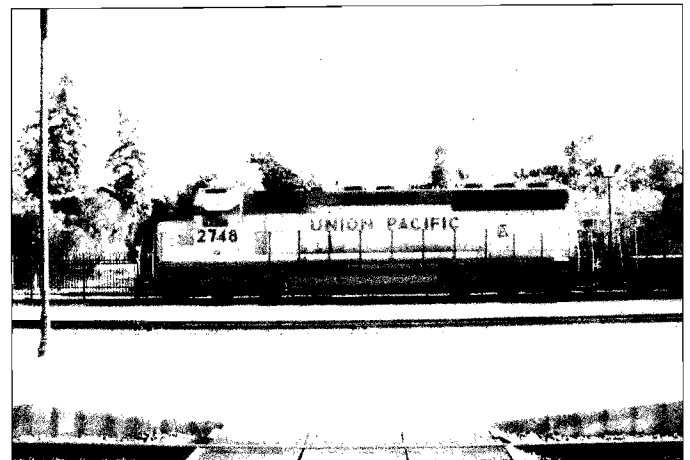
TRAIN DERAILMENTS

Human error or problems with the track causes trains to derail. In 2007, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) reported 1,876 derailments on U.S. railroads, although the vast majority cause only minor damage. Among those incidents, 46.7 percent were caused by track defects, while another 28.7 percent were caused by human factors. The rest were caused by mechanical problems with the train itself, signal failures, and miscellaneous factors ranging from vandalism to snow.

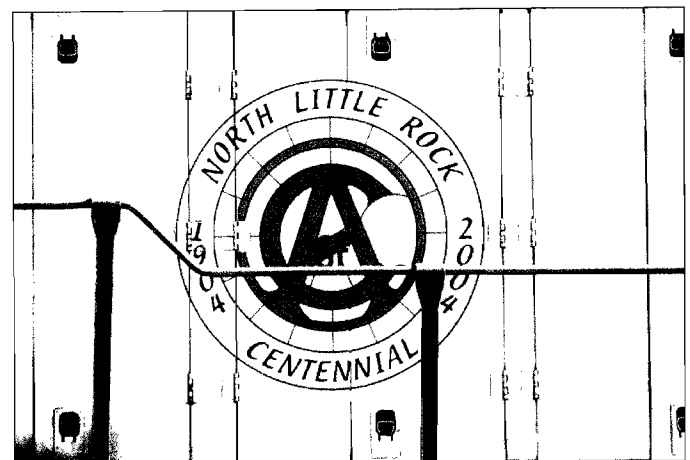
Human-caused derailments are rarely traced back to the proverbial employee asleep at the switch – the FRA reported only one such derailment in 2007. Instead, accidents more frequently occur because trains are going too fast. Some train wrecks occur when drivers exceed the posted speed limit (19 derailments in 2007), but more often, the cars go off the rails because the brakes weren't applied correctly.

Almost half of all derailments are caused by faulty equipment or track defects. In the United States, a standard gauge, which is the distance between the two rails, is exactly 4 foot 8½ inches. If that gauge widens over time or because a crosstie is loose, then the wheels of the train, which are held on the rails by wheel flanges, will no longer align with the track, and one or both wheels on an axle, will drop to the ground. Small cracks in the rail causing misalignment can also result in a train wreck.

Over the past 30 years, improvements in the monitoring of



Union Pacific 2748 is the north-facing unit of the three-unit helper locomotive set at San Luis Obispo on Dec. 1, 2008. The circular emblem on its side commemorates the 2004 North Little Rock Centennial. Photo by Charles Varnes



A closer view of the North Little Rock Centennial emblem.

Photo by Charles Varnes