

# WHEEL CLICKS

*Pacific Railroad Society Inc.*

JANUARY 2011

## **BULLET TRAIN BOARD OKS FIRST SEGMENT**

The California High Speed Rail Authority board unanimously approved construction on December 2 of the first leg of the state's proposed bullet train – a 65-mile section in the Central Valley that would not carry passengers until more of the system is built. Costing at least \$4.15 billion, the segment would run from the tiny town of Borden to Corcoran. Stations would be built in Fresno and Hanford.

Included in the plan are tracks, station platforms, bridges and viaducts, which would elevate the line through urban areas. The initial section, however, would not be equipped with maintenance facilities, locomotives, passenger cars, or an electrical system necessary to power high-speed trains.

The Central Valley was targeted as a starting point to rapidly create jobs and avoid the expected resistance in Los Angeles and San Francisco, said Bob Kulat, a Federal Railroad Administration spokesman. State Sen. Alan Lowenthal (D-Long Beach), who chairs the Senate committee that oversees the high-speed rail project, said the board is acting prematurely. Critical questions about financial management, future funding, ridership projections and other issues have not been answered, he said.

To satisfy federal requirements, the starter route must have "independent utility." That is, other passenger railroads must be able to use the track if funding dries up and high-speed trains never come to fruition. The rail authority says Amtrak's well-established San Joaquin service could shift from its conventional track to the high-speed route between Borden and Corcoran in such a case.

Officials agreed on December 20 to nearly double the length of the first segment to allay concerns that the initial route will not reach major population centers in the Central Valley. Six members of the High-Speed Rail Authority board voted unanimously to spend another \$616 million in federal funding to extend the segment to Bakersfield.

The sudden windfall provides the authority a total of \$5.5 billion to construct up to 123 miles of track, authority CEO Roelof van Ark said. The latest round of funding must be matched by state funds. Authority board members hope the expansion to an Amtrak station in Bakersfield, a city of 330,000 on the southern end of the valley, will put an end to critics' derisions.

## **WARNING ISSUED OVER HIGH-SPEED RAIL**

A sweeping independent assessment of the state's proposed \$43-billion high-speed train is delivering a warning that financial planning and staffing challenges must be swiftly addressed if the project is to proceed. Among the alarms sounded by a special voter-created bullet train watch dog panel are the grim fiscal realities facing recession-ravaged federal, state and local governments.

The chairman of the review panel, Will Kempton, said the report is intended to offer "constructive input" to legislators and officials guiding the project. "I think the group wants a successful outcome," said Kempton, chief executive officer of the Orange County Transportation Authority. The six-member panel was appointed by the state's elected controller and treasurer, as well as Cabinet members of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, a strong bullet-train backer.

Sen. Alan Lowenthal, (D-Long Beach), said the report validates issues raised repeatedly by lawmakers. The authority has "been in denial," he said. "These are very serious concerns. I think it's a convergence of another group saying there are unanswered questions that need to be addressed." The project may need to be slowed down and carefully reassessed, Lowenthal said, adding he is planning hearings on the report in coming weeks. "We need to make sure we make the right decisions. This is the largest, most complex project ever done in the state," he said.

## **RAIL FUNDS SHIFTED TO CALIFORNIA**

The federal government on December 9 redirected \$624 million in economic stimulus funds from other states to the California high-speed rail project, bringing the total available for building the line to about \$5.5 billion. California was one of 11 states to share in the redistribution of \$1.2 billion in high-speed rail money that had been approved for Ohio and Wisconsin.

Whether the money will actually be received is unclear. Concerned about a \$1.3-trillion federal deficit, some Republicans in Congress want to pull back billions in stimulus money pledged to the project but not yet allocated.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*, *Pasadena Star-News*]

## **HIGH-SPEED TRAIN LINKS FINLAND AND RUSSIA**

A new high-speed train links Helsinki and St. Petersburg. The French-built train, with a top speed of 135 mph, cuts the travel time between the two cities to 3½ hours. The 250-mile trip previously took more than six hours, including a stop at the border. It is the first high-speed rail link between Europe and Russia, Finnish Rail VR spokesman Otto Lehtipuu said.

## **RUSSIAN-FRANCE EXPRESS TRAIN DEBUTS**

A new train taking rich Russians to the French Riviera in style and luxury has arrived in Nice, some 53 hours after it departed Moscow. The new service launched by Russian Railways is a once-a-week run for those with money and time.

The train travels at a sedate 40 mph, and just slightly faster on the return. For fares ranging from €306 (\$412) one-way to €1,200 (\$1,616) for a luxury compartment, the traveler passes through two dozen cities and a half-dozen countries before reaching Nice.



**WHEEL CLICKS**

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

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**PRS NEWS — ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES**

- Jan. 5, 12, PRM Wednesday work party, 1:00 p.m. to 5 p.m.  
19, 26 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
- Jan. 8, 15, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10:00 a.m.  
22, 29 to 4:00 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas  
Sats. Committee meeting: 29.
- Jan. 8, 15, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Saunders  
22, 29 Yard, Noakes & Herbert, Commerce. Regular  
Sats. days: 8, 22; Extra days: 15, 29. Com. Mtg.: 22.
- Jan. 7 PRS Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m., **Pacific Railroad  
Fri. Museum**, 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
- Jan. 14 Membership Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Board Room  
Fri. **MTA Building**. See details below.
- Jan. 21 Slide Night at Saunders Yard, 7:30 p.m., Noakes  
Fri. & Herbert, Commerce. All welcome, bring slides.
- Feb. 2, 9, PRM Wednesday work party, 1:00 p.m. to 5 p.m.  
16, 23 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
- Feb. 4 PRS Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Location to be  
Fri. announced in February *Wheel Clicks*.
- Feb. 4, 11, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10:00 a.m.

- 18, 25 to 4:00 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas  
Sats. Committee meeting: 25.
- Feb. 4, 11, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Saunders  
18, 25 Yard, Noakes & Herbert, Commerce. Regular  
Sats. days: 4, 18; Extra days: 11, 25. Com. Mtg.: 18.
- Feb. 11 Membership Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Location to be  
Fri. announced in February *Wheel Clicks*.

**MEETING PROGRAMS by RUSS DAVIES**

January 14, 2011: **PRS images on the big screen!** The program will be **"The best of the PRM Collections,"** shown as **digital images**, on the big reverse image screen in the **MTA Board Room, our temporary meeting location. Be there, and bring digital briefs!**  
 February 11, 2011: **Watch for details in the February *Wheel Clicks*. Location and program to be announced.**

**JANUARY MEMBERSHIP MEETING DETAILS**

The **MTA Building** is adjacent to the east side of Union Station. **Parking** is available in the underground lot shared by the MTA and Union Station. The probable cost, **\$5**, or the **maximum, \$6**, depending on timing. Free parking is available at **Denny's** across the street from the MTA garage entrance **if you eat dinner there, and advise the Denny's Manager!** To get to the meeting from Denny's, **for safety**, cross the street at the traffic signal, and walk right into the covered MTA garage. Then follow the signs in the garage to the MTA Building elevators. The Board Room is on the third floor. You can also take any of the Metro rail lines, or Metro and other bus lines, that serve Union Station, as well as Metrolink.

**MEMBERSHIP REPORT by VIRGINIA GRUPP**

As of December 3, 2010, Seniority Number 427 was given to one late renewal. New members voted into PRS on that date were: Mel Miller, #423; Mo Miller, #424; Patricia Porras, #425; Rodney Courtney, #426; and Robert Jacoby, #428.

**MILEPOSTS**

*By Marti Ann Draper*

Happy New Year!

Thanks to all of you at the Museum in San Dimas who put on both a fit finish for the San Dimas Christmas festivities on December 4 and a warm celebration for your fellow PRS members on December 10. It was wonderful to see our friends in such an inviting atmosphere. The light fare was perfect, and the decorations beautiful. Thanks again!

Any of you who take the time to read *Wheel Clicks* noticed that the dates for these important activities were totally mixed up. With dates for the holiday gathering set forth as December 4, December 10, and December 12, we started to wonder if anyone would figure out when to show up at all! Thankfully, most of you noted the green cards we sent out to insure that you knew of the correct date. This brought up the question of whether or not Dick might be able to use some help in proofreading the copy that goes into *Wheel Clicks*, not just for typographical errors but for content. Dick has to get all of the material together and assemble it in some fashion so that it all fits into the issue. If you are able to do proofreading, it would help him because a second set of eyes is always better to spot for

inconsistencies. Want to help? Just write to *Wheel Clicks* at 210 W. Bonita Avenue, San Dimas, California 91773. It's better if you write instead of call, because then we can see if you know how to do it!

#### MORE VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

PRS is governed by a Board of Directors who are elected by the membership. Each Director serves a three-year term. Directors are not allowed to run for more than one consecutive term. This year, we will elect two directors to full three-year terms. We will also elect one director to a two-year stint to finish out a three-year term that was opened when Lindsay Smith had to resign due to his wife's illness. That spot has been filled by Neal Bjornsen, who graciously consented to serve until the election and was appointed by the board. Neal can run for that spot now. In addition, we have four elected officers who must run for election every year. These are the President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

From your correspondence to me it is apparent that a very small number of you think PRS is run by a tiny cadre of insiders who somehow keep themselves in power by controlling the election process. In reality, every year we have a nominating committee that calls around to beg people to consider running. Years ago, when our by-laws were formulated, there were many candidates and the elections were hotly contested. That is not the case today, not in most volunteer organizations and certainly not in PRS.

#### HERE'S THE SECRET TO "POWER" IN PRS

How does one run for office? The easiest way is to contact the nominating committee. You can do this by writing to Secretary, Bill Smith, at 210 W. Bonita Avenue, San Dimas, CA 91773; by contacting committee members in person when they are introduced at the January meeting; by telling any board member that you want to run, so they can then tell the nominating committee; or by leaving a message for the nominating committee at [prsexcursions@live.com](mailto:prsexcursions@live.com). If you don't contact the nominating committee you can still run by either showing up at the February membership meeting and putting your name into consideration, or by someone else nominating you from the floor at that meeting. At the end of the February meeting, nominations are closed. When you tell someone you are willing to run for office you should also give them a candidate statement of up to 250 words. This year you have only until March 15 to get your candidate statement to the elections committee so they can send it out to the members with the ballots. The candidate statement is extremely important, since it is your only chance to let your fellow members know what you hope to do if elected and what your priorities and opinions are. Several very good candidates in recent years got low vote counts simply because they didn't have a candidate statement for members to consider.

Copies of our by-laws are available which spell out what the responsibilities of each officer are and how the election is to be conducted. They are available if you write to – now, you should be able to recite it along with me – 210 W. Bonita Avenue, San Dimas, California 91773.

At New Year's, when we pause in our personal lives to appraise the past and ponder the future, we can do the same at PRS. Can we learn from the past, both from our successes and our mistakes? Of course!

#### URBAN GREENING GRANT IN MONROVIA

The city of Monrovia is nearly \$1 million richer from a new Urban Greening Grant from the California Strategic Growth Council. The \$995,000 grant, funded through Proposition 84, will help fund the design and construction of a new recreational area as part of the Station Square Transit Village.

Station Square is a residential and commercial development planned to coincide with opening of a new Metro Gold Line station in Monrovia in about 2014. Part of the grant will fund the creation of a hiking trail along the Gold Line right of way through Monrovia, officials said.

[Info. from *Pasadena Star-News*]

#### URBAN RAIL TRANSIT

##### EXPO LINE

The Expo Line is a staggering \$260 million over budget – 40 percent above the initial price – and it may open as much as two years behind schedule. The reasons behind the fiasco are as numerous as they are complex.

The Expo Line now is scheduled to open sometime next summer, but it won't go all the way to Culver City because the Venice/Robertson bridge won't be finished until November 2011. The Farmdale station won't be ready either. That station might have to be built at night because trains run during the day, or to save those costs Expo might hold off on opening the entire line until 2012.

The project budget now sits at \$899 million and is projected to go to \$911 million. Expo officials are engaged in aggressive cost-cutting maneuvers to try to keep it from going any higher. To pay for cost settlement, which sources expect to be \$25 million to \$30 million, Expo might hold off on buying new trains until 2014.

The plan would be to use old trains and defer the expenditure of \$47 million to Expo Phase 2. The second phase is scheduled to bring rail to the beach in Santa Monica by 2015 – 140 years after that feat was first accomplished with the Los Angeles and Independence steam train.

[Info. from *LA Weekly*]

#### ALAMEDA CORRIDOR-EAST

The city of Montebello officials are insisting that the Alameda Corridor-East Construction Authority build a \$360 million trench under four city streets. But ACE officials said there is no way the agency can afford such a project. ACE is sticking with its proposals to either lower Montebello Boulevard or build a bridge over the thoroughfare – both of which would cost about \$90 million.

ACE has six unfunded projects, one of which is the Montebello proposal. The staff wants the Montebello issue cleared up soon so ACE can start competing for the remaining federal money. "We don't want to wait six or seven years," ACE Chief Executive Officer Rick Richmond said. "We'd like to know soon how this is going to go."

Resident and community activist Larry Salazar urged the City Council to "insist ACE work as hard to fund the project as they did in San Gabriel." But ACE officials said the San Gabriel trench was needed because any other project would have impacted or destroyed the San Gabriel Mission – a historic

landmark. Other than Montebello Boulevard, the streets in Montebello aren't as impacted as those in San Gabriel, according to ACE statistics.

The standoff has already had consequences for Montebello. The city's project was to be one of the first in a 20-project ACE lineup. The project would include upgrades to train crossings at adjacent Greenwood, Maple and Vail avenues. But after supporting the project initially, Montebello council members changed their minds. ACE officials said they need to move on to projects with more community support. "We're not going to do a project that nobody wants," Richmond said.

[Info. from *Pasadena Star-News*]

### SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COMMUTER RAIL RIDERSHIP

Metrolink weekday, systemwide, average trips during August 2010 were 38,275, a decrease from the previous month of 1 percent. Trips during September were 39,068 with a monthly increase of 2 percent, and trips during October were 39,805 with a monthly increase of 1 percent.

### CAR PURCHASE

The board of the Southern California Regional Rail Authority disregarded financial pressures and unanimously voted to exercise an option to buy 20 more state-of-the-art train cars on November 19. The cars made by the South Korean Hyundai Rotem Co. will cost Metrolink \$1.68 million each, about \$1 million below the market value.

Rotem cars have energy-absorbing crush zones and other safety improvements now required by the federal government. Trying to shed its record of major accidents – the most recent being the Chatsworth crash two years ago that caused 25 deaths and 135 injuries – Metrolink is the first commuter service in the country to buy the Hyundai Rotem model.

"This is a big step on a number of levels," said Richard Katz, who sits on the Metrolink and Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority boards. "This will help us become the safest commuter railroad in the nation and five agencies got together to do this in a time of tight budgets."

Metrolink is funded by regional transportation agencies in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, Ventura and San Bernardino counties. Because of the economic downturn, the agencies are trying to adjust to lower transit ridership, the loss of state funding and steep declines in revenue from county sales taxes that help pay for transportation projects.

The \$33.3-million deal will bring the total number of Rotem cars in Metrolink's fleet to 137 out of 160 passenger cars, which will include 23 older Bombardier coaches that will remain in service. Metrolink planned to roll out 10 of the new cars on December 6.

Budget concerns had threatened the 20-car purchase option, but John E. Fenton, Metrolink's chief executive, said the deal could be financed in a way that does not require any out-of-pocket payments by county transportation agencies. Metrolink will use revenue from state transportation bonds, an \$18-million loan from MTA, \$4.2 million in damages paid by Hyundai Rotem for late delivery of a previous order, and will shift funds from some railroad crossing projects.

### RAIL PANEL MEMBERS KATZ AND PRINGLE

Richard Katz, who serves on the boards of MTA and the Metrolink commuter rail system, said on November 16 that he has submitted his resignation to the governor from the state panel overseeing development of California's \$43-billion high-speed rail system. California High-Speed Rail Authority Chairman Curt Pringle is mayor of Anaheim and a member of the Orange County Transportation Authority board, but he will relinquish those offices in December.

Katz and Pringle have been the focus of a state attorney general's review to determine if the state and local positions they hold are legally "incompatible" because of the potentially overlapping interests on rights-of-way, station locations and other matters.

Katz has argued to the attorney general that his public offices are compatible. But he said he did not want to risk being able to continue work on local transportation projects, including a plan to leverage county sales tax receipts to build 30 years of transit projects in the next decade. The so-called 30/10 proposal "is one of the most exciting things I've ever been involved in," Katz said. He said he also wants to see through a major collision-avoidance system and other safety improvements at the five-county Metrolink system.

A spokeswoman for the state attorney general's office said a formal opinion on the Pringle-Katz question is still in the works. She said she did not know if the issues would soon be considered moot because Pringle and Katz are leaving potentially conflicting offices.

### METRO LAUNCHES NEW TRANSIT INFO. LINE

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority has launched a new user information hotline. It is 323-GO-METRO, where callers can find bus and rail information. The old transit info. hotline, 1-800-COMMUTE, funded by Caltrans, is being discontinued for budgetary reasons.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

### PASSENGER TRAIN UPDATES by CHARLES VARNES AMTRAK

#### National Christmas Tree Train

Amtrak, working with the National Park Service, the National Park Foundation, and the National Christmas Tree Railroad, provided one of several model trains that circled the 42-foot Colorado blue spruce. Located on the Ellipse, just south of the White House, the National Christmas Tree has been a part of the holiday season since 1923.

The Amtrak model train is a G scale (1:22.5) and includes two GE Genesis P42 diesel locomotives and four single-level Am fleet passenger cars plus a café car. The model represents Amtrak's Midwest Corridor service, as well as the Northeast Regional service south of Washington, D.C. where the trains operate using this type of equipment. The National Christmas Tree and model Amtrak train was on display through January 1, 2011.

The National Christmas Tree Railroad is a group of volunteers who have been producing the model train exhibit around the National Christmas Tree since 1994. The organization has a web site at <http://nctr.com/index.html>.

Record Thanksgiving Travel

Amtrak had a record-breaking Thanksgiving holiday travel week carrying 704,446 passengers, up 2.7 percent over last year. In addition, 134,230 passengers rode Amtrak on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving – itself a new record for the single busiest day in the history of the railroad.

Comparing Thanksgiving 2010 to Thanksgiving 2009, rider ship was up 5.1 percent on state-supported trains and other short distance corridors with strong growth in Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Virginia and Washington. The long-distance trains saw a 3.7 percent increase and on the Northeast Corridor, the high-speed *Acela Express* trains had a 12.9 percent increase, however, rider ship on the entire corridor dropped slightly.

The previous Thanksgiving ridership record was set in 2009 with 685,876 passengers.

Historical On-Time Performance

The November 2010 historical on-time performance percentages for selected routes were:

Route	November 2010	Last 12 Months
Sunset Limited	84.0%	87.3%
Texas Eagle	68.3%	66.0%
Heartland Flyer	93.3%	78.4%
Southwest Chief	91.7%	76.9%
California Zephyr	43.3%	47.7%
Empire Builder	51.7%	74.6%
Coast Starlight	76.7%	89.1%
City of New Orleans	65.0%	81.9%
Pacific Surfliner	80.9%	76.5%
San Joaquin	88.6%	90.3%
Capitol Corridor	92.9%	93.5%
Amtrak Cascades	73.3%	72.6%
Michigan Services	58.1%	59.4%
Hathaway	92.4%	88.7%
Missouri River Runner	92.5%	91.0%
Acela Express	83.9%	80.4%
Northeast Regional	78.7%	75.0%

Firearms Permitted In Checked Baggage

Effective December 15, 2010, Amtrak began accepting unloaded firearms in checked baggage at stations and on trains operating within the United States that offer checked baggage service. This change in the Amtrak checked baggage policy is required by Section 159 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-117) enacted by Congress in December 2009. Firearms will be handled only on trains and between stations offering checked baggage service.

Passengers wishing to check firearms and/or ammunition must notify Amtrak no later than 24 hours before train departure. Reservations for firearms or ammunition can be made only by calling the Amtrak reservations number as online reservations are not accepted.

To meet this new legal requirement, Amtrak spent about \$2 million to make changes to its reservation system, install secure storage at checked baggage train stations and modify 142 baggage cars to improve and secure firearm transport. More detailed information about its firearms policy is available at Amtrak.com.

INTERCITY TRAINS

From January through March the *Coast Starlight* will depart from Los Angeles and Seattle two hours later to allow for work windows for rail and tie replacement. The projects are on the Santa Barbara, Coast and Brooklyn Subdivisions. Travelers from stations south of Los Angeles will use Pacific Surfliner Train 567 to connect with the northbound *Starlight*. The connection from the southbound *Starlight* will be via motor coach.

For the duration of the projects the northbound *Starlight* will not stop at Richmond, Calif., because it arrives after BART stops operating for the night. A same-day connection to the *Empire Builder* at Portland will not be possible. Travelers wishing to make the connection will need to stay overnight.

NORTHEAST CORRIDOR

Amtrak added *Northeast Regional* weekend stops at its Newark, Del., station starting Dec. 17. The new schedule has a southbound stop every Friday at 3:05 p.m. (train 133), and a northbound stop every Saturday and Sunday at 8:43 p.m. (train 182).

HIGH-SPEED RAIL FUNDS REDIRECTED

\$1.195 billion in high-speed rail funds originally designated for Wisconsin and Ohio will be redirected to other states eager to develop high-speed rail corridors across the United States. Wisconsin has suspended work under its existing high-speed rail agreement and the incoming Governors in Wisconsin and Ohio have both indicated that they will not move forward to use high-speed rail money received under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). As a result, \$1.195 billion will be redirected to high-speed rail projects already underway in other states.

The Recovery Act included \$8 billion to launch a national high-speed rail program that will modernize America’s transportation network, spur economic development domestically and keep the U.S. competitive with other leading nations. High-speed rail grants announced under the Recovery Act can be used only for high-speed rail projects and not for other transportation projects.

Under the Recovery Act, the Federal Railroad Administration originally announced \$810 million for Wisconsin’s Milwaukee-Madison corridor and \$400 million for Ohio’s Cincinnati-Columbus-Cleveland “3C” route. The Federal Railroad Administration will redirect \$810 million from Wisconsin and \$385 million from Ohio, and will work with these states to determine whether they have already spent money under their contracts that should be reimbursed.

The \$1.195 billion originally designated for those high-speed rail projects in Wisconsin and Ohio will now be used to support projects in the following states:

- California: up to \$624 million
- Florida: up to \$342.3 million
- Washington State: up to \$161.5 million
- Illinois: up to \$42.3 million
- New York: up to \$7.3 million
- Maine: up to \$3.3 million
- Massachusetts: up to \$2.8 million
- Vermont: up to \$2.7 million
- Missouri up to \$2.2 million

Wisconsin: up to \$2 million for the Hiawatha line

Oregon: up to \$1.6 million

North Carolina: up to \$1.5 million

Iowa: up to \$309,080

Indiana: up to \$364,980

[Info. from Ken Ruben, Ed Von Nordeck]

## AAR DECEMBER STORED FREIGHT CARS REPORT

by CHARLES VARNES

The Association of American Railroads reported that on Dec. 1, 2010, 317,810 freight cars, equaling 20.8 percent of the fleet, were stored. This is a decrease of 465 cars from Nov. 1, 2010. In its December 2010 Rail Freight Cars in Storage report the AAR stated that "Since peaking in June 2009, about 185,000 freight cars have come out of storage."

For the first 11 months of 2010 the number of freight cars stored (and the percentages) was: January, 448,555 (28.7); February, 439,631 (28.2); March, 418,552 (26.9); April, 387,029 (25.0); May, 369,090 (23.8); June, 368,343 (28.3); July, 365,279 (23.7); August, 359,471 (23.4); September, 348,712 (22.7); October, 331,074 (21.6); November, 318,275 (20.8).

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

[Info. from AAR Rail Time Indicators]

## RAILROAD EMPLOYMENT NUMBERS

by CHARLES VARNES

The Surface Transportation Board shows the average number of employees at mid-month in the six job classification groups (executive, professional, maintenance-of-way, equipment and transportation/train and engine and transportation/other than train and engine), encompassing all class I line-haul railroad employees.

The latest report, issued in November 2010, shows a total employment of 155,042. The number of employees in each job classification is: Executives, officials, and staff assistants 9,150; Professional and administrative 13,856; Maintenance of way and structures 35,171; Maintenance of equipment and stores 28,387; Transportation (other than train and engine) 6,659; and Transportation (train and engine) 61,819.

## HOME IS SOUGHT FOR HISTORIC STEAM ENGINES

Portland's three historic steam locomotives are at home in the drafty, oil-slicked Brooklyn Roundhouse – Oregon's only remaining one – for more than 25 years. But in a little more than a year, the Oregon Rail Heritage Foundation, the engines' caretaker organization, loses its lease on the roundhouse.

If it doesn't raise \$3.8 million to build a new facility by then, the engines might have no place to call home. The group has gotten rolling. It has \$1.5 million so far, and opportunities to make money are coming up. Early in December, volunteers were to start to steam up one of the engines, the Southern Pacific 4449, for the sixth annual Holiday Express. SP4449 is one of the engines that pulled the Bicentennial Freedom Train throughout the nation from 1975 to 1977.

With help from the city of Portland, the foundation purchased property last year near the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry in southeast Portland. An estimated 100 volunteer hours go into every hour the engines actually run. The vice-president of the foundation, Ed Immel, says, "These engines, they just laugh at us." After retiring as a state rail planner for Oregon, he spends all his free time with the three giants: SP4449, built in 1941; Spokane, Portland & Seattle 700, built in 1938, and the Oregon Railroad & Navigation Company 197, built in 1905.

"How do you stay young? Hammer on steam engines!" Immel says. "Except it gets harder to climb (17 feet) up the ladder and climb down under the trains. We never saw these engines in regular service," Immel said. "It's a skill that's been passed down person to person. We're trying to create the 'wow' of it." [Info. from *The Oregonian* via Caroline Hobson.]

## LOS ANGELES STATE HISTORIC PARK

California's budget deficit is forcing officials to scale back plans to develop a state historic park atop a former railroad yard near downtown Los Angeles. State parks administrators are now considering an \$18-million development project at the 32-acre site east of Chinatown instead of the \$55-million first-phase plan proposed amid great fanfare four years ago.

At least temporarily scratched from the space known to local residents as the Cornfield is a high-tech combination bridge and water fountain, a pedestrian bridge connecting the park site with Broadway, theme gardens, an upscale restaurant and an ecology center that would have featured a wetlands area created by water from the Los Angeles River.

The new plan for Los Angeles State Historic Park calls for a more modest main entryway, a scaled-down visitors center and a 16-foot high graded-berm walkway that would overlook an archeological dig that is slowly unearthing the railroad roundhouse that served the train yard in the late 1800s. Also included in the construction would be parking for 150 cars, a campfire storytelling area, a ranger station, restrooms and an area for food trucks.

"We have the \$18 million," said Sean Woods, superintendent of the state Department of Parks and Recreation's Los Angeles sector. "This will get us going." Construction of the facilities and park features should begin in late 2013 and take about 18 months to complete, Woods said.

After being abandoned as a rail yard, the site was targeted for redevelopment with industrial buildings before the state acquired it for \$32 million in 2001, said Warren Westrup, a parks real estate manager involved in the acquisition. The development that has occurred at the site until now was done in conjunction with an art project created by artist Lauren Bon in 2005.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

## 3985 RETURNS TO STEAM

by BRIAN BLACK

After a two year absence, the Union Pacific Challenger class steam engine 3985 has returned to service.

The 3985 is the largest and most powerful steam locomotive in the world that is still in operating condition. It was built for the Union Pacific in 1943 by the American Locomotive Company, and is equipped with 69 inch drivers, which allows a top

speed of about 70 mph. The total weight of engine and tender in working order is 1,076,000 pounds, and the working boiler pressure is 280 pounds. Fuel used is No. 5 fuel oil.

At the end of the operating season in 2008, it was discovered that one of the springs that control the centering device on the lead truck was missing. A new one had to be made, and while this was being done, issues were discovered with the boiler and some of the superheater units. It was also discovered that there had been more damage to the front running gear than had been originally thought. During this time, the experimental European style Lemper exhaust system was removed, and the original Alco equipment re-installed. The Lemper system was supposed to reduce fuel and water use, but the experiment was a total failure. It was necessary to overfire the engine to maintain steam pressure, which resulted in huge clouds of smoke and excessive fuel use. As crew member Lynn Nystrom put it, "That system was designed for one of those itty-bitty European engines, not one of these big ones!"

Since the UP steam crew was primarily occupied with keeping the 844, the other active engine operating through a busy 2009 season, repairs to the 3985 went on as time and manpower became available.

On September 28, the big girl made her dramatic return to operation. On this date, the engine ran from Cheyenne to Speer, which is the junction of the Overland Route with the line to Denver. At Speer, the 3985 locked drawbars with the Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey circus train for the 100 mile run to Denver. This was the longest, heaviest train hauled by a steam locomotive in the 21st century. It consisted of 65 cars, about 6000 tons, and over 6000 feet in length. A handful of UP cars were entrained between the engines and the circus train equipment. A single General Electric GEVO class diesel was behind the steam engine to assist with dynamic braking on the heavy descending grades of the Cheyenne-Denver line.

My daughter, Suzanne, and I followed the train on its run to Denver. It was a special moment for her, since she grew up around steam, and as a teenager, she and the family rode behind two Rocky Mountain Railroad Club trips after restoration of the engine was complete in 1981. She has always adopted the 3985 as her favorite locomotive. When we drove alongside the engine as it was accelerating from a speed restriction, the sound of the exhaust was ear-splitting! That sound alone told us that the Lemper system was history.

Upon arrival in Denver, there was a ceremony featuring the circus ringmaster. A very large crowd gathered to take in the festivities.

On September 30th, the 3985 departed Cheyenne on a two week trip to Sedalia, Missouri. Your reporter followed the train to North Platte, Nebraska.

Chasing a steam train in this area is quite a bit different from the total madness that marks California steam chases. There are way fewer people, and those that are out seem to be a bit saner. You even run into the same people you've met on previous effort. I have made several new friends in this way.

When you are following any of the steam engines in eastern Wyoming/western Nebraska, it is necessary to use the old highway, US 30. There are very few speed restrictions on the railroad, but plenty on US 30 through numerous small towns. It

is quite a trick to keep up with the 3985, which was cruising about 65 mph, and not attract the attention of the local constabulary. You hope that the train will slow down due to signal indications, or whatever.

At Lodgepole, Nebraska, a stop was made to grease the rods and inspect the engine. I talked with steam boss, Steve Lee, and he stated the engine has never run or fired better. I also asked him to confirm or deny the rumor I'd heard that the UP planned a surprise doubleheader featuring the 3985 and the 844 on the circus train.

"No," he said. "We wanted 3985 to be the center of attention, and we didn't need two circuses out there." He went on to say that the 844 on its return from the trip to Portland, Oregon, picked up some bad water at Pocatello, Idaho. This caused the boiler to foam, and it was feared that the foam had been carried over into the dry pipe, superheater units, valves, and cylinders. This could have resulted in a lot of damage. Fortunately, this was not the case, and a good boiler wash will get the 844 back up and running.

Then it was on to North Platte for an on-time arrival. A large crowd of local people turned out to greet the train as it arrived on the business car track. It is always fun to see the expressions on kids when they see a real operating steam engine. They will carry that experience for the rest of their lives.

The next morning, the train departed for Marysville, Kansas. A service stop was scheduled in Kearney, Nebraska, (pronounced "Karney" by the local folks). I was set straight the first time I mispronounced the name, believe me! Since the schedule was somewhat slow between North Platte and Kearney, the train didn't operate as fast as it did the day before. This made it a lot easier to keep up, get ahead, and set up for more photos and videos. At Kearney, the report was the same; the engine was running like a big sewing machine. At this point, we reluctantly broke off the chase, and drove home.

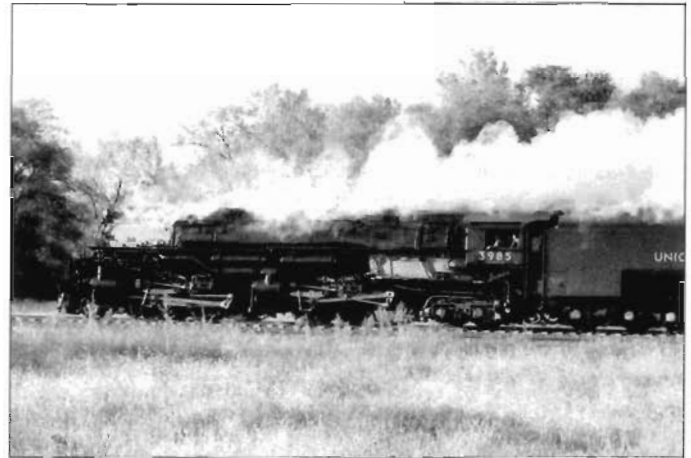
Unfortunately, steam fans will only have two years to enjoy the 3985 in operation. In 2012, the engine runs out of boiler time. At that time, a 1472 day inspection and service will be necessary. As part of this process, it will be necessary to map down to the square inch any interior boiler surface that comes in contact with steam or hot water, ultrasound each square inch for steel thickness, and perform engineering calculations to determine the maximum safe boiler pressure. This information is submitted to the Federal Railroad Administration on what's called a Form 4. While the engine is disassembled the crew will install all new tube sheets at both ends, replace the present Type E superheater with a Type A, and make the necessary throttle changes to accommodate the new superheater.

There has been a changing of the guard at the UP steam program. Long-time head of the program, Steve Lee, has been promoted to a position that oversees not only the steam program, but the entire UP passenger car fleet. Day-to-day oversight of steam operations will be done by Jim Dickens.

Steve told me a long time ago, that running a steam program is as much political as it is the nuts and bolts of the locomotives. In my opinion, Jim is a class act who will be more than capable of handling both roles. Under his leadership, the UP steam program should last into the foreseeable future.



*In the cool morning air, 3985 puts on a show rounding the first curve east of the yard at North Platte. Photo by Brian Black*



*3985 cruises along in the early morning at 62 mph near Brady, Nebraska, en-route to Marysville, Kansas. Photo by Bobbie Black*



*3985 puts on some loud stack talk after a service stop at Lodgepole, Nebraska. Photo by Brian Black*



*3985 races under a highway overpass at almost 70 mph at Pine Bluffs, Wyoming, en-route to North Platte, Nebraska. Photo by Brian Black*



*Passing of the torch. Standing in the gangway is Steve Lee, who will be assuming control of both the steam program, and the Heritage passenger car fleet. The person in the center is unidentified, while the man on the left is Jim Dickens, who will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the steam program. Photo by Suzanne Waddell*



*3985's sister engine, the 3977, is on display in Cody Park at North Platte. It is painted in the gray color scheme that UP applied to some of its steam passenger power. Several parts have been "borrowed" off this engine to keep the 3985 running. Photo by Brian Black*