

WHEEL CLICKS

Pacific Railroad Society Inc.

MARCH 2011

ALHAMBRA LOOKS AT ELEVATED RAIL

The Alhambra City Council on January 24 discussed a California High-Speed Rail Authority proposal for an elevated structure within the I-10 Freeway median. The proposed rail platform through Alhambra would stand at a minimum of 27 feet, but the actual height might be greater, depending on whether it needs to travel over other structures, rail officials said. Alhambra officials believe the rail would be about 75 feet above ground by their estimates. But high-speed rail officials said it's too early to tell how tall the structure will be.

"We have stressed to Alhambra and all San Gabriel Valley cities that the aerial alignment is not final, and at this very early stage in the environmental process there are many details still yet to be pinned down," said Rachel Wall, spokeswoman for the California High-Speed Rail, in an e-mail.

The I-10 route is one of two corridors in this part of the San Gabriel Valley being considered by the authority, Wall said. The other is along the I-60 Freeway. The elevated track would be on the only route option that goes through Alhambra that the authority's staff plans to present to its board in March for approval.

Alhambra council members have gone on record opposing any high-speed rail route on surface streets through the city, but members also oppose the elevated rail concept for the I-10 median. Alhambra "would probably be more suitable for a trench or tunnel than a huge structure that would go up 74 feet above ground and be 50 to 60 feet wide," said Mayor Gary Yamauchi. Yamauchi said high-speed rail in the Valley is still years off. "Unfortunately," he said, "some of us council people may not be around when it's built. But we still have to make the right decision right now."

In urban areas like Alhambra, high-speed trains will travel at speeds of 125 mph or less, rail officials have said. The trains would produce an hourly equivalent sound level of about 77 decibels from a distance of 50 feet. The sound from a high-speed train operating on an aerial structure could be one or two decibels higher than at ground level, officials said.

"I think the city will continue saying, 'We don't like the idea, but we want to continue working with the high-speed rail authority.' That way they're not shut out," said Dan Bednarski, an Alhambra resident, who runs a rail watchdog website at www.alhambra123.org.

[Info. from *Pasadena Star-News*]

LETTER FROM GARY WIDELL, PRS #12

As a member of PRS for more than 56 years who has not been a resident of California for more than 50 years, I really enjoy catching up on things out there through *Wheel Clicks*. As

a railroad professional for more than 50 years, I should have been making contributions to it, and I am sorry that I have not.

There is one correction I should like to make to the January 2011 issue. The second paragraph under "CAR PURCHASE" in the **SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COMMUTER RAIL** article on Page 4 says that energy-absorbing crush zones in passenger cars are now required by the federal government. This is not so.

By way of background, I should mention that I have been a consultant to a passenger car manufacturer, Nippon Sharyo (the company that built the Blue Line cars), for 26 years. I have represented them on the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Passenger Rail Equipment Safety Standards (PRESS) Task Force since its inception in the 1990s. This is the organization that sets standards for the design and construction of rail passenger cars now that the Association of American Railroads no longer does so. We work closely with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), and they are always well-represented at our meetings.

FRA has funded extensive research into Crash Energy Management (CEM), including a series of crash tests which I attended at the Transportation Technology Center, Inc., outside Pueblo, Colorado. Although FRA obviously encourages the use of this technology, there are no laws, regulations, or even industry rules requiring its use.

I smiled when I read that Richard Katz said, "This will help us become the safest commuter railroad in the nation. . ." They have some pretty tough competition on that score. CEM will help, of course, but its benefits can easily be overstated. It will allow an increase of perhaps 5-6 mph in collision speed before a comparable level of damage occurs. It provides limited benefit in collisions at higher speeds.

The passenger rail industry has been opposed to requiring CEM. In general there are two competing philosophies when it comes to passenger train safety – prevent collisions or build the equipment to withstand collisions. The Japanese Shinkansen, for example, follow the former philosophy. The equipment is built to much lower structural standards than ours, but they have employed a sound system safety approach and have never had an accident in almost 46 years of operation, despite passenger volumes that are inconceivable to most of us.

The imposition of Positive Train Control by Congress will reduce (not eliminate) the likelihood of collisions, thus reducing the potential economic benefits of CEM. However, it appears to me that Metrolink's decision to use CEM was based on political rather than economic considerations. That's not the same as saying the decision was wrong. Since Metrolink is a public body, it cannot avoid politics, but there may be no economic justification for the use of CEM.



WHEEL CLICKS

MARCH 2011

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PRS NEWS — ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES

- Mar. 2, 9, PRM Wednesday work party, 1:00 p.m. to 5 p.m.
16, 23, 30 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
- Mar. 4 PRS Board Meeting, 7:00 p.m. at Colonial Kitchen
Fri. Restaurant, 1110 Huntington Dr., San Marino.
Personal dinner in private room at 6:30 p.m.
- Mar. 5, 12, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10:00 a.m.
19, 26 to 4:00 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
Sats.
- Mar. 5, 12, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Saunders
19, 26 Yard, Noakes & Herbert, Commerce. Regular
Sats. days: 5, 19; Extra days: 12, 26. Com. Mtg.: 19.
- Mar. 11 Membership Meeting, 7:30 p.m. **Board Room,**
Fri. **MTA Building.** See details below.
- Mar. 18 Slide Night at Saunders Yard, 7:30 p.m., Noakes
Fri. & Herbert, Commerce. All welcome, bring slides.
- Apr. 1 PRS Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m. See April issue of
Fri. *Wheel Clicks.*
- Apr. 2, 9, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10:00 a.m.
16, 23, 30 to 4:00 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
Sats.

- Apr. 2, 9, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Saunders
16, 23, 30 Yard, Noakes & Herbert, Commerce. Regular
Sats. days: 2, 16; Extra days: 9, 23, 30; Com. Mtg.: 16.
- Apr. 6, 13, PRM Wednesday work party, 1:00 p.m. to 5 p.m.
20, 27 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
- Apr. 8 Membership Meeting, 7:30 p.m. See April issue
Fri. of *Wheel Clicks.*

MEETING PROGRAMS

by **RUSS DAVIES**

March 11: **Once again, we'll be meeting in the MTA Building, see details below.** The program will be **"The best of the PRM Collections, Part Three."** Obviously, we're still going month to month regarding our meeting site. In the mean time we pledge to bring you quality entertainment programs from your **Pacific Railroad Museum's digital archives!** **Be there, bring digital briefs, and sit back and enjoy Metro's big screen!**

April 8: Watch for details in a future *Wheel Clicks.* The program and location to be announced.

MARCH 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, depends 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 and parking. Then follow the signs in the garage to the MTA Building elevators, to your right. **The Board Room is on the Third Floor.**

You can also take any of the **Metro rail lines, or Metro and "MUNI" bus lines, that serve Union Station, and Metro-link.**

MILEPOSTS

by **MARTI ANN DRAPER**

Seventy-five years ago, six young railfans got together in the Melching family living room in Los Angeles to form a club which they came to call the Railroad Boosters. For three-quarters of a century it has existed, made up of 540 excursions; an office in the Pacific Electric Office building; over 50 banquets; a publication which has come out once a month, uninterrupted, for over 50 years; six pullman cars, three chair cars, a chair-baggage combine, a wine tank car, a hi-level coach, a trailer train flat, three baggage cars, a business car, an insulated box car, two cabooses, a switch engine, two narrow-gauge trolley cars, and a pickup truck; a dynamic and up-to-date website; a professional and comprehensive library of railroad history and technology, conveniently housed in the Santa Fe Depot in San Dimas; hundreds of envelope stuffers, application processors, foremen, book shelvees, photograph preservers, railroad electricians, plumbers, bookkeepers, typists, mechanics, welders, toilet cleaners, weed diggers, waiters, and writers, all dedicated and all working without pay; hundreds of photographers, thousands of poppy pickers, and thousands of the best friends you could have in the whole, wide world.

We will be celebrating this phenomenal milestone all year. If you can't come on the excursion on April 2 and 3 over Cajon and Tehachapi Passes to Bakersfield, we will miss you greatly but there is still plenty to do throughout the year. Once again, we will be asking you to do the work to get these events accomplished. We are a 100% volunteer organization and the work we do is done because we believe in what we are building. Thanks to all of you for the last 75 years, and Happy Anniversary to each of you Railroad Boosters!

Contact Marti Ann at prsexcursions@live.com or write to her at Pacific Railroad Society, 210 W. Bonita Avenue, San Dimas CA 91773, if you want to volunteer or start a new activity.

TRAVELING WEST BEHIND SP 4449 by JEFF GELDNER

In October 2009, SP 4449 pulled a special excursion train via the BNSF Railway from Minneapolis to Portland, Oregon. This was a return home for 4449 and her crew after a visit in July to the Train Festival in Owosso, Michigan. I booked the one-way journey, traveling with California Zephyr Railcar Charters of Costa Mesa. Time did not permit me to take the train to the Twin Cities, so my arrival in Minneapolis, Minnesota on Sunday, October 11th, was on an overnight Northwest Airlines flight from San Francisco. Leaving my NWA flight, I soon was driving a rental car to Red Wing, Minnesota for a meeting with SP 4449.

On both Saturday and Sunday, SP 4449 pulled excursion trains over CP Rail's ex-Milwaukee Road line from Minneapolis to Winona and La Crescent and return. Since photo run-bys would not be staged during the Twin Cities to Portland segment, I would enjoy my own photo run-past by waiting for 4449's arrival in Red Wing.

First, the eastbound Amtrak Empire Builder arrived at the historic 1904 depot. Then, at 10:35 a.m., SP 4449 rolled into Red Wing for a service stop under sunny skies. The stop permitted me to take "action" photos both north and south of the station. A good crowd was on hand to greet the Daylight locomotive's arrival in the Mississippi River town, home of the ever-popular Red Wing shoes.

For the afternoon, I stopped at the Linden Hills station of the ex-Twin City Lines Como-Harriet line. Ex-Twin City Rapid Transit nee: ex-Duluth Street Railway car #265, built in 1915, provided a nostalgic ride into the past along the shady right-of-way between Lake Harriet and Lake Calhoun. A stop was made at the car barn so I could tour car 1300, built in 1908, and PCC car 322, built in 1946. Back in the 1970s, I rode in some of the former Twin City Lines' PCCs in Mexico City during my travels south of the border.

Monday, October 12th, I returned to the airport, dropping off the rental car and hopping aboard Metro Transit's light rail line #55. Billed as the Hiawatha Line, yellow, blue and silver articulated cars built by Bombardier operate on a 12-mile route between the airport and the Mall of America to the south and north of the airport to downtown Minneapolis. Portions of the route use former Milwaukee Road right-of-way, while other segments use ex-Twin City Lines' routes. Upon arrival downtown, I walked a few blocks east to the Marriot Residence Inn at the Depot. Many Milwaukee artifacts and photos were on

display in the station, built in 1899. My suite overlooked the old train shed.

As Monday was Columbus Day, most museums were closed but I did enjoy a visit to the Wells Fargo History Museum (Fargo being the banker for whom the North Dakota city was named) and a walk across the Stone Arch Bridge. Built in 1883 by Jim Hill's Great Northern Railway for rail traffic, now pedestrians and bicyclists enjoy the splendid view of the Mississippi River from the landmark structure.

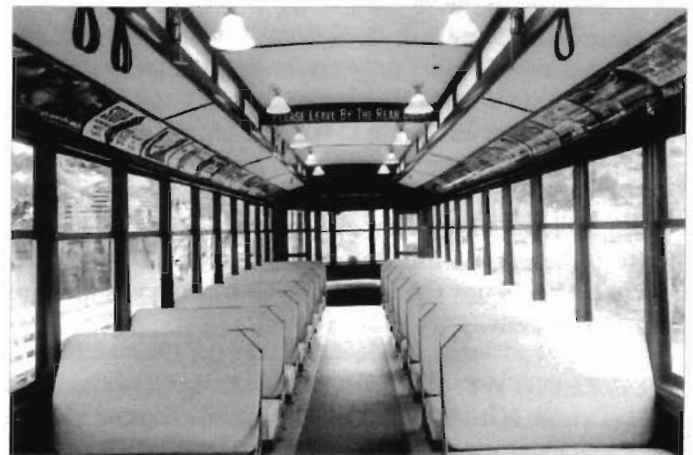
Snow on Monday retreated to sunny skies on Tuesday. After breakfast at the hotel with some of 4449's crew, I headed for Harrison Street yard via taxi, departure point for SP 4449's excursion to Dilworth (Fargo), Minot, Havre, Whitefish, Spokane, and Portland. Former "California Zephyr" cars *Silver Solarium*, *Silver Rapids* and *Silver Lariat* along with ex-PRR *Colonial Crafts* soon arrived along with Amtrak 170, a P-42, from the Midway Amtrak station. By 10 a.m., our consist was complete as follows: SP 4449 Lima Locomotive GS-4 4-8-4 oil burner built in 1941 for the Daylights/DLMX 4219 tender /Amtrak 170 P-42/Gordon Zimmerman baggage car used as a tool car/*Goombay Sunrise* ex-C and O *Blue Ridge Club* sleeper lounge observation/*Minnesota River* ex-Milwaukee sleeper/*Silver Solarium* ex-CZ C B & Q sleeper dome lounge observation/*Silver Rapids* ex-CZ PRR sleeper used in NY-Oakland service from 1948 to 1957/*Silver Lariat* ex-CZ C B & Q dome diner converted from a dome coach/*Colonial Crafts* ex-PRR sleeper lounge (This car and the Silver series cars comprised the *Silver Fleet*, my hotel on wheels for the 8-day trip.)/*Wenonah* ex-C of GA coach repainted and decorated as a Milwaukee coach/Georgia Southwestern 3101 ex-US Army coach converted to a diner lounge/*Portland* NYC 3 former New York Central heavyweight open platform business car/*Caritas* former Frisco sleeper *Pierre La Clede* sleeper converted to open platform car with dining lounge space added/MKT 403 former heavyweight Missouri-Kansas-Texas business car once used by President Harry Truman/800682 ex-Milwaukee *Super Dome* lounge car built for the *Hiawatha* trains/*Cedar Rapids* ex-Milwaukee Skytop lounge car built for the *Hiawatha* trains.

My assigned roomette was listed as #2 on the boarding pass but my name was above the door to #5 in *Silver Rapids*. The toilets in the room had been removed but there was now a toilet and shower just down the hall. All meals were served in the *Silver Lariat*. A buffet breakfast was available each morning while lunch and dinner were served at the table, draped with CZ replica tablecloths on *Silver Lariat* logo china. Printed menus provided listing the set menu of the day. The food was very good, with entrees ranging from prime rib to lamb. All meals were announced via dinner chimes. Beer, wine and cocktails were included and served upon request. Gatherings for cocktails in the evenings occurred in both the *Silver Solarium* and *Colonial Crafts*.

With the highball at 10:40 a.m., our train headed west to Dilworth, just shy of Fargo, North Dakota. For the first 40 miles, we met a number of Northstar commuter trains on test runs. Service to Big Lake was to begin November 15th with an extension planned for St. Cloud later. Our destination at Dilworth was in a rail yard of this small Minnesota town just across the North Dakota border. Still, large crowds came to



*SP 4449 eastbound at Red Wing, Minnesota.
All photographs are by Jeff Geldner on the October 2009 trip.*



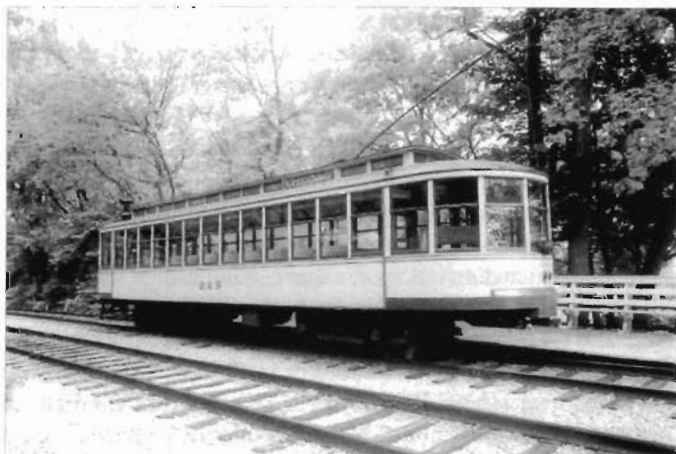
Interior view of ex-Twin City Rapid Transit street car.



Milwaukee Road Super Dome lounge car at Red Wing, Minnesota.



Minneapolis Metro Transit light-rail cars on the Hiawatha Line at Bloomington, Minnesota.



Ex-Twin City Rapid Transit ex-Duluth Street Railways 265 built in 1915 on the former Twin City Lines ex-Como-Harriet line.



Interior view of dome dining area in ex-CZ CB & Q Silver Lariat.



View from the dome of Silver Lariat between Glacier Park (east) and Essex, Montana.



Ex-CZ CB & Q Silver Solarium sleeper dome lounge observation at Glasgow, Montana.



Izaak Walton Inn at Essex, Montana, built by the Great Northern Railway, and also ex-Santa Fe F45 1910 painted in GN livery and rebuilt for guest accommodations.



Ex-CZ CB & Q Silver Lariat at Glasgow, Montana.



Milwaukee Road Cedar Rapids Sky-Top Observation lounge car at Minot, North Dakota.



Ex-PRR Colonial Crafts sleeper lounge car at Glasgow, Montana.

watch our arrival and purchase 4449 souvenirs. Day riders left us, so during the evenings we were a smaller group. Most of my fellow overnight passengers were traveling with the *Silver Fleet* on a round-trip from the Bay Area.

Wednesday, October 14th, the run to Minot first involved a stop at the historic Fargo Depot to pick up the day riders. The weather soon turned colder with light snow. Despite this, prior to making a service stop in Grand Forks, a red mustang convertible with the top down was chasing our special, until the North Dakota Highway Patrol pulled the driver over for speeding.

Thursday was a lay-over day in Minot. We had ample time for exploring the historic Soo Line Depot museum, the Railroad Museum of Minot and the Scandinavian Heritage Park. The westbound *Empire Builder* arrived in Minot 2½ hours off the advertised. It is the only time during our trip when the Amtrak varnish ran late.

Friday SP 4449 was off and running to Havre, Montana. A service stop and meet with the *Empire Builder* were staged beside the historic red brick Williston station. GN 3059, a 2-8-2 steam locomotive, is located just up hill from the depot here. Sunny skies returned with our entry into Montana. Another service stop was made in Glasgow, giving passengers the opportunity to photograph the train under sunny skies in Big Sky Country. Arrival in Havre beside the GN 4-8-4 #2575 was on time at 5 p.m. The Havre Railroad Museum stayed open late so passengers could enjoy viewing all of the memorabilia.

Saturday our special continued west to Whitefish. A service stop was made in Cut Bank, permitting a brief detraining for passengers beside the Amtrak depot. We highballed past Glacier Park station but did make a stop at Essex by the landmark Izaak Walton Inn, built by the Great Northern in 1939. GN 441, located next to the Inn, is a former diesel locomotive painted in Big Sky Blue colors. It has now been converted to a hotel room, complete with skylights. Upon our arrival at the Tudor-style depot at Whitefish, completed in 1927, the railroad museum was opened for our enjoyment. For those seeking a taste of Montana microbrews, the nearby Great Northern Brewing Company had several offerings, including Glacier Park Centennial Ale.

Sunday was another layover day. *Silver Fleet* guests were treated to a tour of Glacier National Park, including a visit to the Lake McDonald Lodge, once operated by the Great Northern Ry.

Monday we headed past lovely Whitefish Lake and through the 7-mile-long Flathead Tunnel. Beside the scenic Kootenai River we encountered a train chaser in a speed boat. As we were ahead of schedule, at Sandpoint, Idaho we were put in the hole for a meet with four freights. Once we had the green signal again, we crossed Lake Pend Orielle, where we spotted at least one boater taking a photo of our special. The local TV news greeted our arrival at the 1890 Spokane station, built for the Northern Pacific Railway. After some servicing of 4449 and the passenger cars, we backed several miles to the yard for the night.

The final day of the westbound journey started quite foggy for our crossing of the impressive BNSF bridge, just outside of downtown Spokane. Skies turned sunny again for our run through arid eastern Washington. One passenger detrained at Pasco while SP 4449 was serviced. We then crossed the Snake River and soon began the scenic run along the Columbia River. Another service stop was made at Wishram. All too soon we

passed the depot at Vancouver, crossed the river and the state line for our arrival at Portland Union Station. Over the next several days the private cars were dispersed to the *Empire Builder* and *Coast Starlight*. My own adventures would continue, riding new rail mileage on WES in Portland and on the Link light-rail and the streetcar in Seattle. My return to California was another delightful trip on the *Coast Starlight*, enjoying the ambience of the *Pacific Parlour Car*. But the highlight of my vacation was the trip back in time, behind SP 4449.

PASSENGER TRAIN UPDATES by CHARLES VARNES AMTRAK

Historical On-Time Performance

The January 2011 historical on-time performance percentages for selected routes were: *Sunset Limited*, 80.8; *Texas Eagle*, 82.3; *Southwest Chief*, 72.6; *California Zephyr*, 67.7; *Empire Builder*, 43.8; *Coast Starlight*, 67.7; *City of New Orleans*, 83.9; *Pacific Surfliner*, 79.7; *San Joaquin*, 90.6; *Capitol Corridor*, 96.7; *Amtrak Cascades*, 62.3; *Michigan Services*, 50.0; *Hathaway*, 50.0; *Missouri River Runner*, 90.3; *Acela Express*, 64.9; *Northeast Regional*, 68.4.

Locomotive Fires

Amtrak P42 locomotive suffered several fires recently.

Jan. 22, 2011. Eastbound *Empire Builder* (Portland section) near Rock Island Dam, Washington.

Jan. 9, 2011. Eastbound *Lake Shore Limited* east of Schenectady, N.Y.

Dec. 15, 2010. Eastbound *Lake Shore Limited* at Elyria, Ohio.

Winter Weather Woes

Severe weather in January and early February this year resulted in delays and cancellations of the Chicago-Seattle *Empire Builder*.

Storms off the Pacific Ocean caused mudslides along the BNSF Scenic Subdivision in Washington disrupting *Cascades* trains, and the Seattle section of the *Empire Builder*, for several 48-hour periods. Following a mudslide the BNSF does not permit the operation of passenger trains through the area for 48 hours.

On Feb. 2 severe weather in the Midwest caused the cancellation of Illinois, Hathaway, and Michigan service trains, as well as the *Southwest Chief*, *California Zephyr*, *Empire Builder*, *Cardinal*, and *City of New Orleans*.

LONG DISTANCE TRAINS

Coast Starlight

The *Coast Starlight* which departed from Seattle on Feb. 7, had Norfolk Southern 9834 for its leading unit. The *Starlight* normally runs with two locomotives. In the event that an Amtrak locomotive fails en route or is otherwise unavailable Amtrak arranges for a locomotive from the railroad over which the train operates, in this case the BNSF. On this day no BNSF locomotive was available so the railroad provided the only available locomotive the NS 9834.

WESTERN CORRIDORS

Cascades

Beginning on Jan. 31 Wi-Fi service became available on all Amtrak *Cascades* trains between Vancouver, British Columbia, and Eugene, Oregon. The Wi-Fi service, provided jointly by

Amtrak and the Washington State Department of Transportation, will remain free of charge during the introductory period, after which the policy will be reviewed based on customer demand and system performance. Wi-Fi service has been the most requested amenity by Amtrak Cascades passengers.

NORTHEAST CORRIDOR

Keystone Service

Starting Jan. 24 Amtrak *Keystone* Service (Harrisburg – Philadelphia – New York) added Quiet Car® service.

The coach adjacent to the locomotive is typically designated as the Quiet Car. Seating in the Quiet Car is available on a first-come, first-served basis, and cannot be reserved.

Passengers riding in quiet cars are requested to converse in a low voice, not to use devices that emit sounds without headphones and the volume must be low enough so that the audio from headphones/earpieces cannot be heard by neighboring passengers.

The Amtrak Quiet Car first started in 1999 on the *Northeast Corridor* between Philadelphia and Washington. Today the Quiet Car has expanded to include *Acela Express* and *Northeast Regional* service between Washington and Boston, as well as the *Hathaway Service* between Chicago and Milwaukee.

DEPOT DOINGS

Denver, Colo. On Feb. Amtrak temporarily relocated from the historic Denver Union Station to 1800 21st St., at the intersection of 21st St. and Wewatta St., near Coors Field in Downtown Denver's Prospect Neighborhood. The relocation is expected to last for at least three years and is necessitated by the \$484 million redevelopment of the immediate area around Union Station, which will become a new transit hub for the Regional Transportation District. RTD's project will bring eight commuter-rail tracks into Union Station, one of which Amtrak will use when the project is finished. The redevelopment also includes a new light-rail platform and an underground regional bus facility.

[Info. from Ken Ruben, Ed Von Nordeck]

CALTRAIN NEWS

by MIKE GONDRO

On January 17, Caltrain ran its annual Martin Luther King special train between San Jose and San Francisco. The train was the 26th annual special run to honor the civil rights leader. The ten-car train, carrying nearly 1500 passengers, left San Jose Diridon station at 9:30 a.m. and made stops at Sunnyvale, Palo Alto, and San Mateo, arriving in San Francisco around 19:45 a.m. As always, special tickets were required to ride the train, and because no southbound special was run, those tickets were honored on regular southbound Caltrain trips.

Having already raised fares and reduced service from 98 weekday trains to 86, Caltrain is now beginning its current budget process to try and deal with a \$30 million deficit. Among its options being considered are reducing service to 48 weekday trains, which would operate only during peak commute times. Elimination of weekend and Gilroy service, as well as suspension of service to seven stations, is also being considered.

In spite of its money problems, Caltrain remains very popular, and still carries around 40,000 riders per weekday. Many of these people, along with over 200 business leaders, are organizing to find ways to save existing Caltrain service. A

Save Caltrain Summit was held at Stanford University on January 21 to identify needs and possible solutions to Caltrain's funding crisis, including the need for a dedicated funding source. Another summit was held at Caltrain headquarters in San Carlos on January 29, and a number of public hearings are scheduled at various locations between San Francisco and Gilroy during February.

The lack of a dedicated funding source is at the heart of Caltrain's financial problems. They rely on contributions from San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Clara counties to operate. But because of the recession, those counties have their own money problems and are drastically reducing the amount they contribute to Caltrain.

2011 brought about changes in how tickets are sold on Caltrain. Paper tickets are no longer sold for 8-ride and monthly tickets. The electronic fare pay system, Clipper, is now the only way to purchase those tickets. Paper tickets are still available for single ride trips.

AAR FEBRUARY STORED FREIGHT CARS REPORT

by CHARLES VARNES

The Association of American Railroads reported that as of February 1, 2011, 318,773 freight cars — 20.9% of the total fleet — were in storage, an increase of 2,502 cars from January 1, 2011.

The peak number of cars in storage was July 1, 2009, when 502,853 cars met the AAR's definition. Today, there are 184,080 fewer cars in storage. During this period, the freight car fleet (of cars with loads in 2005 or later) has declined from a peak of 1.579 million cars in July 2009 to 1.522 million cars today. This means that of the 184,080 fewer cars in storage, a net of about 127,000 cars are back in revenue service, while approximately 57,000 have been scrapped.

AAR defines a freight car is "in storage" if it has had a loaded revenue move since 2005, but not in the past 60 days. Rail cars are stored when they are not needed due to lack of demand; they come out of storage when demand improves. Figures are for the entire North American rail freight car fleet and include rail cars owned by railroads, leasing companies, shippers, and others. The total freight car fleet changes from month to month as new cars are added and old cars are scrapped. [Info. from AAR Rail Time Indicators]

URBAN RAIL TRANSIT

LOS ANGELES METRO RAIL RIDERSHIP

	Red Line	Blue Line	Green Line	Gold Line
December 2011				
Weekday Ave.	133,099	71,038	35,259	30,804
Saturday Ave.	83,318	45,028	19,836	19,675
Sunday Ave.	66,532	35,995	14,718	16,834
Monthly Total	3,643,890	1,948,929	944,058	851,680

[Info. From Metro via Ken Ruben]

PORTLAND, OREGON

PORTLAND'S NEW MAX BRIDGE

Construction on Portland's first new Willamette River bridge in 35 years has a green light. When the so-called Caruthers Bridge is finished, it will be the nation's largest no-automobile span. On December 8, TriMet's board of directors unanimously

approved a \$127 million contract to start building the bridge for the Portland-to-Milwaukie light-rail line. Only trains, buses, streetcars, pedestrians and bicyclists will be able to use the 1,720-foot bridge, the centerpiece of the proposed 7.3-mile MAX Orange Line, when it opens in September 2015.

TriMet is still scratching to find an additional \$35 million to cover its share of the most expensive transit project it has ever undertaken. The new line is expected to cost about \$1.5 billion.

Union members testified that TriMet shouldn't move forward at the same time it is cutting health care benefits and freezing wages. Cameron Johnson, a 16-year-old member of OPAL Bus Riders Unite, told the board that the money would be better spent on restoring service cuts that have made it harder for him and others to rely on public transportation.

Various business and community leaders testified in support of the new line, running from the south end of the Portland State University campus through South Waterfront, over the river, through Southeast Portland and south near McLoughlin Boulevard to downtown Milwaukie. The project is expected to create 14,000 construction jobs and ultimately relieve traffic congestion along the McLoughlin corridor.

The board also approved \$219 million to buy rights of way between Portland and Milwaukie, which is expected to displace 12 residences and 65 businesses. According to the project's final environmental impact study, up to 1,500 people are expected to be displaced.

With its sharp angles and elegant towers, the new four-pier, cable-stayed bridge is expected to be an iconic answer to the drab concrete of the nearby Marquam Bridge. "We're building a bridge for the city of bridges that will be attractive and fit into the skyline in the area it serves," said TriMet spokeswoman Mary Petsch, adding that there isn't an official name for the bridge yet. The unofficial moniker comes from nearby Caruthers Street.

In the end, the board authorized the sale of \$724 million worth of bonds for the Orange Line, including \$63 million in payroll tax-backed revenue bonds.

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

LAKE OSWEGO STREETCAR

The Lake Oswego streetcar was, once upon a time, a project worth celebrating as a wise and timely investment. In 1988, area transportation leaders had the foresight to buy the Willamette Shore trolley line, a seven-mile right-of-way, for \$1.2 million. That prime real estate is now worth \$80 million to \$100 million in the bargaining over federal funding for a streetcar running between Lake Oswego and downtown Portland.

During a grueling recession, there's a case to be made against the big bucks needed for any long-term transportation project. But the streetcar is the environmental alternative when a community is wrestling with carbon footprints, traffic congestion and our addiction to OPEC

"To get federal funding, you have to do an environmental impact statement," notes Doug Oblatz, who heads the project team. "The federal government dictates the process." In exchange for this needlessly complex review, the feds pick up 60 percent of the project cost, which has been pegged in the vicinity of \$458 million. The figure is in 2017 dollars. Oblatz estimates the real cost of the project to top off at \$241 million, with local

partnering agencies required to pay somewhere between \$50 million to \$80 million.

In a recession, 22 years removed from that sweetheart purchase of the right-of-way, that might not sound like a bargain, but it's the real number we should be arguing about. One of them, anyway. Another is the cost of the draft EIS, a 543-page report that cost – thanks to the feds – \$4.3 million to produce.

Let's put that price tag in perspective. If you paid a reasonably bright engineer \$75 an hour and paid for 3,000 hours of work through traffic patterns, noise issues, job creation and design options, the tab would be \$225,000. The draft EIS cost 19 times that amount, and no one even blinks. "It does seem like a lot of money," said Bridget Wiegart, a project manager at Metro, "but it's fairly typical for this kind of process."

Once upon a time, the streetcar was low tech, low overhead, low design and construction costs, and worth celebrating. "A beautiful, streamlines process," Oblatz says. Then the feds showed up. And the train wreck began.

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

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COMMUTER RAIL RIDERSHIP

Metrolink weekday, systemwide, average trips during November 2010 were 39,735, which was essentially the same as the previous month of 39,605. Trips during December 2010 were 35,669, which was a 10 percent decrease from the previous month of 39,735. Trips during December 2010 was a decrease of 5 percent from December 2009.

Average daily Metrolink passholders riding on Amtrak was 1,678 during December 2010, which was a 13 percent decrease from 1,936 during November 2010. Trips during December 2010 was a 12 percent decrease from December 2009.

[Info. from Metrolink via Charles Varnes]

HIGH-SPEED RAIL TO BUY UNION STATION

California's High-Speed Rail Authority announced January 19 that it is earmarking more than \$30 million for land acquisition and related projects in the Los Angeles area, much of it expected to go toward buying Los Angeles Union Station. The historic rail depot, which would be jointly purchased with the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, is slated to be a major stop on the 800-mile statewide bullet train system. Officials want control of the 38-acre site so they can make improvements needed to handle an expected surge in passenger traffic from a proposed Westside subway extension and a new downtown rail connection, as well as high-speed rail. About 50,000 people a day use Union Station now, according to the MTA.

When and if funding will be available to begin high-speed service between the Bay Area and Southern California remains uncertain. The price tag for Union Station is confidential, but the bulk of the money is expected to come from the MTA. Negotiations with private equity firm TPG Capital, which is buying the property from Colorado-based ProLogis, are winding up. A deal could be concluded by late February, said Roger Moliere, MTA's chief of property management.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]