

WHEEL CLICKS

Pacific Railroad Society Inc.

MAY 2009

ROUGH ROAD AHEAD FOR MASS TRANSIT

The dramatic spike in gas prices that began in 2005 sent Americans flocking to trains and buses, a trend that appears to have held up even as gas prices have dipped. But 2009 could be a year of crisis for the agencies that run them – a time of more riders but much less money. If service cuts or increased fares become widespread, transit operators around the country fear they will drive away the new converts they picked up when gas prices were high.

According to the American Public Transportation Assn., (APTA) the third quarter of 2008 saw the largest increase in ridership in a quarter-century. Though national ridership numbers are not available for the final quarter of last year – when gas prices sank most dramatically – some agencies, like the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority, which operates the Tri-Rail, continue to report steady or increased ridership.

In Cleveland, ridership increased for the sixth consecutive year in 2008. But like every major public transit system in the country, Cleveland's system relies on both fares and tax revenue for funding – and county sales taxes, a key component of the budget, have plummeted in the stalled economy, said Joe Calabrese, chief executive of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority.

In the last 13 months, Cleveland riders have seen their fares raised twice and services cut by 8 percent. Calabrese said another fare increase and 6 percent service cut may be necessary this year. The shrinking tax revenues are particularly painful to transit systems that continue to be hammered by high fuel costs. Many of them, Calabrese said, are still locked in to high-price fuel contracts that they thought were good bargains when gas was \$4 per gallon.

The situation is particularly dire in California, where Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, facing a \$41-billion state budget shortfall, has proposed eliminating grants to local transit agencies for the current fiscal year and the next – a move that would save \$559 million, according to H.D. Palmer, spokesman for the state Department of Finance.

In San Francisco, that possibility has transit officials considering cuts to the Bay Area Rapid Transit trains – even though they were ripping out seats last year to cram in record numbers of riders.

In Los Angeles, the transit system has avoided major service cuts, said Marc Littman, an MTA spokesman. But the elimination of the state subsidy – which provides nearly 16 percent of the MTA operating budget – along with shrinking sales-tax revenue, means tough choices lay ahead.

At their board meeting on Jan. 22, MTA board members discussed cutting 160,000 hours of bus service this year or next from the current 7.5 million hours a year. The decision was

delayed for at least a month as several board members, including Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, indicated they were in no mood to cut costs so soon after voters approved Measure R, the half-cent sales tax intended to fund a number of public transportation projects.

Those projects, which include the so-called Subway to the Sea, would require a mix of local, state and federal funding to be realized. With limited state and federal funding, those projects could be postponed, Littman said.

Fare increases cannot be used to make up the difference – at least for a while. The L.A. ballot measure banned hikes in regular fares until 2010, and forbids increases for seniors, students and the disabled until 2013. “We’re in the situation where the public gave us their vote of confidence, saying, ‘Hey, we want to see more service out there, not less – and we want to keep the fares low,’” Littman said.

The federal stimulus package, as currently proposed, could provide money for sleeker trains and buses, and for expanded service. But many agencies don’t have the money to run the systems they have.

APTA, which lobbies on behalf of local transit agencies in Washington, is hoping Congress will add \$2.5 billion for operating expenses to the stimulus bill. In addition to general skepticism about the stimulus strategy, the idea of using that money to fund transit operating costs may be a particularly hard sell politically. Proponents argue that operating subsidies would help the economy by preempting transit layoffs. But some concede that it would only temporarily address the core problem, which is the decline in local tax collections.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times* via Ken Ruben]

HISTORIC UP SMOKESTACK PRESERVED

Demolition of the half-century old Union Pacific Albina, Oregon, freight house began in March. The project is estimated to cost \$238,000 and take about four months. Although the building is being demolished, its square, brick smokestack bearing the name Union Pacific has been preserved and is illuminated at night.

In 2009, the Portland Historic Landmark Commission listed the smokestack as among the most threatened historic landmarks.

The three-acre building was built in the era when the railroads handled less-than-carload freight. When the UP exited the LCL freight business the freight house fell into disuse. Because the structure had outlived its usefulness, its great size, the expense of bringing it up to code and the need to use its site for other purposes the building is being demolished. In the future the building's site may be used for tractor-trailer parking, additional yard tracks, or other new buildings.

[Info. from *The Oregonian* via Charles Varnes]



WHEEL CLICKS

MAY 2009

VOLUME 73, NO. 2

EDITOR DICK FINLEY
 TECHNICAL EDITOR CHARLES VARNES
 MAILER JOHN STALLKAMP

Opinions expressed in unsigned articles are those of the editorial board, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Society, its officers or directors. Opinions in signed articles are those of the author only. All rights reserved. ISSN: 0043-4744. ©2009 BY PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY, INC.

Published monthly by PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY, INC. The Society is a California chartered, nonprofit organization of those who share an interest in railroad operations, travel and history. Address and telephone are the same as for Pacific Railroad Museum.

PARTICIPATING MEMBER \$35.00 per year
 SUSTAINING MEMBER \$50.00 per year
 CORPORATE MEMBER \$100.00 per year
 LIFE MEMBER \$500.00

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.

MUSEUM COMMITTEE CHAIR LINDSAY SMITH
 EXCURSION DIRECTOR VACANT

WEBMASTER RUSSELL HOMAN
 INTERNET Home Page: <http://www.pacificrailroadsociety.org>

BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY, INC.
 PRESIDENT WILL WALTERS
 VICE-PRESIDENT MARTI ANN DRAPER
 SECRETARY BILL SMITH
 TREASURER NICK TEEL
 DIRECTOR (2008-2011) DAVE ABBOTT
 DIRECTOR (2009-2011) VIRGINIA GRUPP
 DIRECTOR (2009-2012) DAVID HOUSH
 DIRECTOR (2009-2012) KEN RUBEN
 DIRECTOR (2009-2010) LINDSAY SMITH

PRS NEWS — ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

May 1 Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Valencia Room, Joslyn
 Fri. Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
 May 2, 9, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10:00 a.m. to
 16, 23, 30 4 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
 Sats. Committee meeting: May 23.
 May 2, 9, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Saunders
 16, 23, 30 Yard, Commerce. Regular Day: 2, 16; Extra day:
 Sats. 9, 23, 30. Committee meeting: 16.
 May 8 Membership Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Alhambra Room,
 Fri. Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
 June 5 Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Saunders Yard, Noakes
 Fri. & Herbert Sts., Commerce.
 June 6, 13, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10:00 a.m. to
 20, 27 4 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
 Sats. Committee meeting: June 27.
 June 6, 13, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Saunders
 20, 27 Yard, Commerce. Regular Day: 6, 20; Extra day:
 Sats. 13, 27. Committee meeting: 20.
 June 12 Membership Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Alhambra Room,

Fri. Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.

MEETING PROGRAMS

by RUSS DAVIES

May 8: **Traction Night, featuring the Pacific Electric!** This evening we'll see two carousels of PE slides, still in the same slots as we received them at your Museum. One is from the **Bill Volkmer Collection**, the other from the collection of, and mostly taken by, **the late Ted Damon**. Many of the images from both collections have never been published, and will be new to you. **Be there, and bring slide briefs!**

June 12: **See some of the treasures from your Museum!** This will be a **digital** presentation of slides, photographs, and artifacts. We've made great strides in our archiving, and will share some of the fruits. **Be there, and bring digital briefs!**

ROBERT B. PETERSEN

Born in Hermosa Beach on August 14, 1927, Bob passed away on February 7, 2009. He belonged to several rail organizations and was one of the early members of the Railroad Boosters, today known as the Pacific Railroad Society. His enthusiasm for preservation of rail equipment included the Orange Empire Railway Museum of Perris, Calif., and the Market Street Railway's restoration and return of older street cars to the streets of San Francisco. He enjoyed Lionel trains and as such was a member of the Toy Train Operating Society. Interment is at Pacific Crest Cemetery, Redondo Beach, California.

REGIONAL CONNECTOR PROJECT

by JACK WHITMEYER

The Railway Club of Southern California luncheon program on March 17 was given by Metro Project Manager Dolores Roybal Saltarelli, who presented a review of studies concerning the proposed extension of the Blue Line northeast to a connection with the Gold Line south of Los Angeles Union Depot.

Two very similar routes were displayed, one remaining in subway mode and under Bunker Hill to a surface connection with the Gold Line's new East Los Angeles segment at 1st and Alameda Streets. The alternate proposal would extend north from the Blue Line and surface on 1st Street, proceeding easterly to Spring Street, where the double tracks would split and turn north on either side of City Hall to reach Temple Street (southbound track on Spring Street and northbound track on Main Street), thence along Temple to a connection with the Gold Line on Alameda Street.

The resulting connection between the Blue and Gold Lines will provide a direct through ride to Union Station, eliminating the present need to transfer to the Red Line Subway to reach Union Station. The Blue Line from Long Beach will become a through line terminating at Union Station, providing a cross platform connection to the Gold Line for Pasadena and beyond.

This proposed junction in the vicinity of 1st and Alameda Streets, if approved, will also provide for a new crosstown east-west route using both East Los Angeles and Exposition Lines, presently under construction.

While all of this remains in the formulative stage, the study continues. Construction starting date will depend on funding. It is interesting to note that with this connector, all of the four different classes of light rail cars will be able to interchange by rail.

CALTRAIN NEWSby **MIKE GONDON**

Caltrain will receive \$12.2 million from the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) to help fund improvements at the Santa Clara and San Jose Diridon stations, as well as for other capital planning projects.

The Santa Clara station is next in line for rebuilding to eliminate the "hold out" rule. The rebuilt station will feature separate "outside" boarding platforms with a connecting pedestrian tunnel. When completed, Altamont Commuter Express (ACE) trains will be accommodated and passengers transferring to and from Caltrain will no longer have to ride all the way into San Jose. At San Jose, two new fully-equipped platforms and four new tracks will be added and connected to the existing pedestrian tunnel that connects to the station and VTA light rail trains.

The first step in the rebuilding project was the demolition of the old maintenance facility in March. The project is scheduled for completion in 2011.

To the delight of every Caltrain conductor, Caltrain recently expanded its mobility device policy to include Electric Personal Assistive Mobility Devices, better known as Segways. The Segways will be loaded and off-loaded in the same manner as wheelchairs, and passengers wishing to bring a Segway aboard Caltrain will need to obtain a permit.

Between March 18 and April 13, Caltrain conducted a rail grinding project of the entire line. The grinding took place at night between 10:00 p.m. and 4:30 a.m. Because of the noise to surrounding neighborhoods at that hour, the contractor was required to keep noise levels at 85 decibels or lower at a distance of 25 feet from the tracks.

A museum honoring the history of Burlingame and Hillsborough opened last fall at the Burlingame station. Though only open on Sundays between 1:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m., the museum contains 125,000 pieces in its collection and admission is free.

SACTO REGION TRANSITby **TOM NELSON**

The Sacramento Business Journal in January 2009, reported that a new corporate structure replaced Siemens Transportation Systems Inc.'s mobility division in Sacramento. This combines the manufacturer's units that develop rail and road operating systems, airport logistics, postal automation, and mass transit rail cars. Management of the division was formally taken over on Oct. 1, 2008, by Sacramento.

On Feb. 2, '09, the new 529-foot-long Watt Ave. light rail bridge opened for service at Folsom Blvd., ending Regional Transit crossing delays and improving safety. The temporary single track was removed. The joint venture between Sacto. County Dept. of Transp. and RT was an example of teamwork.

Early in 2009, construction began to improve the Alkali Flat/La Valentina LRT Station Beautification, scheduled for completion in May. It includes ornamental street lights, platform lighting, and repainting metal structures and benches. The five month job would require the station to remain open during the work.

In Feb. '09, a \$4 million project was scheduled by Sacramento City to begin on the K St. Streetscape project along the 700 block and the St. Rose of Lima Park LRT station. The

station is being moved to the east side of 7th Street between K and L. Although pedestrian access may be detoured, the St. Rose of Lima Park station will remain open.

An appropriation of \$45 million is being asked by Sacto for the S. Sacto Corridor Phase 2 LRT Extension project. This 4.3-mile line is planned to continue trackage from Meadowview Road to Cosumnes River College and will link the rapidly growing S. Sacto corridor with downtown Sacto., as well as with two Los Rios Community Colleges totaling 36,000 students. Additionally, there will be four new light rail transit stations, 2,700 park-and-ride spaces and a major transit center at the Cosumnes River College Station near Highway U.S. 99.

The Sacto Region is requesting partial funding for three bus maintenance facilities and bus replacements. RT has purchased a site for a second bus maint. facility to add capacity for 75 to 100 buses, a CNG fueling system, and a bus wash.

[Info. from *Sacto. Busin. Journal*, *Sacto Regional Transit* (2), and *Sacto. Metro Chamber* via Bob Blymyer]

STIMULUS FUNDS AND HIGH-SPEED RAIL

Metro moved swiftly to secure up to \$950 million of stimulus funding to preserve and create jobs for Los Angeles County under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, recently signed by the president. The Metro Board called for a 135-day deadline for submitting all highway and transit projects which began March 3.

President Barack Obama, on April 16, outlined plans for a high-speed rail network he said would change the way Americans travel. Obama was careful to point out that his plan was only a down payment on an ambitious plan that, if realized, could connect Chicago and St. Louis, Orlando and Miami, Portland and Seattle, and dozens of other metropolitan areas the country with high-speed trains.

There is no guarantee that the nation has the political will – Congress has often tried to reduce support for Amtrak – or the hundreds of billions of dollars and decades it would take to build a comprehensive fast rail system.

The United States trails other developed countries in developing high-speed rail. The Spanish can travel the 386 miles from Madrid to Barcelona at speeds averaging almost 150 mph. Japan's Shinkansen links its major cities at speeds averaging 180 mph, and France's TGV train averages about 133 mph in carrying passengers from Paris to Lyon.

The only U.S. rail service that meets the Federal Railroad Administration's 110 mph threshold to qualify as high-speed rail is Amtrak's nine-year-old Acela Express route connecting Boston to Washington, D.C.

Initially, regional transportation offices will compete for the \$8 billion included in the \$787 billion economic stimulus spending package for high-speed rail, bolstered by \$1 billion a year for five years requested in the federal budget.

California officials who hope to build a rail line that would whisk passengers between Los Angeles and San Francisco in 2 hours and 40 minutes welcomed Obama's enthusiasm for high-speed rail. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger declared that California was "far ahead of any other high-speed rail system in the nation" and cited voter approval of nearly \$10 billion of bonds for the

project.

Although a long-discussed high-speed rail line from Las Vegas to Anaheim was not included among those likely to receive funding, supporters said they would seek a share of the federal money to advance the project.

[Info. from *Pasadena Stat-News* and *Los Angeles Times*]

U.S. TRANSIT USE INCREASE IN 2008

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority had 486 million riders in 2008 - not quite as much as the transit agency had with 494 million riders in fiscal year 2006-07. In July 2007, some fares were increased, and bus ridership fell as a result. Agency officials were encouraged that rail ridership increased as gas prices rose last year. "We tended to attract more riders on the rail side when gas was \$4.50 per gallon, and the riders stuck around even when gas prices fell," said Marc Littman, an MTA spokesman. "The rail is more competitive with the auto because it's faster and the fares are still cheap."

Officials at most agencies are encouraged that even with ridership slipping since last summer's peak gas prices, it was still higher in late 2008 than in last 2007 - an indication that some riders might have given up their cars for transit.

The last time Americans took as many transit rides as they did last year was in 1957. The all-time high for ridership was set in 1946 with 23.5 billion rides. Now, more than ever, the value of public transportation is evident, and the public has clearly demonstrated that they want and need more public transit services," said William Millar, APTA's president, in a statement.

Financially, many transit agencies are struggling. Orange County Transportation Authority raised fares about 25% in January and cut 50,000 hours of bus service on March 9 because of declining sales tax revenue and cuts in state funding by the Legislature. Metrolink is likely to raise fares this summer, and the MTA is also contemplating serious bus service cuts because of the loss of state money.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

S. CALIF. COMMUTER RAIL

Metrolink weekday, systemwide, average trips during February 2009 were 43,313, which was a decrease from the previous month of 675 or about 2 percent. Average daily Metrolink monthly passholders on Amtrak were 1,965, which was an increase from the previous month of 84 or less than 1 percent.

Metrolink weekday, systemwide, total schedule adherence (less than 5 minutes delay) was 93 percent.

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

In March, Metrolink participated in a public hearing convened by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) as a follow-up to the September 12, 2008, train collision in Chatsworth. Given Metrolink's historic focus on safety innovation, many of their enhanced safety measures were described at the nationally significant hearing.

The NTSB scheduled the March 3 and 4 open forum to receive testimony on train-operation safety issues to supplement facts discovered during the on-scene and subsequent follow-up investigation of the Chatsworth collision.

Metrolink sent a number of subject-matter experts to the hearing in Washington, D.C. to provide testimony on issues related to their train operations, as well as to share information on the numerous forward-looking safety enhancements the agency has undertaken since September 12. In addition to Metrolink, the hearing included testimony from other rail-industry stakeholders, including Connex Railroad, Union Pacific, the Federal Railroad Administration, the California Public Utilities Commission, the United Transportation Union, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, and Webtec Corporation.

Metrolink representatives who spoke reinforced the focus on strengthening their agencywide safety culture and ensuring that their outside service providers demonstrate that shared commitment in passenger safety as their top priority. Some of the wide-ranging improvements that are well underway include:

- Accelerating expansion of Automatic Train Stop technology to be completed by early summer 2009.
- Working toward an accelerated strategy to have Positive Train Control (PTC) operational on all Metrolink train equipment by 2012, three years before required by federal mandate.
- Continuing to use extra-board employees to serve as a "second set of eyes" in trains.
- Initiating the procurement process to become the nation's first passenger or freight railroad system to install inward-facing video cameras in all of their locomotives and lead passenger cars.
- Acting swiftly to require senior management of their train-operations contractor, Connex, to take immediate steps to prevent unauthorized individuals in any locomotive cab and unauthorized text messaging, and to improve the adequacy of efficiency testing of train-operations personnel.

Metrolink will continue to focus their resources to ensure exceptional passenger and crew safety on all of their lines, on every train, at all times. Metrolink will continue to aggressively pursue funding for PTC and their other vital commuter-safety and infrastructure projects; such as increasing the amount of double-track territory and upgrading their dispatching system to a known PTC-compatible platform.

[Info. from *Metrolink Matters*]

TRANSIT RIDERSHIP

Transit ridership soared in 2008, with so many Americans taking trips on public transportation that they set a modern ridership record. The American Public Transportation Association released a report tallying 10.7 billion public-transit trips during a year that saw gas prices fall and a recession begin to trim jobs.

This explains the jostling for seats last year - Metrolink experienced the same passenger surge. They had another record-setting year, with more than 12.6 million passenger trips in 2008, a 9 percent increase over 2007. Further, ridership in June through September 2008, when gas prices were peaking, was more than 13 percent higher than during the same period in 2007. With gas prices falling, Metrolink has noticed a significant reduction in ridership and less crowding.

Nationally, 2008 transit ridership was the highest in 52 years. Trips taken jumped 4 percent over the 2007 number, with

vehicle miles traveled falling by 3.6 percent. Clearly, many commuters left their cars parked, and boarded a bus or train.

The increase affected every mode of public transit: light rail, commuter rail, subways, and paratransit shuttles.

[Info. from *Metrolink Matters*]

PASSENGER TRAIN UPDATES by CHARLES VARNES
AMTRAK

National Train Day

Amtrak will celebrate the second annual National Train Day on May 9 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. with events in Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Chicago, and at Los Angeles Union Station.

In Los Angeles Matt Costa and Chana will be the celebrity head liners.

Costa is an environmentally conscious singer/songwriter from Huntington Beach, Calif., who has self-released two EP's and recorded two albums, *Songs We Sing* (2005) and *Unfamiliar Faces* (2008), for Brushfire Records.

Chana is an LA-based singer whose tropical sound could be described as global hip-pop. Chana has received accolades from several media outlets including *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Miami Herald* and *Billboard Magazine* and was one of the artists featured in iTunes' "Best of The Store Latino."

Timetables

The Amtrak 2009 Spring-Summer System Timetable becomes effective May 11, 2009. The timetable will not contain *North-east* or *Empire Corridor* schedules. Instead, it will refer users to a series of panel/wallet timetables that will be issued at various times this spring and summer.

The reason for this is that beginning in April, Amtrak, CSX Transportation, Metro-North Railroad and New England Central Railroad will begin performing extensive track maintenance in the Northeast, resulting in several schedule changes from April through September that will affect *Acela Express*, *Northeast Regional*, *Adirondack*, *Empire Service*, *Ethan Allen Express*, *Maple Leaf*, *Keystone Service*, *Pennsylvanian*, *Lake Shore Limited* and *Vermont* services.

On-Time Performance

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	2009-04-13	
TRAINS	MTD OTP	YTD OTP
Long-Distance Trains	87%	82%
Short-Distance Trains	94%	93%
Pacific Surfliners	99%	97 %

LONG-DISTANCE ROUTES

Sunset Limited

The connection from the westbound *Sunset Limited* at Los Angeles to a northbound *San Joaquin* train at Bakersfield is now Bus No. 5815 to Tr. No. 715. The former connection was Bus No. 5817 to Tr. No. 717. The change is due to improved timekeeping by the *Sunset* (it often arrives early now). The change also shortens passenger's travel time. On days when the *Sunset* is late arriving in Los Angeles, passengers will be reaccommodated on a later *San Joaquin* connection.

Texas Eagle

On April 21, the *Texas Eagle* began operating on a new schedule between St. Louis and Chicago. The *Eagle* now departs stations from St. Louis to Pontiac, Il., 35 minutes earlier, Joliet 15 minutes earlier, and arrives Chicago 22 minutes earlier.

The new station times are: St. Louis, 7:55 a.m.; Alton, Ill., 8:43 a.m.; Carlinville, 9:15 a.m.; 9:55 a.m.; Lincoln, 10:25 a.m.; Bloomington-Normal, 11:08 a.m.; Pontiac, 11:39 a.m.; Joliet, 12:56 p.m.; and arrival at Chicago, 1:52 p.m.

Lake Shore Limited

An April 4, the Lakeshore Limited Tr. No. 48/448, began departing from Chicago at 9:00 p.m., one hour earlier. Effective with its schedule change, Tr. No. 48, the New York section, had its stops at Hudson, Rhinecliff-Kingston, and Ploughkeepsie, N.Y. discontinued. Passengers traveling to those stations now connect to *Empire Service* Tr. No. 244 at Albany. Tr. No.448, the Albany-Boston section's schedule remains the same

The schedule change caused a two-trains-in-one-day problem at South Bend Indiana. Tr. No. 48/448 which departed from Chicago on April 3 at 10:00 p.m. was scheduled to depart from South Bend at 12:30 a.m. on April 4. Tr. No. 48/448 which departed from Chicago on April 4 was scheduled to depart from South Bend at 11:30 p.m. the same day. To overcome the problem Tr. No. 48/448 (April 4) was renumbered to 1048/1448 on that day.

Also, on April 4 sleeping car service was restored on the Boston-Chicago section of the *Lake Shore*.

WESTERN CORRIDORS

Cascades

The substitution of *Superliner* cars for a *Talgo* trainset on Seattle-Vancouver, B.C. Tr. Nos. 510/517 has been extended through June 14, 2009. The *Superliner* equipment offers lower level seating, snack bar service, and checked baggage service. Until the *Talgo* equipment returns to service there is no business class, sit-down meal service, or movies, and no unboxed "BV" bicycle space.

The three Washington-state owned *Talgo* trainsets are being removed from service one at a time for an overhaul which will extend their service life to approximately 2029. The project began in 2007 and is expected to be completed in 2011.

DEPOT DOINGS

INDIO, Calif. Planning for a transit center, which will include an Amtrak and bus depot, a car rental, restaurant, and retail and office space is underway. It will be located on the south side of the tracks, along Indio Blvd., in downtown old Indio. Amtrak has agreed to stops there once the transit center is built.

TOPEKA, Kan. The station is now open from midnight to 8:00 a.m. Monday through Friday. Weekend hours are midnight to 1:15 a.m. and 4:00 a.m. to 5:30 a.m. The ticket office is open Monday through Friday. There are no Quik-Trak ticketing machines, or checked baggage service, at the station.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

Prepaid Orders Discontinued

Effective June 1, 2009, Amtrak will discontinue selling prepaid orders (PPO). The PPO was used by customers who wanted to purchase travel for someone else. To purchase a PPO

the customer would go to a station and pay the ticket agent who would then set up the prepaid order. The nature of PPOs makes them difficult to change if the intended user's plans change. Few PPOs are sold anymore. Most customers use credit cards and purchase travel for someone else through advance payment on amtrak.com or through a call center.

In place of the PPO, people can go to a supermarket or other store, buy an American Express, Visa, or MasterCard gift card, then phone 800-USA-RAIL or go to amtrak.com and make an advance payment for the person whose travel they want to pay for.

[Info. from Ken Ruben, Ed Von Nordeck

ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN RAILROADS FREIGHT TRAFFIC REPORT

by CHARLES VARNES

The Association of American Railroads (AAR) reported a decrease in the number of carloads and intermodal units originated during the first quarter of 2009 compared to 2008's first quarter. In addition to the decrease attributable to the slow economy, a blizzard in the Wyoming coal fields, flooding in the Upper Midwest, and other weather-related problems in March further decreased rail traffic levels.

For the first quarter of 2009, the AAR reported the following.

2009 TRAFFIC ORIGINATED			
Cumulative, 13 Weeks Ending April 4, 2009			
	2009	2008	Change
Major United States Railroads			
Carloads originated	3,521,816	4,225,568	-16.7 %
Intermodal units originated			
Trailers	436,497	632,956	-31.0 %
Containers	1,991,839	2,238,946	-11.0
Total	2,428,336	2,871,902	-15.4 %
Estimated Ton-Miles (Billions)	373.7	442.5	-15.5 %
Major Canadian Railroads			
Carloads originated	803,171	1,004,004	-20.0 %
Intermodal units originated			
Trailers	20,561	23,803	-13.6 %
Containers	509,512	582,406	-12.5
Total	530,073	606,209	-12.6 %
Major Mexican Railroads			
Carloads originated	146,324	161,383	-9.3 %
Intermodal units originated			
Trailers	379	1,021	-62.9 %
Containers	60,628	74,131	-18.2
Total	61,007	75,152	-18.8 %
Major North American Railroads			
Carloads originated	4,471,311	5,390,955	-17.1 %
Intermodal units originated			
Trailers	457,437	657,780	-30.5 %
Containers	2,561,979	2,895,483	-30.5
Total	3,019,416	3,553,263	-15.0 %

CONDUCTOR BETWEEN YREKA AND MONTAGUE

Roger Titus is a self-described railroad "foamer," someone, he jokes, "with a one-track mind." The 71-year-old Dunsmuir

man has spent much of his life around trains – riding them, working on them, photographing them. When he dies – and this is no joke – he can think of no better ending than to have his ashes blown out of the smokestack of a steam locomotive.

Which would be fitting because for Titus it all started with steam locomotives. As a boy, he watched them pull in and out of the Glendale railroad station near his home in Southern California. He was captivated by the noise, the power, the big puffs of steam and the glamour, watching Hollywood stars get on and off while the cameras rolled. On a more somber note, he watched trains filled with flag-draped coffins roll by during World War II.

By the early 1950s, he was beginning to hear the death knell of the trains themselves, the final whistles on the last runs of local trains to Santa Monica, Long Beach and Newport Beach. Titus and his father, a fellow train buff, rode every one of those last runs, sometimes into the wee hours of the night. The trains may have died, but Titus' passion for them didn't.

It was a passion that he worked into his 27-year career as a state park ranger. At Donner Memorial State Park, he led visitors on "railroad hikes" to the old wooden snowsheds of the early transcontinental line. In his final seven years with the state park system, he worked his dream job as a ranger at the California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento, training docents and giving museum tours.

By then, he and his wife, Susi, had found a home in the old railroad town near the Oregon border, Dunsmuir. At age 60, he launched a new career as a conductor on dinner and excursion trains out of McCloud and Yreka.

Today, well past retirement age, Titus works three days a week on the Blue Goose excursion train, running between Yreka and Montague. As the train rolls through the countryside, stopping for the occasional free-range cow, the loquacious train buff happily expounds on the rail line's rich history – the Yreka Western Railroad has been carrying passengers since 1889. On the bucolic, seven-mile route, which crosses the Shasta River, passengers sometimes are treated to the sights of bald eagles, golden eagles, turkey vultures and coyotes.

Siskiyou's struggling rail business is at a critical juncture right now. The long-term prospects are good, with soaring diesel prices giving railway freight a competitive advantage over trucking. Transporting freight by rail is at least three times as fuel efficient as transporting the same load by truck, according to the Association of American Railroads.

But right now, the future is bleak for the Yreka Western Railroad and the McCloud Railway, the two locally owned railroads in the county. Both have dropped their freight operation after losing customers. Yreka Western just cut its Blue Goose runs from five days a week to three in August and will scale back to weekends in September.

The McCloud Railway runs an excursion train two days a week and a dinner train three days a week through a joint venture with the Shasta Sunset Dinner Train. But because of the loss of its freight business, the McCloud Railway is tearing up track and selling it for salvage as the line shrinks from 100 miles to 25 miles.

At Yreka Western, owner Court Hammond is optimistic that he'll eventually get his freight business restored after losing his

sole customer, a lumber mill near Yreka. That company, Timber Products, started trucking its lumber to southern Oregon after being faced with a big rate boost from the Oregon rail line that receives Yreka Western's freight cars.

Titus refuses to be discouraged about the future of rail. He's making a down payment on its future by helping to train three young apprentices this summer. He's teaching two high school students and a Chico State University sophomore such time-honored skills as throwing switches and signaling the engineer.

Titus is optimistic about their job prospects. With the price of gas soaring, he thinks Amtrak will eventually – "possibly in my lifetime" – run a second West Coast passenger train from Los Angeles to Seattle and that more and more trucks will "piggyback" on railroad flatcars.

The rail buff, who as a young man rode the dying trains with his father, has been keeping the faith for a long time now, waiting for the trains to make a comeback. If fuel prices continue their upward spiral, that just might happen, even before Titus takes his final ride through the smokestack of a steam locomotive.

[Info. from *Record Searchlight* of Redding, Calif.]

URBAN RAIL TRANSIT

**LOS ANGELES METRO RAIL
RIDERSHIP**

February 2009	Red Line	Blue Line	Green Line	Gold Line
Weekday Ave.	141,815	74,271	34,766	22,271
Saturday Ave.	90,746	55,165	21,328	14,064
Sunday Ave.	75,754	52,897	17,002	11,113
Monthly Total	3,502,293	1,917,664	848,650	546,125

[Info. From Ken Ruben]

100 LIGHT RAIL CARS FOR THE MTA

AnsaldoBreda of Italy, who is seeking a \$300-million deal with the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), won a victory at the Board Meeting on March 26 when the board agreed to a two-month extension on the company's expiring contract options to build 100 light rail cars. The two-month reprieve was advanced by Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and supported by the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, which filled the hearing room with more than 100 union workers wearing stickers that read "vote for jobs."

As part of its campaign for the contract, AnsaldoBreda won union support by promising that – if awarded the work – it would build a plant with union labor in the Los Angeles area. Company representatives have begun negotiating with the Community Redevelopment Agency to lease a site downtown.

"We want to make sure that we've explored every possible option with respect to the opportunity to site a rail manufacturer here in the city of Los Angeles," Villaraigosa said at the board meeting. Also he said that there were "real questions" about AnsaldoBreda's compliance with its contract and the delays.

The 50th AnsaldoBreda light-rail car is scheduled to arrive three years late, and MTA officials say the passenger cars – which cost \$2.9 million each – are 5,000 to 6,000 pounds heavier than specified in the contract. Officials say the cars also are incompatible with others in the MTA fleet. AnsaldoBreda officials dispute the weight calculations and contend the delays

were caused by the transit agency's demands for design changes, and agency officials acknowledge that granted a waiver on the requirement to make the cars compatible.

Of chief concern for several board members is that the systems in the AnsaldoBreda cars are incompatible with those already in the Metro fleet made by two other companies: Siemens and Sumitomo. AnsaldoBreda officials say that they could fix that problem but that an MTA official waived the compatibility requirement after the company said it would have to simplify the technology in its cars to allow the different manufacturers' systems to communicate.

The board approved the two-month extension on a 10-1 vote. In a statement after the vote, Fabio Ficano, AnsaldoBreda's director of government affairs, said board members had done what was in the "best interest of the county." Noting what he called the company's legally binding commitment to locate a facility in Los Angeles and the company's willingness to be penalized if it does not follow through, Ficano said AnsaldoBreda would work with the MTA "to hopefully address issues to their satisfaction and demonstrate the company's willingness to put its money where its mouth is when it comes to Los Angeles."

AnsaldoBreda has partnered with Shangri-La Construction to design an environmentally sustainable rail manufacturing plant, a \$70-million project that they have said would be built with union labor. Maria-Elena Durazo, executive-secretary of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, told board members that they should raise the bar for public money used on transportation projects. "Here is an opportunity with AnsaldoBreda to come in, to build a factory, make those light-rail cars here in L.A. County, where we have unemployment," she said.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

EXPO ROUTE DECISION

The Exposition Construction Authority board has voted to use the existing railroad right-of-way along Exposition Boulevard to extend the rail line from Culver City to Santa Monica. Although the vote on April 2 does not decide the route once and for all, it represents "a milestone" for Phase 2 of the project, said Los Angeles County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, who serves on the board of both the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the Expo authority.

Phase 1, the segment that will run from downtown Los Angeles to Culver City, is under construction but continues to generate controversy about crossings near schools and other issues.

The Expo authority will further analyze the right-of-way alignment for a final environmental impact report, due later this year. Many issues remain, said Samantha Bricker, the Expo authority's chief operating officer, including the future of a proposed Expo bike path, grade separations and the location of maintenance facilities.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

LOS ANGELES COUNTY RIDERS

During the month of February 2009, the average number of weekday riders traveling on trains going to, from, or within Los Angeles County, other than on Amtrak, was 312,014. This was an average decrease per day from January of 1,499 riders or less than 1 percent.

A brand new BNSF EMD SD-70ace is a distributed power unit on the rear end of a northbound empty coal train at Palmer Lake, Colorado on the Joint Line.

Photo by Brian Black



A southbound UP coal train is approaching the north switch at Monument, Colorado on the Joint Line.

Photo by Brian Black



A southbound manifest with a fairly clean warbonnet on the point is passing through Greenland, Colorado, on the Denver-Pueblo Joint Line.

Photo by Brian Black

