

WHEEL CLICKS

Pacific Railroad Society Inc.

MAY 2010

DISCOVER THE RAIL WAY IN LOS ANGELES ON NATIONAL TRAIN DAY

Amtrak will celebrate America's love for trains with an event in Los Angeles on the third annual National Train Day, Saturday, May 8, 2010. As one of the four free signature events taking place nationwide from 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., the celebration will include model train displays, kids' entertainment, educational exhibits, food demonstrations, and tours of Amtrak equipment, freight and commuter trains, along with notable private railroad cars.

The day will start with opening remarks from *California's Gold* host Huell Howser and live musical performances from the USC Marching Band at 11:30 a.m., as well as Genevieve Goings, the hip-hop train conductor from Playhouse Disney's *Choo Choo Soul*, at 2:30 p.m. Additionally, the Radio Disney Road Crew will be on hand to entertain throughout the day.

"National Train Day celebrates the train's impact on our country and provides an opportunity for Americans to further understand the influence rail has on the future of transportation in America," said Emmett H. Fremaux, Amtrak vice president, marketing and product management. "With a greater national focus on energy efficiency in travel, trains are already a leading alternative with 20 percent more fuel efficiency than commercial airlines and 28 percent more efficiency than car travel per passenger mile.

"Trains have always been an important part of this country's fabric and with the spotlight on green initiatives and increasing options for intercity and high-speed rail growth, it's clear that they will continue to drive innovation in transportation," said Fremaux.

EXCLUSIVELY IN LOS ANGELES

The National Train Day celebration in Los Angeles will feature the exhibit "Railroad Braceros: A Mexican Legacy." During World War II, thousands of Mexicans came to the U.S. under the guest worker program called "Railroad Braceros" to build and maintain our nation's passenger railroad system. The exhibit will honor the Hispanic contributions to the national railroad and Steve Velasquez, associate curator of the National Museum of American History, will discuss the braceros and their role in railroad history.

NATIONAL TRAIN DAY EXHIBITS AND FESTIVITIES

National Train Day commemorates the 141st anniversary of the first transcontinental railroad's inception by bringing to life the rich narrative of how trains transformed America. This year's events will feature the following exhibits:

Trains Move our Economy Exhibit: Discover how upgrades to Amtrak's infrastructure and expansion of intercity and high-speed corridors will create jobs and establish a greener, world-class rail transportation system.

Go-Green Express: Eco Exhibit: Learn about how Amtrak is providing greener options for travel, including energy-efficient locomotives, reducing its greenhouse gas emissions and alternative fuel trials.

National Park Service Trails & Rails Exhibit: National Park Service, Trails & Rails, Rangers and Volunteers will be stationed throughout the event to meet with the public and highlight how trains have historically impacted the National Park Service and explain its current partnership with Amtrak.

Amtrak: Dining the Rail Way: Explore the history of dining on trains, view live cooking demonstrations from Chef Marcel Lagnaz of Gourmet Foods and Amtrak Chef Paulette Starwood and sample meals offered in Amtrak's dining cars.

Train Equipment Displays: At the newly expanded train displays, get up close and personal with Amtrak equipment to experience first-hand the modern amenities and accommodations offered by passenger rail. Then get an inside peek at how passengers traveled in generations past by touring a variety of historic train cars and privately-owned luxury coaches.

Model Train Displays: Delight in the craft of model train displays and take a closer look at these miniature masterpieces

Amtrak Brand Display – Enjoy the Journey: Learn more about Amtrak's range of connectivity, routes, train technology, amenities and onboard offerings.

AmtraKids Depot: Enjoy magicians, face painters, arts and crafts, interactive games and giveaways at the AmtraKids Depot.

Snapshot Photo Station: Snap a photo in front of custom train-themed backdrops for a fun National Train Day keepsake.

Joining Amtrak to celebrate the importance of trains, SUBWAY restaurant chain is the premier sponsor of the third annual National Train Day. For more information about National Train Day and the opportunity to host a National Train Day event in your city, visit www.nationaltrainday.com.

ABOUT AMTRAK

As the nation's intercity passenger rail operator, Amtrak connects America in safer, greener, and healthier ways. Last fiscal year (FY 2009), the railroad carried 27.2 million passengers, making it the second-best year in the company's history. With 21,000 route miles in 46 states, the District of Columbia, and three Canadian provinces, Amtrak operates more than 300 trains each day – at speeds up to 150 mph – to more than 500 destinations. Amtrak also is the operator of choice for state-supported corridor services in 15 states and for four commuter rail agencies. Visit Amtrak.com or call 800-USA-RAIL for schedules, fares and more information.

[News Release from Marti Ann Draper]



WHEEL CLICKS
MAY 2010 **VOLUME 74, NO. 2**

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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.

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PRS NEWS — ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES

May 1, 8, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10:00 a.m.
 15, 22, 29 to 4:00 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
 Sats. Committee Meeting: May 29.
 May 1, 8, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Saunders
 15, 22, 29 Yard, Noakes & Herbert Sts., Commerce. Regular
 Sats. days: 2, 16; Extra days: 9, 23, 30. Com. Meet.: 16.
 May 7 Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Valencia Room, Joslyn
 Fri. Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
 May 14 Membership Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Alhambra Room,
 Fri. Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
 May 21 Slide night at Saunders Yard, 7:30 p.m., Noakes &
 Fri. Herbert Sts., Commerce. All are welcome and
 bring slides.
 June 4 Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Valencia Room, Joslyn
 Fri. Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
 June 5, 12, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10:00 a.m.
 19, 26 Sats. to 4:00 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
 June 5, 12, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Saunders
 19, 26 Yard, Noakes & Herbert Sts., Commerce. Regular

Sats. days: 5, 19; Extra days: 12, 26. Com. Mtg.: 19
 June 11 Membership Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Alhambra Room,
 Fri. Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.

MEETING PROGRAM by **RUSS DAVIES**

May 14: **Joe Bonino** from the R&LHS Southern California Chapter will present a slide “**Double Feature,**” **SP Narrow Gauge, and LARY**, images from the Chapter’s archives. Each year Joe and I do a “Home & Home” exchange of presentations, R&LHS and PRS. **This will be a good one. Be there, and bring slide news briefs!**

June 11: **The Best of Blackhawk slides!** Many of you have seen or heard of these wonderful, collectible slide sets, and their films as well. At the **PRM** we probably have every set they ever produced. They have come in with several of our collections (in some cases duplicate sets). The names of the photographers credited on these slides include most of the legendary railroad authors and photographers! **Be there, and bring slide briefs!**

KENNETH V. BONE, Deceased June 9, 2009.
 Kenneth enjoyed reading *Wheel Clicks*, especially about steam trains.

HENRY K. OGATA, Deceased December 20, 2009.
 While living in California, Henry went on railfan tours and helped the *Wheel Clicks* mailing party assemble issues.

ROGER FOGT — 1930-2010
 Roger Fogt was a longtime member of several Railroad Clubs, including Pacific Railroad Society. He passed away suddenly after a lingering illness.

Roger had been active in PRS’ San Dimas Museum in the Archives and Book Collection activity. He was also a presenter of Video Programs at many of PRS’ membership meetings. Having traveled extensively through the Midwest, Colorado, Nebraska, and his home state of California, Roger had amassed a great collection of movies and videos of railroad operations.

He been born in Aurora, Nebraska, in 1930, and later moved to Hastings, NE. The Fogt family then moved to Alhambra, California, where Roger graduated from Alhambra High School. After Army duty in Japan during the Korean War, Roger returned to California to begin a career in the Accounting Department of Southern California Edison Co.

He joined the Southern California Division of the Electric Railroader’s Association, and later the Orange Empire Railway Museum. Roger took a special interest in Chicago & Northwestern’s “Cowboy Line” from the Dakotas to Wyoming. He joined the Chicago & Northwestern Technical and Historical Society to be kept advised of that operation.

Roger took an interest in the Narrow Gauge Railroads of Colorado, driving over abandoned rights-of-way and enjoying some of the fan trips on the Denver & Rio Grande Western Narrow Gauge before the lines’ regular service was abandoned.

Later in the 1980s Roger joined PRS as an active member.
 – James R. (Jim) Baker, April 15, 2010

MILEPOSTS FROM MARTI ANN

by MARTI ANN DRAPER

Thanks to you all for the honor of election as your president for the year from April 1, 2010, to March 31, 2011. As you can see, our fiscal and electoral year starts on April Fool's Day. The founders always claimed that it just "happened" that Railroad Boosters was started at that time of the year, but I always suspected that they had injected that date into the by-laws on purpose as a means to give new officers a sense of foreboding.

VOLUNTEERS ARE OUR LIFE BLOOD

Not all non-profit organizations are membership organizations, and many have paid employees. PRS follows the model of being a member organization which is also a charity, existing to educate the public about railroad history and technology.

Being 100 percent staffed by volunteers is consistent with our mandate that no financial gain accrues to any of us. These volunteers work only for the personal satisfaction gained on the job, and for the occasional "Thank You" we afford them. I will try, in future editions of this column, to thank some of the workers who make PRS possible.

Starting out, I have to thank and ask the forgiveness of Al Novak, who went unmentioned in the March *Wheel Clicks* story about the Big Dome to the Bay excursion. He was one of the volunteers at Saunders Yard who completed the periodic air brake valve and hose replacement. We had hoped he would make the trip with us, but a medical emergency intervened, and we look forward to seeing him on future trips.

SOME OPINIONS FROM OPINION POLL

We received 54 responses to opinion poll number one sent out with the April *Wheel Clicks*. At the time of the mailing, we had 451 members on the rolls. So, it can be said that about 12% of the membership returned the survey. (You can still send yours in if you have it – there is no deadline for consideration.) Thanks to each of you who spent the time and postage to respond.

Over the course of the next few months, I will share with you some of the insights we got from this poll. For this month, I am including a couple of general comments.

One respondent made a reference to what a "well-run" organization would do. Please note: This is a membership organization, and we are at the moment dedicated to all-volunteer staffing. Not offering pay severely limits the pool of available talent. But we endeavor to see that this organization is well-run in spite of this challenge.

There was one member who wanted to have our complete balance sheets and budgets printed in *Wheel Clicks*. The respondent stated that "there seems to be a lack of accountability. The books should be opened, including the bequeaths (sic) . . ." I started to send this respondent copies of our latest balance sheet, budget, and expense and revenue statement, but noticed that there was no contact information. The response had been sent in an envelope with no return address. So, the respondent registered a gripe, but didn't give us any means to provide him or her with any feedback.

One of the reasons why financial reports are not routinely printed in *Wheel Clicks* is that the vast majority of people don't read *Wheel Clicks* to keep up with our financial status. The reports are pretty dry and boring. So, we do not burden Dick

and the *Wheel Clicks* staff with having to use up several pages of our publication to print figures which almost all members will avoid reading.

Still, members are entitled to see all of the figures and review the proceeds of the board meetings whenever they want them. The secretary and treasurer have been directed to send copies of the minutes and the treasurer's reports to each and every member who requests them, free of charge. We also have available copies of our Articles of Incorporation and By-laws. Request copies of any of these documents at any time from Pacific Railroad Society, Inc., 210 W. Bonita Avenue, San Dimas, CA 91773. If it is easier for you to do so, send your request via e-mail to prsexcursions@live.com. Let us know whether you just want one specific month, the annual reports, or if you want to be included in a monthly mailing of all documents.

And don't forget: you are all welcome to come to the Board of Directors meetings, held on the first Friday of every month as specified on page two of *Wheel Clicks*.

Next month: we'll let you know what your fellow members thought about raising the dues.

ANGELS FLIGHT IS BACK

The world's busiest but shortest railway, Angels Flight, is in downtown Los Angeles. It was called Angels Flight in 1952 by the Daughters of the American Revolution, who installed a plaque to mark the railway's 50th anniversary. By that time, it had carried 100 million passengers safely up and down its 315 feet on a 33 percent grade.

Originally the brainchild of a Col. J. W. Eddy, it was built in 1901 and immediately became a great favorite of Angelenos. The rail cars originally were white, but they were painted orange and black in the 1930s. The only fatality in its first 50 years of operation was a sailor, who with a surfeit of courage no doubt brought on by an overabundance of adult beverages, decided to climb up the track. He met one of the cars coming down and was crushed.

Originally located at 351 Hill St. in Los Angeles, Angels Flight (note the lack of an apostrophe in the name as correctly spelled) closed in 1969 with redevelopment causing great changes in the immediate area. The matching cars – Sinai and Olivet – were put into storage for 27 years. In 1996, it reopened half a block further down Hill Street. For the new railway, the track was rebuilt to withstand earthquakes. It is a pleasant experience to go from Hill Street to the modern Water Court plaza above, which is close to some of the city's finest museums and theaters. The fare was 25 cents and the ride took just under a minute.

Then on February 1, 2001, the upper car, Sinai, broke loose on the tracks and rushed down, striking the second car, Olivet. One passenger was killed and several others were seriously injured. The railway was immediately closed. The founder of the company responsible for the drive, control and braking system, left the country.

Angels Flight has been featured in a number of films and TV programs. It was in the Glen Miller Story and a 1960s Perry Mason episode. It also appeared extensively in a movie made in 1964, called, "The Inexorably Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Mixed-up Zombies."

Angels Flight has reopened between 6:45 a.m. and 10 p.m., 365 days a year. Fare is 25¢ one-way or five tickets for \$1. [Info. from *Pasadena Star-News* and *SO.CA.TA*]

NATIONAL TRAIN DAY **by CHARLES VARNES**

National Train Day will be celebrated May 8 this year. Major events are planned at Amtrak stations in Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. In addition to the events held at the major Amtrak stations, there will be events at smaller stations across the country. In California events are scheduled at Dunsmuir, Fresno, Guadalupe, Oceanside, Paso Robles, Sacramento, Salinas, San Bernardino, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Truckee.

DESERTXPRESS HIGH-SPEED TRAIN

Tom Stone of the DesertXpress Enterprises, high-speed train, said he expects to begin building the tracks from Las Vegas to Victorville, California, by the end of the year. Environmental studies are done and in the hands of U.S. officials for approval, he said. "Oh yeah," Stone said when asked whether the project is scheduled to open in four years.

The plan is to tie into a high-speed network in California. When completed, Las Vegas could jump on the DesertXpress in Las Vegas for an hour-and-a-half trip to Victorville, then connect to Palmdale in another 20 minutes and to Los Angeles in an additional 20 minutes.

Backers of the DesertXpress train publicized their progress on March 25, a week after rival magnetic levitation train organizers unleashed commercials suggesting Sen. Harry Reid of Nevada turned his back on union workers by stripping their project of funds. Andrew Mack of DesertXpress knocked maglev officials for misleading union workers by announcing that 90,000 jobs would be created immediately when the project is far from coming to fruition. He said 50,000 workers will be hired overall for the DesertXpress project.

The battle between the two trains has gone political. Reid, once a maglev supporter, changed alliances last summer and earlier in March reprogrammed \$45 million, initially secured for the maglev train, to a highway project in Las Vegas. Gov. Jim Gibbons remains a strong proponent of the maglev train.

Stone was asked why the two train organizations didn't join forces to build a high-speed train linking Southern Nevada to Southern California. "Their project is not financially viable. It's not even close, that's why," Stone said.

DesertXpress representatives have advertised their project as a 100 percent privately funded venture, but Mack said in March they plan to pursue federal grants given the struggling economy. [Info. from *Las Vegas Review-Journal* via Fletcher Swan]

PASSENGER TRAIN UPDATES **by CHARLES VARNES** AMTRAK

Amtrak is on pace to break its annual ridership record carrying a best ever 13,619,770 passengers during the first six months of fiscal year 2010 with the historically busier summer travel season still ahead.

The 13.6 million passengers who rode on Amtrak trains during the first two quarters of FY 2010 (October 2009 – March 2010) contributed to a 4.3 percent increase over the same period

the prior year. This also is about 100,000 more riders than the 13.5 million posted in FY 2008, which turned out to be Amtrak's best ridership year in company history when America's passenger railroad carried 28.7 million passengers.

Ridership Highlights

Comparing March 2010 to March 2009, ridership increased by 13.5 percent to a record 2.47 million passengers for the month. In addition, every single Amtrak route carried more passengers with several experiencing double-digit growth.

Ridership on long-distance trains increased by 16 percent in March and is up 5.2 percent for the first two quarters of FY 2010. Long-distance trains posting strong six-month numbers include *City of New Orleans* (Chicago – New Orleans) up 16.4 percent, *Sunset Limited* (New Orleans – Los Angeles) up 15.1 percent, *Silver Star* (New York – Raleigh – Tampa – Miami) up 8.3 percent and *Coast Starlight* (Los Angeles – Seattle) up 7 percent.

Amtrak's popular *Auto Train* saw significant growth in the month of March, increasing 25.1 percent over March 2009, and carrying nearly 25,000 passengers and their cars, motorcycles and other personal vehicles between Lorton, Va., and Sanford, Fla. For fiscal year to date, Auto Train ridership has increased by 8.6 percent.

In the West, ridership on *San Joaquin* (Bakersfield – Oakland) is up 13.2 percent for March and 5.4 percent for the year. *Pacific Surfliner* (Los Angeles – San Diego) increased 7.5 percent in March and its six-month figures are about even with the same period a year ago. *Amtrak Cascades* (Eugene, Oregon – Vancouver, B.C.) increased by 11.4 percent in March and saw a 16.7 percent increase for the first six months of the fiscal year.

In the Chicago hub, ridership on *Lincoln Service* (Chicago – St. Louis) showed significant growth with an 18 percent jump in March and 11.6 percent for the six month period. *Hiawatha Service* (Chicago – Milwaukee) continues to grow with a 14.3 percent increase in March and up 4.8 percent fiscal year to date. Elsewhere in the Midwest, the *Missouri River Runner* (Kansas City – St. Louis) is up 24.2 percent for March and 15.8 percent for the first half of the Amtrak fiscal year, while the *Blue Water* (Chicago – Port Huron) increased by 21.7 percent in March and 5.2 percent for fiscal year to date.

The *Northeast Corridor* experienced strong ridership growth in March with Amtrak's high-speed train, *Acela Express*, seeing a 14.3 percent increase and Northeast Regional trains up 12.9 percent. For the first six months of FY 2010, Acela service increased 2.9 percent and Northeast Regional service grew by 4.7 percent.

The FY 2010 Amtrak ridership figures are consistent with the annual growth seen during the last several years that saw a 32 percent increase in passengers from FY 2002 to FY 2008.

New High-Speed Rail Department

The Amtrak board of directors recently approved the creation of a new High-Speed Rail department. The new department will focus on the Amtrak-owned Northeast Corridor and conduct the necessary planning activities required to provide: a major reduction in trip-times between Washington and New York and New York and Boston; a significant increase in the number of train frequencies; and determining the feasibility of increasing top speeds up to 220 mph (354 kph). In addition, it will pursue

partnerships with states and others in the passenger rail industry to develop federally-designated high-speed rail corridors such as the new projects moving forward in California and Florida.

Change Tickets Booked Online

Amtrak passengers who book their reservations online at Amtrak.com can now change their travel schedule or class of service, as well as upgrade, downgrade and exchange tickets online instead of standing in line to speak with a ticket agent.

The online self-service feature can only be used for reservations made on Amtrak.com before a paper ticket has been printed. Passengers will still need to pick up printed tickets at the station prior to boarding the train.

Any reductions in fare will automatically be refunded while payment of fare increases resulting from reservation changes can be collected through the online system. Passengers who book through channels other than Amtrak.com, such as through the call center or at a station, will not be able to make changes to their bookings online.

BNSF AMTRAK ON-TIME PERFORMANCE PERCENTAGES

The Amtrak On-Time Performance Percentages posted on the BNSF News web page on April 12, 2010, were:

TRAINS	MTD OTP	YTD OTP
Long-Distance Trains	87%	89%
Short-Distance Trains	98%	95%
Pacific Surfliners	99%	99%

[Info. from Ken Ruben, Ed Von Nordeck]

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

RIDERSHIP

February 2010	Red Line	Blue Line	Green Line	Gold Line
Weekday Ave.	147,482	77,788	37,456	30,512
Saturday Ave.	93,576	52,018	19,258	21,359
Sunday Ave.	82,719	49,006	18,235	20,735
Monthly Total	3,654,821	1,959,845	899,085	778,609

[Info. from Metro via Ken Ruben]

BLUE LINE

In a sting aimed at curbing accidents along the Blue Line, police and sheriff's deputies staked out a two-mile stretch of the line's tracks in downtown Los Angeles on March 24 and ticketed nearly 300 jaywalkers and drivers they caught using cellphones and making illegal left turns. Transportation officials said the crackdown was the latest effort in a push to improve safety along the Blue Line, the city's oldest and most popular light rail line but also its most dangerous.

Ninety-nine people have died in accidents and suicides involving the line in the nearly 20 years since the service from Los Angeles to Long Beach began. Marc Littman, a spokesman for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, said the death rate is lower than for highway accidents. "But any fatality is one too many," he said. "Our goal is no more fatalities and no more accidents."

Over the last two decades, the MTA has made several safety improvements to the Blue Line, which crosses more than 100 intersections in some of Southern California's most densely populated communities. The changes include the installation of LED signs to deter motorists from making illegal turns in front

of trains, the installation of four-quadrant crossing gates and pedestrian gates at several intersections, and lower fences along the tracks so train operators have a better view of traffic.

The changes have worked to reduce accident rates, Littman said. In the last five years there were 1.09 accidents per 100,000 train miles, compared with 4.09 in the first five years the trains operated, according to MTA data.

But pedestrian deaths and suicides have not declined. Data show there were 39 such fatalities in the last 10 years, six more than the 33 recorded in the previous decade.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

GOLD LINE

The MTA board on March 25 approved \$690 million in funding for the extension of the Gold Line in the San Gabriel Valley. The money would go toward extending the light rail line 11.3 miles from its current terminus at Sierra Madre Villa Avenue in Pasadena to Azusa. The board's approval means the project is on track to break ground in June and begin service in 2014.

The extension is one of several major rail projects being planned for Los Angeles County in the next few years. There has been much debate about which projects should get funding, and county Supervisor Mike Antonovich said it's important that a line outside the city of Los Angeles received money. "We need to have a regional transportation network and not one that just favors one city," he said. "Los Angeles has cannibalized the funds, and this is the first time we have been able to bring 'regional' to the front of the plate instead of the back of the bus." Antonovich said the extension – with stops in Arcadia, Monrovia, Duarte, Irwindale, and Azusa – would move the area toward a "truly regional transit system."

The Construction Authority had originally proposed completing the 6-stop line by 2013. Habib Balian, the authority's CEO, said in March that a rail-yard maintenance facility in Monrovia that needs to be finished before the line can be operated will delay completion until 2014.

The MTA has clashed with Monrovia over the yard. City officials had balked at giving up land that could be used for other developments without a guarantee the railyard would be built. Scott Ochoa, Monrovia's city manager, said the MTA's actions go a long way toward allaying the city's concerns.

Cities are looking to creating a high-tech corridor and building housing and multi-use commercial projects along the line, which parallels the 210 Freeway. Planners would like to eventually extend the Gold Line all the way to LA/Ontario International Airport in San Bernardino County.

With the March vote, \$690 million in revenue from Measure R will be transferred to the Gold Line Construction Authority. County voters approved the measure in 2008 to increase the sales tax by half a cent on the dollar for 30 years to raise \$40 billion to construct specific mass transit projects.

The Gold Line funding effectively moves the scheduled opening of the Azusa extension to 2014 from 2017, Antonovich said, because it allows for the construction authority to seek bids for faster construction in a private-public partnership. Building the extension would generate 6,900 jobs, a third of them construction-related, during the three-year project, according to the Los Angeles Economic Development Corp. The second

phase of the project would add stations in Glendora, San Dimas, La Verne, Pomona, Claremont, and Montclair, and is estimated to cost about \$600 million to \$700 million.

After the board voted, several members gathered to celebrate with San Gabriel Valley officials, including Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, who took time to remind everyone that many of the same officials who opposed Measure R were celebrating the Gold Line, which will now be the first Measure R project to be started. "I want to thank the voters of the San Gabriel Valley," Villaraigosa said. "Despite the opposition of many leaders in the area, they voted overwhelmingly in favor of Measure R."

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

MISCELLANEOUS PROJECTS

- A new underground light rail alternative underneath Little Tokyo has been added to the Regional Connector Transit Corridor Study.
- The Regional Connector would create a seamless transit link between the Metro Gold, Blue, and Expo Lines through Downtown Los Angeles.
- Crews are installing a rail cross-over link at the Blue Line for the new Exposition Light Rail line being built between Downtown Los Angeles and Culver City. The Expo Line will share a track and two stations (7th St./Metro Center and Pico) with the Metro Blue Line as it leaves downtown.
- A proposed regional transit center in Torrance served by an extension of the Metro Green Line is now under further environmental review as the preferred option for the Harbor Subdivision Transit Corridor. The Harbor Subdivision is a 26-mile rail right-of-way between Vernon and Wilmington. Visit metro.net/harborsubdivision for more information.

[Info. from Metro]

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COMMUTER RAIL RIDERSHIP

Metrolink weekday, systemwide, average trips during February 2010 were 40,596, which was essentially no change from the previous month, and a decrease from the previous year of 6 percent.

Metrolink weekday, systemwide passholders on Amtrak during February 2010 were 2,006, which was an increase from the previous month of 3 percent, and an increase from the previous year of 2 percent.

[Info. from Metrolink via Charles Varnes]

METROLINK'S NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

John E. Fenton, a longtime transportation and business executive, was named on April 2, 2010, as the new chief executive officer of Metrolink. He will join the agency April 16, taking over for David R. Solow, who stepped down in December. Fenton's hiring was announced during a public hearing being held by the Southern California Regional Rail Authority's board of directors, which oversees the commuter agency.

Fenton is a former operating partner of CIH Capital Partners, overseeing plans for acquiring short-lines railroads and negotiating with investors and railroad owners. He was president and CEO of Denver-based transportation company OmniTRAX. He was also a vice-president for the Canadian National Railway and Kansas City Southern Railway, and had various positions with

the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway and Union Pacific Railroad. Fenton has a masters degree from USC.

"Metrolink is pleased to announce that John Fenton has agreed to serve as the chief executive officer and continue to build on the success the agency has had delivering quality commuter rail service at a time of great economic uncertainty," said SCRRA Board Chairman Keith Millhouse. "With a unique combination of experience operating rail services and serving at the highest level of executive management, Mr. Fenton is well-prepared to ensure passenger safety and service in our complex railroad operating environment," Millhouse said.

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

METROLINK WORKERS

Engineers and conductors on Southern California's commuter rail service are threatening an en masse boycott of new personality profiling tests required as a result of the 2008 Chatsworth disaster. The dispute sets up a potentially major labor-management clash just as the five-county Metrolink system is shifting to a new contractor to provide crews for trains that have nearly 1 million boardings a month.

The screening tests, frequently used by corporate managers to gauge the suitability of job applicants, are already required by Amtrak, the incoming operating contractor, when it hires engineers and conductors.

But two powerful railroad unions are strongly objecting to a Metrolink-Amtrak agreement finalized last week. It requires experienced crew members on the regional rail service to take and pass the tests to continue working on the system. Some have worked on Metrolink trains for years.

"We are not going to be taking these tests," said Tim Smith, California legislative chairman of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen. "That's it. We'll see where it ends." "We're all going to stand together," said Ray Garcia of the United Transportation Union, which represents the conductors. Union leaders say that, unless the dispute is resolved, Amtrak may not be able to field qualified train crews when it takes over operations this summer.

Amtrak is set to assume operations of the 500-mile Metrolink system July 1. Connex Railroad, the current operator, opted not to pursue a contract extension when its relationship with Metrolink soured after the Chatsworth crash, which killed 25 and injured 135. Metrolink board members say safety must come first, but they are likely to revisit the testing issue to ensure it is fair to the approximately 130 engineers and conductors now working on their trains.

The push for psychological screening was prompted by findings that a Metrolink engineer who repeatedly violated safety rules caused the Chatsworth catastrophe. Engineer Robert M. Sanchez, who died in the crash, had sent and received hundreds of text messages while operating trains, including seconds before he ran a red light and hit a freight train head-on, federal investigators concluded. In addition, evidence showed that Sanchez sneaked young railfans onto locomotives and apparently let at least one sit at the controls. Such conduct was wildly irresponsible, Metrolink officials say, and occurred even though the veteran engineer had received good evaluations.

"You don't want someone out there who's having whatever psychological issues they are having that could jeopardize

passengers,” said Metrolink board Chairman Keith Millhouse. But he added, “We are going to have to look at this and see if some kind of proper balance can be struck.”

The written tests are part of an ongoing effort to overhaul Metrolink’s safety culture, agency officials say. Another initiative, last year’s installation of video surveillance cameras in train control cabs, has already sparked a legal battle with the engineers’ union.

Like the cameras, personality testing of train crews – and particularly locomotive engineers – is prudent because employees are responsible for hundreds of lives, said agency board member Richard Katz. “This is one more tool to help evaluate how an engineer might operate under stress.”

USC professor Robert Gore, a personality testing expert, said such screening can be valuable but might not flag an employee like engineer Sanchez. “These tests are far from perfect,” he said, adding that they should be used with great care and caution in screening existing workers who have not demonstrated problems.

Katz said he thinks the test results should be part of assessing existing workers but not necessarily a disqualifying factor. But he acknowledged that under the current contract language, Metrolink crew members “run the risk of not being employed” if they don’t agree to take the tests.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

METROLINK SERVICE

Metrolink officials are considering cutbacks, a fare increase, reduced schedules, and the elimination of underperforming trains to help offset Metrolink’s \$17.3 million budget shortfall.

Six of the eight San Bernardino-to-Los Angeles Metrolink trains originally targeted for elimination as well as 26 other scheduled departures in Southern California will not be scrapped, the system’s board of directors decided April 2. The board of the Southern California Regional Rail Authority instead will consider cuts to just 12 trains – two that serve the Inland Empire – with a final decision on their fate at its April 23 meeting.

Metrolink spokeswoman Angie Starr said the board decided to reduce the number of trains to be cut following many comments from consumers. “We’re trying to find ways to affect the passengers in the least possible way,” she said. Among the 12 considered to be cut are two weekday trains on the San Bernardino-Los Angeles line. Two of the other 12 trains targeted for cuts are one trip in each direction between Riverside and Oceanside. Half of the 12 trains are on the L.A.-Ventura line between Union Station and Chatsworth or Moorpark.

In addition to the recommended elimination of a dozen trains, agency staff has proposed a systemwide average fare increase of 6 percent per trip. One speaker, Carol Arnold, of the Antelope Valley, said she opposed any service cuts to the system, but had an idea to drum up some cash. “Billboards on trains,” she said, suggesting the agency sell advertising on its trains to bolster revenue, rather than raising fares.

[Info. from *Pasadena Star-News*]

AAR STORED FREIGHT CARS REPORT

by CHARLES VARNES

In April 2010 the number of freight cars stored on the first

day of the month was 387,029, equal to 25.0 percent of the total fleet, the Association of American Railroads reported.

In its April 2010 Rail Freight Cars in Storage report the AAR stated, “Since July 2009, nearly 116,000 freight cars have come out of storage, including 31,500 in March 2010. Over the past four months, the pace of cars coming out of storage has accelerated.” It also stated, “The reduction in cars in storage, including in March, has been broad based across the various freight car types – an indication of a broad increase in demand for rail service and, by implication, a broad improvement in the overall economy.”

For the first three months of 2010 the number of freight cars stored (and the percentage) was: January, 448,555 (28.7); February, 439,631 (28.2); March, 418,552 (26.9).

In 2009 the number of cars stored on the first day of the month (and percent of the total fleet) was: March, 437,547 (27.5); April, Not reported; May, 493,879 (31.5); June, 502,021 (31.9); July, 502,853 (31.9); August, 489,469 (31.1); September, 478,046 (30.4); October, 462,410 (29.4); November, 541,112 (28.8); December, 451,096 (28.8).

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]

SHASTA SUNSET DINNER TRAIN

The current era for the Shasta Sunset Dinner Train saw the sun go down for the last time Jan. 17 as the last run pulled into the McCloud station hours after dark. Although the railroad is for sale, owner and founder Jeff Forbis decided that after 13 years, that night’s run was the last.

Forbis said over 100,000 passengers have enjoyed the train since its first run in 1996 that began with one car and quickly grew to four. The price for the Shasta Sunset Dinner Train is \$5 million.

Restored to Victorian elegance with tuxedo clad servers dishing up a five course, five star dinner, the Dinner Train conjures up memories of a bygone era. From the richly paneled walls, to the plush carpet, brass fixtures and crystal stemware, no expense was spared in recreating a time when riding the rails meant luxury and elegance.

The Dinner Train route began in McCloud and wandered through the forest to Mount Shasta, ending up near Spring Hill before returning along the same track for a 28-mile, two to three hour, round trip journey.

The line the Dinner Train runs on has a long history going back to the 1800s. The first track was laid in 1897. Regular passenger service began on the McCloud River Railway in 1898 and continued until 1952. Pleasure oriented excursion trains continued into the 1960s while also serving the lumber industry.

Forbis said a combination of factors went into his decision to close the train including his health, regulations and money. “At our peak, we had 15,000 passengers a year. This year we had 8,000,” Forbis said. “Money had a lot to do with the decision.”

[Info. from *The Dunsmuir News* via Roger Titus.]



Pictured at the National Forum in Los Angeles on January 18, 2010, is the staff of the Big Dome to the Bay excursion number 539: Rob Markowitz, Annette Markowitz, Marti Ann Draper, Wes Frishkorn (Amtrak employee who was the lead service attendant aboard adjacent lounge car 10031). Larry Jennings, Andy Novak, and Will Walters. Photo by John Jay Ulloth



Bakersfield bound San Joaquin Train 714 is arriving at the Stockton San Joaquin Street station on March 14, 2010. Some of the passengers waiting to board are returning from Winterail, which was held the previous day. Photo by Charles Varnes



A BNSF Railway locomotive, still in the Santa Fe Warbonnet livery, leads an intermodal freight train across San Joaquin St. in Stockton on March 14, 2010. Photo by Charles Varnes



San Joaquin Train 714 is southbound on the BNSF Railway Stockton Subdivision after departing Stockton. The signals the train is approaching protect the Union Pacific Railroad Fresno Subdivision Crossing. Photo by Charles Varnes



San Joaquin Train 701 accelerates from the Stockton Downtown station after its passenger stop on the morning of March 14, 2010. Originating in Bakersfield, it will terminate in Sacramento in a little more than an hour. Photo by Charles Varnes



Demolition of the Sea Food Grotto in Torrance – exposing three rail cars (2 box and 1 caboose) which formerly were part of the local Victoria Station Restaurant, somewhat similar to the original in Universal City. Note they retained their running gear on track. Photo by Jack Whitmeyer