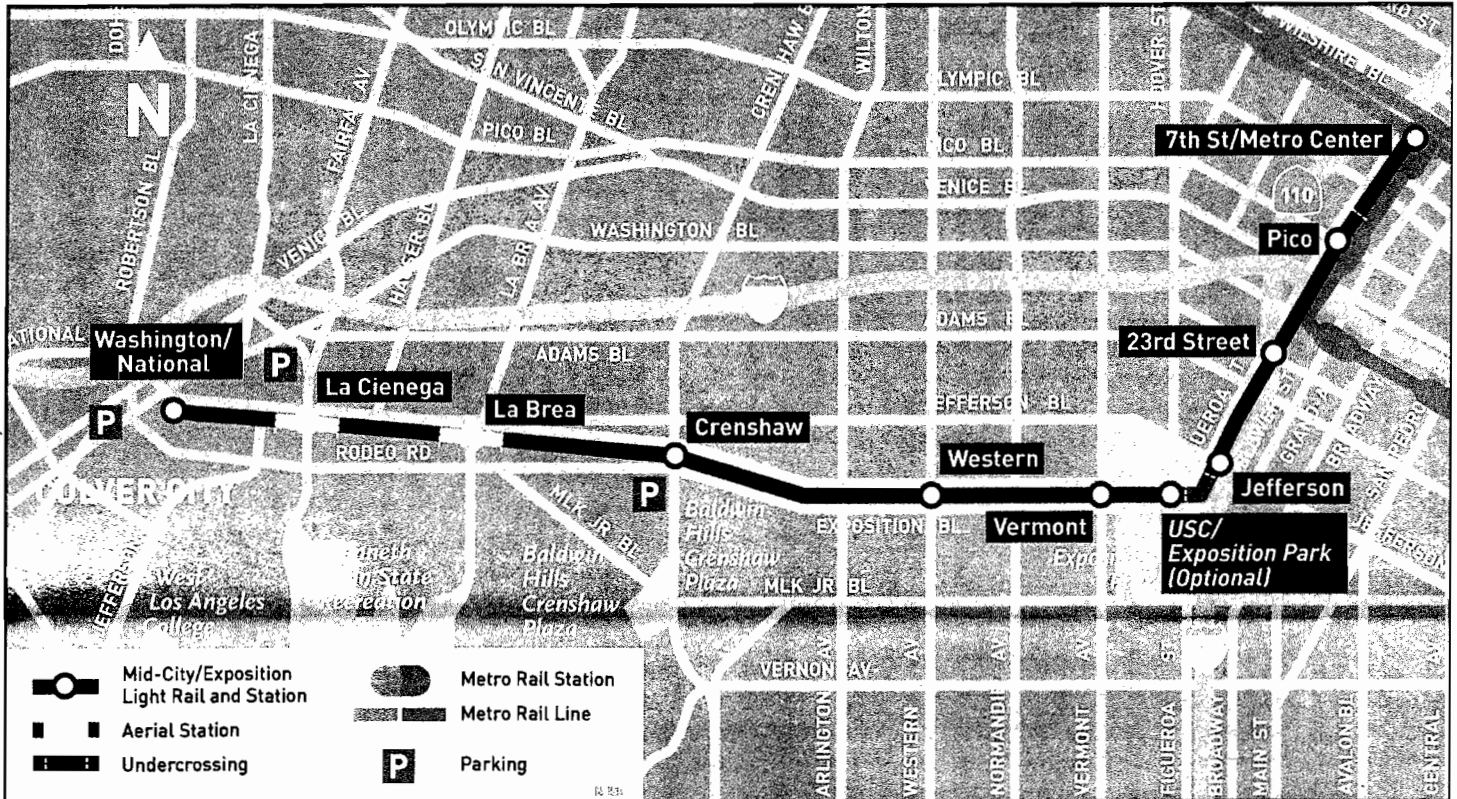


WHEEL CLICKS

Pacific Railroad Society Inc.

NOVEMBER 2006



The Exposition Light Rail Line will run on the Exposition right-of-way between the 7th Street/Metro Center station in downtown Los Angeles and the Washington/National station in Culver City. Map by Metro

EXPO LINE DEDICATION by DICK FINLEY

Historical Note by Tom Nelson:

During the half-hour of congratulatory speeches on Sept. 29, there was mention of MTA's "vision" to build a light rail transit line on the dormant rail right-of-way along Exposition Blvd. to Culver City and later to Santa Monica. This is a classic case of "better late than never," culminating the years that the "Friends 4 Expo Transit" group promoted the endeavor. Otherwise why would the property have been purchased?

A much earlier "Save The Santa Monica Air Line" citizens group spent considerable time and energy contacting governmental officials, writing letters, speaking before audiences, etc., in an attempt to save this former Pacific Electric Railway service on the same right-of-way. This was in the late 1940s and early 1950s while a weekday round trip was still being made to and from Main St. Station. But the public and officials thought that future traffic problems would be solved by a grandiose freeway system, so nothing came of that citizen effort.

Finally, on Oct. 26, 1953, the last Pacific Electric, scheduled, public, rail-passenger service ended. Fittingly, it was on a remnant of the Santa Monica Air Line, along private right-of-
[continued at EXPO LINE on Page 3]



Exposition Light Rail Vehicles can seat 300 passengers with 300 standing in a 3-car train, which is 270 feet long by 8.6 feet wide by 15 feet high. The car, manufactured by AnsaldoBreda S.P.A. of Naples and Pistoia, Italy, has a maximum speed of 55 mph and an average speed of 24 mph. Photo by Metro



WHEEL CLICKS
NOVEMBER 2006 VOLUME 70, NO. 8

EDITOR **DICK FINLEY**
 TECHNICAL EDITOR **CHARLES VARNES**
 MAILER **FRED KNOX**
 EXCURSION DIRECTOR **BARBARA SIBERT**

Published monthly by Pacific Railroad society, Inc., P. O. Box 80726, San Marino, California 91118-8726. The Society is a California chartered, nonprofit organization of those who share an interest in railroad operations, travel and history. Telephone (562) 692-4858. INTERNET Home Page: <http://www.pacificrailroadsociety.org> For excursion informaton, phone (626) 570-8651.

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. ©2006 BY PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY, INC.

Membership Dues: \$25.00 per year

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**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY, INC.

VIC CARLUCCI **PRESIDENT**
ROB MARKOWITZ **VICE-PRESIDENT**
BILL SMITH **SECRETARY**
MARTI ANN DRAPER **TREASURER**
DAVE ABBOTT (2004-2007) **DIRECTOR**
OWEN DANAHER (2004-2007) **DIRECTOR**
DICK FINLEY (2005-2008) **DIRECTOR**
CHRIS PARKER (2006-2009) **DIRECTOR**
LINDSAY SMITH (2005-2008) **DIRECTOR**

PRS NEWS — ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

- Nov. 3 Board meeting, 7:30 p.m., Valencia Room at Joslyn Fri. Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
- Nov. 4, 11, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10 a.m. to 4 18, 25 p.m., Bonita & Monte Vista Aves., San Dimas.
- Sats. Committee meeting: 25.
- Nov. 4, 11, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Noakes & 18, 25 Herbert Sts., "Saunders Yard," Commerce. Regular day: 4, 18; Extra day: 11, 25. Committee meeting: 18. Call Will Walters for info.: 714-637-4676.
- Sats.
- Nov. 10 Membership meeting, 7:30 p.m., **MTS HEAD- Fri. QUARTERS BLDG., BOARD ROOM, THIRD FLOOR, 1 GATEWAY PLAZA, LOS ANGELES.** The underground garage will probably charge for parking (\$6.00?) Last Departures: Red & Blue Lines 12:00P+, Gold Line 11:52P; San Bernardino & Antelope Valley Metrolinks 9:00P.
- Dec. 1 Board meeting, 7:30 p.m., **PACIFIC RAILROAD Fri. MUSEUM, 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.**
- Dec. 2, 9, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10 a.m. to 4 16, 23, 30 p.m., Bonita & Monte Vista Aves., San Dimas.
- Sats. Committee meeting: 23.
- Dec. 2, 9, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Noakes & 16, 23 Herbert Sts., Commerce. Regular day: 2, 16;
- Sats. OERM day: 9; Extra day: 23. Com. meeting: 16.

- Dec. 10 Open House—Pacific Railroad Museum, 3:00 p.m. Sun. to 5:00 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
- Dec. 10 Holiday Dinner at Via Verde Country Club, Social Sun. Hr. 5:00 p.m., Dinner 6:00 p.m., 1400 Avenida Entrada, San Dimas.
- Dec. 15 Slide Night at Saunders Yard, 7:00 p.m. Bring Fri. slides and refreshments.
- Dec. 31 New Years Eve at Saunders Yard. Sun.

MEETING PROGRAMS by **RUSS DAVIES**

November 10: **NOTE! THE JOSLYN CENTER IS NOT AVAILABLE ON THIS DATE FOR OUR MEETING. See PRS NEWS – ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES**

Traction night! We'll see a presentation of **slides** from the **R&LHS Archives** assembled by **Joe Bonino** (and possibly presented by Joe, his consulting commitments permitting). The presentation will showcase the late, great **Pacific Electric!** **Be there, and bring slide briefs!**

December 10: At 7:30 p.m., the Pacific Railroad Museum will present a slide program at the Holiday Dinner on the "History of Railroading in San Dimas" and the development and continuing operation of the Pacific Railroad Museum.

MEMBERSHIP by **VIRGINIA GRUPP**

At the Board meeting on October 6, 2006, Joseph G. Putt and Per Harwe were voted into PRS.

SYNOPSIS OF BOARD MINUTES—SEPTEMBER 1, 2006

[Complete Minutes are available from Secretary Bill Smith]
CALL TO ORDER—8:10 p.m. in Valencia Room of Joslyn Center.

ROLL CALL—Present: President Vic Carlucci, Vice-President: Rob Markowitz, Directors: David Abbott, Owen Danaher, Dick Finley, Chris Parker, and Lindsay Smith. **Absent:** Secretary Bill Smith and Treasurer Marti Ann Draper (both excused). **Also Present:** Cecelia Ditlefsen, Virginia Grupp, Ken Ruben, Barbara Sibert and John Stallkamp.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES—Those of Aug. 4, 2006.

TREASURER—The President noted that the Treasurer and several other members were attending a memorial service for Bill Farmer at Train Mountain, Oregon.

EXCURSIONS—Space is available for the San Francisco trip.

PUBLICATIONS—The mailing party for the Oct. *Wheel Clicks* (WC) will be Sept. 27.

MEMBERSHIP—Two applicants were presented for membership and subsequently voted into PRS.

MUSEUM—See items in Museum article in Sept. WC.

ROLLING STOCK—The *National Forum* is at Track 13 of LA Union Station. A moving bill has been paid to Union Pacific to move the car to Saunders Yard.

PUBLICITY—An Open House will be held at the ex-PE station in Etiwanda is scheduled for Nov. 17.

MEETING ARRANGEMENTS—Oct. and Nov. Boards and Membership meetings will be at Joslyn Center. Dec. Board will be at the Pacific Railroad Museum. The Holiday Banquet will take the place of the Dec. Membership Meeting.

INSURANCE—The last of our four insurance policies for this

year has been received, which was the general liability policy written by the Hartford Insurance Co. (premium - \$350.00).
ADJOURNMENT—9:30 p.m.

PACIFIC RAILROAD MUSEUM by LINDSAY SMITH

About the time I feel we are peaceful at the Museum, another event seems to keep us several days late and overloaded. In September Tim Muck and I sold some of our excess inventory at the Orange Empire Swap Meet. We brought home more than \$600.00.

We have a tent and banner that we used at Fullerton Railroad Days. We sold items at the Pomona Valley Model Railroad Club Swap Meet in October. We use the funds from sales to purchase current books before they go out of print. Our de-acquisition program makes the books useful again. Sometimes they come back as donations.

We have had an extraordinary growth to our documents and image collections. We have added to our archives by donations from the following:

- Ralph Melching's negative collection in six cabinets of paper envelopes. Joe Moir is making an inventory.
- Ron Bateman
- Keith Ogle
- Marti Ann Draper. Lots of Santa Fe operations books.
- Elbert Gann. We went to south Los Angeles and picked up several boxes.
- Helen Kirshman. We finished the inventory and added the collection to the shelves, but I still must send her the report.
- Bill Farmer. A magnificent amount of books, slides, hats and memorabilia.
- Joe Moir. Continuing photo donations and contact with the Whistle Stop.
- Dick Donat

Tim Muck, Jim Baker, Roger Fogt, and Russ Davies are making lists of these donations. I had put off acknowledging the Robert Noon collection from Nancy Dingus. I looked for the mention we made in past *Wheel Clicks*. I have started making digital copies of *Wheel Clicks* and am making a digital list of the items. It is incomplete as yet but the task of responding to Nancy pointed out the need for a comprehensive *Wheel Clicks* Index.

John Thompson of Belleview, Washington, sponsors a Yahoo Group. In his Cajon group, John has printed early items from *Wheel Clicks*. He had found some at a swap meet and I have helped him add to the discussions by forwarding more *Wheel Clicks* items relating to Cajon operations.

Ed Saalig of La Verne remembers the wreck of the RDC cars. He became interested in them and after visiting the Museum, joined the PRS. We have been slow processing memberships but he is working on a book about the cars. We have talked to Corey Wylde about printing the book with many colored pictures. When we went on-line on Cajon, Stan Kistler came back and offers some help. There were more comments and John Thomson has let us discuss the operation.

Mel Goyen has been making DVDs from our old films. Before CDs and VHS tapes, there were 8mm film strips for foamers. We have cleaned up some of these and we are getting ready to offer them for sale in DVD formats. We showed one of

the early steam sequences at the October General Meeting.

Owen Danaher has entertained many visitors to the Museum. We have seen many of our members and Owen is a recruiter. We get many calls asking about our hours. We had some visitors from Bangladesh. They were in school and took video of our staff working.

Vic Carlucci and a friend visited Chard Walker. Chard has given us a chart of the LARY system. He made the drawing in our 6th & Main Museum. We are going to make copies and they will be sold later.

Bob Washburn has become a regular and he is working with Russ on the 35mm slide collection. I would guess we now have over 100,000 slides. Russ Davies has made several presentations from our collection. We have purchased archive quality (low acidity) boxes and will purchase more. The Bill Farmer collection is has about 25,000 shots from around the world. We are developing a policy for selecting slides for the archives.

My friend and the kind gentleman who established the Museum in PRS was a string saver at times. He was building the collection and it grew to the facility we are so proud of today. We have now reached saturation and my role is to manage the space. We keep the best but we have to find alternate places for things like surplus books. Owen has taken some of them to the general meetings and recently, I have been selling at Swap Meets. Peter Balch and Russ Davies made our shelving system railroad friendly and we can find items that have made it through the acquisition process in the files and shelves. We look forward to making computer listings of more than the books to support research such as Ed Saalig's RDC book.

[EXPO LINE from Page 1]

way and Exposition Blvd. A single-truck Birney streetcar had been assigned to run between Amoco Junction (at the tracks of the Long Beach Line) and 11th Ave.

Dedication:

Parsons Corp., in conjunction with the Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority, PCI constructors, and Fluor Enterprises, officially kicked off construction of the new 8.5-mile Mid-City/Exposition Corridor Light Rail Transit Project on Friday, September 29, 2006. On the Exposition Blvd. median (right-of-way), between Hillcrest Dr. and West Blvd., were set up several tent covers for morning refreshments, music and a program.

The program started shortly after 9:00 a.m. with County Supervisor Yvonne Braithwaite Burke, Chair of the Expo Construction Authority, welcoming the guests and introducing County Supervisor Gloria Molina, Metro Board Chair, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, Culver City Mayor Gary Silbiger, Rick Thorpe, CEO, Expo Construction Authority, and Members of the Expo Construction Authority Board of Directors.

"Today marks the beginning of construction on this vital transportation project that will bring relief to the thousands of daily commuters that travel between downtown Los Angeles and the Westside," said Supervisor Burke. "It's been over 50 years since Pacific Electric's Santa Monica Air Line provided passenger service along this right-of-way and in less than five years we will once again have a rail system in place to ease

congestion and speed travel times for Westside residents," said Supervisor Molina. "Today is a milestone for the construction authority and a time to celebrate as we begin to construct this important transportation project for the region," said Expo Construction Authority CEO Rick Thorpe.

After the program many dignitaries went to the median west of the program tent, put on hard hats, picked up a shovel, and lifted soil for a groundbreaking.

Landscaping will be a particularly important element in creating the Exposition Light Rail Line as a transit parkway. When it opens, the Expo Line will feature thousands of trees, shrubs and vines. "Modeled after the successful Metro Orange Line busway in the San Fernando Valley, the Expo Line will have similar landscaping, creating a park-like atmosphere along the corridor," said Thorpe.

The Expo Line, beginning in downtown Los Angeles will have a total of 10 stations, sharing two stations (7th St./Metro Center and Pico/Chick Hearn) with the existing Metro Blue Line. The cost of the new project is estimated at \$640 million and includes eight new stations (possibly nine if an optional USC-specific stop is included) and a bike path that will run along the alignment. The new stations planned for the project will be built at 23rd St./Flower, Jefferson/Flower, Vermont/Exposition, Western/Exposition, Crenshaw/Exposition, La Brea/Exposition, La Cienega/Exposition, and Washington/National.

The stations will include state-of-the-art amenities including ticket vending machines, telephones, security cameras, real-time train arrival signs, bike racks, canopy-covered seating and public art. Park and Ride lots will also be constructed along the alignment with approximately 1,500 parking spaces provided among three stations at Crenshaw, La Cienega and Washington/National.

Estimated ridership on the Exposition Light Rail Line is projected at 43,600 daily riders by the year 2020. The hours of operation will coincide with Metro's other rail lines (approximately 4 a.m. to 2 a.m., seven days a week).

We are excited to get construction underway," said Jim Shaperll, Parsons Group president. "Not only is this project great for the community at large, it also serves as an example of the city's pledge to promote denser development and the use of public transit, which ultimately will further business and economic growth."

Last month the Construction Authority received proposals from various firms to do environmental studies and preliminary engineering workups for the proposed second phase, which would complete the Expo's run to Santa Monica, Thorpe said. [Info. from Metro (LACMTA), *LA Downtown News*, *Pasadena Star-News*]

GRAND CANYON RAILWAY FINDS BUYER

The owners of Grand Canyon Railway have received a letter of intent on Sept. 21 from Xanterra Parks & Resorts to buy the railway for an undisclosed price, said David Chambers, railway president. Xanterra operates hotels, restaurants and stores at most of the nation's most popular national parks. Chambers said a final deal is expected to be struck by the end of October, with anticipated National Park Service approval by early next year.

The 65-mile rail line begins in downtown Williams and ends at a historic depot on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. Nearly 225,000 people rode the rail last year and 2005 revenues were \$38 million, railway officials said.

Chambers said the purchase is expected to include the railway's depot and restaurant in Williams and the adjoining Grand Canyon Railway Hotel. It also includes 162 acres paralleling the tracks in Williams, 160 acres near the Grand Canyon National Park boundary, and two steam engines and 29 cars that the railway has in service. The railway's six diesel engines and 14 cars not in service also will be included in the deal, Chambers said. The railway is the largest employer in Williams, and Xanterra intends to retain its 480 employees.

Owners Max and Thelma Biegert brought the railway back from the dead, after a nearly 20-year absence, when they resumed operations in 1989. The railway had once been the main mode of transportation to the Grand Canyon in the early 1900s.

[Info. from *The Arizona Republic* via Jim Baker]

LOS ANGELES COUNTY RIDERS

During the month of August 2006, the average number of weekday riders traveling on trains going to, from, or within Los Angeles County, other than on Amtrak, was 294,424. This was a 2 percent decrease from last month.

RAIL TRANSIT TEMPO

by TOM NELSON

SPOKANE

The Spokane Transit Authority (STA) on Aug. 17 unanimously approved the placing of two non-binding questions concerning light rail transit (LRT) on the Nov. 2006 ballot. The 15.5-mile LRT line would run between downtown Spokane, Wash., and Liberty Lake.

1. Should STA identify local taxing alternatives and develop a financing plan to put before the voters for approval in 2007 to fund a \$263 million light rail project from Spokane, through Spokane Valley, to Liberty Lake?

2. The second advisory measure asks: Should STA use existing resources to fund preliminary engineering and environmental analysis for a future light rail project to run from Spokane, through the City of Spokane Valley, to Liberty Lake?

SALT LAKE CITY

By June this year, the ridership on Utah Transit Authority's (UTA) 19-miles of Trax LRT lines in the Salt Lake City area had grown to 58,000 per day. That is more than double the number transit officials had predicted for 2020.

UTA has received a \$489 million Federal Full Funding Grant Agreement for the FrontRunner commuter rail line between Salt Lake City and Weber County. UTA plans to start running trains on the 44-mile route by Nov. 2008. Peak periods service is to be every 20 minutes and off-peak 40 minutes. UTA estimates a daily ridership of 12,500 by 2025.

DENVER

Engineers designing the Denver Regional Transportation District's (RTD) FasTracks rapid transit lines are faced with deciding on either electric or diesel motive power. According to their studies, diesel railcars cost \$3.6 million each and between 67 cents and \$2 per mile to run, depending on fuel costs and

operating conditions. Electric rolling stock is cheaper at \$2.8 million per car, but electrification adds \$2 million more per mile. Electric energy and operating conditions amount to between 55 and 80 cents per mile for an electric multiple unit.

Electric commuter trains on a 23.6-mile airport line would have a 29-minute trip time, including station stops, due to faster acceleration than diesel cars, which would take 34 minutes. Commuter trains in the Boulder-Longmont corridor will travel 38 miles each way. Although RTD's FasTracks study assumed commuter rail type trains running in the 18-mile corridor through Commerce City and Thornton, LRT is still an option, which if selected would eliminate the need to choose between electric and diesel.

NORTH SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Siemens Desiro diesel-hydraulic light rail vehicles (LRV) deliveries for North San Diego County Transit District's Oceanside-Escondido Sprinter line began Aug. 15, 2006. Railcar No. 4001 arrived at the Escondido maintenance facility followed by No. 4002 on Aug. 17. No. 4003 was to arrive in late Aug. Construction of the line was more than 50 percent complete in early Aug.

PHOENIX

The Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA) in Phoenix, Arizona, formed Valley Metro Rail (VMR) (METRO) in Oct. 2002. The target date for revenue service to begin on the 20.3-mile LRT line is Dec. 2008. Service will be provided by 50 low-floor, Kinkisharyo, LRVs, each 93-feet long with a 200-riders capacity. The 27 stations will have canopies and louvered panels for shade, seating, and drinking fountains.

Peak period service frequency is to be 10 to 15 minutes, off peak 20 to 30 minutes. METRO LRVs will have green signal priority at 150 street grade crossings. First year daily ridership is projected to be 26,000; by 2020 it is expected to grow to 50,000 daily.

ALBUQUERQUE

Part of the first phase of commuter rail service in New Mexico was opened by the Mid-Region Council of Governments on July 14, 2006. The Rail Runner Express was launched with free rides for the first three months. The first three stations activated include Sandoval County/U.S. 550 (the northernmost station located in Bernalillo), Los Ranchos/Journal Center, and downtown Albuquerque. The downtown Bernalillo station (just south of Sandoval County/U.S. 550) was to be added this summer. Service to Belen (the southernmost station of this phase) was scheduled to begin by Oct. 2006, completing the \$135-million, 46-mile, first phase, which includes nine stations.

Albuquerque intends to join the U.S. cities providing LRT service to its citizens and visitors. Being planned are lines along the Central Ave. corridor from Old Town to Nob Hill and from Central to Albuquerque International Airport. The \$200-million LRT system is expected to open in Aug. 2009. The City selected HDR as program manager/general engineering consultant assisted by URS Corp. and LTK Engineering Services. They will be involved with design, architecture, vehicle procurement, operations, and maintenance.

DALLAS

On July 3, 2006, a Full Funding Grant Agreement was signed which will provide Dallas Area Rapid Transit with \$700

million in federal funds toward the \$1.4-billion Northwest/Southeast LRT extension to be known as the Green Line. The 10.9-mile northwest segment will extend from Victory Station to the City of Farmers Branch, and the 10.1-mile southeast segment will continue to Buckner Blvd. The project will add 16 new stations, 2,700 parking spaces, 18 new LRVs, and increase rider capacity on 38 existing LRVs. Opening is scheduled for June 2011.

AUSTIN

Capital Metro in Austin, Texas, began informational forums in July 2006, on its voter-approved commuter rail project to build a 32-mile line with nine stations between downtown Austin and Leander. To be known as Metrorail, service is programmed to start in 2008. Commuter cars will be gray with red stripes and doors, accented in black and white.

The Swiss company Stadler is building six railcars, each 138 feet long with 108 seats, at a cost of about \$38 million. Locomotive(s) will not be needed, as each railcar will be self-propelled by two diesel engines in the center section. A corridor between engine compartments will allow passengers to walk from one car end to the other. Each engine will be capable of running the car if one fails. The Cummins engines will be manufactured in Europe. Lights and air conditioning are to have backup power. Stadler was to begin building the first railcar in the summer of 2006 and deliver it in Sept. 2007. The last railcar is expected to arrive in Austin by May 2008.

The station platforms will be highlevel with a maximum gap between platform and railcar entrance floor of three inches. The three outlying stations in or near Leander will have park-and-ride lots.

HOUSTON

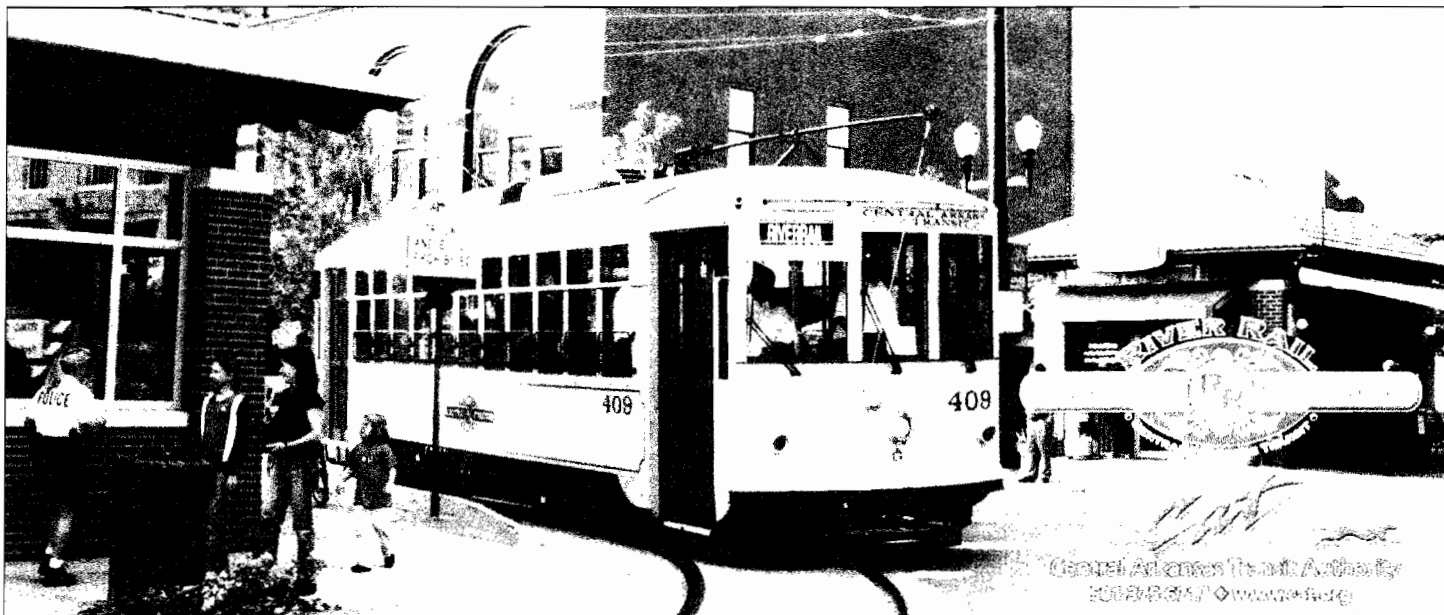
Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County in Texas (METRO) in 2001 embarked on METRO Solutions, a \$2 billion long-range planning process for the Houston area. The study will include the expansion of LRT, new BRT (bus rapid transit) lines, commuter rail, and intermodal facilities.

METRO hired HDR/S.R. Beard & Associates as the general planning consultant for METRO Solutions. More recently HDR etc. received an added two year contract for travel demand forecasting as well as corridor, project, environmental, and public involvement planning. HDR will perform the work on development and preliminary engineering for the North Corridor extension of the present LRT line and an upgraded rapid transit line.

Siemens has contracts to furnish SITRAC (Siemens Traction Control) propulsion equipment for its Avanto LRVs ordered by Houston and San Diego. Included are the electrical current controls.

NEW ORLEANS

Because of the smaller population in New Orleans resulting from the destruction of Hurricane Katrina, more than 200 Regional Transit Authority (RTA) employees will lose their jobs. The RTA Board on July 27 regretfully approved the action to be completed by Nov. 30 when the temporary federal subsidy ends. RTA employment prior to the storm was 1,357. The \$1.25 fare on streetcars and buses was reinstated on Aug. 6. Until then rides were free since service resumed in Oct. 2005.



River Rail car 409 turns the corner from President Clinton Ave. to Commerce St. in Little Rock, Arkansas. Phase 2 track will continue east on Pres. Clinton Ave., to the right.
Central Arkansas Transit photo



A view looking southeast at the former Choctaw Route railway station in Little Rock. On the left, a portion of the station platform shed is visible. This depot was built on the east side of downtown, but the depot used by Amtrak is on the west side of downtown.
Photo by Tom Nelson

LITTLE ROCK

My wife Mary Anne and I arrived in Little Rock, Arkansas, by air on Sept. 1, 2006, to board the Delta Queen (DQ) steamboat for a sail down the Arkansas River and up the Mississippi River to St. Louis. For this particular cruise we did not take the train, because the DQ's company offered free air-fare. We arranged a "red-eye flight" to have a day in Little Rock. Of course we visited historic sites, but my main interest was the River Rail Electric Streetcar line of Central Arkansas Transit Authority (CAT) which reintroduced street railway service to Little Rock and North Little Rock Nov. 1, 2004.

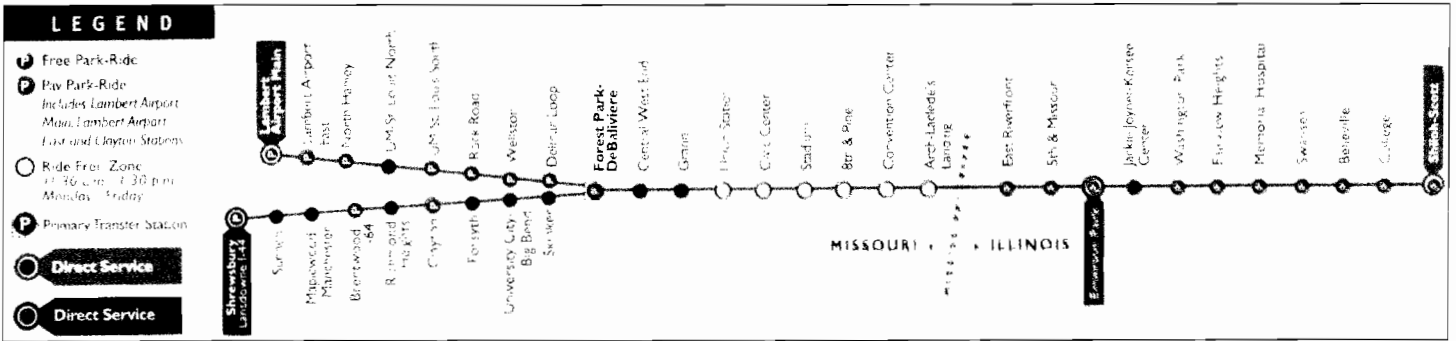
River Rail operates in the downtowns of both cities on 2.5

miles of single track, including two-way running on the one track that crosses the Arkansas River via the Main St. Bridge. The intercity route runs on a loop within each city, but another streetcar remains continuously circulating on the larger loop in Little Rock where River Market and the historic buildings are located. Single overhead trolley wire suffices for each car's trolley pole to contact the electrical power source. There are five stops in North Little Rock and six in Little Rock for what is referred to as Phase 1. Each stop is easily identified by a small shelter with a bench and posted signs.

The cost to build Phase 1 was about \$20 million, \$8 million per mile, including a car barn, reached by a short section of non-revenue track, and three streetcars. The only private right-of-way is on the Main Street Bridge. Federal funds paid for 80 percent of the project. Local funding was in equal amounts from each city and Pulaski County. Annual operating costs are expected not to exceed \$500,000. New operating expenses above passenger revenues will also be paid by the two cities and the county.

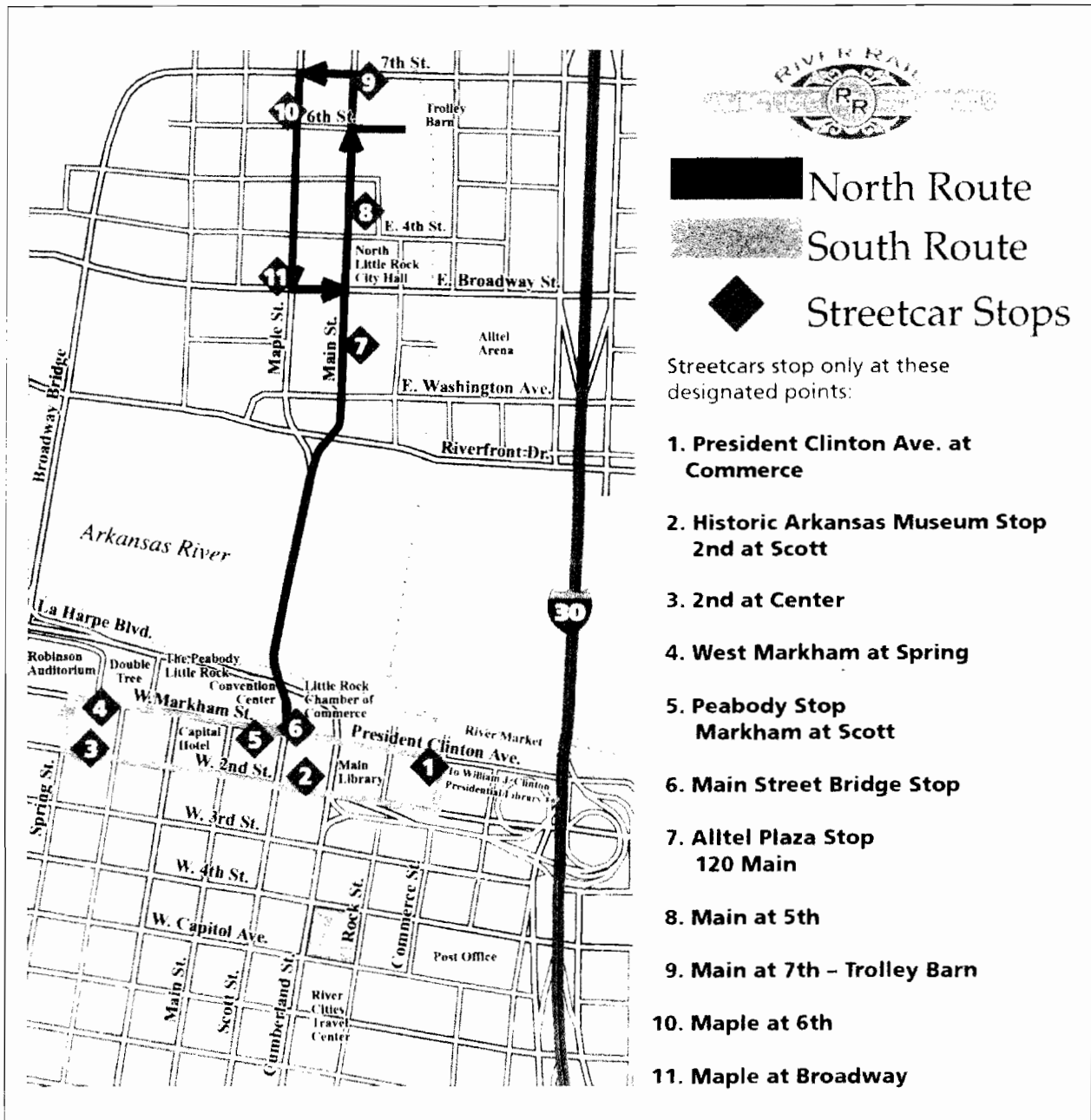
The replica streetcars were built by GOMACO in Ida Grove, Iowa, at a cost of \$808,000 each. They resemble a doubletruck Birney but are modernized with air conditioning and on-board wheelchair lifts. The motors and controllers were obtained in Milano, Italy, where they had formerly been in service on that city's streetcars for 75 years. Fareboxes came from Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA) where they had been replaced by a newer type. The cars can carry 40 seated passengers and 40 standees.

Dec. 24, 1947, was the end of street railways in Little Rock and North Little Rock. The last streetcar to run in Little Rock was No. 407 in green and white livery, so CAT decided to number the new cars of Phase 1 in the sequence of 408, 409, and 410. The Tampa streetcars are the same as CAT's. When one came through Little Rock en route to Florida, it was left on Main



St. Louis MetroLink (Metro) light rail system effective fall 2006.

Metro diagram



Map of River Rail Phase 1 routes, North Little Rock at top, Little Rock at bottom. On Sept. 1, 2006, one streetcar ran continuously via the combined routes, while another operated only on the loop in Little Rock.

St. for a few days for everyone to see. The public loved the car's yellow color, so with Tampa's permission CAT adopted that color for its cars.

The River Rail System operates every day beginning at 11 a.m. Service ends at 10 p.m. Mon. through Wed., midnight Thu. through Sat., and 5 p.m. Sun. Adult rides are 50¢ per round trip, 25¢ for seniors, and a day pass is \$2. River Rail carried 200,000 riders the first year. CAT sells the naming rights for rail stops. The stop nearest the Peabody Hotel was named Peabody, a name that is known for its 11 a.m. performance of several ducks trained to move as a group from an elevator, along a red carpet, and climb into a decorative, lobby-pool of water. When the Peabody stop was dedicated, a red carpet was laid up the entrance to one of the streetcars, and the ducks boarded for a ride.

Preparations for Phase 2 are underway with two more cars ordered from GOMACO, 411 and 412. The route will be eastward from Commerce St. along President Clinton Ave. to the Clinton Library. Just to the south is an attractive, reddish-masonry, two-story, railway depot now serving other uses. Above the second story facing the street entrance are the words, THE CHOCTAW ROUTE, indented into the facade. After traversing a block or two south, the River Rail will head west on 2nd St. or 3rd St. to return to the present loop in Little Rock.

Information available when I wrote the May edition of this column stated that Phase 2 would open this mid-summer, but on Sept. 1 no work toward laying track or erecting trolley-wire support poles had been done along Pres. Clinton Ave. When I visited CAT HQ that afternoon, managers had left for the Labor Day Holiday, so only the unofficial word indicated that it may open by the end of Dec.

It is North Little Rock's route choice for Phase 3, not yet decided. After that, Phase 4 may be on Little Rock's Main St. or to the Arkansas Capitol. There has been talk of a line to the airport, but that seems beyond CAT's financial capabilities at present.

The DQ was delayed in leaving North Little Rock on Sept. 1 due to weather in the eastern U.S. affecting airline travel. This prevented some passengers from arriving to board the DQ for its scheduled 6 p.m. departure. Darkness had fallen by the time we pulled away from our tie-up place, turned around, and started down river. Lights on the tall buildings in Little Rock presented a different view of the city. One building had three neon ducks in a row near its top, identifying the Peabody Hotel.

The best sight materialized as the DQ emerged downstream from under the Main Street Bridge. It was there that an emotional moment was felt by most of us watching a River Rail streetcar slowly crossing on the bridge above, its interior lights shining brightly. The motorman sounded the car's whistle, answered by a blast from the Delta Queen's throaty steam horn, a farewell exchange recognizing the revival of two historic types of transportation.

MEMPHIS

The next opportunity to ride local rail transit occurred on Sept. 4 in Memphis, Tenn. The DQ tied up at Mud Island for a half day shore tour to Graceland, Elvis Presley's home, and the new Rock n' Soul Museum created by the Smithsonian Institution. Mary Anne took the tour, while I joined two DQ passen-

gers also interested in rail transit, Bob Heinlein, Assist. Supt. of Weekday Operations at Illinois Railway Museum and former Chicago Transit Authority employee, and Leigh Morris to ride MATA. We had taken rides on MATA's streetcars during previous Memphis visits. I had seen the start of track laying for a new line to the Medical Center east of downtown during my last visit and knew it had been completed.

The DQ shuttle bus dropped us off in front of the Peabody Hotel, and we headed over to Main St. and two blocks north to Madison where the new line connects to the double track on Main at right angles to Madison. We boarded a car that had just returned from the Medical Center. The motorman told us he was going up to MATA's North End Terminal on Main St. and return to go out Madison Ave., so we bought our Daily Trolley Passes from him at \$3.50 each. A new map and timetable folder for MATA's rail system was being made, but nothing was available yet. Departments other than Operating were not open, because it was Labor Day, leaving no one in authority to visit.

This most recently built line's track begins at Main, but is only single track to the next street due to the narrow width of Madison in that block. Then it becomes double track to the outer end. The entire line was built to LRT standards with heavier rail and overhead catenary, not like the streetcar system on Main St. with its single trolley wire. This would facilitate a future extension to the airport. For the connection of the single track to double track on Main, a single track curving off Madison to the south and another curving to the north were installed along with crossovers between the Main St. double tracks. The LRT type of construction on Madison allowed the Melbourne, Australia, center entrance cars to move along more rapidly than on Main St.

When we returned to Main, I elected to stay on the car to its second stop on Main while Bob and Leigh got off to take more photos of the line on Madison. I boarded a southbound car and put my day pass into the farebox slot for validation where it became stuck. I notified the motorwoman and stayed on the car. Thus, I rode past the end of double track at the final south car stop on Main St. This is located one-quarter block north of Central Station where Amtrak serves Memphis. From this car stop, a single non-revenue track continues south and ends in front of Central Station.

The lady car operator tried to extract my pass, but it would not budge. She gave up, called maintenance on her cell phone, and gave me a replacement pass. I rode back to Union Ave., went to the Memphis Peabody Hotel, and arrived just in time to see the 11 a.m. performance of the march of the ducks (actually they run) on the red carpet, elevator to pool. At 11:30, the three of us were on the DQ's last shuttle bus back to the boat, a short visit to Memphis.

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

As reported in the October issue of *Wheel Clicks*, the Nashville Chamber of Commerce believed the new commuter line out of Nashville would open a few days after Aug. 7. They were a bit optimistic, because the actual start date was Sept. 18, according to *NARP News* (National Association of Railroad Passengers). Named the *Music City Star*, the new commuter rail service covers 30 miles between downtown Nashville and Lebanon.

ST. LOUIS

The Delta Queen arrived in St. Louis the evening of Sept. 8, and debarkation was Saturday morning the 9th; again the transit offices were closed, but a lady staffing the information desk at Lambert Airport was very knowledgeable and helpful. I learned that MetroLink's LRT Cross County extension had opened on Saturday Aug. 26, just two weeks previously. She gave me copies of the new MetroLink Ride Guide and Quick Guide. There were free rides on the opening weekend days with revenue service beginning on Aug. 28. The Cross County line extends from the junction with the line to Lambert, just west of Forest Park Station, heads west to Clayton, and then turns south to Shrewsbury. A one day system pass costs \$4.50.

Having only a limited amount of time before our flight to Los Angeles, we rode from the airport to Shrewsbury. Departure from the airport (after acquiring our boarding passes and sending our luggage through security) was 9:49 a.m., with return at 11:12. We found the Cross County extension to be a well-built, modern LRT line mostly at or above ground level. It went underground for a few blocks of subway and below a few cross streets. There was only one street-level grade crossing on the entire line; it was protected by automatic crossing gates. The line was double-track from Forest Park to end of line. Art work at stations was included in, or attached to, vertical concrete walls.

A side note: En route to the airport on the bus shuttle we observed the steel I-beam supports and spans from which contact wire had previously been suspended, but now gone, for the famous electric interurbans of Illinois Terminal Railroad. These frames were still in place on the trestle approaching the bridge IT used to cross the Mississippi River and on the bridge.

OMAHA

The previous city administration was enthusiastic about reinstalling a streetcar line in Omaha, Nebraska. The present city governance is not. A Sept. 22, 2006, telephone call to Don Thorson, Assistant to the Mayor, evoked an answer bordering more on a political expression than reality. He said the mayor's office is interested in a local rail transit line, but it is way too early to proceed. He indicated an appropriate private/city partnership would be needed to supply the financial backing for such a project.

OTTAWA, CANADA

OC Transpo, Ottawa's transit agency, requested bids on a 15-year contract to build and operate a 17-mile starter electric LRT line from Rideau Centre to Barrhaven. Transpo specified a maximum price tag of C\$725 million, including 21 LRVs. A Siemens Canada consortium was preferred low bidder, but Transpo did not disclose the actual bid price. OC Transpo's O-Train Light Rail Pilot Project will be the first step toward city-wide LRT. Ottawa was an early proponent of BRT instead of LRT. It appears Transpo has decided that Vancouver, BC, and Toronto, Ontario, were right.

[Supplemental info. from F. Mares, Ed Von Nordeck, C. Varnes, M. Nelson, FTA, *Austin American-Statesman*, UTU News, CAT, and trade publications *Ry. Age*, *METRO*, and *Mass Transit*]

BNSF RICHMOND INTERMODAL FACILITY CLOSED

by CHARLES VARNES

Over the past several years, demand for intermodal service into and out of Richmond, California, has been gradually declining. As a result of the decline, the BNSF Ry. discontinued intermodal service to and from Richmond, California effective Sept. 1, 2006.

The intermodal traffic formerly handled at Richmond will be handled at the Oakland International Gateway (20-foot and 40-foot international and domestic steamship containers), and the Stockton Intermodal Facility (48-foot and 53-foot domestic containers and all trailers).

In addition to the decline in the demand for intermodal service at Richmond, BNSF is concentrating its assets on a more streamlined core network. This change will permit the elimination of on line work events and create more point-to-point train operations.

CALTRAIN NEWS

by MIKE GONDRO

In September, Caltrain released a preview of its system-wide capital improvement project, known as Project 2025. The plan is basically a wish list of improvements and increased service level options that Caltrain would like to see implemented over the next 20 years, based on funding availability. Some of the major projects include: Electrifying the Caltrain corridor by 2012; Improving technology and signaling equipment so that train speeds can be increased; Opening the Dumbarton Rail Corridor to serve Newark and Union City by 2012; Adding track and crossovers to accommodate more frequent trains; Building grade separations to assist with rail safety and traffic flow; Improving the San Francisco terminal to allow for increased service and access to downtown through the Transbay Terminal; Improving the San Jose terminal to allow for additional service, including access to ACE, Capitol Corridor, and Amtrak trains.

A final plan will be delivered to the Joint Powers Board by the end of the year. Visit www.caltrain.com/Project2025 to view a slide show of the plan.

As promised earlier this year, parking fees at Caltrain stations between San Jose Diridon and San Francisco increased on October 1. Daily rates increased by \$0.50 to \$2.00 from \$1.50, while monthly rates went from \$15 to \$20.

On September 25, Baby Bullet Train No. 323 struck a car at Churchill Avenue in Palo Alto that had stalled on the tracks. Fortunately, there were no injuries, but both main tracks were blocked, shutting down the line for about two hours. Northbound trains were turned back to San Jose at California Avenue and southbound trains were turned back to San Francisco at Palo Alto. A bus bridge was set up between California Avenue and Palo Alto to connect passengers with trains.

Caltrain track crews were busy in late September performing routine maintenance, including replacing cross ties near Broadway station in Burlingame, welding tracks near the Maple Street bridge in Redwood City, and resurfacing tracks near the San Jose station.

PASSENGER TRAIN UPDATES by CHARLES VARNES

Mary E. Peters was confirmed by the U.S. Senate as the 15th Secretary of Transportation on Sept. 30, 2006. She was nomi-

nated by President Bush in Sept. Peters succeeds Norman Mineta, who resigned in June.

WESTERN CORRIDORS

Pacific Surfliner

Reservations will be required on *Pacific Surfliner* trains during the Thanksgiving holiday period, Tuesday, Nov. 21 through Monday, Nov. 27.

San Joaquin

During the Oakland Raiders season, fans can travel from Bakersfield, or any intermediate stations, directly to the Oakland Coliseum station, which is adjacent to the football stadium. On Raiders home game days *San Joaquin* Tr. No. 711 will make a special game-day-only stop at the Oakland Coliseum station instead of the Oakland-Jack London station, the regularly scheduled end point of the route. Home game days are Oct. 1, 22, and 29, Nov. 12, and Dec. 3 and 17.

San Joaquin Tr. No. 711 departs Bakersfield at 4:55 a.m., and arrives at the Oakland Coliseum station at 11:20 a.m. After the game, fans can return on *San Joaquin* Tr. No. 718, which departs the Coliseum station at 5:40 p.m.

Radio personalities from KHKK - The Hawk and ESPN Radio 970 will ride *San Joaquin* Tr. No. 711 on game days throughout the season from Modesto to fire-up the on-board Raider Nation.

Capitol Corridor

The Capitol Corridor is now served Monday through Friday by 20 trains, 16 *Capitols* plus four *San Joaquins*. On weekends and holidays, the corridor is served by 11 *Capitols*, plus four *San Joaquins*. The *San Joaquins* run on the corridor from Martinez to Oakland-Jack London, stopping at all intermediate stations except Berkeley.

At Emeryville all trains have a motor coach connection to or from San Francisco. The stops in San Francisco are at the Financial District-Hyatt Regency Hotel, Ferry Building Annex, 1 Pier 39, SF Shopping Center, Moscone Center, and the Caltrain depot.

ILLINOIS SERVICE EXPANSION

The state of Illinois increased state funding for Passenger rail service from \$12.1 million to \$24 million this year. Starting Oct. 30, an additional train will be added to the Chicago-Carbondale and the Chicago-Quincy routes. The Chicago-Carbondale train will be named the *Saluki* (Tr. Nos. 390/391). The new Chicago-Quincy train will be named the *Carl Sandburg* (Tr. Nos. 381/382), and the existing *Illinois Zephyr* will be renumbered to Tr. No. 380/383.

[Info. from Ken Ruben, Ed Von Nordeck]

RENO TRAIN TRENCH

The Reno City Council on Sept. 27 approved a design for a two-block plaza west of Virginia Street, covering the city's new trench for Union Pacific Railroad tracks that cut through downtown. The \$16 million pedestrian plaza to be built with railroad trench and related grant and bond money is the final part of the \$313 million train trench.

Each of 12 trellises spanning 60 feet would be planted with wisteria and trumpet vine to shade the plaza. Paving stones would be laid over precast concrete sections that cover the trench, with rows of shade trees at the edge of the trellises.

The trellises disguise a series of towers that are 24-26 feet tall. The towers are equipped with fans so smoke and fumes can be removed quickly from the tunnel if there's a train accident. The towers also help support the trellises, said Gene Webber of plaza designer PLACES Consulting Services. If the project was approved on Oct. 11, Granite Construction Co. was to build the plaza as a change order to its trench contract.

[Info. from *Reno Gazette-Journal* via Virginia Grupp]

S. CALIF. COMMUTER RAIL RIDERSHIP

by DICK FINLEY

Metrolink weekday, systemwide, average trips during August decreased from July by 518 or 2 percent to 41,390 passengers. Total system ridership was a 6 percent increase over August 2005.

Metrolink weekday, systemwide, schedule adherence during August, being the percentage of trains arriving within 5 minutes of scheduled time, was 94 percent. 91-LA route peak period, weekday, schedule adherence was 89 percent inbound to Los Angeles and 96 percent outbound.

SCHEDULE - Thanksgiving Day

On Thanksgiving Day, the San Bernardino Line will operate their regular Sunday Schedule. The Inland Empire - Orange County (IEOC) Line will have trains leave Riverside-Downtown at 9:00 & 10:30 a.m., 12:00, 1:30, 4:00, & 6:00 p.m., arriving at Irvine 1h15m later. Return trains leave Irvine at 10:30 a.m., 12:00, 1:30, 3:00, 5:30, & 7:30 p.m., arriving at Riverside-Downtown 1h15m later. Intermediate stops are Riverside-La Sierra, North Main Corona, West Corona, Anaheim Canyon, Orange, Santa Ana, & Tustin.

Riverside-Downtown Station

On Aug. 28, the Riverside County Transportation Commission began construction of new parking facilities northeast of the Metrolink Riverside Downtown Station. The lot will accommodate 321 additional vehicles and provide easy platform access to the IEOC and 91 Lines. Consisting of new paving, lighting, fencing and landscaping, construction will include enhancements and improvements with a new east side entrance to the northern end of the east side platform. The project is expected to be completed by the end of December.

Ride Metrolink FREE for Two Years

Metrolink has teamed up with The Olson Company - A California leader in building unique urban lifestyles to provide two years free travel on Metrolink when a brand new Olson Home is purchased near a Metrolink station. Olson Communities involved with this offer are:

- Vintage Walk in Covina with 60 Townhouses
- Soco Walk in Fullerton with 120 Lofts, Townhomes & Live/Work Homes
- Founders Walk in Buena Park with 100 Townhomes
- Depot Walk in Orange with 32 Lofts & Live/Work Homes
- Village Walk in Claremont with 38 Townhomes

East Ontario Station

The UPRR has two main tracks at San Bernardino Association of Government's East Ontario station. The station has a 425-foot platform north of the north track and a 250-foot platform north of the south track between the two main tracks.

Southern California Regional Rail Authority's (SCRRA) civil contractor will begin extending both platforms in Nov. and complete the extensions in May 2007. UPRR is planning track work to install 1,548 feet of new 141-pound rail, and replace 398 wood ties with concrete ties immediately after the platform extensions are completed. The tie replacement will have to be done manually because UPRR's tie machine does not fit between the platforms.

The SCRRA Board authorized its CEO to execute a work order with UPRR in the amount of \$378,509, which includes \$223,871 for SCRRA's 50% share of UPRR's total replacement cost estimate and \$154,638 to provide flagging protection for SCRRA's contractor.

Emergency Exit/Access Rail Car Windows

The emergency exit/access window design on the third generation Bombardier rail cars has proven to be easier to maintain and test than those of the first and second-generation. The window assemblies to be purchased are designed with a solid frame that allows for the removal of the glass as a unit without requiring the removal of the entire assembly and can be replaced from the interior of the car. In order to equip the entire passenger car fleet with these windows, the Equipment Dept. is replacing approximately 1,800 windows over a five-year period for the balance of the 114 cars in the fleet.

A single bid was received from Ellcon-National Inc. on Aug. 17, 2006. The cost for each window is approximately \$900 enabling SCRRA to retrofit approximately 24 rail cars for the base year in an amount not-to-exceed \$382,000. There will be four one-year options.

Santa Susana Tunnel 26

The Board authorized the CEO to amend Contract No. C3084-06 for Safety Improvements with Johnson Western Gunitite Company increasing the authorization by \$906,000 contingent upon allocation of these funds from the State at the Oct. 12, 2006 California Transportation Commission meeting. The new total not-to-exceed contract funding authorization will be \$8,512,880.

This project entails the seismic retrofitting of the century-old concrete and wood-lined tunnel, and also requires the drilling and installation of cement grouted rock anchors on both sides of the tunnel. An engineering investigation of the tunnel lining and the ground behind the tunnel lining conducted prior to procurement indicated that large voids varying from four inches to four feet existed behind the tunnel lining. The voids behind the tunnel liner must be grouted in prior to the installation of the rock anchors. The combination of rock anchors and grouting of the voids behind the sidewalls provide the greatest benefit of seismic and structural improvements.

This contract funding will enable Johnson Western to continue grouting and make rock bolt alterations through Dec. or early Jan. 2007, allowing for the installation of approximately 2,000 additional feet of grout along the tunnel crown. It is estimated that it will cost an additional \$1,800,000 to complete the remaining 4,000 feet of tunnel crown.

Anaheim Transit Center

Anaheim's vision of one of the largest transit centers in Southern California – between Angel Stadium and the Arrow-

head Pond and 15 years in the planning – is being realized. At the first of August, Anaheim Mayor Curt Pringle, county supervisors and the Orange County Transportation Authority tentatively reached an agreement to buy 13½ acres from the county for \$32.5 million. Plans call for the Anaheim Regional Transportation Intermodal Center to include the county's largest bus terminal, a parking structure, platforms for Amtrak and Metrolink trains and room to add tracks for high-speed rail. The project would also have commercial and retail space the city hopes will entice private developers to build the station.

Pringle is on a commission of California and Nevada officials studying a 270-mile high-speed train linking Las Vegas and Ontario International Airport. Pringle is pushing to extend the route to Anaheim. The so-called Maglev train could ferry passengers at more than 250 mph from Anaheim to Ontario in 15 minutes. But Anaheim's transportation center is needed regardless of whether projects such as Maglev get built, experts say.

VIRGINIA & TRUCKEE RAILROAD

For the first time since 1938, a daily train is operating on track in the American Flat area south of Gold Hill. The Virginia & Truckee Railroad Co. has begun running its 4 p.m. train on a 1.4-mile section of track that crosses the Overman Pit. The operation is scheduled to continue through Oct. and is part of an agreement between the company and the Nevada Commission for Reconstruction of the V&T Railway.

The commission is involved in a project to rebuild the line between Virginia City and Carson City as a major tourist attraction. Tom Gray, an owner of the tourist train operation that links Virginia City with Gold Hill, said the addition to the ride offers visitors views of the 300-foot-high fill across Overman Pit, Gold Hill cemeteries, five gold and silver mines in operation, and progress on V&T Tunnel No. 2.

[Info. from Virginia Grupp]

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

	Red Line	Blue Line	Green Line	Gold Line
September 2006				
Weekday Ave.	118,279	72,025	33,645	20,972
Saturday Ave.	77,808	50,413	20,803	10,029
Sunday Ave.	65,480	42,274	15,841	9,284
Monthly Total	3,082,017	1,908,939	856,108	516,008

South Bay Study

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) has embarked on an analysis this summer of what transportation options might be possible on the Harbor Subdivision mass transit line. Several factors have spurred the MTA to take a new look at the Harbor Subdivision, which one of its predecessor agencies purchased from the ATSF Railway in 1992. Planners at the MTA caution that the Harbor Subdivision is not even included in their current long-term plan, so any mass transit line there could be two decades or more away. The analysis of the Harbor Subdivision is expected to be wrapped up in Nov. or Dec.

[Info. from *Daily Breeze*]

SAN DIEGO

The initial concept of introducing low-floor technology anticipated a fully compatible light rail vehicle (LRV). An

increased minimum platform height requirement and car size (length) created obstacles to readily adapt system-wide implementation. Additional obstacles related to compatibility with the existing fleet had to be overcome due to changes in technological applications of car design and performance.

At the June 23, 2005, Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) Board meeting, due to unresolved issues, staff was directed not to operate mixed consists (SD-100/S70) during the initial opening phase of Mission Valley East. Staff was further directed to continue efforts to identify and, where possible, resolve incompatibility issues between the new S70 and the existing SD-100 LRVs. While technical specifications for vehicle compatibility were contained in the contract, it also lacked specifics in certain electrical and control elements. This has required a higher level of testing, hardware and/or software modifications to correct discrepancies, and validation of acceptable performance.

MTS staff has continued to identify issues and work with Siemens to find acceptable resolutions. Testing has been conducted on nonrevenue test trains involving a variety of combinations of SD-100 and S70 LRVs. These test trains have included two-, three-, and four-car train sets with differing models of vehicles placed in a wide variation of consist configurations.

While staff believes there are residual matters that need further evaluation by Siemens, there are no remaining items of a serious nature that would prevent the operation of mixed two-car SD-100/70 train sets. Staff will continue to address issues related to three- and four-car mixed train sets and explore options that may result in more operating flexibility. Our plan going forward is to operate a mixed SD-100/70 consist on each of the seven train sets circulating and to position the SD100 vehicle on the west end of each train set.

One final issue that warranted evaluation involved wheelchair boarding on a mixed consist with the lead car being an SD100 vehicle. In July 2006 a special meeting of the MTS Accessible Services Advisory Committee (ASAC) was held to address this matter. ASAC was asked if it was necessary to deploy the wheelchair lift platform on an SD100 vehicle while the trailing S70 vehicle was fully accessible. The consensus of ASAC was that in all cases, the lead vehicle must be accessible whether it is an S70 or an SD100. ASAC felt that consistency in application is of the utmost importance as it related to providing lead-vehicle access to the disabled community. While this will tend to negate some of the efficiencies realized from the use of low-floor cars, the operation can be accommodated.

ORANGE COUNTY

During the second week in October, transportation officials in Irvine were to examine what intercity transit system – monorail, trolley, streetcar, or bus – the city should pursue. A team of consultants was hired by the city to hold public meetings, seek ideas and provide recommendations to the City Council by June 2007. While the final route is uncertain, one possible path would be to have it depart the Irvine Transportation Center for the Spectrum office and retail area, return, and then head to the Great Park, a distance of at least four miles.

Irvine has a \$120-million allocation from a 1990 statewide transit initiative that has not been tapped, though the city must

provide matching funds. The money is earmarked for “anything elevated or on a fixed track like a specific lane,” said Marty Bryant, the city’s public works director. Once a recommendation is made, the city wants to begin whatever construction is needed in 2010 and finish in two years.

With the annexation of the former Marine base in 2003, Irvine became the county’s largest city in area. The property was slated for years to be a commercial airport until Orange County voters killed that plan in March 2003.

The park is part of a 3,700-acre development by national home builder Lennar Corp. that will include 3,400 homes and millions of square feet of commercial buildings. Lennar bought the base, which closed in 1999, for \$649.5 million from the U.S. Navy in 2005. It is donating the parkland to Irvine.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

PORTLAND, OREGON

Yearly ridership on the MAX light rail line to Portland International Airport exceeded 1 million for the first time since the line opened Sept. 10, 2001, according to TriMet. The fifth anniversary of the airport service saw an 11 percent jump in ridership since last year.

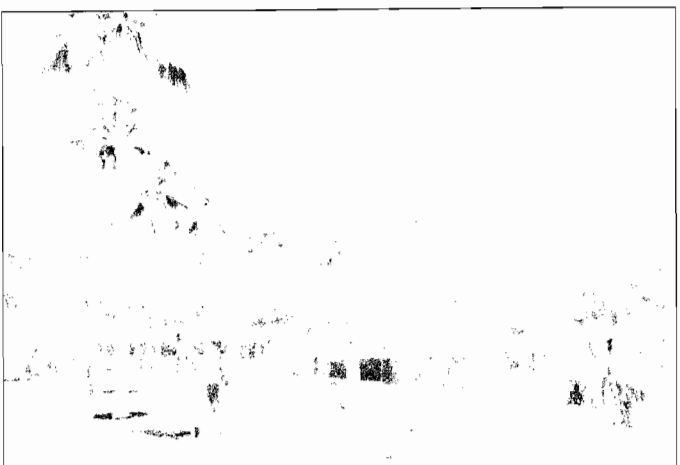
The original 5.5-mile Red Line between Gateway Transit Center and Portland International Airport was the first train-to-plane service on the West Coast and has carried 4.3 million people to or from the airport since it opened. In 2003, the service expanded to the Beaverton Transit Center to the west of downtown Portland.

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

ALTERNATIVE TRANSIT MONEY FOR STATES

Several national forests and park sites have received money from a \$20 million federal pot to reduce pollution and congestion. The alternative transit proposals run the gamut from trains to shuttle buses to bicycle trails. The biggest of the grants included \$4.7 million to buy rail cars for the Chugach National Forest in Alaska. In Washington, \$947,000 will go to North Cascades National Park. In Oregon, \$100,000 will go to Mount Hood National Forest and \$50,000 to Lewis and Clark National Historical Park.

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



Soto Station Plaza Level – Once a land of vineyards, sheep ranches, and horse drawn streetcars, Boyle Heights now has a dynamic culture with delicious food. Rendering by Metro