

# WHEEL CLICKS

Pacific Railroad Society Inc.

NOVEMBER 2007

## CHARD WALKER

Chard L. Walker was born June 8, 1922, and passed away September 28, 2007. A Memorial Service was held on October 6, 2007, in the First Congregational Church of Redlands, California. This was the church in which Chard and Margaret were married in 1955.

Chard was a longtime member of Orange Empire Railway Museum and Pacific Railroad Society. It was through PRS's predecessor organization, Railroad Boosters, that Chard first traveled to Summit, Calif. in 1946, to stay in the Los Angeles Railway funeral car, *Descanso*. He was apprenticed as a Santa Fe Railway telegrapher in 1947, and eventually worked at Summit, which was at the top of Cajon Pass.

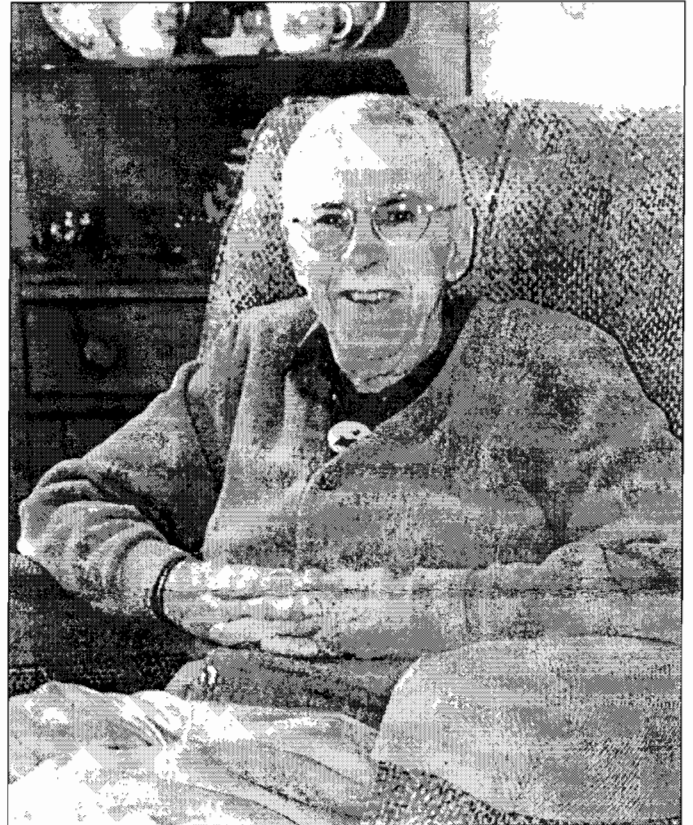
Chard lived in the *Descanso* from 1951 to 1955. Margaret didn't like the idea of living in the *Descanso*, so the couple moved into a company house. Chard and Margaret's daughters, Joy and Judy, were born while the Walkers lived at Summit. The Walkers left Summit when it was closed in 1967 to live in Hesperia. Chard retired from the Santa Fe in 1983, while working at Barstow.

During his retirement, Chard spoke to different organizations, sent occasional columns and photographs to railroad publications, and wrote three books about trains in the Cajon Pass.

Printed in 1985, Chard Walker's *Cajon—Rail Passage to the Pacific* quickly became one of the best selling rail books of the decade. In 1990, Chard assembled a collection of photography, *Cajon—The Pictorial*, which showcases the work of more than 40 top rail photographers. Signature Press plans on reprinting Chard's book, *Cajon—Rail Passage to the Pacific* for Christmas 2007.

The family requests donations be made to a fund for the preservation of Walker's favorite rail car, *Descanso*, which is in storage at Orange Empire Railway Museum. Checks can be made payable to PRS-*Descanso* Trust Fund and mailed to Pacific Railroad Society, 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas, CA 91773. Indicate on the check it is in memory of Chard Walker.

Glen Icanberry



Chard Walker – Pacific Railroad Society (Railroad Boosters) #9



Buena Park's new Metrolink station has a bridge across the tracks and adjacent restrooms. Photo by John Ulloth



Train No. 602 at Buena Park bound for San Diego, seen on Sept. 4, 2007. Photo by Dave Abbott



**WHEEL CLICKS**

**NOVEMBER 2007 VOLUME 71, NO. 8**

**EDITOR ..... DICK FINLEY**  
**TECHNICAL EDITOR ..... CHARLES VARNES**  
**MAILER ..... FRED KNOX**

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. ©2007 BY PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY, INC.

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 (same as Museum): (909) 394-0616.

**Membership Dues: \$35.00 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**

**EXCURSION DIRS. .... BARBARA SIBERT, VINCE CAMMARANO**  
 For excursion informaton, phone (626) 570-8651 or (818) 445-8723.

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

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY, INC.**  
**VIC CARLUCCI ..... PRESIDENT**  
**VINCE CAMMARANO ..... VICE-PRESIDENT**  
**BILL SMITH ..... SECRETARY**  
**OWEN DANAHER ..... TREASURER**  
**MARTI ANN DRAPER (2007-2010) ..... DIRECTOR**  
**DICK FINLEY (2005-2008) ..... DIRECTOR**  
**CHRIS PARKER (2006-2009) ..... DIRECTOR**  
**LINDSAY SMITH (2005-2008) ..... DIRECTOR**  
**WILL WALTERS (2007-2010) ..... DIRECTOR**

**PRS NEWS — ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES**

- Nov. 2 Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Valencia Room at Fri. Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
- Nov. 3, 10, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10 a.m. to 4 17, 24 p.m., Bonita & Monte Vista Aves., San Dimas. Sats. Committee meeting: 24.
- Nov. 3, 10, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, Saunders 17, 24 Yard, Noakes & Herbert Sts., Commerce. Regular Sats. day: 3, 17; Extra day: 10, 24. Com. mtg.: 17.
- Nov. 9 Membership Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Alhambra Room at Fri. Joslyn Center, 210 N. Chapel Ave., Alhambra.
- Dec. 7 Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m., **Pacific Railroad Museum**, Bonita & Monte Vista Aves., San Dimas.
- Dec. 9 PRS Christmas Banquet at Knott's Berry Farm at Sun. Chicken Restaurant. For further information call Vince: 818-445-8723 or Barbara: 626-570-8651.

Dec. 21 Slide night at Saunders Yard, 7:30 p.m., Noakes & Fri. Herbert Sts., Commerce. Everyone welcome.

**MEETING PROGRAMS**

by **RUSS DAVIES**

November 9: More of the best of your Museum's slides. We'll see slides from our all-star collections, selected by, and presented by, the PRM "Wednesday Warriors," and it will be big. Be there, and bring slide briefs!

December 9: The entertainment at the annual Christmas Banquet at **Knott's Berry Farm Chicken Restaurant** will cover **Steam Railroading in Colorado**, provided by the **PRM staff**, represented by **Russ Davies**.

**MEMBERSHIP REPORT**

by **VIRGINIA GRUPP**

At the Board Meeting on Oct. 5, George Ashby, Richard Collela, and Edward Sikora were voted into PRS with seniority number 506-508, respectively. No. 509 was assigned to a late renewal.

**CORRECTION**—In the Oct. issue of *Wheel Clicks* on Page 8, the Los Angeles Metro Rail Ridership listed is for July 2007.

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY RIDERS**

During the month of August 2007, the average number of weekday riders traveling on trains going to, from, or within Los Angeles County, other than on Amtrak, was 300,720. This was a decrease of about 1 percent from the previous month.

**CALTRAIN NEWS**

by **MIKE GONDON**

On Saturday, September 29, Caltrain officially opened its Centralized Equipment Maintenance and Operations Facility (CEMOF) after nearly a three month delay. The facility was originally scheduled to open on July 1.

CEMOF sits on 22 acres of land at the site of the old Southern Pacific roundhouse and cost \$140 million. Construction began three years ago. Among those in attendance at the grand opening were San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed, Amtrak President Alexander Kummant, and various local, state, and federal officials, as well as Caltrain Board members.

The event was open to the public, and to accommodate attendees, Caltrain operated a two-car special train between San Jose's Diridon Station and the CEMOF facility. Special buses were also operated. The festivities began at 10:30 a.m. and lasted until 12:15 p.m., after which, tours of the facility were available to the public. Free refreshments were available during the festivities, and afterwards, a barbeque was held for Caltrain and Amtrak employees and their families.

About a year ago, I reported on Caltrain's plans to install wireless Internet service on its trains. Well, you can forget about it. In September, Caltrain's board voted unanimously to reject both of the bids it had received to provide the service. One of the proposals was projected to be a money-loser, while the other would have been a hassle to install and use.

Caltrain had hoped to have the technology up and running by now. It spent over \$300,000 last year to test it, and approved an additional \$1 million last fall to move forward with the project. Now it appears the project probably won't get going again for years to come. There are no immediate plans to seek more bids.

Caltrain's on-time performance took another hit during the week of September 24 when the morning commute was delayed on three separate days by mechanical breakdowns and a suspicious package found along the right of way.

The worst came on Friday, September 28, when Train No. 211 broke down at Belmont. That train was annulled and other trains were delayed for as much as an hour. All trains used the normally southbound track between CP Dumbarton and CP Ralston, meaning northbound trains arrived on the southbound platform at Redwood City and San Carlos. This shouldn't have been a problem, but no announcements were made at those stations, so waiting passengers were out of position, and trains had to wait until everyone could cross over to the correct platform to board the train.

Most likely, a few more riders returned to driving their automobiles the next week.

### **S. CALIF. COMMUTER RAIL**                      **by DICK FINLEY** **RIDERSHIP**

Metrolink weekday, systemwide, average trips during August were 41,357. This was a decrease from the previous month of about 1 percent. Metrolink weekday, systemwide, schedule adherence (within five minutes of scheduled time) was 94 percent.

### **NEW LOCOMOTIVES**

Metrolink purchased 15 new locomotives from Motive Power Industries in Boise, Idaho. The streamlined locomotives are similar to the latest models that Southern California Regional Rail Authority currently operates, but they are about 10 feet longer. The 3,600-horsepower locomotives are cleaner and greener than current models, so they will produce notably fewer emissions.

### **SANTA ANA SECOND MAIN TRACK**

On the weekend of Sept. 15, one of the last sections of single track on the Orange County Line was transitioned to double-track service. The lone track, located between the Orange and Santa Ana stations, served trains in both directions. With the cut-over, trains are allowed to travel in both directions simultaneously.

The Santa Ana Second Main Track project has been in the works for years to improve the 1.8-mile stretch of single track in the midst of a 50-mile double-track segment. About a year-ago, the \$25 million construction project was started.

The project involved a significant amount of utility work on Lincoln Ave., the site of a new wall. Improvements have been made to several adjacent streets. When the project is finished, riders will appreciate the improved efficiency on the rails.

### **ALAMEDA CORRIDOR EAST**

The Alameda Corridor East (ACE) Construction Authority is helping to relieve congestion due to Union Pacific freight and Metrolink trains in the area of Valley Blvd. and Temple Ave. in Pomona. A project of ACE Construction Authority will eliminate the UP crossing at Temple Ave. and Pomona Blvd. by constructing a diversion track on a parallel route to the east of Pomona Blvd. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors recently approved selling a parcel of land for \$332,000 to the authority for the project.

About 70 to 90 freight and 14 passenger trains travel through the area daily, often blocking traffic on Temple Ave. heading

between the 57 Freeway and Cal Poly Pomona or Mt. San Antonio College.

The rerouting project had called for the construction of three new tracks, but the railroads determined a fourth track would be needed, said ACE Chief Executive Officer Rick Richmond. The project was stalled until the parcel of flood control land was sold. The contractor work should be done this summer, Richmond said, and the new property, tracks and signals should be done by early 2008.

### **PLACENTIA TRAIN HORN RELIEF**

The city of Placentia has upgraded its railroad crossings and on the Fourth of July was to become one of the first cities in Southern California to be designated a quiet zone, which means engineers won't have to sound horns. The 3½-mile zone runs from Kellogg Dr. on the east to Kraemer Blvd. on the west, and touches Anaheim and Yorba Linda.

Trains will go through eight crossings that have been upgraded with additional gates, new sidewalks, synchronized traffic signals and other measures to block cars and pedestrians from entering the right-of-way. More than 60 trains daily carry cargo through Placentia from the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. That number is expected to triple by 2020. Engineers of both freight and passenger trains will still have discretion to sound the horn in case of emergency, said Denise Tyrrell, a Metrolink spokeswoman.

The city accomplished its mission by shelving the controversial OnTrac trench plan, a \$650-million project that drained municipal coffers before its demise about three years ago. That plan would have built the Burlington Northern corridor through the heart of Old Town Placentia. But the project derailed several years ago because of a \$12-million shortfall in state grants, a stable of high-cost consultants, and uncertainty over federal funding.

Under OnTrac, the city spent \$18 million for the Melrose St. underpass and to buy private property to make room for the project. The new zone, by comparison, cost the city \$8.5 million, which brings the price for Placentia's railroad work to more than \$70 million, said city activist Craig Green. "Getting the quiet zone has been an unbelievable blessing," Green said. "It's something the city fought for a long, long time."

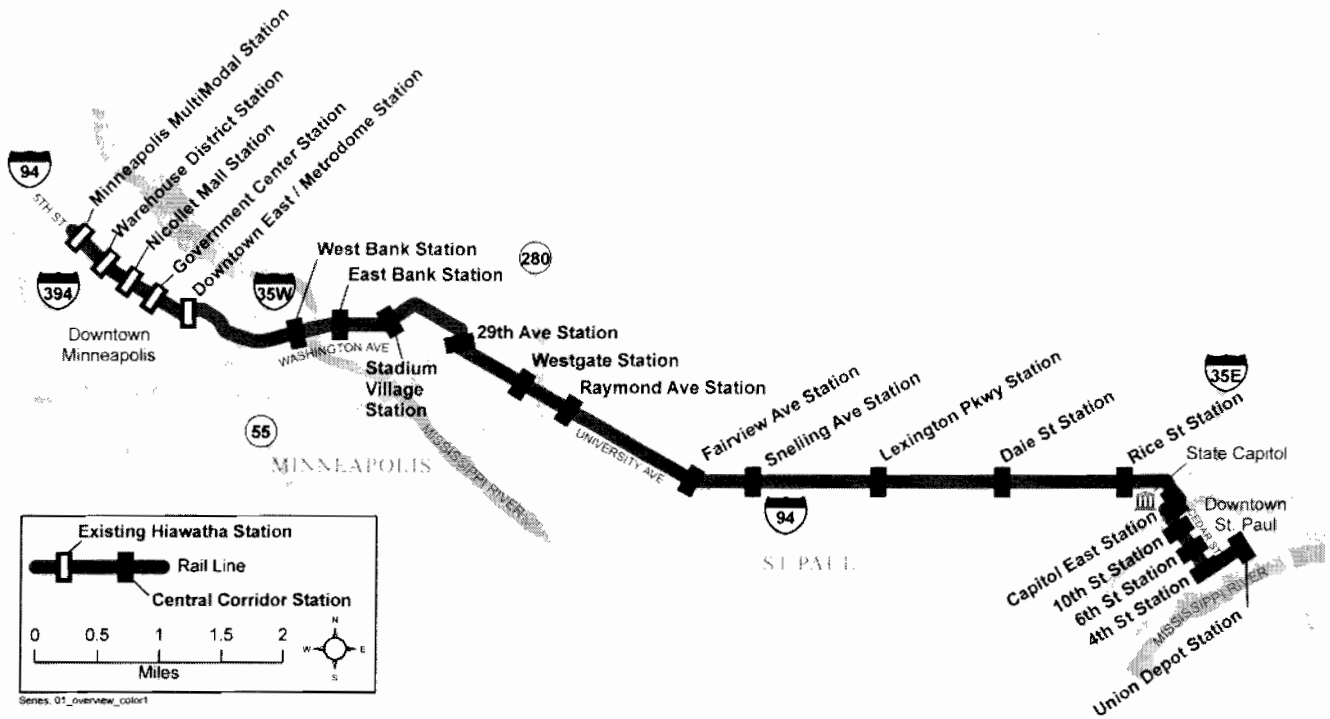
Placentia and Riverside are among six California cities with quiet zones.

### **BUENA PARK STATION**

The Buena Park Metrolink Station commemorated its opening by the Orange County Transportation Authority hosting a special public event on Oct. 6, 2007. Everyone was welcome to come out to experience the new station firsthand, and to enjoy refreshments, entertainment, and music. Anyone riding from any Metrolink station to Buena Park could receive a Knott's Berry Farm kid's price promotion.

### **JEFFREY ROAD UNDERPASS**

In 2½ years, Jeffrey Rd. motorists will drive safely and quickly under passing Metrolink and Amtrak trains while adjacent mobile-home residents will finally get some peace and quiet. The contract was awarded to SEMA Construction Inc. in March. The project, scheduled to be completed in Dec. 2009, will be built in five phases. Phase one is expected to be completed in December 2007.



Metropolitan Council map of Central Corridor LRT line between Minneapolis and St. Paul

1. Construct four-lane detour road to remove drivers from Jeffrey Rd. between Walnut Ave. and Smoketree Ln. Metrolink and Amtrak trains use a temporary track north of existing tracks. Noise and dust barrier built outside Meadows Mobile Home Park.
2. Widen portions of Jeffrey Rd. to three lanes in each direction with about 140,000 cubic yards of dirt removed.
3. Excavate Jeffrey and construct railroad bridge substructure.
4. Complete roadway and bike path paving, curbs, irrigation and landscaping, and construct railroad bridges.
5. Remove Jeffrey detour road and temporary railroad track, and construct railroad maintenance road.

Planning for the railroad bridge began in 1993, with a similar project for Culver Drive. City staff is considering another separation of track and roadway for Sand Canyon Ave. near I-5, an intersection next to the future Great Park.

Cost of the Jeffrey separation project is \$45 million. The daily average number of cars that travel along Jeffrey at the railroad tracks is 30,000. (Culver at the tracks is 46,000 and Sand Canyon Ave. is 20,000.) Metrolink's trips of 69 a day in 2007 are expected to rise to 103 a day in 2009.

**RAIL TRANSIT TEMPO** by TOM NELSON  
MINNEAPOLIS

Earlier this year, the Metropolitan Council received approval from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to begin preliminary engineering on the Central Corridor light rail transit (LRT) line to St. Paul, Minnesota. The five existing Hiawatha-line stations will be utilized by the new line as well as 16 new stations to complete the 11-mile route to downtown St. Paul.

If the final go-ahead is received from FTA by late next year, final design will commence, construction will start in 2010, and the line could open for service in 2014. To maintain 7.5-minute, peak-period headways, 31 new light rail vehicles (LRVs) will

be needed. End-to-end travel time is expected to be about 35 minutes.

[Info. from *IEEE Vehicular Technology*]

DMJM Harris was selected by the Metropolitan Council to be prime consultant on the \$1-billion Central Corridor project. Their involvement spans preliminary engineering and final design.

**SACRAMENTO**

A \$400,000 grant to the Sacramento Regional Transit District (RT) will permit the installation of a stationary, energy-storage system along eight miles of the Folsom LRT line. Siemens Transportation Systems' SES capacitor equipment will store energy released during regenerative braking by LRVs. It will be used to supply part of the power needed during the acceleration of LRVs running within the eight-mile section.

The results of the energy storage and release are lower peak-power demand, energy savings, and a boost to power-line voltage. RT could save \$25,000 per year in just this eight-mile section.

**STANDARDIZED TRACK**

The American Railway Engineering and Maintenance-of-Way Association's Rail Transit Committee 12 is working on developing standard transit track. With all the rail transit systems being planned, the availability of standardized track components would be helpful in project cost reduction.

[All other info. from *Railway Age*]

**PASSENGER TRAIN UPDATES** by CHARLES VARNES

S. 294, the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2007, is still awaiting Senate action. The Act reauthorizes Amtrak for six years, and would authorize Federal funding for the operation and development of intercity passenger rail service; make improvements to Federal passenger rail transporta-

tion policy and activities; and enhance passenger rail security. California Senator Barbara Boxer is one of the original cosponsors of the bill. Currently it has 41 cosponsors.

H.R. 3074, the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2008, was passed by the Senate on Sept. 12, and is awaiting further action. It makes appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes.

#### AMTRAK NEWS Timetable Change

The Fall 2007 – Winter 2008 Amtrak System Timetable will be issued in two editions. The first edition became effective on Oct. 29. A revised edition will be issued in January 2008. The reason for issuing the timetable in two editions is to allow for planned changes to *Cascades* and *Acela Express* services and for schedule adjustments due to ongoing maintenance-of-way projects. The new timetable will include paid advertising, also.

#### Fall Double Points Travel Promotion

Beginning September 17, Amtrak Guest Rewards members will receive double points for every qualifying trip taken on any route through December 14, 2007. The promotion runs from September 17 through December 14, 2007. Travel between November 20-27, 2007, is excluded.

To take advantage of the Fall Double Points Promotion, travelers must be Amtrak Guest Rewards members and must first register for the promotion. Members may register online at [www.amtrakguestrewards.com/91707](http://www.amtrakguestrewards.com/91707) or by calling 1-800-307-5000 and selecting option 2. The registration code is 91707.

Members may earn double points on up to two qualifying trips per day – one round-trip or two one-way trips. Travel on every Amtrak route is included. Members should include their Amtrak Guest Rewards membership number when making reservations to ensure they receive credit for all qualifying travel. Canceled or refunded tickets may not be used as qualifying travel towards the promotion.

#### Redeem Amtrak Guest Rewards Online

Effective Oct. 1, 2007, Amtrak Guest Rewards (AGR) members became able to redeem points online at [Amtrak.com](http://Amtrak.com), as well as by telephone, for some types of Amtrak travel.

Only direct one-way trips using one train can be booked. To book a round trip, two separate reservations are required. Currently, travel on connecting trains, in sleeping car accommodations, and on *Auto Train*, is currently not redeemable online. The usual blackouts and *Acela* time-of-day blackouts apply.

For travel that cannot be booked through the web site, AGR members may call the Amtrak Guest Rewards call center at 800-307-5000, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m. ET.

To access the link to the Redeem Rewards Points page click on the Reservations tab on the Amtrak home page. When the reservations page opens, the Redeem Guest Reward points link is located under the Reservation Options on the left side of the page.

#### Gift Card Purchase Refunds

Amtrak travel purchased with gift cards sold by major credit card companies cannot be refunded to the cards. In cases where gift card purchases were refunded, the purchaser's money went

into limbo and it was difficult to recover their funds. Now if the travel purchased using a gift card is canceled, the refund of the purchase will be via an exchange voucher equal to the value of the ticket. The Fall – Winter Timetable will contain a notice that gift card purchases cannot be refunded.

#### New Amtrak Credit Card Launched

In mid-September Amtrak Guest Rewards® and Chase Card Services launched the Amtrak Guest Rewards World MasterCard®. The new card gives Amtrak Guest Rewards members the opportunity to earn points on all their card purchases which can be redeemed for free Amtrak® travel, hotel stays, car rentals and gift certificates to a variety of restaurants and stores.

Cardmembers will receive two points for every dollar spent on Amtrak purchases and one point for every dollar spent on all other card purchases. Also, Amtrak Guest Rewards cardmembers will receive 5,000 bonus points after their first card purchase. The bonus points are in addition to the points Amtrak Guest Rewards members earn for their Amtrak travel and partner use. Customers who are not members of the Amtrak Guest Rewards frequent travel program, who apply and are approved for the card, will automatically be enrolled in the frequent traveler program.

Amtrak Guest Rewards members can apply for the new card at [AmtrakGuestRewardsCreditCard.com](http://AmtrakGuestRewardsCreditCard.com) or 1-888-58 -AM-TRAK. For more information on the Amtrak Guest Rewards World MasterCard or the Amtrak Guest Rewards program visit [AmtrakGuestRewards.com](http://AmtrakGuestRewards.com).

#### DigePlayer Service Discontinued

On Sept. 18, Railway Media, the company that provided the digePlayer video devices that were available on Amtrak trains, went out of business. DigePlayer is no longer available for rental at any station. The devices are no longer provided to sleeping car passengers on the *Coast Starlight*.

#### WESTERN CORRIDORS

##### Pacific Surfliner

Again this year, travel on *Pacific Surfliners* will require reservations from Nov. 20 through 26, the Thanksgiving weekend.

Effective with the Fall – Winter Timetable the following changes were made to *Surfliner* service.

Tr. No. 582 departs Los Angeles at 4:10 p.m. (five minutes later) and arrives at San Diego at 7:00 p.m. (five minutes later). The train departs intermediate stations five minutes later, except at Solana Beach where it departs at 6:18 p.m. (12 minutes later). The schedule change for Tr. No. 582 was effective Sept. 17. It was made because the Sept. 4 Metrolink schedule change had a negative effect on Tr. Nos. 582's performance. Tr. No. 798 departs San Luis Obispo at 2:00 p.m. (two hours, 25 minutes earlier), and arrives at Los Angeles at 7:40 p.m. (two hours, five minutes earlier). Tr. No. 792 no longer operates from Goleta to Los Angeles. New Tr. No. 592 operates from Los Angeles to San Diego on the same schedule as Tr. No. 792. Tr. No. 796, formerly Los Angeles-San Diego Tr. No. 596, originates at Goleta at 6:45 p.m., and arrives at Los Angeles at 9:45 p.m. It departs Los Angeles at 10:10 p.m., and arrives at San Diego at 12:50 a.m., the former Tr. No. 596 schedule. Monday-Friday Tr. No. 589 departs San Diego at 5:55 p.m. (five minutes later) and arrives at Los Angeles at 8:55 p.m. (five minutes later).

##### Anaheim Resort Transit Service

Anaheim Resort Transit (ART) began service from the Anaheim Amtrak station to The Disneyland® Resort and Anaheim

Resort™ hotels on Oct. 1, 2007. The shuttle service is provided hourly meeting all southbound and northbound *Surfliner* trains.

The fare is \$3 for adults and children 10 and under are free. Beginning January 8, 2008, children 10 years and under will be charged \$1. ART passes can be purchased from a ticket vending machine at the station.

[Info. from Ken Ruben, Ed Von Nordeck]

## URBAN RAIL TRANSIT

by **DICK FINLEY**

### LOS ANGELES METRO RAIL

#### RIDERSHIP

| August 2006   | Red Line  | Blue Line | Green Line | Gold Line |
|---------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| Weekday Ave.  | 132,237   | 74,398    | 38,259     | 19,213    |
| Saturday Ave. | 90,929    | 56,491    | 23,505     | 12,381    |
| Sunday Ave.   | 76,516    | 44,899    | 18,121     | 11,241    |
| Monthly Total | 3,711,239 | 2,116,702 | 1,046,452  | 536,385   |

#### RED LINE

Installation has begun on a new electronic signage system at subway stations. This will replace the single line ticker-tape style LED displays that were installed when the line opened. Called the Transit Passenger Information System (TPIS), the board-approved \$2.2 million installation includes 350 46-inch LCD screens that are managed by Rail Operations Control through a simple software system. The screens display up-to-date relevant, independent information for each station.

"We've done Union Station," said Dan Lindstrom, manager of Wayside System Communications. "Next will be Civic Center." Metro will complete the installation at each station a few weeks part until they're finished in April 2008.

#### BLUE LINE

A 19-year-old male Los Angeles resident has been arrested by Transit Services Bureau (TSB) deputies on suspicion of causing \$86,000 in vandalism to Blue Line trains, buses and stations. This is the highest total attributed to any tagger the TSB has arrested. The TSB's Special Problems Unit conducted a 2½-month investigation, resulting in an Aug. 15 arrest, according to Sheriff's Sgt. Augie Pando.

#### EXPOSITION LINE

At the start of heavy construction on Aug. 10, workers began operating a special drilling rig to dig 30-foot holes along the alignment in preparation for excavation of a 2,700-foot long, 25-foot deep trench. The trench will parallel Exposition Blvd. between Flower St. and Pardee Way on the USC campus. Open to the sky except where it passes beneath intersections, the trench will be constructed wide enough to accommodate two railroad tracks. The contractor expects to complete the project in about 18 months.

The following three modifications of the Expo Phase I Project were approved by the Metro Board on Sept. 27, 2007.

- Metro staff has asked that additions be made at the Blue Line/Expo Line interface at flower St., so that both lines will operate more efficiently. The additions will allow train movements to be better tracked and managed remotely through the installation of electrical switches and a train control system that is projected to cost \$11.3 million.
- Several engineering changes have been made at the Trade Tech and Farndale crossings, along with potential improvements in the vicinity of USC/Expo Park to better manage special event traffic. An additional \$5 million is needed to fund these modifications to the crossings.

- In Dec. 2006, the Expo Board approved transferring money from contingency for some initial design of the Trousdale station. Because this station would better serve both USC and the Expo Park museums, and is integral for handling passengers during special events at the Coliseum, Expo staff believes that this station is crucial for the efficient operation of the project. As a result, the Expo Board has requested that Metro fully fund the design and construction of this station in the amount of \$7 million, and to take the appropriate steps to include this station as part of the project.

#### CULVER CITY

Nearly two years after the Mid-Cities Exposition Light Rail was approved by Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) Board of Directors, Culver City is the only city to be serviced by the light rail that has not made its financial disbursement, as all of the participants in the light rail initiative have been asked to do.

Funding for the Expo Line has been a major concern in recent months, as well as Culver City's insistence that the station be constructed on an elevated platform to better serve its residents and create a link to the city's downtown and nearby arts district. But building such an elevated rail station will require more money than is in the current budget, and Metro officials say that without Culver City's allotment, building it is highly improbable.

Los Angeles, where the majority of the train is expected to run during the first leg of the line, will contribute approximately \$35 million to the initiative. Santa Monica has purchased the land where its stations will be located. It has been estimated that Culver City would be asked to provide between \$5-10 million toward the effort, considerably less than the other two cities.

Metro officials also stipulated that they will pursue the additional money that would be necessary to build an elevated station, which is the option that nearly all Culver City merchants, lawmakers, public safety leaders and citizens desire. Since the approval of the Metro EIR almost two years ago, which the Culver City Redevelopment Agency approved by a vote of 4-1, the train design has called for an at grade, or ground level, station in the first phase of the project at Wesley St. and National Blvd., an option that east Culver City residents vehemently oppose.

The local government's subsidy could make a difference in how the station in the first leg of construction is built. If Culver City paid its portion, "That would make it more likely for an elevated station to happen," the Expo Chief Operating Officer said. Some, like Mayor Alan Corlin, who represents Culver City on the multi-city Expo Joint Powers Authority, has suggested that if an elevated station cannot be built by 2010, instead of the interim station, the line should be stopped at La Cienega Blvd. instead of proceeding to Culver City.

If the train does not arrive in Culver City in the first stage, that could set the stage for a domino effect that could jeopardize planned developments in east Culver City and possibly delay the second stage of the line, says Vice Mayor Carol Gross.

The Expo Line will begin in downtown Los Angeles and is due to arrive in Culver City in 2010. The extension of the rail project is expected to begin shortly thereafter and run to the beach in Santa Monica by 2014, say Metro officials.

[Info. from *Culver City News* via Ken Ruben]

## SAN DIEGO

What has become the great workhorse of the regional trolley system, the Blue Line connecting San Diego to San Ysidro, is showing its advancing age. Riding the line on a recent weekday, former state Sen. James Mills, pointed out the problems – the badly cracked ties, the tired-looking stations, the stretches of old rail that bounce riders left and right.

Executives with the Metropolitan Transit System, which operates the region's buses and trolleys, agree that the 26-year-old Blue Line needs a major makeover. "I'm not proud of it," said Paul Jablonski, the agency's chief executive officer. "It looks tired and could be improved, and that's the case up and down the line." Transit administrators figure they need roughly \$165 million over the next decade to rehabilitate the line, including replacing rails, improving stations and stringing new trolley cable.

At least \$77 million of it is expected to come from a half-cent sales tax extended by San Diego County voters last Nov.

Transit officials hope to raise the rest of the rehabilitation money from federal and state sources. Major work on the trolley line probably won't start for two more years, said Peter Tereschuck, general manager of the trolley system.

From the start, critics dismissed the trolley as a colossal waste of money, saying San Diego needed more freeways, not an old-school rail system. Trolley planners set out to prove them wrong. In the process, Mills said, they cut a few corners when developing the Blue Line.

Or, as Mills puts it today, "it was built on the cheap." Some stretches of rail were left untouched, and today include spikes dating back to the 1920s. The trolley stations were given a bare-bones look. Mills said state highway engineers designed the system. He said they were freeway engineers first, not trolley experts.

Transit officials say the 19-mile line remains safe to ride today, and that they are aggressive about making day-to-day repairs. And, they point out, the Blue Line remains the most popular line in the system. Mills said the old workhorse, even with its faults, long ago proved its worth. "It's very satisfying," he said.

## SEATTLE

After a two-year closure and \$94 million worth of construction to prepare for Sound Transit's future light rail transit (LRT), the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel was ready to handle buses again. More than 18,000 feet of rail was laid and over 20,000 cubic yards of concrete poured. The big day was Sept. 24.

The 1.3-mile tunnel was closed in Sept. 2005 so it could be retrofitted to handle both buses and LRT. During the closure, buses that used the tunnel were moved up to Seattle surface streets. When the tunnel re-opens, both Metro and Sound Transit buses will use the tunnel. Link LRT will join buses in 2009, when the rail line from downtown Seattle to SeaTac Airport opens for service.

The tunnel improvements include:

- A state-of-the-art communications and signaling system.
- Fresh paint and improved lighting at each station.
- Upgraded signage and new electronic variable message signs.
- A state-of-the-art public address system.

When the tunnel re-opens, you may notice that new hybrid

diesel-electric buses have replaced the dual-mode, diesel-electric trolley buses that ran in the tunnel between 1990 and 2004. The hybrid buses are more environmentally friendly, with 90 percent fewer particulate emissions. They also have reduced diesel exhaust odor and a "hush" mode that is quieter than traditional diesel buses.

The tunnel floor has been lowered eight inches, so the boarding platforms will match the height of a new generation of low-floor buses and trains. Wheelchair users won't need a hoist, and other passengers won't need to step up.

But the lowering also brings the mirrors down to head levels, and the metal sides of the bus closer to the curb. There are no railings on the boarding platforms, but they have a yellow stripe to encourage people to stand back. Metro added strobe lights to the mirrors, a public-address announcement and warning signs. "We're confident this will help us operate safely," said Mike Lemeshko, supervisor of transit safety for Metro. "We don't want to bonk anyone."

Buses will run 14 hours a day in the tunnel, five days a week. Trains, when they begin in 2009, will run 20 hours a day, seven days a week. Metro hasn't decided whether it will extend the bus hours.

Of the tunnel's cost, \$85 million came from Sound Transit and \$9 million from Metro. That includes the cost of the stub tunnel, which will not only be the turn-around point for the trains but the start for an eventual rail tunnel to Husky Stadium.

The project came in 3.4 percent over budget, said Sound Transit spokesman Bruce Gray. The agency says "multiple unanticipated challenges" arose – for instance, diagrams from the original project were inadequate, according to a Sound Transit report.

The tunnel was closed, in part, to fix a blunder made nearly 20 years ago. The old Metro Council decided to install rails in the tunnel, which first opened in 1990, so it wouldn't have to be closed years later, when light rail would presumably be added. But the rails weren't insulated adequately, so stray electric current from trains could corrode nearby utility lines. Sound Transit would up closing the tunnel to, among other things, rip out the rails Metro spent \$5 million putting in.

When the recent two-year project began, huge traffic jams were expected. But by most accounts, it was relatively painless.

## SEATTLE STREETCAR

In the South Lake Union area, a red streetcar arrived by flatbed truck on Sept. 17, the first of three to begin service in December. Orange and purple cars will arrive later. The new streetcars were built in the Czech Republic. They will be owned by the city of Seattle and operated by Metro.

Testing was to begin in mid-October on the street, with a tentative service to start Dec. 12, said Ethan Melone, the city's streetcar project manager. The 1.3-mile streetcar, from Westlake Center to the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, cost \$50.5 million.

Seattle is considering possible streetcar extensions, while a Sound Transit streetcar from the International District station to Capitol Hill is part of a bigger regional ballot measure this fall. [Seattle info. from Sound Transit, and *The Seattle Times* via Jim Futterer]



Western track of Sprinter's Oceanside Terminal is still under construction. A northbound Amtrak Pacific Surfliner passes on the right. Photo by John Ulloth



At least six Sprinters were seen at the shops or on the track at Escondido on September 16, 2007. Photo by John Ulloth



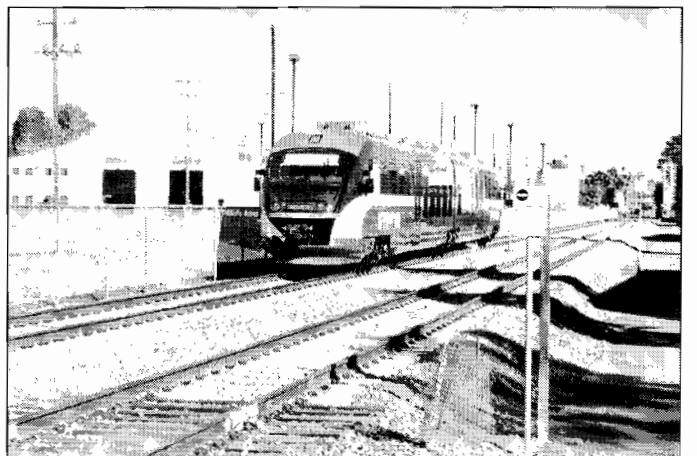
The Sprinter station at Vista nears completion, but signals facing each other still have a way to go. Photo by John Ulloth



The end of Sprinter #4005 is seen with car number located just above coupler. Photo by John Ulloth



Typical articulation can be seen on Sprinter #4002. Cars were still undergoing line testing on Sep. 16. Photo by John Ulloth



Eastbound Sprinter passes by shops on newly laid tracks resting on a mix of concrete and new wood ties. Photo by John Ulloth