

WHEEL CLICKS

Pacific Railroad Society Inc.

SEPTEMBER 2011

TUCSON BUILDING 3.9 MILE STREETCAR LINE

Tucson got federal approval in January to start spending its \$63 million grant for a modern-streetcar project. The money was allocated to the city, but the city's environmental review was still pending, keeping the city from spending down the grant money. The Federal Transit Administration approved the city's environmental assessment, saying the project has "no significant adverse impacts on the environment" as long as it sticks to plans submitted.

Those plans include keeping vibration to a minimum near an astronomical observatory on the University of Arizona campus, and designing the Cushing Street bridge across the Santa Cruz River so the streetcar has no impact on the recreational use of Santa Cruz River Park.

The Federal Transit Administration awarded the \$63 million grant in February 2010 for the project to put in a modern streetcar line from the University Medical Center to the west side of downtown. City officials already had ordered streetcars from Oregon Iron Works and had spent more than \$25 million on design and materials for the project. The Regional Transit Administration is kicking in the largest amount of funding, with \$75 million from a half-cent-per-dollar sales tax for transportation projects in the metro area. The RTA and the city of Tucson are jointly managing the project.

Total cost of the 3.9-mile streetcar system is \$196 million. The lead engineering firm, URS Corporation, is based in downtown San Francisco. The downtown and 4th Ave. segments begin in August 2011, the UA campus segment begins in Sept. 2011, and the western segment begins in Nov. 2011. Delivery of the first streetcar is late 2012, and public operation of the streetcar system is late 2013.

On the university campus, construction will be complicated by a large student population in a compact area. The Warren Avenue Underpass will be lowered at least six feet to get the streetcar under Speedway. To accomplish that "half of Speedway will be closed as we excavate, pull the lid off, dig down, put in track, put the lid back on, and then do the same thing on the other side," said Steve Pageau, senior project manager for URS Corporation.

A top priority is to "minimize utility conflicts," throughout the 3.9-mile route. Throughout the route, Tucson Water, Tucson Electric Power, Southwest Gas, and the University of Arizona are concerned about "the potential for stray current," said Pageau. Stray current is electricity that "leaks" or strays from its untended path through the surrounding soil. It has the potential to flow into underground pipes along the route and cause extensive corrosion damage.

"You've got current going through the wire above the streetcar, and down through the streetcar to the track. Tucson

Water is spending \$10 million in protection, concerned for their pipes due to this potential for stray current," said Pageau. Southwest Gas has high-pressure lines within the alignment and that has drawn concern from the Arizona Corporation Commission. All the utilities "are in a very confined right-of-way, he said.

Another issue is the \$11.4 million maintenance and storage facility, on East Stevens Avenue just northwest of where Fourth Avenue crosses the Union Pacific railroad line. The site is in the flood plain and will have to be elevated. Due to safety concerns for bicyclists, the Old Pueblo Trolley tracks on Fourth Avenue will be torn up and replaced with new track.

City transportation planners had been considering using a block-type track that leaves a relatively narrow gap between the rail and the street. The narrower the gap, the less likely a bicycle wheel could get stuck and send a rider tumbling, possibly into the path of fellow commuters with far larger vehicles.

But it turns out the upgraded rails would add about \$3.5 million to the cost of the track. This, at a time when Tucson and the RTA are hard-pressed to cover a remaining funding gap. Planners have decided they'll use T-rails, which they've already used for the renovated Fourth Avenue underpass.

But it's not just about money. Transportation Director Jim Glock outlined a series of technical problems at a meeting of the Pima Association of Governments in May 2011. The segments of block-rail are shorter, he said, requiring more welds, and those areas are also considered weaker points. And there'd be more of them, possibly jacking up maintenance costs over the years. Worse, there are no domestic manufacturers of the block rail, which means the city runs up against a mandate that goes with the federal funding to buy American. There also aren't experienced U.S. installers, leading to increased uncertainty.

Glock said that although block-rail's gap is 1.7 inches, he said the specs. for the underpass, using the T-rail, called for a gap of 1.5 inches. He said he believes the gaps will be fairly comparable. Still, he is looking into ways to narrow the T-rail gap if need be, possibly by changing the way installers form the concrete, which forms one side of the track.

All told, \$765,000 will be spent on public art for the 3.9-mile route, which reflects the city's policy of spending 1 percent of construction costs on public art. Streetcar construction is pegged at \$75 million, so the public art requirement is \$750,000. The streetcar route has 17 stops, which officials have split into two groups. There are nine "simple stops," adopted with just electronic poetry boards scrolling digital verse, at maybe a line at a time. And there are eight "unique stops," which are getting the \$73,750 treatment.

[Info. from *Arizona Daily Star*]



WHEEL CLICKS SEPTEMBER 2011 VOLUME 75, NO. 6

EDITOR DICK FINLEY
TECHNICAL EDITOR CHARLES VARNES
MAILER JOHN STALLKAMP

Opinions expressed in unsigned articles are those of the editorial board, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Society, its officers or directors. Opinions in signed articles are those of the author only. All rights reserved. ISSN: 0043-4744. ©2011 BY PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY, INC.

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

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

PACIFIC RAILROAD MUSEUM is operated by Pacific Railroad Society at 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas, CA 91773. Telephone: (909) 394-0616. Museum e-mail: PRSTrainman@aol.com Open Saturdays: 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; Mondays: 12-5 p.m.; Wednesdays: 1-5 p.m.

MUSEUM CURATOR **DAVID HOUSH**

EXCURSION DIRECTOR **MARTI ANN DRAPER**

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY, INC.

PRESIDENT **MARTI ANN DRAPER**
VICE-PRESIDENT **LINDSAY SMITH**
SECRETARY **NEIL BJORNSEN**
TREASURER **NICK TEEL**
DIRECTOR (2011-2014) **LARRY AANDAHL**
DIRECTOR (2011-2014) **DICK FINLEY**
DIRECTOR (2009-2012) **DAVID HOUSH**
DIRECTOR (2009-2012) **KEN RUBEN**
DIRECTOR (2011-2013) **ROBERT WASHBURN**

PRS NEWS ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES

Sept. 2 Fri. Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Colonial Kitchen, 1110 Huntington Dr., San Marino. Room for dinner at 6:30 p.m.
Sept. 3, 10, Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
Sept. 3, 10, Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, 17, 24 Sats. Saunders Yard, Noakes St. & Herbert Ave., Commerce.
Sept. 5, 12, Mon. PRM open, 12:00 to 5:00 p.m. 19, 26 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
Sept. 7, 14, Wed. PRM work party, 1:00 p.m. to 5 p.m., 21, 28 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
Sept. 9 Fri. Membership Meeting, 7:30 p.m., MTA Bldg. in Board Room on 3rd Floor.
Oct. 1, 8, 15 Pacific Railroad Museum work party, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
Oct. 1, 8, 15 Rolling Stock repair day, 8:30 a.m. to ?, 22, 29 Sats. Saunders Yard, Noakes St. & Herbert Ave., Commerce.

Oct. 3, 10, Mon. PRM open, 12:00 to 5:00 p.m., 17, 24, 31 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
Oct. 5, 12, Wed. PRM work party, 1:00 p.m. to 5 p.m., 19, 26 210 W. Bonita Ave., San Dimas.
Oct. 7 Board Meeting, see Oct. *Wheel Clicks*.
Oct. 14 Membership Meeting, see Oct. *Wheel Clicks*.

MEETING PROGRAM

by Russ Davies

September 9: **SP over Donner Pass! Tom Grose** by popular demand! On this evening we'll see another of Tom's great CDs. We'll see **SP action in the 1980s, including winter operations**. We'll also see **historic images**, some dating back to the original construction. **This will be a good one. Be there, and bring digital briefs!** The meeting will again be at the MTA Board Room.

SAN FRANCISCO'S TRANSPORTATION PLAN

A new streetcar line running the length of San Francisco's Embarcadero from Fisherman's Wharf to the Caltrain station, street closures along the northern waterfront and modified Muni bus routes are all part of a draft plan for getting 200,000 people a day in position to watch the next America's Cup regatta. Mayor Ed Lee is promising "to deliver the most transit-, bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly major sporting event in history for residents and visitors alike" when the series of yacht races begins in 2012, culminating with a final matchup in September 2013. About 2.6 million spectators are expected to watch at least part of the races around the Bay Area, with most concentrated along San Francisco's northern waterfront, including Crissy Field, the Marina Green and a new public viewing area to be built on Pier 27 near the start and finish line.

City officials hope to use the event as a catalyst for some long-term transit and other projects that have been on the drawing board but lacked funding. These include extending the F-line tracks from the wharf through Fort Mason via an existing tunnel. The draft plan proposes using some historic F-line streetcars to run the length of the Embarcadero on high-volume days during the Cup, although that would require double-ended cars because there is no turnaround at the Fourth and King streets Caltrain station. There are currently fewer than five such streetcars in the city's fleet, though more are being refurbished, said Michael Martin, the city's America's Cup point person. City officials are viewing that proposal as a test run for creating a formal E-Embarcadero line.

[Info. from *San Francisco Chronicle* via Jack Whitmeyer]

BOULDER VANDALISM TO TRACKS

Burlington Northern Santa Fe is seeking suspects in recent vandalism to railroad tracks near Madras, Ore., and Bellingham, Wash. Boulders weighing 200 to 300 pounds were pushed onto tracks near a Madras trestle twice in July. Freight train locomotive hit the first boulder in May and was damaged. BNSF spokesman Gus Melonas said conductors spotted the second boulder in July and stopped the train in time. Meanwhile, 44 spikes were removed from tracks in Bellingham. A railroad inspector noticed the tampering before any trains could derail, Melonas said.

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

CALTRAIN NEWSby **MIKE GONDON**

The California High Speed Rail Authority has been awarded a federal grant of \$16 million that will benefit Caltrain. The grant will allow the High Speed Rail Authority to design a new, modernized signaling system on the Caltrain corridor between San Francisco and San Jose. Known as the Communications Based Overlay Signal System, it will include safety improvements required by federal law and is the first step toward an electrified passenger rail service between San Francisco and San Jose that will include Caltrain and high speed rail.

Caltrain ridership continues to climb. Average weekday ridership in May was 42,550, a 6.3 percent increase over May 2010. The additional passengers also boosted May revenues to \$4.6 million compared to \$3.9 million in May 2010, an increase of 16.4 percent.

Ridership is up in other categories as well. The number of passengers using Caltrain shuttles increased by 25 percent and nearly 2400 people used Caltrain specials to return home from watching the July 4 fireworks display in San Francisco. Nearly 135,000 baseball fans have used Caltrain so far this season to attend giants games at AT&T Park. That's a 13 percent increase from last season.

Not all the news is positive from Caltrain. On time performance has been poor due to a number of issues. There have been nine trespasser fatalities so far, which can basically shut the system down when they occur. In addition, there have been mechanical problems, signal issues, and heat restrictions, which have all contributed to delay trains.

For years, Southern Pacific, and later, Caltrain, have provided service for football fans attending games at Stanford. The Stanford stop is about a five minute walk from the stadium. Trains will be stopping there again this year, but this year Cal fans will also be able to ride Caltrain to attend Bears home games. Because of an extensive renovation of Memorial Stadium in Berkeley, this season Cal home football games will be played at AT&T Park in San Francisco.

Over the weekend of July 23-24, new control point, CP Scott, was officially brought on line. Located at milepost 10.5, between South San Francisco and Bruno, CP Scott will have 50 mph crossovers and should help greatly in expediting train movement.

NEW STREETCARS FOR NEW ORLEANS

New Orleans plans to spend up to \$90 million to build streetcar lines down-river from the French Quarter; a working class and Creole side of the Big Easy immortalized by Tennessee Williams and Marlon Brando in "A Streetcar Named Desire."

The city said it would build 2½ miles of streetcar lines by the end of 2013 down Rampart Street and St. Claude Avenue. A spur track would go down the street where Stanley and Stella Kowalski live in Williams' 1947 play.

New Orleans' fabled streetcars once stretched into every corner of the diverse city, but they eventually faded from the back-streets and were reduced in the early 1960s to a single line running past the mansions of St. Charles Avenue.

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

SAN BERNARDINO RAILYARD STUDY

Southern California air quality regulators announced a major study on June 9 focusing on the San Bernardino railyard, a national trade gateway that has been found to pose the greatest health risk of any railyard in the state. The two-year Loma Linda University study on the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railyard will cost an estimated \$846,000, to be funded by the South Coast Air Quality Management District. The study will include reporting on environmental health risks, and surveys of respiratory diseases and health issues among children and adults.

Railyard operator BNSF, however, said it has serious questions about the impartiality of the study and about any results it will produce. It will be impossible for researchers to tease out what pollution is coming from the railyard and what is coming from multiple other sources of pollution in the Inland Empire, a region plagued with hazy air, said Lena Kent, a BNSF spokeswoman.

"We know that scientifically they cannot link any health effects to our facility given that the homes and our RAILYARD are next to a major freeway linking Southern California to Las Vegas, and then there's a number of businesses in the area," she said. "We live in the Inland Empire and we see in the morning the pollution blowing in from the west and getting trapped here."

Kent added that BNSF has reduced emissions by 50 percent since 2005 and has pledged to reduce them 85 percent by 2020, regardless of growth. The company spent \$16 million on low-emission engines and \$9 million on a system that reduced the idle time of diesel trucks at the site by half, she said.

The study was prompted by a 2008 report by the California Air Resources Board that found the San Bernardino railyard topped the state in terms of health risks to the surrounding community. The report found that more than 1.8 million Californians are at risk of cancer from railyard pollution, but critics have dismissed it as a theory that's not based on real data. [Info. from *The Daily Breeze* via Jack Whitmeyer]

NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUMby **DENNIS GILKEY**

I went to see my sisters and their families in December 2010, who took me to see the Nevada Southern Railroad. We rode the train four miles west of the station and returned backward. The line was originally the Union Pacific Boulder City Branch that was used to haul supplies to build Hoover Dam (1931). The current UP Boulder City Branch ends at a chemical plant in Henderson, Nevada, near Las Vegas.

The Excursion Train consist was: Ex-UP GP30 No. 844/ power car/coach(crew car)/coach(3-20s or 30s)/coach/coach/cupola caboose.

The following information is about the museum/ gift shop.

Nevada State Railroad Museum

600 Yucca Street

Boulder City, Nevada 89005

Telephone: (702) 486-5933.

(Website: Museum. Nevada Culture)(.org)

Train Departs: Saturday & Sunday, 10:00-11:30-1:00-2:30.

Adults: \$10.00; Children (4-11) \$5.00; (3 & under) no charge.

Cab ride: \$35.00 per person.

Engineer for an hour: \$250.00 (Tuesday-Friday only)

Group Rate: 12 or more adults, \$7.00 per adult.



*Nevada Southern Excursion Passenger Train near Boulder City, Nevada, pulled by Ex-UP GP30 No. 844.
All photographs on December 26, 2010 by Dennis Gilkey*



Interior of vintage coach (20s or 30s) No. 1911 that I rode on the excursion.. There was no unit on the back for the return trip, just the caboose.



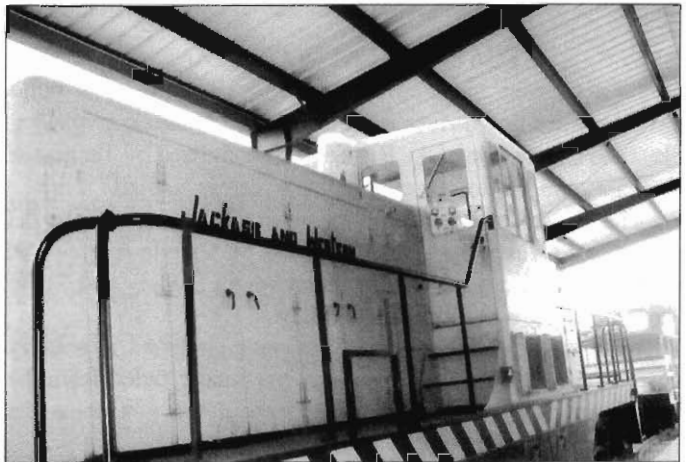
Ex-Union Pacific EMD-GM GP30 No. 844



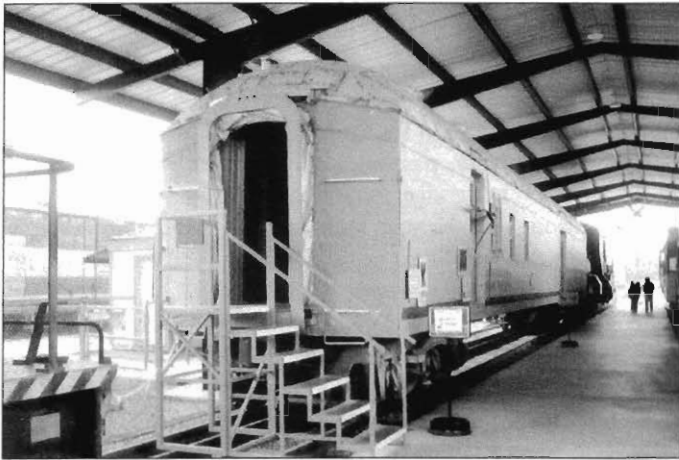
The end of the four mile trip was at the same location as the start.



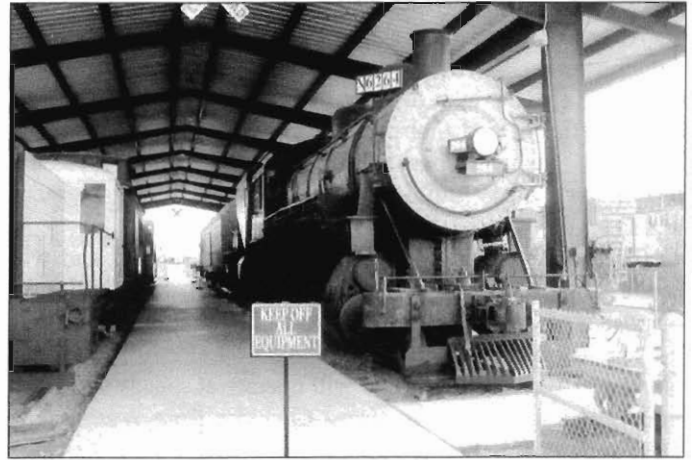
The power car is behind GP30. Nevada Southern Excursion travels four miles west on the ex-UP Branch.



General Electric Center-cab Switcher, having name: Jackass and Western Railroad, of which I do not know the origin.



Ex-Union Pacific Railway Post Office Car at the museum.



Nevada Southern No. 6264 Steamer at the museum.



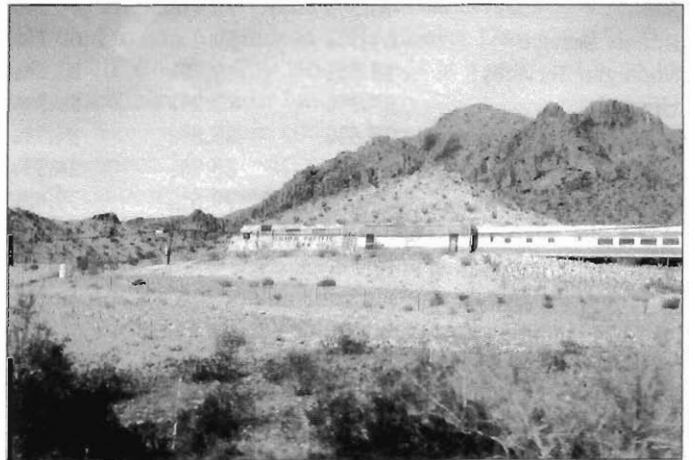
Interior of R.P.O. Car at Nevada Southern Museum.



Nevada Southern 2-8-2 Steamer No. 35 at the museum.



Ex-Union Pacific Cupola Caboose at N. S. Museum.



On our way back to Las Vegas and continuing to a horse ranch, we passed the Nevada Southern Excursion Train on its second trip for the day.

PASSENGER TRAIN UPDATES by CHARLES VARNES
AMTRAK

New Electric Locomotives

Amtrak has received a \$562.9 million Federal Railroad Administration Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) loan to fully fund the purchase of 70 new energy efficient and higher performing electric locomotives. The RRIF loan includes \$465.9 million for the 70 electric locomotives and \$97 million for maintenance facility upgrades and spare parts.

The contract was awarded to Siemens Mobility and will create 250 jobs primarily at a facility in Sacramento, California, but also at plants in Norwood, Ohio and Alpharetta, Georgia.

The first Amtrak Cities Sprinter ACS-64 electric locomotive is to be delivered in 2013 and will operate at speeds up to 125 mph (201 kph) on the *Northeast Corridor* from Washington, D.C. to Boston and up to 110 mph (177 kph) on the *Keystone Corridor* from Philadelphia to Harrisburg, Pa. They will replace locomotives in service between 20 and 30 years with average mileage of 3.5 million miles traveled.

The \$465.9 million contract for 70 electric locomotives is a key element of the Fleet Strategy Plan and follows another major equipment procurement of a \$298 million contract to build 130 single-level passenger rail cars to support growing ridership on its long-distance trains.

Historical On-Time Performance

The July 2011 historical on-time performance percentages for selected routes were

Route	July 2011	June 2011	Last 12 months
Sunset Limited	77.8%	80.8%	81.3%
Texas Eagle	25.8%	40.0%	53.7%
Heartland Flyer	58.1%	83.3%	82.1%
Southwest Chief	43.5%	61.7%	75.1%
California Zephyr	0.0%	30.0%	41.8%
Empire Builder	52.7%	61.2%	43.1%
Coast Starlight	74.2%	73.3%	71.9%
City of New Orleans	90.3%	65.0%	75.8%
Pacific Surfliner	65.5%	79.9%	79.5%
San Joaquin	88.4%	84.2%	88.6%
Capitol Corridor	95.3%	91.7%	94.5%
Amtrak Cascades	76.5%	75.9%	67.0%
Illinois Service	61.5%	59.2%	69.2%
Michigan Services	13.5%	9.7%	27.6%
Hiawatha	83.3%	92.2%	89.2%
Missouri River Runner	35.6%	85.8%	84.7%
Acela Express	82.1%	86.9%	84.3%
Northeast Regional	77.0%	79.6%	79.4%

INTERCITY TRAINS

California Zephyr

The *California Zephyr's* dismal on time performance in July was due to continuing flood problems in the Midwest.

Coast Starlight

The *Coast Starlight* on Aug. 2 made all the stops for the cancelled *Pacific Surfliner* Trains 798/799. *Northbound Surfliner* Train 798, which turns at San Luis Obispo to become Train 799 was canceled due to an incident involving a service vehicle in the Los Angeles coach yard which sent two employees to the

hospital. The *Starlight* departed from San Luis Obispo on time and arrived at Los Angeles at 9:13 p.m., only 13 minutes late due to the amount of recovery time in its schedule.

WESTERN CORRIDORS
California Corridors

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood on Aug. 8 announced \$179 million for the State of California to continue building a statewide, passenger rail network with both high-speed and intercity service. Funding will kick-start several major projects throughout the state including the construction of new tracks, the purchase of next generation trains and the installation of high-tech signaling systems.

Highlights of the announcement include:

Central Valley High-Speed Rail

The California High-Speed Rail Authority will receive \$86.4 million for the Central Valley project, extending the current 110 mile segment an additional 20 miles to Merced and Bakersfield, advancing completion of the backbone of the Los Angeles to San Francisco corridor.

Regional Equipment Pool

Caltrans will receive \$68 million for new trains servicing intercity routes. The funding is part of a multi-state procurement between California, Michigan, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri and Washington State to pool resources, maximizing the purchase of next-generation American-made trains. Along with \$100 million from a previously awarded grant to California, the money will allow for the purchase of six new locomotives and forty new passenger cars.

Pacific Surfliner – San Diego to San Luis Obispo

Signaling/Safety - Positive train control will be installed between San Onofre and San Diego. This signaling system will increase railroad safety and efficiency by monitoring and controlling train movements. \$24.9 million was awarded to Caltrans to install the system.

DEPOT DOINGS

Grand Central Terminal

Apple has begun construction of a 23,000 square foot store on a balcony in Grand Central Terminal. The store occupies the site of the now-closed Metrazur Restaurant. It is anticipated that the store will be open as early as mid-November.

AMTRAK FREE IPHONE APPLICATION

Amtrak passengers can now plan trips, purchase tickets, modify existing reservations, check train schedules and status, and view station information from the convenience of an iPhone® with the free Amtrak application (app) now available through iTunes.

Amtrak customers can also utilize the Passport feature to share their travels on Facebook or Twitter.

Customers using other web-enabled mobile devices can access the Amtrak mobile website at m.amtrak.com. This site provides features available on Amtrak.com in a mobile-friendly format.

CANADIAN RAIL NEWS

Rocky Mountaineer

The lockout of *Rocky Mountaineer* employees which began on June 22 was still in effect at column deadline.

Rocky Mountaineer is reported to be seeking British Columbia Supreme Court injunctions against picketers protesting the

lockout of on board service employees.

The same report states that the *Rocky Mountaineer* has a private security company videotaping all demonstrations and allegedly, locked out on board employees have been notified by letter that if they continue to appear in picket lines, *Rocky Mountaineer* will not continue to employ them when and if the lockout is settled.

The locked out employees state on their Rocky Mountain Train Lockout web page <<http://rockymountaintrainlockout.wordpress.com/about/>>, "Quite simply, what we were asking for was very reasonable. It is customary to be paid overtime after 8 hours in Canada. However, recognizing that our long days last anywhere from 12-16 hours, we asked for overtime after 11 hours; we were willing to take a 0% wage increase in order to accommodate this.

We also have a small health care spending account and we wanted to see this increase so our average worker could afford a private health and dental plan since the company does not provide one.

This does not seem greedy to us."
[Info. from Ken Ruben, Ed Von Nordeck]

AAR AUGUST STORED FREIGHT CARS REPORT by CHARLES VARNES

The Association of American Railroads reported that as of Aug. 1, 2011, 276,943 freight cars were in storage, up 707 cars from the month-earlier level and equal to 18.2 percent of the North American fleet

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

The ARR estimates on how the rail car fleet has changed since July 2009 are:

- In July 2009, 1,603 million cars were in the fleet. From July 2009 through July 2011, 39,822 new cars were installed, while 110,510 cars were scrapped or otherwise removed, yielding a net reduction of 70,688 cars in the North American fleet.
- 527,060 cars were in storage on July 1, 2009 (including cars that haven't moved since before 2005). By August 1, 2011, that was down to 290,415, for a reduction of 236,645. Subtracting the 110,510 cars scrapped or otherwise removed yields 126,135 freight cars returned to service.

For the first seven months of 2011 the number of freight cars stored (and the percentage of the fleet) was: January, 316,271 (20.8); February, 318,773 (20.9); March, 306,316 (20.2); April, 283,649 (18.7); May, 276,228 (18.2); June, 279,083 (18.4); July, 276,236 (18.2).

[Info. from AAR Rail Time Indicator]

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COMMUTER RAIL

When John E. Fenton took over Metrolink in April 2010, the government-run railroad had problems – several million dollars

in inventory was unaccounted for, ridership was declining, and staff morale had plummeted. After the head-on collision with a freight train in Chatsworth killed 25 people in 2008, the line had the worst safety record in the nation for a commuter railroad. Today after the arrival of Fenton, Metrolink had changed a number of critical measures.

Transportation officials say the 52-year-old chief executive has reversed the line's sagging performance since taking over. Safety violations and injuries have decreased. On-time performance has risen. Ridership has increased by about 5,000 a day since December, and millions of dollars have been saved through changes in procedure.

Audit recommendations that occurred yearly are now accomplished in months if not weeks. Fenton has expanded operations, with more novel approaches like service at a U2 concert in Anaheim one weekend in July, which attracted about 11,000 riders.

The challenges before him remain considerable. Fenton notes that in a region with more than 14 million people, Metrolink hauls only about 21,000 round-trip passengers per day. The number of individual boardings peaked in July 2008 at more than 50,000 per day, but plunged to 37,347 before rising again in December.

Because Metrolink must share its track with major freight lines as well as cross against truck and auto traffic at more than 400 street and highway intersections, the risk of a collision is always present. In charge of a five-county system with 512 miles of track, Fenton regularly puts in 12- to 14-hour days for his \$275,000 annual salary. He constantly measures performance, talks up safety and shows a fervent-desire to better-serve customers.

Except for stints in investment banking and waste management, Fenton is a longtime private-sector railroader, having held high-ranking executive positions at four major lines. He has degrees in transportation and systems management.

Within six months of his hiring, he bolstered morale with an event at the Pasadena Playhouse. An open microphone was set up so employees could talk about Metrolink and the effects of the horrific Chatsworth crash. It was part wake, part therapy session.

"It was the start of a turn-around in the culture of the railroad and provided an outlet for employees to grieve and express their concerns," recalled Richard Katz, board chairman of Metrolink's operator, the Southern California Regional Rail Authority.

In some of his first changes, Fenton stopped engineers from having their locomotives idle without reason, sometimes for hours a day. It has saved Metrolink more than \$3 million in fuel costs.

With a small boost in the operations budget but without increasing crews, he added 22 trains to Metrolink's schedule. The new service included an Antelope Valley express line, more holiday trains, and special-event transportation to baseball games, concerts and high-volume destinations, such as the San Manuel Indian Bingo & Casino in San Bernardino. The casino train attracted 3,000 riders a week until it stopped when the casino said it could not provide enough shuttles to get passengers to and from the Metrolink station.

Complaints from the public, passenger counts, mechanical problems, crimes, safety violations, and the number of late trains

are now tallied daily and discussed at 7 a.m. briefings Fenton attends at the Pomona operations center. Under Fenton's leadership, the number of rules violations by train operators and other railroad workers has decreased from 33 in 2010 to 12 – a telling measure because the Chatsworth crash was blamed on a distracted engineer who had been textmessaging just before running a red light.

Fenton has boldly vowed that by early 2013 Metrolink will be the first railroad in the nation to install a sophisticated collision avoidance system that might have prevented the Chatsworth crash. Many in the rail industry say it is a substantial challenge because so-called positive train control has yet to be demonstrated on a large scale.

To encourage ridership, Fenton and his staff are reaching out to companies and overhauling the marketing effort. Metrolink also has begun placing so-called customer engagement representatives on trains to assist passengers and take complaints.

"I knew this would be a major turnaround effort," Fenton said. "But that's what I love. Go in and see how you can make things better."

[Info. from *Los Angeles Times*]

URBAN RAIL TRANSIT

LOS ANGELES METRO RAIL

RIDERSHIP

April 2011	Red Line	Blue Line	Green Line	Gold Line	
Weekday Ave.	148,057	82,086	40,586	38,485	
Saturday Ave.	97,013	57,946	22,862	24,475	
Sunday Ave.	79,110	49,657	19,361	19,662	
Monthly Total	3,910,711	2,212,162	1,044,058	1,009,212	

RIDERSHIP

May 2011	Red Line	Blue Line	Green Line	Gold Line	
Weekday Ave.	144,244	80,223	40,411	36,623	
Saturday Ave.	98,574	51,553	23,832	25,421	
Sunday Ave.	71,577	45,678	18,599	18,553	
Monthly Total	3,852,879	2,164,959	1,055,556	982,089	

[Info. Metro via Ken Ruben]

METRO EXPLORER PROGRAM SEEKS APPLICANTS

The Sheriff's Department's Transit Services Bureau in Los Angeles County, which patrols the Metropolitan Transportation Authority system, is looking for people ages 15-21 to join its Explorer program. The bureau has seven locations where Explorers work: downtown Los Angeles, El Monte, Downey, Willowbrook, Chatsworth, and Leimert Park.

Explorers work assignments with patrol, the Special Problem Unit, the detective bureau, station desk operations and special events. Participants can attend one of two Explorer academies in Whittier – www.starexploreracademy.org – or in Santa Clarita – www.northacademyexplorers.org/

"We will register successful applicants at the academy location of their choice," said Detective Cris Reyes. "I'm really looking forward to working with young people who want to get started in a law enforcement career or those who just want to help better their communities."

People interested must complete an Explorer application and return to Reyes by Aug. 22. In addition to the websites, applications are available at the TSB Gateway Plaza front counter in the MTA Building, 1 Gateway Plaza, in Los Angeles. Applicants must pass an oral interview, a physical and a background check.

Call Reyes at 213-922-3787 for more information.
[Info. from the *Daily Breeze*]

PORTLAND, OREGON

BUILDING STRETCARS IN OREGON

The most expensive streetcar expansion in U.S. history – Portland's \$148.3 million eastside line – will open five months behind schedule because of manufacturing setbacks tied to producing the only American-made modern streetcar. Those glitches also have prompted the Clackamas-based manufacturer to reduce production from six cars to five but at nearly the same cost. And city officials recently created a "Plan B" to satisfy federal officials who revived the project two years ago by agreeing to cut a check for half the costs.

Project officials say they are confident the line will open by its new date, Sept. 21, 2012. Ten years ago, Portland became the first city nationally to reinvest in streetcars, eventually building a 4-mile line stretching from the Pearl District through downtown to the South Waterfront. That line relied on European-built streetcars. But state and federal politicians, disappointed at missed opportunities to manufacture light-rail lines in the United States, insisted that a domestic company begin making streetcars.

They turned to Oregon Iron Works Inc. and its subsidiary, United Streetcar. The company's first batch of streetcars is being built for the 3.3-mile eastside extension to Portland, although seven cars are slated for a project in Tucson, Ariz. Knowing that a separate, U.S.-produced system out of Wisconsin was being developed, Portland officials pushed to bring in an Austrian-based company, Elin, to make the streetcars go. But that cost nearly \$2.9 million, prompting the city to cut one of six streetcars to stay within budget.

City officials may purchase a sixth streetcar by 2015, at an option cost of \$3.5 million. But because of their investment to help guide the technology, coupled with a discount for not receiving the sixth-car immediately, they expect the cost to be as low as \$1.5 million.

Details of the streetcar expansion went to the Portland City Council near the end of July. The backup plan, required by the federal government, is to use Portland's vintage trolley system in case deadlines cannot be met.

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

UNION PACIFIC FAIRWAY DRIVE OVERCROSSING

by CHARLES VARNES

The Walnut, Calif., City Council has given conceptual approval for a 1.4-mile concrete "flyover" bridge that will elevate the Union Pacific Alhambra Subdivision over Fairway Drive along Valley Boulevard at the city's border with Industry.

The UP Alhambra Subdivision is the former Southern Pacific Colton Subdivision Alhambra Line.

The railroad flyover would begin its ascent just east of Nogales Street and rise 22 feet at Fairway Drive before returning to grade one-quarter of a mile west of Lemon Avenue. The \$68 million project would be funded by a combination of federal, state and Measure R funds. (Measure R is a half-cent sales tax passed by Los Angeles County voters in 2008 for transit improvements.)

[Info from San Gabriel Valley Tribune]