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Join us at San Luis Obispo in October
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JOIN TODAY!

YOU can make a difference!
Rail Passenger Association of California and Nevada
A statewide membership organization working for the improvement and expansion of passenger rail service.

Organized in 1977 by a group of passenger rail supporters, RailPAC has been working for over 30 years to establish a network of rail services that will provide service to and throughout California and Nevada.

We need your support to improve and expand passenger rail service in the west!

 Representation and Advocacy
RailPAC presents a strong case to federal, state and local governments for reliable rail services from long-distance trains to commuter operations. Your organization gains strength with a growing membership base and members are invited to review and reflect on proposed changes in budgets, routes and service frequencies.

Cooperative Alliances
RailPAC works closely with other rail organizations and transit advocacy groups.

Volunteer Efforts
Members work with local rail passenger groups including Station Hosts at several Amtrak stations, attend and report on meetings of regional and transit boards and write letters to editors of newspapers. Members also submit personal reports on board-service levels for distribution in Steel Wheels and the weekly newsletter.

FOR MORE INFORMATION about RailPAC and how you can help expand and improve passenger rail, visit our website RailPAC.org or fill out and return the form on the back page of this newsletter.

RailPAC.org
Our website includes a complete listing of our current positions, as well as frequent articles and reports from around the state. Visit RailPAC.org to learn more about these and other regional passenger rail projects we support.

Social Media
To receive the latest rail news from around the state:
- Follow us on Twitter: www.twitter.com/RailPAC
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Your Membership includes...
- STEEL WHEELS: Passenger Rail in California and the West
- Weekly newsletter and periodic email alerts
- Eligibility to attend our annual and regional meetings

RailPAC'S WORK AT-A-GLANCE
RailPAC is working with Amtrak, Caltrans and all agencies involved in achieving the following goals for expanding and extending safe and reliable rail passenger service. We support adequate funding for these services and vigorously promote them.

High Speed Rail
Build the High Speed Rail system together with electrification for Caltrain and Metrolink.

Coast Corridor
Reduce travel times. Continue to enhance onboard amenities. Restore connections to Long-Distance trains at Los Angeles Union Station. Reestablish the Coast Daylight between Los Angeles and San Francisco. New stations at Glendale, Watsonville, Soledad and King City.

Pacific Surfliner Corridor
Campaign for run through tracks at Los Angeles Union Station to improve punctuality and travel times for Amtrak and Metrolink. Extend service to the Coachella and Imperial valleys.

Sunset Corridor
Introduce daily service and reestablish service to Florida.

San Joaquin Corridor
Increase service to and from Sacramento as well as a new station in Elk Grove. Extend daytime and overnight service to Los Angeles.

Capitol Corridor
Increase frequency to hourly service between Sacramento and Oakland. Increase frequency of service to San Jose. Extend service to Reno and Redding and Salinas.

Las Vegas
Reestablish service between Los Angeles and Las Vegas.
President’s Commentary

Amtrak Elimination Saga
When I moved here in 1980 the Reagan Presidency was about to attempt to eliminate Amtrak. At about the same time I became a member of RailPAC and I still recall working with both Republican and Democratic politicians to advance the cause of passenger rail. In the intervening years passenger rail has become a party political issue, which is sad given that this is driven by the way Amtrak happens to be financed rather than its virtues as a mode of transportation. Thus, given a Republican administration and both houses of Congress, Amtrak is indeed in dire straits. This is no time for complacency. Victories (of a sort) in the past do not guarantee future success. And even if Amtrak is still here in a year’s time it will still be limping along much as it is at the moment. Heck, it’s still running some of the rolling stock that I first saw here in 1980!

We need to be vigilant. Amtrak elimination may be tucked into a budget or even a health care bill and slide through under cover of darkness. Most of all we need to point out the facts about where the money goes, (See Andy Selden and Russ Jackson’s stories), and the difference between riders and passenger miles. In the middle of this we’ll have a change of CEO at Amtrak. Moorman has done a good job in a short time and is to be highly commended for stepping into a buzz saw. He has candidly laid out at least some of the realities to politicians in New Jersey and to Congressional committees. His successor is a transportation business man, Richard Anderson, a veteran of Delta Airlines. If Moorman sticks around long enough to prevent the old railroad hands at Amtrak HQ from circling the wagons and preventing Anderson from doing his job this could be a very good outcome.

Brighton – Roxford Double Track on the Antelope Valley Line
Having had our legs cut off by politicians who allowed themselves to be panicked by a few NIMBYs over the Northridge Double Track (see Steel Wheel first quarter) and $120 million of railroad investment refused by Los Angeles Metro, we are determined not to let it happen again. We, in this case Bart Reed of the Transit Coalition and some local volunteers and myself, are working to ensure that all the City Councils, City of Los Angeles Neighborhood Councils, and any other group having an interest, has at least been informed about the proposal. We have in fact been very successful in receiving letters and resolutions of support from just about every organization we have asked. It’s a lot of work. Sometimes it seems as if we are laying one tie at a time. Once all the support is lined up we have to go to Metro to have them program the project and find the money. Those familiar with the area and with Los Angeles County’s Measure M will know that a transit line is proposed along Van Nuys Boulevard. We have proposed a new station where Van Nuys crosses the Metrolink tracks in Pacoima to provide connectivity and better travel options to this underserved community. In addition, the various councils are requesting quiet zones, grade crossing improvements and better amenities at stations. Our plan is for Metrolink to offer transit frequencies between Santa Clarita and Los Angeles Union Station including service to the new Burbank Airport North Station.

Van Nuys Station Second Platform – Ventura County Line
Contracts were let some months ago, where is the action? This single platform bottleneck continues to cause delays to and impede scheduling of the Coast Starlight, the Surfliners and Metrolink Ventura County line trains. The project is made far more complex by the peculiar ownership of the right of way (“RoW”) between Burbank Junction and Moorpark. The north side of the RoW was retained by Southern Pacific and is now owned by Union Pacific. I have never been able to ascertain the reason for this but it is an anomaly that needs to be eliminated.

Metrolink Diesel Locomotives
The first of the new F125 Metrolink diesels are undergoing clearance trials on the Antelope Valley line. I am skeptical about the performance, fuel consumption and emissions of these behemoths. Did you know that Tier 4 emissions standards for locomotives are much more lenient than for trucks? Furthermore, recent real-world data on truck emissions indicates that Tier 4 is nowhere near as clean as the theoretical improvements. You only get the maximum benefit when the engine is running at high revolutions. In southern California trucks spend a lot of time in traffic or waiting in line at ports and rail yards, so diesel emissions are still a major factor in our air quality problem.

Already Obsolete?
F125 diesel locomotive for Metrolink commuter service.
I sincerely hope that these are the last all diesel locomotives ever to be supplied for commuter service. Indeed, I hope that sooner rather than later they are transitioned into Amtrak long distance train service and we start a program of innovation along the lines of our cover story. It’s not just emissions. The F125s fail in other areas. Without a separate generator for passenger car lights and air-conditioning (Head End Power) we can only hope that there are no breakdowns of the main engine. And these heavy diesel locomotives, along with equally lard butted Metrolink passenger cars, will never achieve the kind of acceleration between stops that we need for modern regional rail.

Safety
We have had too many recent incidents where safety has been compromised by what appear to be mistakes by the engineers of passenger trains. Kudos to Tony Bizjak of the Sacramento Bee for bringing out the truth about a near disaster on the Capitol Corridor. There certainly appeared to be a cover up by Amtrak when a train passed through a 40mph crossover at nearly double that speed. This came all too closely behind the terrible accidents in Philadelphia, Spuyten Duyvil and Hoboken, and now a derailment of a Cascade Talgo train near Tacoma July 2nd. It’s easy to say that Positive Train Control (“PTC”) could have prevented these incidents. The reality is that the technology to control overspeeding trains (Automatic Train Stop, Approach Control and similar systems around the world) has been around for half a century or more. In some of these cases the system was in place but not operative, which is doubly tragic. Perhaps if Wick Moorman does stay at Amtrak at least part time a little longer he can break this cycle of accidents and instill a safety culture that seems to have slipped out of focus.

SB 477 (Cannella)
The unintended consequences of the legislation creating the California Intercity Corridor governing bodies will be cleared up soon (we hope) with the passage of Senate Bill 477 being carried by Republican Anthony Cannella. The Senator’s district includes parts of both the San Joaquin Corridor and the Coast line where Capitol Corridor hopes to extend service to Salinas. Apart from the trivial obstacles of a lack of funds and our dear friends in Omaha it turns out that the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Board (“CCJPB”) has no legal right to extend its service beyond current limits. Of course, you’d think that a simple amendment extending the geography of these corridors would not be a big issue. Unfortunately that is not the case. As I have pointed out before, giving these powers and responsibility to County level governments was a mistake. Some of the counties voiced opposition to theoretical extensions because it might take away funds from their county and their plans. Such people are lacking both in vision and understanding of how a rail service should be working to serve our needs. Fortunately, the opposition has been neutralized and as of July 8 the bill will be reviewed by the Assembly Transportation Committee July 10, hopefully without controversy. Needless to say, RailPAC has been sending letters of support when appropriate.

RTC Plan for Coachella Service
California Rail News did a story on Riverside County’s (“RCTC”) plan to bring intercity service to the Coachella Valley. Just for once I agree with CRN. The County’s draft plan to add just two or three round trips a day is a waste of money and will not be successful. Trains with an average speed of 40mph are simply not competitive given the additional first and last mile legs of any rail journey. Here I go again. In 1955 British Railways studied the impact of the construction of the Motorways (freeways) on intercity business. It was concluded that trains would need to average 60mph, implying significant mileages at 100 mph to reach that average. 1955! Since then people’s expectations of comfort and speed have been raised, and the technology is available to meet those expectations. For RCTC to propose a 1950s speed and frequency is risible. We must aim higher.

Coast Line
I travelled up Highway 101 from Burbank to Salinas and back recently, without seeing a single steel wheel turning. Now admittedly there are plenty of sections where the line is distant from the highway, but it used to be a rare occurrence to make that trip without seeing a passenger train, or a local or through freight. Other than the oil train at San Ardo and the twice weekly Guadalupe turn there are just occasional through freights to supplement the Coast Starlight and Surfliners. The twice weekly Guadalupe turn would be a lonely job without the passenger trains on the line. The 29th May run is seen on the siding at Seacliff. Photo by Charles Freericks.
In Steel Wheels January 2013 I proposed that the State lease the line from Union Pacific Railroad. It’s clear to me that UP is not interested in retaining or developing carload business on the line. If you are shipping lemons to New York from Ventura County UP prefers you to truck the load to Delano in the San Joaquin Valley to be consolidated there with other traffic. Such much for environmentally friendly transportation. After the promises of 1995 when UP told the Surface Transportation Board and the California PUC how much better they would be than Southern Pacific there are more trucks on our roads than ever. (BNSF Railway is doing the same, closing terminals and extending truck hauls). Meanwhile UP wants huge infrastructure investments by the public to run additional passenger trains on what is now an almost empty railroad. My suggestion: If UP doesn’t want to run trains and develop freight business they need to step aside, or be made to do so. They are not fulfilling their obligations as a common carrier to meet the “public convenience and necessity”.

Trains Magazine October 1984
My wife (who tolerates much) kindly picked up a 1984 trains magazine at a neighbor’s garage sale. In it our good friend Don Phillips pointed out the inconsistencies of much of Amtrak’s on-board service. Some crews were excellent, some sadly lacking to the point of being surly. Unfortunately that commentary could still be written today, although I believe the overall performance is better. But it does mean that those bad apples that were around in 1984 have to some degree passed on their attitude to another generation. Let’s see if Mr. Anderson can improve the situation. Delta Airlines and the other major air carriers have themselves not always had a stellar reputation for customer service. I am always happy to hear from you about your experiences on board, and on any other rail topic for that matter.

Paul Dyson. pdyson@railpac.org

Take a Trip on the Coast Line This Fall – October Events in San Luis Obispo
Make plans now to come to San Luis Obispo for the Central Coast Railroad Festival which will take place October 13 – 15. (ccrrf.com). In addition to the Festival events the Coast Rail Coordinating Council will be holding a policy meeting in the afternoon of Friday 13th. This will be followed by a RailPAC hosted reception for elected officials and staffs, and for RailPAC members. On Saturday 14th RailPAC will have an information booth at the Railroad Museum followed by an informal get together at a venue to be arranged (hopefully Café Roma next to the depot). Plans are not yet finalized and so keep an eye on our website and the weekly news email. I look forward to seeing many of you. This will be a fun event.

2017 Central Coast Railroad Festival
October 13-15, 2017

- Amazing Model Railroads Tour
- Historic Railroad Equipment
- Speakers
- Bike Tours and Walks
- Railroad Art and Photography
- Railroad Swap Meet
- Kids Activities and Railroad Reading Times
- Wine Tasting by Pomar Junction
- Food and Beverages by Central Roasting Company

Visit www.CCRRF.com for Full Details and Schedule

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Conventional wisdom tells us that commuter rail services, (Caltrain, Metrolink, etc.) must be either diesel or catenary electric. What if this were no longer true? Wireless Power Transfer along with several other maturing technologies have now converged resulting in an opportunity to incrementally modernize intercity and commuter rail to full Zero Emissions operation.

For over a century passenger rail has operated with slightly modified freight equipment and operations to minimize equipment costs, but the requirements for commuter rail are inherently opposite those of long haul freight. While Class 1 freight railroads have achieved an incredible 470+ Revenue Ton Miles per gallon of diesel, a typical diesel passenger train in intercity and commuter service consumes over three gallons per mile. This is purely due to the difference in application as freight trains are long and slow and stop as infrequently as possible whereas passenger trains are shorter, travel at much higher speeds and stop frequently. A typical six car passenger train consumes over five gallons of diesel each time it accelerates to 79mph and throws away that energy every time it stops. Historically, the solution to this has been to add overhead catenary wires and electrify. In Europe and in the northeast corridor of the United States where passenger rail is given priority, the railroads have been electrified with overhead catenary wire to perform better with higher average speeds and frequent stops. While catenary electrification offers proven, clean, high performance rail service, there are significant financial and policy barriers to overcome. Most readers are aware of the obstacles associated with catenary electrification; the challenge of running the wires above taller freight trains and under bridges, the unsightly appearance of the catenary wires and poles and the years of construction and disruption of service necessary to implement. The significant infrastructure investment and need for dedicated rail for catenary electrification leads to its biggest Achilles’ heel, its large initial capital costs. At a cost currently well over $20 million per route mile for the infrastructure and equipment, conventional electrification will only be built where the frequency is high enough to support its cost, and not a mile farther. For example, Caltrain will soon convert to catenary electrification from San Francisco to San Jose at an estimated cost of $32M per mile, but passengers traveling on to Gilroy, on the same tracks, will have to change to a diesel train in San Jose to complete their journey. Add to this, the majority of the railroad trackage in the US is privately owned by freight railroads that do not support having catenary wires over their tracks, and conventional electrification will continue to be the exception and not the rule without new alternatives.

Past Steel Wheels articles have been published on the subject of low emissions passenger rail and hybridization, but wireless Zero Emissions commuter rail is now a real possibility. Batteries, power electronics, and even fuel cells are now in general use in vehicles and getting cheaper, more durable, and smaller. In addition to the application of these technologies for rail, a newer more recent advancement is high capacity Wireless Power Transfer (WPT). WPT is now able transfer more power with examples on transit buses charging at greater than 90% efficiency. Ironically, current passenger locomotive architecture has remained largely the same since the dawn of the diesel electric age some 70 years ago. These locomotives have proven that they will last the 20 years and can be rebuilt and repurposed to support the transition away from diesel for another 20 years and beyond. Combining these technologies on existing surplus locomotive frames addresses the financial and political barriers to electrification. The application is a vehicle based, incremental ‘plug and play’ solution. It can be implemented at any commuter agency at any time and at first can be done only on locomotives for the busiest routes. The only modification of the existing commuter train is the installation of a small hybrid control interface box (HCIB) in the cab of the existing locomotive. Other than the installation of the HCIB, all the wiring needed for the system is already in the locomotives. Further, most passenger trains are plugged in overnight to 400kW wayside power systems so the battery charging infrastructure in many cases is already built in. The path is simple:

**What is Heavy Passenger Rail?**

For Safety reasons, when passenger rail has to share track with freight railroads, the locomotives and passenger cars have to be built to higher crashworthy standards to survive possible collisions with freight equipment. This is opposite of what is commonly referred to as a Light Rail Vehicle (LRV) which can be of lighter construction as the heaviest vehicle it could collide with would be another LRV. In general Intercity and Commuter Rail uses heavy rail equipment and urban high frequency rail is located on dedicated corridors allowing the use of LRV’s.

**Zero Emissions Boost Locomotive (ZEBL)**

![Image](https://example.com/image.png)
Phase 1: Nationwide transition to low emissions passenger locomotives

Rebuild existing passenger locomotives with after-treatment retrofits to get their emissions down to Tier 4 levels. There are currently over 700 legacy passenger locomotives in service in the US. These can be overhauled and upgraded to meet current emissions and retain their proven reliability and low operating costs at half the cost of new unproven locomotives.

Phase 2: Hybridization of existing commuter and intercity trains.

There will likely be an abundance of legacy locomotive chassis on the market soon, as they are retired for new units recently purchased by large agencies. These can be converted to pure electric Zero Emissions Boost Locomotives (ZEBL) that will be added to the consist to hybridize the train. The hybridized trains will have twice the power for acceleration, a large battery pack to store regenerative braking energy and plug in capability to charge overnight when there is excess electricity. These features allow the trains to operate with less than half the emissions and fuel consumption of a conventional commuter train with only a Tier 4 diesel locomotive.

Phase 3: Wireless Power Transfer

After a passenger rail agency has initiated hybridization, the next step is range extending with opportunity charging. Wireless power transfer now allows transferring electrical power to the train anytime it is moving slowly or sitting idle at a station. WPT receivers would be mounted under the passenger cars and, typical of this incremental approach, the track based WPT transmitters embedded between the tracks could first be implemented at the turn around points where the trains sit overnight or for up to an hour before returning to their origin. Over time as the frequency rises the busiest train stops could be equipped with WPT transmitters. At first each station would have enough transmitters to charge the train while stationary for the one minute it takes for embarking and disembarking.

Phase 4: Advanced Wireless Charging and On Board Range Extension

Once ZEBLs and the stations along a route are operational with WPT, additional transmitters can be added extending out from either end of a station to also charge the train dynamically as it enters, stops, and then leaves the station. This should double the amount of opportunity charging per station stop by adding an additional 1.25 minutes of charging.

At the point that the infrastructure for WPT has matured enough, the diesel locomotive at one end of the train can be replaced with a second ZEBL. This solution is viable for routes that stop frequently enough to maintain sufficient charge on the batteries for the train operation. This fully electric commuter train would have zero emissions, over twice the performance, and full power system redundancy compared to the conventional diesel train it replaced.

If there were long distances or hills between two stations that would stretch the energy storage too far, the ZEBL train’s range could be extended with a demand specific alternative fuel generator such as a Hydrogen Fuel Cell for zero emissions or a CNG generator for low cost near zero emissions and the respective fuel storage on board the battery locomotives.

Wireless electrification is real and for a fraction of the cost and disruption of installing and maintaining unsightly catenary wires or the need to change trains when the wire ends!

RailPAC Fall/Winter Meeting has not been finalized. We are still hoping to have a Southern California event. Please check our website and weekly e-news. As it will be our official annual meeting you will receive a notice in the mail.

Don’t forget to check your subscription expiration date on the mailing label and renew your membership if it is due.

Thank you for your continued support for RailPAC and passenger rail.
The Salinas train station waiting room was full of passengers on Wednesday, waiting to board the Coast Starlight Amtrak train 11 on its way to Los Angeles. Elizabeth from St. Louis said that she and her new husband had chosen the train for their honeymoon trip. “Once you are on the train, you are already on vacation,” she said, “You don’t have to wait to arrive.” Of the twenty five people waiting for the train, most expressed surprise that this passenger train, the Coast Starlight, would eliminated in the proposed federal budget. A young man on his way to Atascadero said, “What will people who can’t drive do?” A woman who travels often to Los Angeles said, “I am able to work on the train.” Tourists from New Jersey and Texas said they were looking forward to the beautiful scenery as the train passes through stretches of coast that cannot be reached by road.

The National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) estimates that 30% of long distance rail passengers are tourists, and, indeed, that proportion seemed reflected in the group in the Salinas Amtrak station. The proposed federal budget would eliminate passenger rail in 23 states and 225 cities nationwide, specifically all passenger rail service that is more than 750 miles. In our state; the California Zephyr, the Coast Starlight, the Southwest Chief and the Sunset Limited would all be eliminated. The Coast Starlight is an historic train that stops in Salinas twice a day, once on its two day journey to Seattle and once on its return trip to its home base in Los Angeles. The California Zephyr goes from Emeryville to Chicago and has a beautiful section over the Donner Pass. Both The Southwest Chief and the Sunset Limited leave daily from Los Angeles Union Station, the first to Chicago and the second to New Orleans.

The heavily used Corridor Trains, such as the Surfliner that runs from San Diego to San Luis Obispo and the Capitol Corridor travels from San Jose to Sacramento would not be affected by the federal cuts. The Capitol Corridor is planning to extend train service to Salinas, and in anticipation of this increase in service; Salinas has invested money in improving the Amtrak Station. In response to the news that Salinas’ only passenger train is slated to be eliminated, Salinas Project Planner Don Reynolds said, “I think it would be horrible. Amtrak is a big asset to our city and has been for a hundred years.”

Trains Help The Environment

Eliminating long distance passenger rail would be a step backwards for the environment. Rail is an energy efficient way of moving large quantities people over land. Passenger train encourages the preservation and appreciation of landscapes. Automobile travel promotes suburban sprawl, while train travel encourages compact, walkable communities.

As I watched the travelers get off the Amtrak Coast Starlight train in Salinas, I found that three of them were college students coming home from UC Davis. Train travel is ten times safer than automobile travel, as I am sure the parents collecting these students were aware. A cheerful family of five was returning from a vacation in Seattle, and as I looked at the lively children I thought of the difference between being seat belted into a car for a long trip in contrast to the freedom to walk around a train. During my train travels I have played chess or assembled puzzles with young people in the viewing car, as their parents rested a few seats away. The disappearance of these trains would be a sad loss of choice in travel.
Commerce, Oklahoma (not California) is a small town in the northeast corner of Oklahoma near the Kansas border, population 2,400 hardy souls. This town sits astride the original Route 66 highway, several bypassed miles away from Interstate 44. It is small town America personified, in what today is labeled “flyover country.” Commerce is the home town of hall of fame baseball great Mickey Mantle, and it is a Mantle quote that brings us to the topic of this article. In referring to his upbringing Mantle said, “I guess you could say I’m what this country is all about.” Route 66 is much of what is right with America. So is the passenger train. The current question is, do the Congress and the Amtrak leadership understand this, or do they consider a train going through rural America to be superfluous in today’s economy?

In December another CEO will take the reins of the National Rail Passenger Corporation, aka Amtrak. His name is Richard Anderson, and while he comes from a railroad family, his father having worked for the AT&SF in the Houston, Texas area where Richard grew up, his life has been spent in the airline industry, most recently Delta Airlines. The current Amtrak CEO, Wick Moorman, was CEO of Norfolk Southern before taking, as he said, a temporary job heading Amtrak. Southern boys. Came up through the ranks. Now comes the challenge for Moorman, to teach Anderson “the ropes” of railroading. What will Wick tell Richard about the Amtrak long-distance trains… you know, the ones that operate in and serve “flyover country”? Will Anderson learn that the Northeast Corridor is a profit center for Amtrak? (It isn’t.) Will he learn that the long-distance trains are “big losers,” as Wick’s predecessor allowed the world to think of them? (They aren’t.) Moorman has decried the Trump Administration’s 2018 budget request that eliminates money for the long-distance trains. Trump’s Budget Director has said that un-needed items that may have outlived their usefulness should go. Well, let’s see. Amtrak’s own reports continue to show the NEC with a profit and the long-distance group with a big loss, as Andrew Selden found, in the aggregate totaling several hundred million dollars. Pete Loomis did a long division that shows the loss for the long-distance trains by these figures comes to several tens of thousands of dollars of loss per trip, which is ridiculous on its face. No wonder the Congress and the press take the “profitable NEC” and the “loser long distance” trains to be just that, and take it as gospel, which we know it is not. As a group the long-distance trains are cash-positive. If Amtrak insiders and too many outsiders really believe those two fake ideas, then why did Amtrak put in their own 2018 Budget Request the following?

“...ask that eliminates money for the long-distance trains. Trump’s Budget Director has said that un-needed items that may have outlived their usefulness should go. Well, let’s see. Amtrak’s own reports continue to show the NEC with a profit and the long-distance group with a big loss, as Andrew Selden found, in the aggregate totaling several hundred million dollars. Pete Loomis did a long division that shows the loss for the long-distance trains by these figures comes to several tens of thousands of dollars of loss per trip, which is ridiculous on its face. No wonder the Congress and the press take the “profitable NEC” and the “loser long distance” trains to be just that, and take it as gospel, which we know it is not. As a group the long-distance trains are cash-positive. If Amtrak insiders and too many outsiders really believe those two fake ideas, then why did Amtrak put in their own 2018 Budget Request the following?

“The Administration’s Fiscal Year 2018 budget request for the U.S. Dept. of Transportation proposes the elimination of Federal funding for Amtrak’s long-distance services. Enactment of such a proposal would drastically shrink the scope of our network, could cause major disruptions in existing services, and increase costs for the remaining services across the Amtrak system. Amtrak’s initial projection is that eliminating long distance services would result in an additional cost of approximately $423 million in FY 2018 alone (we think it’s more than that), requiring more funding from Congress and our partners rather than less” (emphasis mine). So there, they said it. Now it is buried in their budget request and will it be forever dismissed or ignored, because all that anyone has seen for years is the “profit” and “losers” idea? But wait! Amtrak reports that the deferred NEC maintenance is $473 million per year, so what Mr. Moorman has done for us is give us almost exactly the amount of cash the long-distance trains contribute, $423 million a year, and had that maintenance not been “deferred” and properly charged to the NEC would the corporation be breaking even? As for the “partners,” that means the state-supported train routes like the three in California. Mr. Selden says, they “cannot lose money because states make up the difference between revenues and Amtrak’s fully-allocated costs, so they are approximately cash-neutral to Amtrak.” (Continued on next page)
When a region evolves without effective regional transportation planning the traffic tends to get worse, especially in urbanized areas. The SF Bay Area’s record in this regard is poor. As might be expected, according to the “TomTom Traffic Index of 2017”, released on February 21, 2017, San Francisco is the 3rd most congested city in the country and San Jose is the 7th. Added to that are the horrendous traffic backups on the Bay Area’s 6, 8 and even 10-lane freeways.

What happens in a growing region when infrastructure does not keep up with land development.

The Role of Passenger Rail

So what might be done to make it easier to enter the inner Bay Area, and then get around without a car once you’re there?

1 The Oncoming Transbay BART Capacity Crunch: It has been estimated that BART will run out of transbay carrying capacity between 2025 and 2030. This is nothing new; people have known about and talked about the problem for years. Yet there has been little actual progress toward dealing with the problem. The idea that a second rail tube between Oakland and San Francisco will solve the problem is an illusion. Even if it were decided tomorrow to go ahead with a new tube and its connecting subways (a project estimated to cost between $25 and $30 billion in today’s dollars), given the pace of today’s infrastructure development, it would take a half century to get a new transbay passenger rail service on line. Obviously, something has to be done in the meantime, and for unaccountable reasons that “something” remains undefined. The “Bay Area Transportation Working Group” has proposed that BART develop its own bus shuttle system, comprised of 3 or 4 major trunk lines operating in transit-only lanes on 10 minute headways and geared to conveying people quickly and comfortably from various parts of the East Bay to downtown Oakland and/or downtown San Francisco. This and accelerating the design and construction of a second second transbay rail service might suffice.

2 BART/Amtrak Connections: There should be a convenient way of transferring between the Amtrak trains passing north and south through Oakland and BART. The Richmond connection is efficient but once on BART the traveler bound for downtown Oakland or downtown San Francisco must first meander through Berkeley and Oakland’s Rockridge District, thereby adding 10 minutes to the Oakland trip and 20 minutes to the San Francisco trip. The Coliseum connection requires an 800 foot schlep across busy San Leandro Boulevard to get from the BART Station to the connecting Amtrak station.

A New Amtrak CEO and Flyover Country  (Con. from page 9)

Now back to flyover country. (I hate that term, but it applies.) In his acceptance statement press release, Richard Anderson said, “I’m passionate about building strong businesses that create the best travel experience possible for customers.” Well, how great is it? According to Amtrak’s financial report, since last October system Ridership is up 2.1%, Revenue up 3.0%. Nice. Shows growth. And, three new real growth projects are under consideration: 1) Closing the gap between Oklahoma City and Newton, Kansas; 2) Extension of the Crescent from Meridian, Mississippi, to Dallas and Ft. Worth; and 3) Finally re-extending service across the Gulf Shore from New Orleans to Orlando, Florida. These are worthy projects for the southern boys to work on, but what is the missing factor to all of them? State support, and approval by the freight railroads: the BNSF, the Kansas City Southern, and the CSX. Are any of them going to get on the bandwagon? Mr. Anderson will have a full-time challenge dealing with those hard nose guys. Speaking of the OKC gap northward, Amtrak ran a very well received test train on that route. One of the cities that would be served is Wichita, Kansas. Recently this writer attended an event where a young couple from Wichita told me that they hadn’t heard about the test train, but they really want a train that can take them places. They have dropped friends off at the Newton, KS, station to ride the Southwest Chief; they know a potential candidate for Kansas Governor and after our talk will bring up Amtrak with him. Now that’s what happens when rail is discussed out here in “flyover country.”

This summer has been an operating challenge for Amtrak, perhaps more-so than in some years past. Heat, flooding, mechanical problems, and more heat have had a depressing effect on trains. RailPAC member Ralph James, who lives up in the cool Sierra Nevada near Colfax, reports that the California Zephyr’s summer consist has “regularly been three coaches and three sleepers plus the transition dorm/sleeper, the first time he’s seen three sleepers on a regular basis in a long time.” That shows a growth attitude exists here in the West. But, James says, “Timekeeping for 5 and 6 has been sporadic at best with some three and four hour delays across the Midwest and Rockies frequently.” A look at the Southwest Chief shows the train can run on time until it gets to northern New Mexico, and then can lose up to four hours up there. RailPAC member Mike Palmer wrote recently that he was waiting on the Atlanta, Georgia, platform for Crescent #20: “It is blocked a few miles away, because a (NS) freight train broke down in front of it and has been sitting at the station.” The situation was cleared, and the Crescent finally arrived and departed two hours late. Just a few examples, but to new CEO Richard Anderson we say, “Pay attention to what is going on in flyover country. These passengers are your real bread and butter, so DON’T write us off and think all that matters is what happens in the Northeast despite what those politicians tell you. If you want to know more about “us,” or even if you don’t, come talk to us out here. We want the trains and we want them to be reliable, clean, and staffed by people who know what to do and how to make all your customers feel that they are valuable and should come back again. Too much to ask?

Continued on page 11
As has been proposed for years, there should be both an improved connection at the Coliseum and a convenient BART/Amtrak transfer station in West Oakland. If this latter change led to the closing of the Emeryville Amtrak stop, so be it. Prospects for these critically important long distance rail to BART connections? So far the Bay Area’s regional planners haven’t shown much interest.

3 Caltrain: Caltrain’s electrification program seems to be underway. In addition Caltrain…and later High Speed Rail….needs to get to downtown San Francisco. The downtown extension (DTX) extension would make San Francisco’s new Transbay Transit Center, located in the immediate vicinity of 350,000 office jobs and 20,000 transit-oriented housing units, the hub of 11 separate rail lines and over 40 bus lines. Despite the powerful transit-integrating potential of the new terminal, DTX is stalled because of a lack of local and regional attention and political backing.

4 The Altamont Commuter Express (ACE): ACE is an 86 mile long commuter rail service between Stockton California and San Jose California. The ACE trains currently travel at average speeds of 40 mph. There has been talk of speeding up and otherwise improving the ACE service. However things now seem to be going in exactly the wrong direction. Union City is a small but ambitious city located north of Fremont. The Union City BART station is located two and one half miles north of the ACE line. Union City is struggling to define the sprawling out development it has built around the BART Station as “transit-oriented”. Union City feels that the creation of a connection between ACE and BART at its new development would help to improve viability of its development. The problem is that to achieve Union City’s objectives would require ACE trains to be detoured 2.5 miles off line and then reversed in direction before continuing on to their regular destinations, thereby significantly increasing the trip times of all through passengers. This proposal is the epitome of how disjointed and parochial thinking undermines the opportunities to attract motorists into otherwise efficient passenger rail services. Instead of being slowed down by detours, the ACE service between Stockton and San Jose should be speeded up. In addition a branch line of ACE should be extended across a rebuilt, or if necessary replaced, Dumbarton Rail Bridge to Redwood City with timed transfers between ACE and Caltrain. There are several alternative ways of implementing this improvement which will be described in a future edition of Steel Wheels.

5 Capitol Corridor Passenger Rail: The Capitol Corridor is a 168-mile long passenger rail service that currently runs from Auburn, California via Sacramento and Oakland to San Jose. In recent years the service, operated by Amtrak under the direction of the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority (CCJPA), has been significantly upgraded and in the last 24 months experienced a 10% increase in ridership. At this time, additional improvements along the line are being considered by the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority, including the eventual depression of the main line through Oakland’s Jack Long Square area. One proposal possibly slated for “early action” is of particular importance. This would shift the Capitol Corridor trains from the Southern Pacific tracks located close to the much faster and more direct BART line to the Mulford alignment now used by the Coast Starlight. This change would eliminate three little used Amtrak stops and a tight turn in Union City, thereby significantly reducing the time it currently takes Capitol Corridor trains to get from Oakland to San Jose. Under this arrangement there would be a new ACE/Capitol Corridor transfer station in Newark. With Station upgrading, the Capitol Corridor and long distance trains could connect easily to BART at the Oakland Coliseum and Santa Clara / Great America joint use stations. There are signs that the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority is committed to further streamlining and speeding up its service without giving in to impractical parochial demands for more stops.

6 San Francisco’s Market Street Subway: BART runs in the BART level of the subway about 70 feet below the surface of Market Street. Above the BART level, about 50 feet below Market, is the Muni Metro level. Five separate Muni Metro light rail lines fanning out to five different parts of San Francisco operate in the Muni Metro Level. Thanks to an arbitrary and ill-conceived decision in the mid-1990’s to cut the length of Muni Metro trains from 4 and 5 cars to 1 and 2 cars, the current peak period ridership potential of the Muni Metro system is now just 40% of what it used to be. This has made traveling by Muni Metro during peak hours a nightmare. A high priority should be placed on finding ways of returning the carrying capacity of the Muni Metro service to its design level.

7 Ferryboats: Bay Area ferryboat service is a slow but satisfying way of getting across the Bay. Steps should be taken to improve the connections between the ferry terminals and the nearby rail and bus lines. This applies in Larkspur, Vallejo, Alameda and elsewhere.

It is no longer ok (if it ever was) to subordinate the transportation needs of the Bay Area to the interests of local political cabals and assorted land use developers. The Bay Region needs to get serious about expanding and optimizing the usefulness of its passenger rail lines.
Dear Secretary Chao:

Re: Amtrak

URPA has followed with interest the Administration’s budget proposal and its purported impact on Amtrak, as well as Amtrak’s recent statements concerning its results, investment priorities and spending plans. These stories all reflect longstanding misimpressions of both the financial and operational results of Amtrak’s various train operations. The budget proposal threatens to eliminate the largest sector Amtrak operates (by output) and its most commercially successful trains (by load factor and market share).

Inappropriate Metrics

Amtrak’s reports, built on train and segment “ridership,” chronically deceive congress and the media. “Ridership” is not a meaningful measure of anything important that Amtrak does. Amtrak exists to move people between cities by rail. “Ridership” does not measure the performance of that mission. It measures only transactions—tickets sold—not the distances over which customers are carried, or the revenues they generate, or the costs required to move them. A static equipment display generates transactions (“ridership”) but zero transportation output.

The only useful metric for the output of intercity passenger service is “revenue passenger miles” (RPMs). They are all that matters to an entity whose purpose is to provide intercity passenger transport.

Trains Ranked by Output

Amtrak’s segment output of intercity transport may surprise you. In FY2016, Amtrak long distance trains generated 2.649 billion RPMs, while the NEC managed only 1.978 billion, just barely topping the regional corridor trains elsewhere in the country, with 1.899 billion. The long distance trains therefore by a wide margin are Amtrak’s largest segment in producing intercity passenger transport. In FY’15, the NEC had the fewest RPMs and was actually the smallest operation Amtrak had, measured by output. These results have been consistent for decades.

Trains Ranked by Load Factor

Another key measure of performance is load factor. Load factor is a measure of capital efficiency, and it is a direct indication of places where the enterprise is over-invested (low load factor—capacity exceeds demand) or under-invested (high load factor—demand exceeds capacity). Load factor measures how much of its inventory a transport enterprise can sell.

Amtrak’s long distance trains consistently have a higher load factor than do the NEC trains. Amtrak’s segment load factors have been generally consistent for decades. In the NEC, Amtrak’s load factor is just over 50%, for Acela premium services and conventional services alike. Amtrak cannot sell nearly half the NEC’s inventory of available seat miles that it generates each year. This demonstrates objectively and unequivocally that Amtrak is over-capitalized in the NEC because it has far more capacity there than it is able to sell.

In long distance markets, load factors vary from 55-65%. A long distance train is effectively sold out at a load factor of about 65%. These load factors objectively and unequivocally demonstrate that Amtrak is under-capitalized in its few long distance markets because demand consistently exceeds supply.

Trains Ranked by Market Share

Another key measure of the returns on Amtrak’s use of federal capital is the market share its services have attained. Amtrak’s market share for intercity transport in the NEC (after 40 years and more than a hundred billion dollars in federal subsidy, in constant 2017 dollars) is well under 2%, which is trivially insignificant to regional intercity mobility in the Northeast. In the markets where they operate, the long distance trains often have shares that approach 5%, more than twice the NEC’s and achieved with sold-out trains and almost no recent federal investment at all.

Based on load factor and market shares, the long distance trains, therefore, are also objectively the most commercially successful trains that Amtrak operates.

Trains Ranked by Financial Results

Financial results of operation are another important metric of performance.

Recent media stories have repeated Amtrak’s “big lie” that its NEC trains are, as Business Insider recently wrote, “...Amtrak’s only profitable line.” That is simply a falsehood. Amtrak’s statements and suggestions to that effect silently omit any assignment to NEC trains and their revenues of all or most of the massive annual costs of the fixed facilities of the NEC. These trains emphatically do not cover all of the fixed facility costs that they require in order to operate. Those costs (which Amtrak mischaracterizes as “capital” costs) came to about $1.6 billion in FY’16, most of which was spent in and for the NEC, and included another $473 million in deferred maintenance and purchasing (primarily in the NEC) that Amtrak incurred to cover a substantial shortfall in anticipated, budgeted, NEC FY’16 revenues.

The NEC once it is charged with its annual fixed facility costs appears to account for the major part of Amtrak’s annual loss as shown on its audited financial statements, and to consume 100% of the uncommitted portion of the annual federal subsidy grant to Amtrak.

The tens of billions of dollars that Amtrak claims it needs to fix up the NEC is simply the accumulation of decades of deferrals,
similar to last year’s $473 million, to cover annual losses in the NEC in earlier years.

Amtrak Misrepresents Financial Results of Operations

Amtrak’s losses cannot, and do not, arise out of its operation of trains other than its NEC trains.

The state-sponsored regional trains cannot lose money (for Amtrak) because Amtrak operates all of them under contracts that obligate the state to pay Amtrak the difference between the train’s revenues and Amtrak’s “fully-allocated costs” allocated to that train. Under Amtrak’s logic, once a state has paid Amtrak’s “fully-allocated” costs of a given train, by definition no other costs—cash or non-cash—can remain. So, these trains are always cash-positive to Amtrak. They cannot, and do not, require or consume ANY federal subsidy.

The long distance trains also are cash positive to Amtrak. Amtrak said so itself when it told congress recently that elimination of all long distance trains would increase, not decrease, its annual subsidy need and that its subsequent subsidy need would grow year over year. That can be true if and only if the long distance trains also are cash-positive to Amtrak. Thus, these trains also cannot, and do not, consume any federal subsidy dollars.

Amtrak’s APT Reports are not Statements of Profit and Loss

Amtrak’s statements of train, route and segment performance generated from its “APT” system do not contradict these conclusions. APT does not generate, and is incapable of generating, statements of profit and loss as used in GAAP-compliant financial statements, and its reports do not represent the financial results of operations of any train, route or segment. APT reports are not GAAP-compliant and are not audited. Rather, they reflect a hypothetical cost allocation system based on Amtrak management-derived algorithms. Amtrak does not have statements of profit and loss compiled in accordance with GAAP for any train, route or segment.

The inescapable conclusion is that neither the regional corridors nor the long distance trains have “losses” that are cross-subsidized by NEC “profits.” That is a myth and a lie.

Unintended Consequences

Much of what I have related to you is not well understood because few have bothered to look behind Amtrak’s mischaracterizations of its business results. We think Amtrak’s obsessive fixation on the NEC reflects the preferences of its political patrons in congress, management bias, or perhaps its own obsession with the only market where Amtrak owns the railroad it operates over. But the result is the foolishness represented in both management’s endless repetition of the same failed investment strategy, and as reflected in the Administration’s budget proposal. The great irony is that if that budget were to be implemented, according to Amtrak itself, the country would lose the largest, most successful and productive group of trains Amtrak operates, and the annual federal subsidy for what remains, according to Amtrak, would rise not fall. That doesn’t seem like good policy or good business to us.

Solutions

Amtrak needs to re-think its investment strategies to direct capital to its largest and most commercially successful yet undercapitalized segments. Amtrak needs to come clean with congress, the administration and the public about the financial and operational performance of its three groups of trains using appropriate metrics. Only then could Amtrak expect to achieve real growth and real reduction in its endless need for federal subsidy.

URPA is an independent institute devoted to research and education on intercity rail passenger issues.

Cordially,

Andrew Selden, President
United Rail Passenger Alliance
A new era of advanced manufacturing has given rise to the nation’s most innovative passenger rail solutions.

That’s what’s happening at the Siemens Sacramento facility where we are building trains made in the U.S. for the U.S. These new vehicles are increasing efficiency and making intercity travel more reliable than ever before.

In the Northeast corridor, the Amtrak® order of 70 locomotives will help improve performance and ease mobility between cities so this vital region can continue to flourish.

Further west, new orders of diesel-electric vehicles mean five states will be able to link their economies more closely.

Somewhere in America, the people of Siemens are connecting us all with a new generation of home-built locomotives.

Built to bring cities closer and take them further.

Siemens locomotives are reinventing intercity travel in America.
Santa Barbara Car Free is a cooperative project founded and led by Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District for cleaner air and a healthier planet. See OurAir.org.
All Aboard Arizona is turning the valves wide open to move Arizona forward on a fast track for expanded passenger rail services to help mitigate increasingly heavy highway traffic congestion in Arizona. In this connection, I am pleased to report what ALL ABOARD ARIZONA is doing now.

Organization Changes Made In January

Your new 2017 Board of Directors was elected on January 21, 2017. All previous board members, except for one, were re-elected for the new year. Two first time members elected to the board were Ken Karrels, PhD, Chairman, Southern Arizona Transportation Museum and John Jones, AICP, urban planner and consultant. We welcome them both to the board.

The new board elected the following individuals to fill officer positions with ALL ABOARD ARIZONA: Chuck Mott – President, former Chairman, All Aboard Washington; Rob Bohannan - Past President, AICP, urban rail and transit planner; Roger Clark - VP Membership, Founder, Pro-Rail Nebraska & NARP Representative; Al Richmond - VP Northern Arizona, President, Arizona State Railroad Museum Foundation; Tony Haswell - VP Southern Arizona, Attorney and Founder, National Association of Railroad Passengers; Alan Mott – Treasurer; Retired Executive, 3 M Company; Jay Smyth, PhD - Parliamentarian, Retired Professor; Mary Jo Mott – Recording Secretary, Retired EVP, Innovac, Inc. and Mike Garey, Corresponding Secretary, Retired Colonel USAF.

The Board of Directors approved a resolution, supporting proposed legislation, sponsored by Senator Steve Farley, (D), Tucson, that authorizes a Joint Power Commuter Rail Authority (JPCRA) bill, comprised of metropolitan planning organizations, council of governments Indian Tribes and public and regional transportation agencies, to plan, fund, construct and operate passenger rails services, connecting the cities of Tucson and Phoenix and intermediate communities, in the Counties of Maricopa, Pinal and Pima. ALL ABOARD ARIZONA has proposed a low budget rail passenger train service alternative, serving this same rail corridor, at substantially less cost, than the recently completed ADOT Tier I Study proposes. The JPCRA would create intercity passenger train services that would operate outside of the authority of ADOT and legislative approval and funding. Presently, neither the State Legislature nor the Governor’s office support intercity passenger rail services in Arizona.

Spring Rail Passenger Summit Meeting Held In Phoenix, April 8, 2017

Rail Passenger advocates, both from ALL ABOARD ARIZONA and the National Association of Rail Passengers (NARP), attended the Spring Rail Passenger Summit Meeting, held in Phoenix, AZ, April 8, 2017. The keynote speaker was Scott Smith, CEO, Valley Transit, Phoenix; AZ. He gave an inspiring presentation showing the great success of the 26 mile light rail system, which began operations in 2008. Since construction of the $1.4 billion first phase 21 mile rail system, which began in 2005, nearly $8.4 billion in real estate construction has occurred along this light rail corridor; presently, nearly 60,000 people ride the light rail daily. Senator Steve Farley, (D), Tucson, AZ, gave the next presentation. The senator recounted how he was a key part of the successful rail transit coalition, embracing both sides of the aisle, bringing public institutions and private corporations, together, for the support of Proposition 400, which passed in 2004, and authorized building the Phoenix Area Valley Transit light rail and Tucson Sun Link rail trolley services. Recently, Senator Farley, who is a friend of passenger rail, announced he is running for state governor in 2018. Following lunch, we were privileged to hear a presentation from Jim Mathews, President and CEO, NARP. Mr. Mathews described NARP’s efforts to build grass route support at the local level across the country. He urged attendees to contact our state congressional legislators regarding continued federal funding of Amtrak intercity passenger train services. The speaker cited their efforts to support passenger train services, along with the Southern Rail Coalition, operating between New Orleans, LA. And Orlando, FL., and changing tri-weekly passenger train services to daily service on the Cardinal and Sunset Limited passenger train routes. The meeting concluded with a presentation from Amtrak, Director Long Distance Services, Eric Smith. His presentation showed major customer service improvements, starting on the Coast Starlight, June, 2015; resulting from joint working group task committees, comprised of upper-level management, union chairs and front line services employees, working together to improve customer service amenities – including enhanced boarding procedures, clean car condition improvements, daily at your seat meal services, new cocktail on rails beverage services and breakfast to go bags. These passenger service enhancements have since been expanded to all western long distance passenger trains. The results have been higher customer service scores, significant revenue increases and lower food and beverage service losses. This year, the Sunset Limited/Texas Eagle tied first on customer servicer scores, compared to all other long distance passenger trains.

All Aboard Arizona Supports Mag Planning For Commuter Rail And Transit In Phoenix

A member of the board and two officers met with Marc Pearsall, Transit Planner III – Rail, Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), on April 20, 2017 to learn about rail transit planning in Maricopa County. Marc is one of the most knowledgeable rail planners in Arizona. He is working with all transportation related agencies in Maricopa County and state agencies, necessary to produce a proposed Proposition 500, slated for the public ballot in 2020, which would ask voters to authorize, fund and build commuter and light rail transit services. ALL ABOARD ARIZONA supports MAG in their plans to build rail commuter and light rail transit services in the Phoenix metropolitan area.
Second Quarter Board of Directors Meeting Held In May

The Board of Directors Second Quarter Board Meeting was held in Casa Grande, AZ May 20, 2017. Alan Mott, Treasurer, and Becky Miller, Executive Director, Arizona Transit Association, were both approved to become members of the Board of Directors. The board reviewed and approved the ALL ABOARD ARIZONA five year Strategic Plan. This carefully crafted future planning document, facilitated by Alan Mott, Treasurer, and several officers and members of the board, states our vision to be: “Intercity and commuter rail passenger services, connecting rural, suburban and city communities in Arizona and throughout the region.” Our organization vision is: “Educate, advocate and support grass roots, executive and legislative actions necessary to build rail passenger intercity and regional services serving all of Arizona”. This important planning document lays out the what, where, how and when to accomplish our mission.

ALL ABOARD ARIZONA strongly supports a daily Sunset Limited. The president has determined this campaign is, perhaps, the most doable project we can support for positive results at this time. Accordingly, we have made contact with all state rail passenger advocacy organizations on the Sunset Limited route, to form a coalition, that together with NARP and other related organizations, builds grass roots support for a daily Sunset Limited. Board Member, Earl Van Swearingen, has agreed to chair ALL ABOARD ARIZONA's task force to coordinate our support, with other state groups, necessary to raise strong support for the daily passenger train.

The president addressed the need for new, younger leadership in ALL ABOARD ARIZONA that is focused on future needs for passenger rail services in our state. Recognizing our present leadership ranks are aging, we must be engaged in succession planning now. At the same time, we have to increase our efforts; building grass roots support, meeting key leadership and decision makers: in the legislature, in county executive, city mayors and city council offices, talking to civic and trade associations and soliciting support from organized labor and college and university millennials. To help move us forward, meeting these objectives more effectively and aggressively, the president offered his proposal to hire a full time paid executive director, along with job qualifications and a job description.

He specifically recommended Mr. Anthony Trifiletti, formerly President, All aboard Washington (1997 – 2008), while this president of ALL ABOARD ARIZONA was then Chairman, All Aboard Washington. The ALL ABOARD ARIZONA president knows the candidate very well, having worked with him very successfully for over eleven years. Mr. Trifiletti is very interested, available and ready to assume the responsibilities of the new position. The board determined Mr. Trifiletti should come to Arizona and meet as many board members and officers as possible, to determine his qualifications, capabilities and willingness to fill the position, before considering him for the position. Accordingly, the president called for a special meeting of the board of directors, to be held in Tucson, AZ., June 17, 2017 to meet Mr. Trifiletti, to determine his qualifications and interests in the position, to vote to approve the position of Executive Director and to approve the hiring of Mr. Trifiletti for the position.

Special Board of Directors Meeting in Tucson, Az. June 17, 2017

Mr. Trifiletti came to Arizona and met with several officers and members of the board, Friday, June 16, 2017, Tempe, AZ, and again at the special meeting of the board of directors, Saturday, June 17, 2017, Tucson, AZ. Officers and board members present at the meeting heard Mr. Trifiletti’s presentation, his qualifications and asked him what his work priorities would be as executive director. After much discussion, all board members present voted to approve a resolution that specifies raising 12 month s cash and cash pledges, totaling $40,000.00, to fund the position by September 15, 2017, after which, IF fund requirements are met, the president will initiate a telephone conference call to all members of the board of directions for a voice vote, to approve the position of executive director and to approve the hiring of Mr. Trifiletti.

Presently, ALL ABOARD ARIZONA has nearly half of the funds needed, including $8,000.00 in cash pledges received already. The Board of Directors of ALL ABOARD ARIZONA wishes to thank board member, Becky Miller, Executive Director, ARIZONA TRANSIT ASSOCIATION, for a substantial cash pledge made from her organization to help fund the position. The officers will campaign for remaining cash funds and cash pledges donations from officers and members of the board, organization members and cash contributions from related organizations, including corporate donations.

Summary Six Months Accomplishments of All Aboard Arizona

During the first six months of 2017, the Board of Directors and Officers of ALL ABOARD ARIZONA have accomplished the following actions: changed name of Arizona Rail Passenger Association to ALL ABOARD ARIZONA; adopted new snappy logo; updated and changed corporate trade name certification, reinstated IRS 501 (c) 3 tax exemption contribution status - effective March 18, 2017; updated and computerized membership rolls; computerized all organization financial reports, appointed annual financial review committee and revised ALL ABOARD ARIZONA web site to facilitate making on line credit card contributions. Many of these actions were successfully handled by our Treasurer, Alan Mott, to whom we extend our gratitude for all of his talented efforts made in this regard.

In addition, special thanks go to Rob Bohannan, Roger Clark and Alan Mott, who put in major efforts to identify and enroll additional dues paying members. Consequently, our organization is now experiencing growth in membership. Our immediate goal is to reach 90 dues paying members by January 1, 2018 and to increase our membership to 300 dues paying members in five years. Special recognition goes to Mike Garey, Corresponding Secretary, for his behind the scenes tireless efforts and strong support for many of our accomplishments and to Jay Smyth, Parliamentarian, for his professional work to revise and up-grade our organization by-laws.
Third Quarter Board of Directors Meeting.  
The board of director’s third quarter meeting will be held at the Francisco Grande Hotel Conference Center, Casa Grande, AZ. Saturday, September 16, 2017, at 11:00 AM. Lunch will be provided.

Fourth Quarter Board of Directors and Fall Membership Meeting  
The fourth quarter board and membership meetings will be held at the Riverpark Inn, Saturday, December 2, 2017, Tucson, AZ. The board meeting is scheduled at 8:00 AM and the membership meeting is scheduled to begin at 10:00 AM. More details will be provided by Roger Clark, Membership VP, as we near the meeting date.

Special “Narp 2017 Rail Nation Chicago” Passenger Rail Expo and 50th Anniversary, November 2, 2017  
All officers, members of the board of directors and members of ALL ABOARD ARIZONA, are invited to attend the special NARP 50th anniversary celebration, November 2 - 5, 2017, Chicago, IL. The host hotel is the Millennium Knickerbocker Hotel. On a very special note, NARP will pay special tribute to NARP founder, and ALL ABOARD ARIZONA board member, Anthony Haswell. Special events include great speakers, interesting exhibits and rail tours. We urge everyone that can, to register and attend this important gala event.

Rail News: Amtrak  
Cuomo, Christie call for review of Amtrak infrastructure protocols  
Tweet “A New Jersey Transit derailment last week stemmed from a wide gauge track condition, according to Amtrak.”

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo and New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie on Monday called for an independent review of Amtrak’s infrastructure and maintenance protocols in response to the railroad’s recent acknowledgement that track disrepair played a role in two train derailments at New York City’s Penn Station.

In a letter to Amtrak Chief Executive Officer Wick Moorman and Federal Railroad Administration Executive Director Patrick Warren, the governors noted the derailments caused “severe service disruptions” at the station.

An independent review should take into account the causes of the recent failures at the station and “any needed changes to the processes by which routine maintenance and emergency repairs are performed,” the letter stated.

“As you know, Penn Station is more than just a rail hub — it is a regional economic engine,” the governors wrote, adding that the MTA Long Island Rail Road carries 230,000 riders through the station and New Jersey Transit carries 200,000 commuters to and from Manhattan every day.

“Severe service disruptions at Penn Station not only impact and inconvenience riders, but also create a ripple effect across the region,” wrote Cuomo and Christie.

Last week, Moorman acknowledged that track issues led to a NJ Transit train derailment at Penn Station last week and an Amtrak Acela train derailment at the station in March.
XpressWest. Transmittal of the Executive Summary of the Investment Grade Ridership and Revenue Study

The status of the High Desert Corridor (HDC): Investment Grade Ridership and Revenue Study was reported in Steel Wheels, 2nd quarter, 2017. XpressWest, in advance of a proposed July meeting with the Board of the Nevada High Speed Rail Authority, has now submitted the Executive Summary of the Investment Grade Ridership and Revenue Study to that Board.

XpressWest, within its submittal, particularly draws the Board’s attention to the following:

- The study validates the nature of the travel demand between Southern California and Southern Nevada - and particularly notes the demand nature between Victorville, California and Las Vegas, Nevada.
- And with these results, XpressWest understands that the High Desert Corridor Joint Powers Authority is moving forward to prepare rail right-of-way acquisition activities in support of the rail portion of the High Desert Corridor alignment between Victorville and Las Vegas. (Acquisition activities are identified within the letter.)

Reference: XpressWest letter of May 26, 2017, to the Nevada High Speed Rail Authority, by Mr. Anthony A. Marnell II, Manager, XpressWest. (XpressWest.com)


Las Vegas Officials Seek State Permission for Light-Rail

Nevada government officials have presented a legislative plan laying groundwork to build a multi-billion dollar light-rail system in Las Vegas. Senator Mark Manendo, D, Las Vegas, and other State transportation officials, believe that a LV world-class transportation system is feasible; however, the State’s permission is needed to create, fund and implement appropriate plans. This proposal, heard by the Senate Transportation Committee, would give local officials authority to seek financing for an expanded choice of transportation options. Senator Manendo’s bill primarily supports buildout in Las Vegas but could expand public transit elsewhere within the State. Regardless, notable legislative process uncertainties linger, and guidance from transportation authorities in transit cities, such as Denver, Salt Lake City, and Phoenix, has been sought and is being utilized in the legislation to clearly define jurisdiction for regional transportation authorities. Tina Quigley, General Manager of the RTC of Southern Nevada, is one of the participating transportation experts; her Commission has estimated that Las Vegas light-rail could cost up to 12.5 billion and take 20-30 years to plan and build.


Developer Sees Boost In Prospects For Rail Project

In an interview, by the Las Vegas Review Journal (LVRJ), Tony Marnell, Manager, XpressWest, discussed high-speed rail (HSR) and the recently completed investment grade ridership and revenue forecast, i.e., an investment grade study to estimate travel demand for the HSR rail project linking Southern California with Las Vegas. LVRJ interviewer, Richard N. Velotta, notes that Marnell is well known as the builder of Las Vegas properties: Mirage, Treasure Island, Bellagio, and Wynn Las Vegas.

In this exclusive interview, Marnell discussed a variety of topics, e.g., the results of the investment grade ridership and revenue forecast study, the Trump Administration’s infrastructure role, and the Raiders move to Las Vegas. And, also the consequent outlook for HSR from an investors’ perspective. Marnell identifies the XpressWest project as a $1 billion shovel-ready infrastructure project (and asks how many are there of those?). And the interview refers to the relatively sudden appearance of the Raiders in Southern Nevada as a wildcard in the ridership equation, with consequent anticipation of increased weekend traffic demand; and the HSR offer to fans, from the Los Angeles basin, for an easy alternative mode to travel to Las Vegas.

Proposed light rail on Maryland Parkway, Las Vegas. Credit -rtcsnv


Maryland Parkway Project

Nevada’s Governor Brian Sandoval has, in early June, approved the seeking of funding by officials to build a light-rail line, linking the McCarran International Airport to downtown Las Vegas and routed along Maryland Parkway: aka the Maryland Parkway Project. (This Project was publicly presented in March 2016 and commentary appeared under Nevada News in Steel Wheels, 3rd quarter, 2016.) The Governor’s approval also authorizes the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada to ask for a sales tax increase, and it can seek investment partnerships with private companies.

This legislation also allows officials of the RTCSNV, Clark County, and Las Vegas city to offer “high capacity” transit options and not just traditional bus service.


Nevada RailPAC member Edward Arbuckle is tracking rail and rail transit news in the Silver State for Steel Wheels.
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