



What in the world is this??? You might ask. This is one of the/ experimental mats that have been placed at the 7th and Flower St subway station in Los Angeles to speed up loading. The yellow area on the platform is next to the doors of the subway cars and the black arrows shows the way out for exiting passengers. The white arrows show where boarding passenger should wait while the train passengers unloads before boarding. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

RE: Problems with Chief-Zephyr connections

Just read your most recent posting The Denver Crossover for the Southwest Zephyr and the California Chief. While in theory this would be a good idea-operationally this is not possible. Your assumption of rail travel time of 4 hours and 10 minutes between Trinidad and Denver is completely unrealistic. A more reasonable schedule would probably be 12 hours!!! The reason is that in 1970 before the coal train boom, the Santa Fe eliminated some 30 plus miles of track through Colorado Springs and up the hill to Palmer Lake. The remaining Rio Grande line had CTC installed but sidings are few and far between. Further the remainder of the line is directional running with separated rights of way-so it is not "double track" in the true sense of the word. With up to 20 coal trains a day, it may take 10 hours to run from Denver to Pueblo alone.

In the early 90's the State of New Mexico commissioned a study for a Denver- El Paso train and the consultants estimated then that it would take \$90 million for infrastructure upgrades to run one train in each direction for the Denver-Pueblo segment alone! Many I spoke with thought that amount was extremely conservative then and it never was presented to the railroads for their evaluation. Since that time Colorado has spent considerable time and money evaluating the possibility of building a coal train bypass on the eastern plains to free up capacity on the Joint Line (as the Denver-Pueblo line is referred) but that is a billion dollar plus endeavor and appears to be going nowhere.

Finally-the Trinidad Pueblo section of the line is very curvy and not especially fast. The 1949 Texas

Zephyr time on this segment was about 2 hours and the total Denver Trinidad running time was 4 and 1/2 hours. Further today this segment is a one-way stretch of track as all empty coal trains from Texas run northbound over this section of the line. There are no Southbound trains except from Pueblo to Walsenburg which connect with the San Luis and Rio Grande.

The bottom line is that the Denver-Pueblo corridor can not accommodate even one set of passenger trains with the current rail infrastructure. It would take hundreds of millions of dollars to fix this situation and make the \$100 million requested by BNSF for improvements to the ex-ATSF passenger line through Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico look like a bargain. So while filling in the map looks good on paper, it won't work operationally. Thruway bus connections remain the most viable way to "connect" these trains.

I am a supporter of all rail passenger service, and frankly I am getting tired of all the Northeast Corridor and Acela bashing that goes on with your organization. I joined your group to be an advocate, but the constant resentment of funding going to the Northeast Corridor is getting old. The real problem is a federal government that won't fund passenger rail. Amtrak funding is probably 2% of the total USDOT budget- that is the problem lack of adequate funding for all rail passenger services. The political reality is that for many in Congress long distance trains don't make sense and even funding improvements to high speed corridors is a stretch. Anti-rail forces have rail advocates right where they want them-fighting amongst themselves diluting the message and our effectiveness. Let us all fight for more funding nationally so that we can begin to build a more modern national passenger rail system.

Thank you.

Hugh K. Wilson Lakewood, CO

Thank you for your on the scene report of the track conditions in Colorado. Future progress in many places will require spending to allow expanded rail passenger service besides Colorado. The point of my article was to spotlight the need for keeping the Chief in southern Colorado for future connections to Denver and the Zephyr.

I have 34 years of experience as an rail passenger service advocate in California which has been the leader for rail passenger service expansion now for almost 40 years. I have seen and in many cases been involved in what works and have seen what doesn't work to get more and better rail passenger service. A good example of what works is the San Diego Trolley, which was the first new Light Rail service in this country since World War II. This spawned the introduction of Light Rail to many places in the US including Denver. Why did the San Diego Trolley succeed? By starting small and cheap. Like many major cities San Diego had studied several expensive transit projects all to be killed due to opposition over cost.

The Trolley was built cheap, only \$86 million in 1980. It used an existing rail branch line the railroad was only too happy to sell cheap; it was originally single tracked and used much of the old rail on the right of way. It served downtown using street running and there were no new grade separations. There was still opposition to the Trolley. Even the name originally was a put down by opponents who called it the Tijuana Trolley. The mayor at the time, Pete Wilson was a major opponent. The project was able to get built despite the opposition largely because it was so cheap and from day one its ridership exceeded expectations which made it a clear success. This soon lead to more money to double track the line and soon service was expanded to other areas. As for Pete Wilson when he ran and won a Senate Seat and later when he ran and became governor his political adds always showed video of the Trolley. People love to be associated with a winner, not with losers. When you start with a small successful project it is much easier to get additional funding as more people use rail service.

Predating the Trolley was the expansion of the then San Diegans between Los Angeles and San Diego starting in 1976. The same politician who behind the Trolley, then State Senator Jim Mills of San Diego and President of the California Senate was responsible for funding State support of the San Diegans. With improved and additional service ridership tripled in about 4 years. The