



The last 2 of the original 8 Gates at Los Angeles Union Station now used only by Amtrak. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

We Get Emails

Re: No More "free" Pillows on Amtrak and Other questionable Amtrak practices.

How about the seat check above the seat? How much wasted time and effort goes into that? How often have you made your way to the cafe car, only to see 3 or 4 staff chatting away, whilst counting and sorting the tickets? This seat check system does not occur in Europe, nor on some commuter services. That's another holdover from the Golden Years of Railroading that should perhaps be revisited for relevancy. When I ride the Coaster to Oceanside, there is one conductor, and one person who checks the tickets. That's two crew in addition to the engineer/driver. Now, by contrast, Amtrak is far more heavily staffed. Is there a legitimate business need for 3-5 crew on a (non-sleeper) train? I know there are union issues, but if other operators can do it, so can Amtrak. It's not enough just to work, we all have to work smarter and that includes Amtrak.

So, in addition to throwing open the gates at Penn and Union Stations throughout the land, perhaps it's time to get the folks at Amtrak working productively too.

Axel Vogt
San Diego

In the near future all ticketing for the trains will be handled with modified smart phones which will eliminate most of the paperwork on-board. The San Diegans had a Conductor and 2 Trainmen to handle the doors and collect tickets. This manning is still needed for using the old low-level equipment since the doors of those trains have to be manually opened and closed. There is one engineer up front for short distance trains and a Cafe-Car attendant and Business Class Car attendant on Surfliner trains. The big difference between commuter trains and Amtrak

besides price is food service and first class service which need extra employees. My main concern about Amtrak productivity is not its employees, but the need for more fast loading trainsets for more and longer trains going to more places giving more people reasons to travel by train. NB

Re: No More "free" Pillows on Amtrak

Well... Its B Y O P (Bring Your Own Pillow) Those absurd tiny excuses for an Amtrak pillow are useless anyway.

Now I wonder, since I can't afford it, what kinda pillows them roomette and bedroom passengers get ? I usually just go the lounge car and put my head on my backpack to sleep. Pax cars are always too noisy near the each end doors and if there's a baby crying all nite - forget it !

USA rail travel is an absurd amateur Ma n Pa Kettle joke compared to most all other excellent rail services in the so called civilized world. I sure wish our president Pussyfoot would use his presidential powers to force betterment of USA rail services and force ATSF to allocate rails for pax services. That the RR between New Orleans and FloriDUH has been closed since Katrina is pure greed n arrogance at work !

Vic Stryker

From a PR standpoint Amtrak could have done a better job of this. The best term to use in sales is "Free!" Instead of taking something away, Amtrak could have offered a new improved amenity with a FREE Amtrak Tote Bag for overnight travel with pillow, eye shade, blanket etc. This would have been FREE in the Milton Friedman sense of the Free Lunch, just buy a beer to go with your Free Lunch. Amtrak could have quietly added the Tote bag kit with small train fare increase to pay for it and reduced their cost with economy of scale by buying these Tote Bag packages in larger numbers. The passengers would be happier to get something "Free", the Tote Kit would have been free advertising for Amtrak and they still wouldn't have had to deal with all those old pillows. NB

Re. More trains on the Coast Line:

You're probably right about the difficulty involving Union Pacific. Gene Skoropowski was remarkably successful in working with UP to resolve long-standing Capital Corridor conflicts. He is presumably still available via HNTB. He should be called upon to head up a team geared to accommodating both freight rail and passenger rail in the Coast Line right-of-way.

Re. the Transbay Transit Center:

The new Center will come into its own when Caltrain arrives and when underground moving pedestrian ramps connect the new Center directly to the mezzanine level of the Embarcadero BART/Muni Metro Station and to Market Street.

Re. the ACE Upgrade:

ACE should indeed be upgraded. However the current talk is limited to the San Jose connection. There should be two western legs, one to San Jose and the other to San Francisco. The San Francisco branch should be routed over a rebuilt Dumbarton rail bridge and the Caltrain right-of-way into San Francisco's new Transbay Transit Center. If necessary, dual mode locomotives could be used on the San Francisco leg. If it is decided to electrify ACE, so much the better. Together the two legs would ease pressures on five East Bay freeways as well as on BART's already crowded transbay section.

Jerry Cauthen

Last I heard Gene Skoropowski had left HNTB and was working with the FEC to start up a for profit Rail Passenger service between Miami and Orlando on the FEC. We need leadership to find solutions to running passenger trains quickly and on time which is hard to find. I agree wholeheartedly that the Dumbarton rail bridge should be rebuilt and there should be direct service from the East Bay to the Peninsula in both directions. The problem is with competition for limited funding usually the most powerful not the most needed gets funded. NB

Re: Ralph James Auburn-Bakersfield Trip

I was intrigued by [Ralph James' trip report from Auburn to Bakersfield](#).

I, too, have had trips that were not easy to book, but some time ago found that by using the Multi-City option on Amtrak.com, I could book every trip I wanted the way I wanted.

Using the Multi-City option, I was able to book ARN-SAC on 529 (6:30a-7:32a), SAC-SKN on 3712 (7:45a-8:40a) and SKN-BFD on 712 (9:17a-1:41p). It was priced out at \$61 (\$51.85 for me as I qualify for senior discount).

If Mr. James gets the "right" person at Amtrak Guest Rewards they should be able to book this using points (albeit with some coaching). I travel enough that I have Amtrak Guest Rewards Select Executive status and I find that the agents who answer the special Select Executive line are the most knowledgeable and often get what I'm trying to do with little or no coaching.

I hope this is useful.

Bob Heywood

Modesto CA

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Rail Passenger Association of California.

The RailPAC Mission: Passenger Rail advocacy, Publications...both print and electronic, Representation at regional meetings, and Rail education.

Join us! More memberships increase our strength in presenting the case for rail to policymakers at all levels!

You can send your comments to me at nbraymer@railpac.org

For those who would like an additional copy of the eNewsletter with plain text (minus photos and graphics) just email me at nbraymer@railpac.org with your name and email address. NB

If you are not a member of RailPAC go to [RailPAC Membership...Join Us!](#) to get information about RailPAC and a FREE copy of our regular newsletter

For information about RailPAC,

Write:

Rail Passenger Association of California

1017 L Street, PMB-217

Sacramento, CA95814-3805

Email us at info@railpac.org

Call at **(415) 7-TRACK-2**
(415) 787-2252

[Unsubscribe](#) from this list.

Copyright (C) Rail Passenger Association of California (RailPAC) All rights reserved.

[Forward](#) this email to a friend
[Update your profile](#)

