
Subject: Why can't America operate passenger trains profitably like most countries?

From: Rail Passenger Association of California (noelnoelt@cox.net)

To: ntbraymer@yahoo.com;

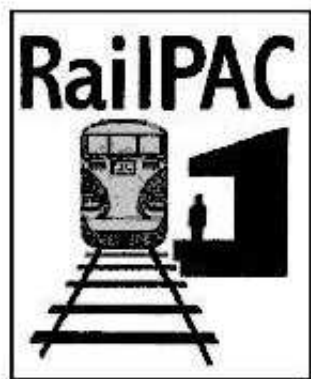
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RailPAC Weekly E-Newsletter for October 14, 2013

Edited by Noel T. Braymer

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Rail Passenger Association of California
www.railpac.org
Traffic? Gas Pains? We need more Trains!



This is the scene on Saturday October 5, 2013; Caltrain was so busy it is standing room only for passengers boarding at Millbrae who can't even get into the aisles. This Saturday there was a football game at Stanford and the train was standing room only when it left San Francisco with many football fans. Even with long consists and hourly service Caltrain was full on Saturday. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

[Tracks are fixed, but Amtrak's still derailed](#)

Glenwood Springs Post Independent-Oct 8, 2013

GLENWOOD SPRINGS — The washed out railroad tracks west of Denver have been fixed, and freight trains have resumed running between Denver and Grand Junction, but Amtrak passenger trains have yet to be allowed back on those same tracks, officials said on Tuesday.

[Amtrak service return to Glenwood Springs on Saturday](#)

Glenwood Springs Post Independent- Oct 10, 2013

GLENWOOD SPRINGS — Amtrak passenger trains will be resuming service on Saturday along the Moffat Tunnel route, which carries freight and passenger trains between Denver, Glenwood Springs and Grand Junction, according to an announcement on Thursday.

[Local business reopens as Amtrak returns to Grand Junction](#)

KKCO-TV- Oct 12, 2013

GRAND JUNCTION, Colo. (KKCO) It took three and a half weeks, but the California Zephyr train is rolling back through Grand Junction.

Who says passenger trains, particularly long distance trains don't impact the economy? NB

[California: Railroad Museum is San Luis Obispo's newest landmark](#)

Los Angeles Times-Oct 9, 2013

San Luis Obispo on Saturday is marking the grand opening of a new railroad museum that's housed in a Southern Pacific freight house built around 1894. The museum tells the story of the city's important 19th century link in the coastal rail line that joined San Francisco and Los Angeles.

The museum is a short walk from the San Luis Obispo train station. NB

[San Francisco Police: Rail Commuters on Phones Didn't Notice Gun ...](#)

NBC Bay Area-Oct 9, 2013

A man flashed a gun several times on a crowded commuter train in San Francisco, but Muni passengers were so absorbed in their phones and tablets they didn't notice until he randomly shot and killed a university student, authorities said.

[Contractors asked to qualify for next California high-speed rail bids](#)

Fresno Bee-Oct 10, 2013

Ground has yet to be broken in the central San Joaquin Valley on the first 29-mile stretch of California's proposed high-speed train system, but the state is already on the lookout for contractors to work on the second major section.

[California Approves Amtrak Deal](#)

Governing (blog)-Oct 9, 2013

California officials have approved a deal to provide an extra \$19 million in annual funding for Amtrak, ensuring the passenger rail provider's service continues uninterrupted in the Golden State.

[Illinois agrees to spend additional \\$9M on Amtrak](#)

Northwest Herald-Oct 11, 2013

CHICAGO – Illinois has agreed to spend an additional \$9 million to support Amtrak service in the state, joining other state governments in ...

[Indiana last to decide on keeping state Amtrak route](#)

nwtimes.com-Oct 11, 2013

Indiana became the last of 19 state's still mulling a decision on whether to keep its local Amtrak route when Illinois announced Friday it would pony up an additional \$9 million to keep local routes running there.

Indiana now has until Wednesday to decide if it wants to put up almost \$3 million to keep the Hoosier State running from Chicago to Indianapolis four days per week. The train also stops in Dyer, Rensselaer, Lafayette and Crawfordsville.

[How to Operate Passenger Trains at a Profit](#)

By Noel T. Braymer

The key to income for all passengers services (trains, planes, taxis, ships and buses) are passenger miles. The miles passengers travel reflects income since passengers are charged by the mile. Even if a train carries many people for a short distance, it isn't earning money when the train has empty seats. The best way to generate passenger miles is with extended routes. In transportation the long hauls are always the biggest money makers.

Airlines today when they offer corridor service usually do so to connect with major hub airports. On a recent flight from San Diego to San Francisco the man sitting next to me was on his way to Korea making connections at San Francisco. Many other passengers on this flight no doubt were also making connections. This made it possible for me to get a cheaper ticket for this flight.

[Amtrak Cascades offers tours of new trains at Portland Union Station](#)

OregonLive.com Oct 10, 2013

The public is invited to check out the new trains in Portland that will soon be running between Eugene and Vancouver, B.C., on the Amtrak Cascades line...

Oregon's new trains are Talgo Series 8 trains, the only ones that will be operating in the world.

[Business Brief: Murphy to head long-distance Amtrak service](#)

Journal Gazette and Times-Courier- Oct 10, 2013

Murphy joined Amtrak in 1976 and most recently served as the deputy chief mechanical officer, terminal operations, in Wilmington, Del.

[Amtrak revamps Great American Stations site](#)

RailwayAge Magazine-Oct 8, 2013

GreatAmericanStations.com, in place since 2006, "has proven to be a valuable resource to communities contemplating preservation and renovation of their publicly- or privately-owned stations, as well as the construction of new passenger rail or multi-modal facilities and the associated economic and social benefits they offer," Amtrak said in a statement...

Of the more than 500 stations Amtrak serves, other railroads own about 22 %, Amtrak owns 14%, transit agencies and state Departments of Transportation own 12%, and the remainder are held by various parties, including private individuals and redevelopment agencies, Amtrak noted.

[Making plans for 30th Street Station](#)

Philly.com-Oct 8, 2013

Amtrak is seeking redevelopment plans for 30th Street Station and the surrounding area, including the potentially lucrative air rights above the rail yards adjacent to the station.

[BART strike called off for now but notice issued for Monday shutdown without a deal...](#)

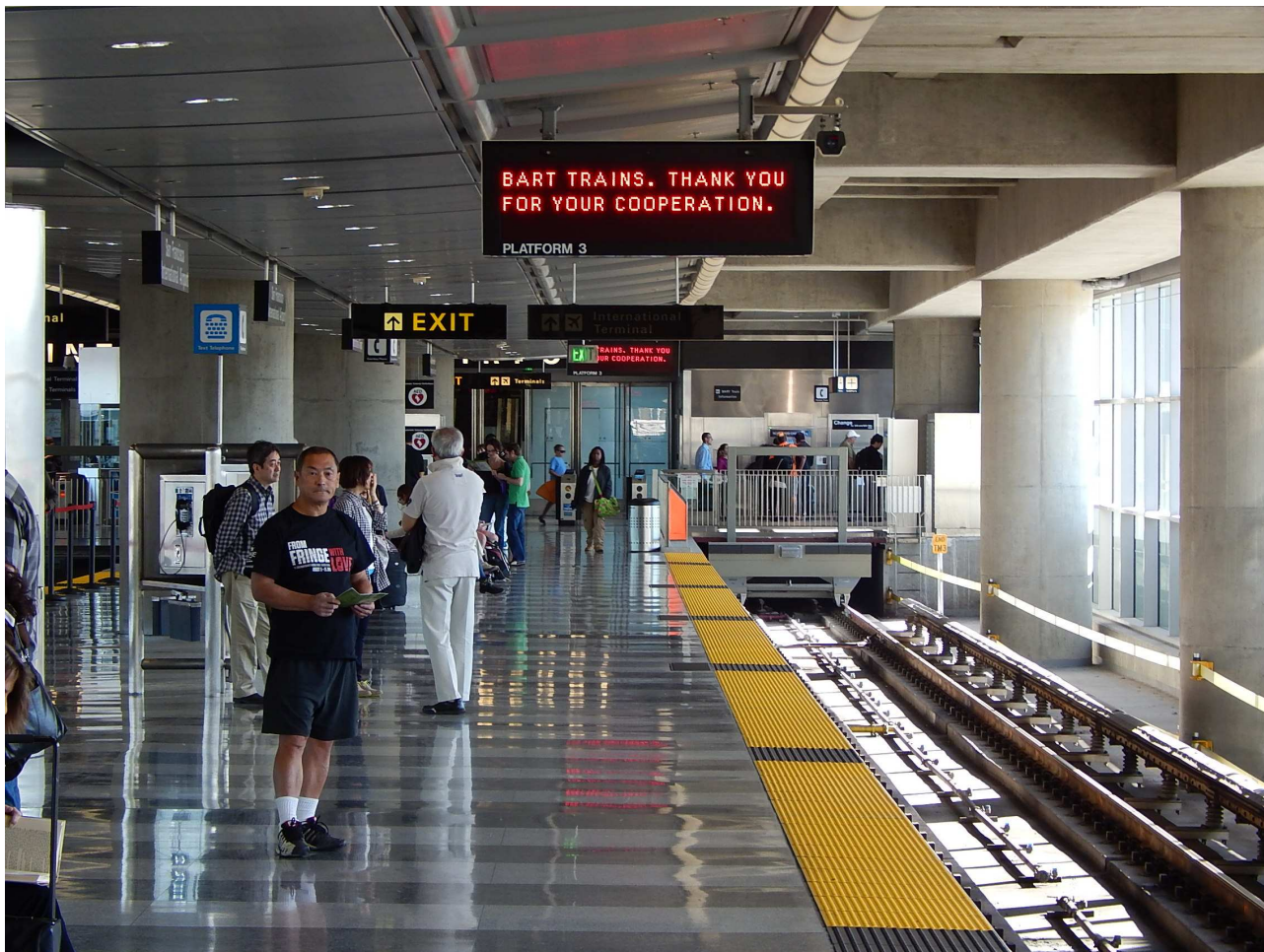
San Jose Mercury News - Oct 11, 2013

OAKLAND -- BART trains will keep rolling -- for now -- after the commuter line and its unions reached a deal Thursday night to extend contract talks for another three days.

[Commute options in the event of a BART strike](#)

San Francisco Chronicle - Oct 11, 2013

BART workers may not be out on strike Friday, or any other day. But if they are, and the backbone train system goes offline, the commute into San Francisco is expected to be pretty bad.



BART at a dead end for its San Francisco Airport Station near the International Terminal. Stub end terminals are slow to get into and out of which limits the number of trains such stations can operate. For a passenger connecting between Caltrain and BART on top of a \$5.00 Caltrain fare from San Francisco to Millbrae, there is a \$4.05 fare on BART just to get from Millbrae to the next station at the airport. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

[BNSF breaks down planned capital projects in California](#)

Progressive Rail Roading-Oct 8, 2013

BNSF Railway Co. has released details on proposed 2013 capital improvement projects in a twelfth state. The Class I has budgeted \$100 million for track maintenance and capacity expansion projects in California.

The California work is part of BNSF's record \$4.3 billion capex program for 2013.

[Oil refinery to plans to add new train track](#)

KSBY San Luis Obispo News-Oct 10, 2013

Phillips 66 Santa Maria says it needs the track to bring in crude from out of state because the California's reserves are dwindling...

Officials hope to build additional railroad track on the refinery grounds. That will help facilitate the added traffic of train cars carrying crude oil.

So the UP has no problem adding more freight on the Coast Line, but it can't handle extending one passenger train from San Luis Obispo to San Jose.NB

[Lack of a Gas Tax Hike Is Hurting the Economy](#)

US News and World Report Oct 11, 2013

Today, traffic congestion costs the U.S. economy more than \$100 billion per year. Five billion hours and

three billion gallons of fuel are wasted each year by drivers stuck in traffic. At the same time, thousands of bridges nearing the end of their intended lifespans have been allowed to fall into disrepair, and one-third of all major roadways are in poor or mediocre condition. This is the price we pay for having a low gas tax.

[A New Kind of Tax for Funding Transportation Improvements?](#)

Forbes Oct 7, 2013

Now Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) has stepped forward with a suggestion for doing away with the gas tax and replacing it with a "sales fee." She appears to be talking about a wholesale sales tax that would be assessed at the refinery level instead of at the pump.

[A Transportation Investment that Could Add 183,000 Jobs to Utah's Economy](#)

Utah Policy.Com Oct 7, 2013

A recent study by the Economic Development Research Group of Boston shows Utah could nearly double its return of investment on the state's transportation infrastructure by 2040. Simply put: For every dollar spent on transportation infrastructure, the state could turn around an ROI of \$1.94...

This isn't the first time the Salt Lake Chamber has taken an active role in pushing for funds to improve Utah's transportation infrastructure. The Chamber played a critical role in the passage of Proposition 3 in 2006, which accelerated the construction of the Mountain View Corridor and helped fund five TRAX light rail projects in Salt Lake County and the FrontRunner commuter rail project from the Intermodal Hub in Salt Lake into Utah County.

[Gov. Brown signs bill that helps Metrolink fund purchase of low ...](#)

Progressive Rail Roading-Oct 7, 2013

An additional \$17 million that's needed to purchase three more locomotives was contingent on an extension of the Carl Moyer Program, which was set to expire in 2014.

The legislation signed by Brown extends the program to 2024.

[Foothill Transit to Open Park & Ride at Industry Metrolink Station ...](#)

Patch.com-Oct 7, 2013

The structure will include 200 parking spaces, bike racks, security cameras, and emergency boxes on every floor. Future plans include the addition of 18 electric vehicle charging stations and rooftop solar panels, officials said.

[Metrolink accounting problems still being unraveled by consultant](#)

Los Angeles Times Oct 11. 2013

Officials for the six-county Metrolink commuter railroad continue to grapple with accounting and management problems that surfaced in February -- a situation complicated by the recent departures of two interim chief financial officers.

KPMG, a consulting firm recently hired to troubleshoot Metrolink's books, reported to the railroad's board on Friday that it has been reconciling various accounts since it started work three weeks ago.

[Caltrain touts real-time website info](#)

RailwayAge Magazine-Oct 9, 2013

Caltrain said late Tuesday, Oct. 8, 2013, it had activated its real-time departure system, available in three locations on its website.

Caltrain said the real-time system uses Global Positioning System technology already on Caltrain locomotives, combined with a rail operating control system to determine train departure times.

[SMART rail district buys 56 acres of wetlands near tracks](#)

Santa Rosa Press Democrat-Oct 11, 2013

SMART has announced the purchase of 56 acres of wetlands along the Petaluma River that will be preserved as part of its environmental mitigation program.

[Connecting Metro Rail to Los Angeles International Airport: here is a look at issues currently on the table](#)

The Source Oct 9, 2013

The main issue that everyone needs to understand: The Crenshaw/LAX Line has a station on the western side of Aviation at Century. It is environmentally cleared and set to be built.

Meanwhile, Los Angeles World Airports has recommended building a people mover station on the east side of the intersection of Aviation and 98th. An elevated block-long walkway would connect the light rail station and the people mover, requiring a trip up and down stairs or an elevator trip for those transferring

Clearly the planners for the people mover have no intention of ever transferring to it from Light Rail. NB

[Coming up at Union Station: music, magic and art!](#)

The Source Oct 11, 2013

he public performances continue Metro Presents, Metro's newly launched program of arts and cultural events planned for the iconic Union Station. All events are free and open to the public. For more information on upcoming Metro Presents events, check Union Station's events page.

[Careless in La La land](#)

Sydney Morning Herald-Oct 12, 2013

Andrea Black sets out to explore the city of angels by ditching its freeways for public transport.

If the idea of tackling those traffic-strangled, unforgiving freeways while remembering to "keep right" puts you off visiting the City of Angels, there is an alternative. While it's true that LA has always been the capital of kerbside culture with its strip malls, car washes, elaborate roadside diners and even drive-in churches, there is an inexpensive public transportation system available. But is it any good?



The Silver Splendor, ex-Denver Zephyr Budd Dome car just arrived in San Luis Obispo on Amtrak 790 . This was the first leg with a return trip to Los Angeles from San Luis Obispo on October 10th. This was just part of the Fifth Annual Central Coast Railroad Festival, from October 10-13, 2013 which included the opening of the new railroad museum in San Luis Obispo at the old Freight House be the depot. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

We Get Emails

Re: Amtrak no bargain for the States

The states that fund their own intercity services, including California, will go on getting gouged by Amtrak to the limits of credibility only as long as they continue to treat Amtrak as a sole supplier rather than put these services out to competitive bid.

Even the host railroads can be interested in a pure operating contract (as BNSF runs the Northstar service in Minnesota under contract to Metro Transit). States and commuter agencies do this routinely for commuter services, and have all but run Amtrak--always the high cost provider--completely out of that business. Why the states don't do this for local and regional intercity services, especially in markets like California where there is proportionally little use for connecting traffic to national system trains, is a complete mystery.

I'm sure many of your regular readers will recall that California had essentially brought the San Diegan service to a breakeven level of operation, even under Amtrak's phony cost allocation regime, under the old "403(b)" program, when Amtrak suddenly changed the rules ostensibly to avoid having to pay a share of looming PROFITS from the San Diegans back to Caltrans.

Andrew Selden

Not just Amtrak but most rail passenger service in this country could learn a great deal from the airlines and most passenger rail services around the world to reduce or even eliminate operating

subsidies for passenger trains. Most intercity passenger railroads operate their trains at a profit around the world. The money is always with the longer distance travel for all modes. Filling up trains with flexible pricing for high levels of occupancy for most of the route would go a long way towards profitable operations. NB

Re: Repeal Senate Bill 804 of 1999

What do you think about SB804 Perata, the "law" that requires an Amtrak California passenger to have a train trip included as part of an Amtrak California bus trip?

For example, to travel from San Jose to San Luis Obispo this Saturday on Bus 4784 and return the same day on Bus 4769, I must buy a ticket from San Jose to Carpinteria and return from there in order to travel San Jose-San Luis Obispo round trip.

This makes no economic sense!

Will Amtrak's computer cancel my e-ticket if I do not board Train 769 in Carpinteria?

Sincerely,

Henry E. Bender

RailPAC along with other Rail Passenger advocacy groups opposed this bill in 1999. Greyhound was behind this bill. It has done nothing to increase Greyhound's ridership. Since 1999 bus companies have learned that they gain passengers by cooperating with rail. Megabus has most of its stop in California at trains stations. Greyhound has several stops at train stations and wants to move into Los Angeles Union Station. Intercity Bus service did was most successful when passenger rail was a major form of transportation. Railroads had a major role creating intercity bus service as feeder to their trains. Railroads were major investors in both Greyhound and Trailways before World War II. Both Rail and Bus passenger service would gain from cooperation and interline connections. SB 804 should be repealed. NB

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

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

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