
Subject: Now you need a ticket to sit at Union Station, Empire Builder often late or not running!

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

To: ntbraymer@yahoo.com;

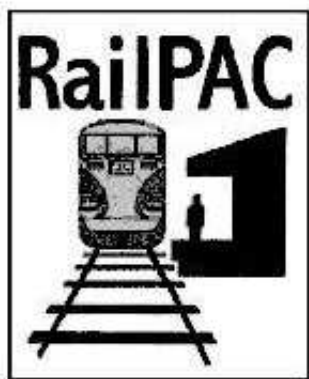
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RailPAC Weekly E-Newsletter for December 16, 2013

Edited by Noel T. Braymer

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



To try to reduce the number of homeless at LAUS, LA Metro now only allows ticketed passengers to sit in the station for 2 hours max with separate sections for Amtrak and Metrolink passengers. Transit passengers can't sit in the main station. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

[Amtrak scraps 5 Empire Builder runs; cold weather, hot economy are ..](#)

.Minneapolis Star Tribune-Dec 12, 2103

Amtrak is in the midst of canceling five runs of the Empire Builder between St. Paul and Spokane, Wash., citing lengthy delays for hundreds of ..

[Heavy oil field freight train traffic forces some Amtrak cancellations ...](#)

In-Forum-Dec 11, 2013

FARGO – Heavy freight train traffic in the oil fields has canceled several of Amtrak's passenger trips between Chicago and Spokane, Wash., through the weekend, disrupting service for hundreds of customers.

[Culbertson working with Amtrak for "Empire Builder" stop](#)

KRTV Great Falls News-Dec 13, 2103

GREAT FALLS - Civic leaders in Culbertson and Amtrak officials met this week to begin planning the construction of a new stop along the "Empire Builder" for ...

[Traffic, construction hurts Amtrak's performance](#)

Prairie Business-Dec 11, 2013

The eastbound Empire Builder, which travels from Chicago to Portland and Seattle, had a zero percent on-time performance during October. -

[Amtrak passengers arrive in Newton after being stuck for hours](#)

KAKE-Dec 8, 2013

NEWTON, Kan. -- UPDATE: Amtrak passengers say they were stuck on a train for hours as it sat idled between Newton and Emporia.

[Get on board, Kansas City, or wave goodbye to Amtrak](#)

Kansas City Star-Dec 10, 2013

Because Middle America should not be satisfied with the vast majority of federal dollars going to the east and west coasts.

If the Southwest Chief is eliminated it would be because money is spent elsewhere, and/or Congress is starving Amtrak while it bails out the Highway Trust Fund.

[Amtrak officials visit historic El Garces](#)

Needles Desert Star-Dec 11, 2013

Cindy Semione, project committee member, said part of the requirement of funding the city received from the Federal Transit Administration is that the El Garces be an intermodal transportation facility. The goal is for the facility to be for various forms of public transportation, including passenger trains.

[Congress to go down in history for lack of action](#)

Santa Fe New Mexican.com-Dec 10, 2013

Scores of measures were put off, including a reauthorization of the Amtrak passenger rail system, and not a single annual appropriations bill ...

[The Budget Deal Will Make Air Travel More Expensive](#)

Business Insider-Dec 11, 2013

The deal, which still has to pass both houses of Congress but is supported by the leaders of both parties, would increase the security fees airlines pay to the TSA.

The exact cost has not been fixed, but industry groups guess it will roughly double to about \$5 per one-way ticket, according to Reuters.

[Union Pacific works to reopen railway after train derailment](#)

Las Vegas Review-Journal-Dec 9, 2013

A train heading to California derailed Sunday near the Las Vegas Motor Speedway.

Union Pacific spokesman Mark Davis said 19 coal cars and one locomotive derailed about 10 p.m. The train, which was bound for Mojave, Calif., had four locomotives and 103 cars.

[Freight train derails near Tehachapi California](#)

KSWT-TV-Dec 10, 2013

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. (AP) - A freight train has gone off the track in a rural area of Kern County, sending one car tumbling 300 feet down a

[BNSF Offers \\$100K Reward In Tulsa Train Derailment](#)

News On 6-Dec 13, 2013

According to a news release Friday evening, BNSF Railway Police believe someone tampered with a parked train's air brake system around midnight on Thursday.

[Driver hit by Amtrak train faces traffic charges](#)

UPI.com-Dec 12, 2013

WAVERLY, Va., Dec. 12 (UPI) -- A man injured Thursday morning when an Amtrak train hit his car in Virginia has been charged with traffic ...

[Strangers On A Train: 32 Hours From New Orleans To New York On ...](#)

International Business Times-Dec 12, 2013

ABOARD THE AMTRAK CRESCENT – Before the train is even across Louisiana’s Lake Ponchartrain, it's clear this trip is going to be about the passengers on board. More than the rhythmic motion of the train or the scenes unfolding beyond the windows, it is the cast of characters – diverse, randomly grouped together, for long duration – who will tell the tale.

[Is train travel a pain or pleasure? It depends, even on culture](#)

The Daily Progress-Dec 11, 2013

What would you consider too far, painfully far, to ride on a train?

Britain’s Hogg Robinson business group attempted to answer that question earlier this year and arrived at the number three: “Traveler behavior shows that when traveling domestically for business, air beats rail as soon as the rail journey is over three hours, despite potential cost savings.” Would most of us in the general public agree? May depend on one’s experiences, I’m learning.

[Signals Upgraded for Curve in Track Where Metro-North Crash ...](#)

New York Times-Dec 8, 2013

Operators nearing the area, just north of Spuyten Duyvil station, will be warned of a reduced speed limit, and the train will brake automatically if it is not traveling at or below 30 miles per hour inside the curve, the authority said.

[Are two-person crews less safe than a single engineer?](#)

RailwayAge Magazine (blog)-Dec 12, 2013

At the time of its deadly derailment Dec. 1 at Spuyten Duyvil near New York City, Metro-North’s ATC was coded only to slow or stop a train if the engineer failed to acknowledge awareness of a signal indication.

So why hasn’t the FRA similarly ordered two crewmembers in the cab of Amtrak trains operating over the Northeast Corridor (NEC) between Washington, D.C. and Boston; Amtrak’s Keystone Corridor linking Philadelphia with Harrisburg, Pa.; Amtrak’s Michigan corridor between Porter, Ind., and Kalamazoo, Mich.; Amtrak’s long-distance trains operating on freight railroad track; on other commuter railroads; or on all freight railroads?

[Some realism from Amtrak](#)

The Economist (blog) - Dec 9, 2013

An Amtrak spokesman, Craig Schulz, who spoke to the Philadelphia Inquirer about the decision, deserves a special round of applause. "Northeast Corridor infrastructure effectively limits maximum speeds to 160 mph," he told the paper. "That will likely be the case for many years—even under the most favourable of assumptions about funding availability for infrastructure improvements.... We continue to work toward the goal of 220 mph service on the NEC, while mindful of the tremendous investment necessary to upgrade the infrastructure to a point that can support such speeds."

[Sides go back to court in high-speed train lawsuit](#)

Fresno Bee-Dec 11, 2013

Lawyers with the California Attorney General's Office and attorneys for high-speed rail opponents in Kings County will meet in a case management conference that is expected to set a spring trial date over allegations that current plans for the proposed bullet-train violate Proposition 1A, the 2008 ballot measure that provided \$9.9 billion in bond funds to help build the system.

[Calif. board OKs eminent domain move for train](#)

Businessweek - Dec 13, 2013

(AP) — A state board gave approval Friday for the California High-Speed Rail Authority to start the process of seizing its first piece of property through eminent domain for a \$68 billion bullet train.

[California High Speed Rail: Media Piling-on Continues, as Does the ..](#)

Streetsblog Los Angeles Dec 9, 2013

Bottom line, construction on a segment from at least Madera to south of Fresno will move forward. After that, more segments will be built. There will be more legal battles. The political winds will, no doubt, generate stops and starts. But despite all the doom-and-gloom reporting, California HSR isn't dead. However, given the many challenges, by the time the first train runs from Los Angeles to San Francisco in less than three hours, everyone reading this may be.

[It's Time for California to Fund High-Speed Rail Itself](#)

The Atlantic Cities - Dec 11, 2013

The best way forward — perhaps the only way — is for California to use the recent ruling as motivation to figure out how to pay for the line itself. The planning advocacy group SPUR outlined such a proposal in 2012 (via the California High Speed Rail blog): it replaces any expected federal contributions with a \$43 billion combination of gas taxes, road tolls, vehicle fees, regional bonds, cap-and-trade revenues, and value capture. The idea is raw, but it's also promising.

[California Tollway Sells \\$2 Billion to Avoid Default: Muni Deals](#)

Businessweek-Dec 9, 2013

The operator of three toll roads in California's Orange County is selling \$2.3 billion in bonds to refund debt as revenue trails projections.

OMG Where is the Outrage! Just Orange County is selling about as much in bonds to refinance a money losing toll road as the State will borrow for 130 miles of new High Speed Rail. At least long distance trains make an operating profit and the commercial development around busy train stations generates increased tax revenues. NB

[Private Toll-Road Investors Get Low-Risk Deals From States](#)

Businessweek-Dec 13, 2013

Now, after at least 11 projects have struggled financially since 1995, the companies are persuading states to make fixed payments so it's taxpayers who roll the dice. Under the arrangements, states receive toll revenue and have to cover any shortfall with money from their operating budgets.

[EDITORIAL: New California road tax is coming](#)

Fresno Bee-Dec 8, 2013

Gasoline consumption, however, is declining, a testament to fuel efficiency. After a high of 15.9 billion gallons in 2004, consumption will fall to 14.5 billion gallons this year. By 2020, consumption will be at levels from the late 1990s.

That's good for the environment and consumers' pocketbooks, but not for road maintenance.

Caltrans relies on the excise tax on gasoline to fund road maintenance and rehabilitation. That source erodes as gas mileage increases and falls far short of the need.

Caltrans will spend about \$3.3 billion on maintenance and rehabilitation this year. The department estimates it should be spending \$7.9 billion just to keep up with needs of the current system.

This increase in miles traveled coupled with shortfalls in maintenance money and the age of California roads also is a recipe for a jarring experience.

[California report: Bay Area population gains are strongest in state](#)

San Jose Mercury News Dec 13, 2013

At the same time, California's population rose to 38.2 million people, an increase of 332,000 from July 2012 to July 2013. That's less than 1 percent more, but the highest gain for the state since 2003-2004 before the recession. Most of the uptick was due to a "natural increase" of more births than deaths. Foreign immigration to the Bay Area has remained strong, as it did throughout the recession years in the mid 2000s, adding 169,266 people to the state during the 12-month period.

[Filling Up Passenger Trains with On-Line Ticketing](#)

By Noel T. Braymer

In California on-line ticketing can increase ridership and revenues on local Amtrak, Metrolink, Coaster, ACE and Caltrain trains. What is particularly exciting is this can be used to attract more first time and occasional riders....Just as exciting is online ticketing will make it easier to sell tickets with transfers between carriers. Connecting trips could be ticketed on line between Amtrak to ACE or Metrolink. Online ticketing would be useful for trips between Coaster, Metrolink and Amtrak. Ticketing online could provide easy connections to almost anyplace by rail and connecting buses in California.



Trains are not full all the time. An empty seat for an airline or intercity bus company is money lost forever. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

[BART fares to rise Jan. 1 to help fund 'Fleet of the Future'](#)

Progressive Rail Roding-Dec 12, 2013

Starting Jan. 1, Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) riders will pay, on average, an extra 19 cents in fares to help pay for new rail cars and other projects, the agency announced yesterday.

[SMART Awards Key Construction Contract](#)

Sonoma County Gazette-Dec 10, 2013

Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) announced today that it has selected Shimmick Construction

Company as the design-build contractor for its next major construction contract. The \$68.7 million contract includes several key elements of the continuing work on Phase 1 of the rail and pathway project:

[Caltrain electrification still on track: Officials say modernization ...](#)

San Mateo Daily Journal-Dec 11, 2013

Even though high-speed rail has hit a snag in its funding plans after its most recent court battle, Caltrain officials said its modernization project will proceed on schedule without a hitch.

High-speed rail became entangled with Caltrain when it opted to use a “blended” track system and share Caltrain’s right-of-way between San Jose and San Francisco. Caltrain is now relying on funding from Proposition 1A, which voters passed in 2008 to fund a portion of high-speed rail, to electrify its tracks.

[Meeting on the Future of Caltrain](#)

Streetsblog San Francisco (blog)-Dec 9, 2013

Join Friends of Caltrain on Monday, December 16 at San Carlos Library at 7pm (7 minutes from San Carlos Caltrain) and share your thoughts. Caltrain staff will be present to share the latest on funding and hear your ideas.

[Advisory: seating area at Union Station now open only to Amtrak and Metrolink passengers](#)

The Source Dec 10, 2013

Union Station is owned by Metro and agency officials say the change was prompted by an increased number of homeless individuals who have been using Union Station as shelter — an average of 135 per night in recent weeks (numbers were higher over the summer). That, in turn, has at times created extremely unpleasant sanitary issues in the seating area that in some cases posed a health threat to passengers using the station.

[Abandoned South LA Rail Tracks Could Become A Greenbelt](#)

LACURBED Dec 9, 2013,

County Supervisors Mark Ridley-Thomas and Gloria Molina are pushing for Rail to River, another idea for improving blighted Slauson Avenue through South LA--this one would most likely tear out old rail track, part of the old Harbor Subdivision rail line, and replace them with a greenbelt with walkways and a bike path.

It is expensive to create a new right of way for rail or any form of transportation in any urban area. Once a right of way is gone it is usually gone forever. NB

[Taking the train to LAX — it’s a connection we can’t afford to miss:](#)

By Eric Garcetti and Mike Bonin

Daily News Dec 6, 2013

Two new rail projects are half-complete and three should soon be underway. Our transit map will soon look like our freeway map: a vibrant tangle of lines connecting our neighborhoods, job centers and major destinations. And that means a train must go to LAX, the sixth-busiest airport on the planet and the gateway to our region for residents, visitors and those who both do business and create jobs here.

[PERRIS VALLEY LINE: \\$75 million federal grant to be announced](#)

Press-Enterprise - Dec 8, 2013

Transportation officials are poised to announce Monday, Dec. 9 the awarding of a \$75 million federal grant to the \$248 million Perris Valley Line, clearing the way for construction of the Metrolink commuter rail extension.

[Exploring the original Pacific Electric Red Cars](#)

MousePlanet Dec 12, 2103

Visitors to Disney California Adventure park can find scaled reproductions of Red Car trolleys running between the park entrance on Buena Vista Street and The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror in Hollywood Land....

Just an hour's drive east of Disneyland is a collection of original Red Car trolleys operating at the Orange Empire Railway Museum. Located in Perris, California, and formed in 1956, this all-volunteer museum contains over 200 vintage pieces of railway equipment.



BoltBus, a division of Greyhound operates express buses along the West Coast and to Las Vegas and stops at LA Union Station. Here is a recent photo at LA Union Station of a Las Vegas bound Greyhound bus at the same bus bays used by Amtrak California Buses. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

We Get Emails

Re: trains don't need grade separations

I disagree with you that grade separation benefits trains. Trains have no need for grade separations, but drivers do. They are entirely to the benefit of drivers (and, in the context in question, of truckers) and should be billed to those users in their entirety.

Donald F. Robertson

Your argument is popular with the freight railroads which point out since trains have the right of way at a grade crossing they don't save running time with grade separations. But a major problem for all railroads are grade crossing accidents. Maintaining damaged property often from hit and run drivers is an expense for the railroads. There are also major service disruptions which are expensive when a semi-tractor trailer is involved at a grade crossing accident or when there is a fatality which shuts down rail service for hours. Also from a practical standpoint on busy routes grade separation is needed to run additional trains across busy roads without traffic gridlock. NB

Re: Why Does it Take So Long to Get More and Faster Trains?

In 2006, there's Proposition 1B. At the time, I recall reading that money from the bonds will be used to purchase more rail cars for California corridors. The article didn't mention that aspect, but that's probably another example of why it takes so long to get more trains.

Martin Wasiak

Prop 1B was one of the highlights of Governor Schwarzenegger's administration and it funded transportation projects in the face of a recession and helped the economy. This included several rail passenger projects and more passenger cars. The money from Prop 1B was added with stimulus money for equipment which is part of a standard designed also being ordered by other States. These cars should be delivered by 2017 for speeds up to 125 mph.

The problem is Prop 1B doesn't come close to funding all of our transportation needs. Recent economic problems have made these shortfalls worse. Political fun and games hasn't helped either. Transportation spending including rail service needs stable funding in order to keep goods and people moving for a healthy economy in a growing State. NB

Re: Why aren't there more safety devices on the railroads?

Just as a look back in time, in the 1920s my father worked on the signal crew of the Michigan Central Railroad, installing their new Positive Stop Control System. How come it's taken the rest of the country so long?

Julie Pifer

It sounds like what your father worked with is Automatic Train Stop (ATS) which is still in use today mostly by Metrolink since the 2008 Chatsworth crash. The reason more advanced safety signaling hasn't been built for the railroads is money. Such systems are expensive and often it is cheaper in the short run to fight things in court than to fix the problems. NB

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

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