
Subject: "Amtrak passenger service will resume normal operations through Grand Forks, Devils Lake and Rugby on Saturday, said Sen. John Hoeven, R-N.D."

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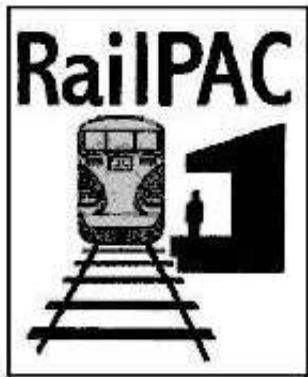
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RailPAC Weekly E-Newsletter for March 3, 2014

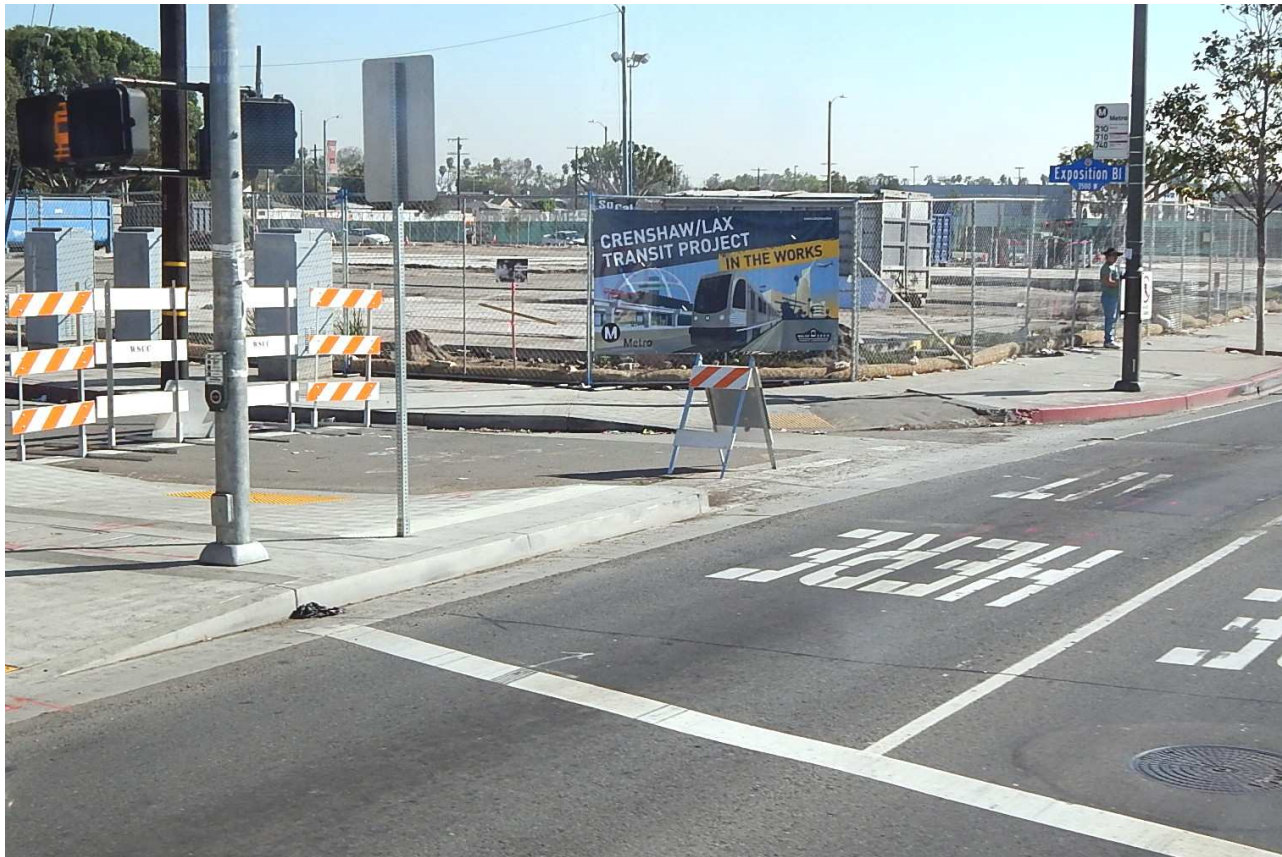
Edited by Noel T. Braymer

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



This is a recent view from the Expo Line at the Crenshaw Blvd crossing. What can be seen is the construction site for the terminus of the Crenshaw Line which will be built under the Expo Line . LA Metro recently announced the approval for the construction of the Regional Connector which will reduce the need for transfers in downtown LA between the Blue, Expo, Gold, Red and Purple Lines. However passengers will need to transfer to ride the Crenshaw Line from West LA and downtown LA. when it is finished. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

[Obama to unveil plan for 302 billion transpo bill](#)

Politico-Feb 26, 2014

BIG DAY FOR THE FUTURE OF THE HIGHWAY BILL: With all the talk about the need for a funding solution, it seems the Democratic president and Republican House Ways and Means chairman are on the same page about one thing: Using corporate tax reform money for infrastructure. And they just so both happen to be unveiling major proposals today...

[Both parts of America Fast Forward initiative are in President Obama's proposal for four-year transportation bill!](#)

The Source Feb 26, 2014

Earlier today in Minnesota, President Obama announced his proposal for a four-year transportation spending bill that would include both parts of Metro's America Fast Forward initiative....

America Fast Forward includes two components. The first is a federally-backed loan program called TIFIA that is designed to give agencies access to loans with interest rates lower than can be found on the open market.

The second part is a bond program described in the graphic below. In a nutshell: those who invest in transportation bonds receive federal tax credits instead of interest, a good way for investors to lower their tax burden and a good way for transportation agencies to save on interest costs.

[Time is On the Side of Rail Passenger Service](#)

By Noel T. Braymer

What is holding up faster progress for passenger rail service is, as always money: actually the lack of money. But the need for alternatives to driving is growing as the cost of driving keeps going up and traffic congestion continues to get worse. People are moving to major urban areas in California. This is for sound economic reasons since transportation costs are lower plus travel distances and travel times are shorter in urban areas with good rail service.

[Federal official reaffirms commitment to California high speed rail](#)

89.3 KPCC (blog)-Feb 25, 2014

California's high speed rail project got a vote of confidence Tuesday from the U.S. Secretary of Transportation. The message came as high speed rail advocates held their annual meeting down the street from the U.S. Capitol.

[Another View: Opponents' arguments against high-speed rail are bogus](#)

Sacramento Bee - Feb 28, 2014

When opponents of California's high-speed rail program don't have answers on their side, they often resort to fiction over facts, as Rep. Jeff Denham and state Sen. Andy Vidak demonstrated in their highly critical op-ed ("New vote needed on high-speed rail project" Viewpoints, Feb. 26).

This goes beyond respectful disagreement. The opponents' claims are increasingly outlandish. Indeed, virtually none of their "facts" are facts at all, but false assertions and phony suppositions.

[High-speed rail should stay the course like the Golden Gate Bridge ...](#)

San Francisco Examiner-Feb 24, 2014

Opposition was fierce and came from all sides. For the Golden Gate, everyone from Ansel Adams to Gertrude Atherton cried that the bridge would despoil the view. Money flowed to the opposition from the ferries that would lose their booming business carting cars back and forth across the strait. Ship owners also cited their fears that their masts would not clear the bridge. Even the Commonwealth Club of California passed a resolution, calling it an "inopportune time."

[Clovis firm wins \\$1.6 million high-speed rail subcontract](#)

Fresno Bee-Feb 25, 2014

The California High-Speed Rail Authority touted the subcontract as an example of the agency's commitment to provide opportunities for small businesses on the \$68 billion statewide rail project.

[Five teams OK'd to bid for second high-speed rail contract in Valley](#)

Fresno Bee-Feb 26, 2014

Companies from across the U.S. and around the world are expected to compete for a contract worth between \$1.5 billion and \$2 billion to design and build a 60-mile section of California's proposed high-speed rail line in the San Joaquin Valley.

[Polluter fees could be annual source of bullet train money](#)

Los Angeles Times-Feb 27, 2014

The measure would annually direct one-third of cap-and-trade revenue to the massive construction effort starting in 2015. The money is generated by polluters who pay for the right to release greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

The proposed legislation expands on Brown's previously announced one-year plan to use \$250 million from the cap-and-trade program to support the bullet train in the upcoming fiscal year, which begins July 1.

[Improving portion of high-speed rail corridor could cost \\$1.5 billion](#)

Chicago Tribune-Feb 24, 2014

Improving passenger service on the slowest portion of Illinois' emerging 110-mph rail corridor, between Chicago and Joliet, will cost an estimated \$1.5 billion, officials said Monday.

It's roughly the same amount the state is spending so far to develop the rest of the high-speed corridor south of Joliet to St. Louis, according to data from the Illinois Department of Transportation.

[One Change to IDOT's Rail Plans Could Vastly Improve Amtrak, Metra Service](#)

Streetblog Chicago Feb 26, 2014

Amtrak trains would run faster between Chicago and Joliet in the Illinois Department of Transportation's proposal to switch St. Louis-bound trains to less crowded tracks. But IDOT's project could be even better with a few key changes. By folding the track upgrade known as CrossRail into the Amtrak project, IDOT could improve intercity trains and regional Metra service in one fell swoop

[Amtrak returns to Union Station on Friday](#)

Denver Post-Feb 27, 2014

Amtrak's California Zephyr returns to Denver Union Station on Friday night after a three-year absence and a nearly \$500 million renovation of the historic rail hub.

[Downtown transforms around Union Station as Amtrak returns](#)

kdvr.com - Feb 28, 2014

DENVER — After three years of renovation, the first train pulled into Union Station Friday night. Amtrak's California Zephyr arrived at the historic building that RTD is turning into a multi-modal transportation hub. Amtrak had been operating out of a temporary ...

[Is it the end of the line for Amtrak's Southwest Chief?](#)

HPPR-Feb 25, 2014

Some rail watchers think Amtrak is using the Southwest Chief routing issue to sidestep its congressional mandate to subsidize long-distance trains — those traveling more than 750 miles — with federal funds according to a recent story in the Amarillo Globe-News.

[Amtrak drops amenities on long distance trains, and there's bad news for the Southwest Chief](#)

Commentary by Russ Jackson, RailPAC Associate Director

Mr. Murphy (*Amtrak's General Manager Long Distance Services*) spoke of Amtrak's need for more revenue and that they are "going after every dime we can get; we can't cut our way to success." Rail advocates in attendance loudly applauded this and the fact he stated that Amtrak earns 89-90 cents for each operating cost dollar. He proudly spoke of the "new equipment" on order, while not mentioning that those cars are the new low-levels that will be used only on the eastern trains. As for new equipment for the western trains, he only said "nothing today, but if we can show value..." meaning that the western trains still have to show their worth to the company? He wants to add capacity to "grow our revenue," but did not say how that would be accomplished.

[Let's get back on the track with the Southwest Chief and economic development](#)

The Colorado Stateman Feb 28, 2014

ColoRail is anxious for as many legislators as possible to have a complete understanding of the situation, which is a building block for encouraging support of railroads as active participants in the economic development of Colorado, especially the Front Range. The Colorado Department of Transportation has been exploring the "interconnectivity" of all Front Range cities by rail, and a meeting next Saturday will include a panel of experts from AMTRAK, the railroads, local officeholders, state and city economic development types, and tourism specialists.

[Rail access could pose challenge for luring Tesla](#)

Albuquerque Business First-Feb 27, 2014

Though Albuquerque may have a lot to offer potential employers, prime railroad access isn't at the top of the list.

And when it comes to building a large factory in the state, such as Tesla Motors' new Tesla Gigafactory, New Mexico could be seen as far behind the other states competing for the project, at least when it comes to transportation.

All the more reason to upgrade the tracks for the Southwest Chief and for other regions as well for economic growth from passenger and freight traffic. NB

[Amtrak to resume normal operations Saturday](#)

Minot Daily News-Feb 28, 2014

Amtrak passenger service will resume normal operations through Grand Forks, Devils Lake and Rugby on Saturday, said Sen. John Hoeven, R-N.D., on Friday....

At a meeting with BNSF senior officials organized by Hoeven last month, the senator urged the railroad to correct the situation as quickly as possible. At that meeting, Matt Rose, BNSF executive director, committed to a sizable investment in locomotives and crews in the state to improve Amtrak and freight service.

[Amtrak train stuck in Dillon County, passengers desperate for help](#)

WPDE-Feb 24, 2014

The train was traveling from New York to Florida, passengers said.

"They keep telling us anytime soon. People are calling Amtrak getting no where, with Amtrak telling them they can't put them through to customer service or anything. And so we've been here for a good eight hours," said Steve Maroutsis, a passenger on the train.

Passengers said there was no power on the train, and they're desperate for help because Amtrak wasn't allowing them to get off.

[Amtrak Train Stuck on Tracks South of Holland In 5ft Of Snow](#)

News Radio Wood-Feb 28, 2014

The Pere Marquette Amtrak train that runs between Grand Rapids and Chicago got stuck in a 5 foot deep snow drift that covered the rails south ...

[Yaddo, MacDowell, and the Acela](#)

The New Republic-Feb 26, 2014

The idea of writers using Amtrak trains to get work done was broached by Alexander Chee in an interview in December; when Gross tweeted at Amtrak about it, the company quickly made it happen. As it happens, right around now is the time poets across America are wrestling with the unbelievably complicated online application process for NEA grants.

[Man indicted in Cary Amtrak crash](#)

abc11.com-Feb 25, 2014

RALEIGH (WTVD) -- A Wake County grand jury handed up an indictment Tuesday charging a Laurinburg man with involuntary manslaughter in the death of his girlfriend.

Benny "Derrick" Dimery, 24, of Old Maxton Road in Laurinburg, allegedly drove around stop arms into the path of an Amtrak train in Cary.

[Whoa! Amtrak is Picking a Developer to Build Its Futuristic Sky City](#)

Curbed Philadelphia-Feb 26, 2014

Remember the proposal to create a platform of development ready land over the 30th Street Station

railyards that seemed a little too ambitious to ever come to fruition? Looks like it's not so far-fetched after all. A rep from Amtrak says that they're "in the process of determining and selecting a winning bid. My understanding is we should have that process wrapped up in the next several weeks".

[Eastern Flyer stirs railroad enthusiasts, but future remains uncertain](#)

Tulsa World-Feb 27, 2014

The trip was the last of three demonstration runs the train made from Sapulpa to Midwest City. Iowa Pacific Holdings, the train's operator, used the trips to show Oklahomans the services the company would offer on a permanent basis if it gets the opportunity.

[Milton William Jones, 98, one of last Pullman porters](#)

Chicago Sun-Times-Feb 26, 2014

The porters numbered more than 20,000 at their peak, a nation unto themselves of sharply dressed, sharply intelligent men. As they crisscrossed the country, they gleaned advice from passengers who gave them tips on investments and other paths to upward mobility. The porters helped fuel the Great Migration north by giving African-American passengers copies of the Chicago Defender, with its news of more jobs — and less fear — than in the South.

[Northstar, Amtrak delays prompt legislative hearing Thursday](#)

Minneapolis Star Tribune-Feb 25, 2014

The delays have become untenable, said House Transportation Finance Committee Chair Frank Hornstein (DFL-Minneapolis). He will participate in a legislative hearing at 10 a.m. Thursday in Room 5 of the State Office Building in St. Paul to look at how the dramatic increase in freight traffic caused by the oil boom in North Dakota is impacting railroad safety and passenger rail service.

[Mississippi spill highlights risk of US oil boom](#)

FuelFix (blog)-Feb 25, 2014

A barge crash that spilled enough oil to temporarily shut a stretch of the Mississippi River highlights the transportation risks of the U.S. energy boom just as regulators respond to several rail accidents involving crude.

[ANALYSIS-New US rail rules will not revamp old oil tank fleet](#)

Reuters-Feb 28, 2014

New U.S. rules to toughen classification standards for oil-train shipments will affect less than 3 percent of the tank cars now hauling crude across the country, leaving older, flawed models on the tracks, officials and industry sources say.

[SAN BERNARDINO: City welcomes \\$227 million transit center](#)

Press-Enterprise-Feb 26, 2014

Transportation officials circled the wagons in downtown San Bernardino on Tuesday, Feb. 25, to kick off a \$227 million project to bring Metrolink, bus service and, eventually, rail to Redlands together at a single station.

[Reorganization or Shakeup? Change in Metro Staff Has Some Wondering About Highway Project](#)

LA StreetBlog Feb 24, 2014

Michelle Lopes Caldwell, Metro's chief administrative services officer, Roger Moliere, Metro's executive director in charge of real estate, and Doug Failing, Metro's executive director of highway programs, have all left the company in recent weeks. Two different sources, and the Los Angeles Times are saying that Terry Matsumoto, the agency's chief financial officer is next. The departures are happening so

quickly, that Metro's online "management staff directory" has the wrong people listed as the heads of at least four departments.

[Board of Directors motion asks Metro to make renewed effort on public-private partnerships to fund transpo projects](#)

The Source Feb 27, 2014

Metro has a PPP program that has already identified five big projects that might make for good PPPs — the Sepulveda Pass Transit Corridor (which could involve building a rail line under the Pass to connect the Westside and the San Fernando Valley, a very pricey idea), the High Desert Corridor, the 710 South and 710 North projects and a project that would construct congestion pricing lanes on the 5 freeway in the Santa Clarita area. But no deals have been finalized.

[If Silicon Valley traffic throttles the economy, can towers on train stations save it?](#)

Silicon Valley Business Journal-Feb 28, 2014

As traffic reaches that point of critical mass, the companies that have built Silicon Valley's economy into a global center for technology innovation will move assets — and people — to competing markets, he says.

Diridon's prescription for heading off this fate? A radical shift in land-use planning that clusters people and jobs around rail stations in ultra-dense, high-rise communities.

[Caltrain releases draft report on rail electrification project](#)

San Jose Mercury News-Feb 28, 2014

But the benefits of a modernized train system will outweigh any negatives, said Jayme Ackemann, a spokeswoman for the San Mateo County Transit District, which oversees and manages Caltrain.

"We believe that for the future of Caltrain, that electrification is the only path forward that's sustainable," Ackemann told The Daily News on Thursday.

A modern electrified rail system would enable Caltrain to add trains and increase ridership, which should result in fewer cars on the road and better air quality. Plus, she added, an electrified system would be cheaper to operate than one that runs on diesel fuel.

Ackemann said daily ridership is expected to climb from the current 55,000 to 69,000 the first year the system is electrified, hopefully in 2019.

[Southbound Caltrain delays of up to 30 minutes after train breaks ...](#)

San Jose Mercury News-Feb 28, 2014

Caltrain is reporting delays of up to 30 minutes this morning after a train broke down south of Redwood City. Southbound Caltrain No.

[BART derailment: Investigators focus on train, clear driver](#)

San Jose Mercury News-Feb 28, 2014

After leaving the Concord station, the train crossed a set of switches that transfers trains from one track to another. At that point the front set of wheels on the second car "climbed the rail" as the train was traveling 24.5 mph, Oversier said.

The speed limit for that section is 27 mph. The train skidded about 24 feet past the switch point, Oversier said.



This blurry photo was shot at speed as Metrolink ran though Camp Pendleton alongside of the I-5 south of San Onofre. Along the tracks can be seen the beginning of grading and fencing for more double tracking. By the end of 2015 an additional 5.8 miles of double tracking will be added in San Diego County just in Camp Pendleton. That will create 16.1 miles of double track through most of Camp Pendleton.

Photo by Noel T. Braymer

We Get Emails

Re:Fix San Francisco By Making It More Like Connecticut

Business Insider Australia-Feb 18, 2014

The difference between Connecticut and Silicon Valley is mostly about differences in planning: Where the rail lines go, how often the trains run, and where homes and offices are located. These differences make it much more appealing to take the train from Manhattan to Connecticut than from San Francisco to Mountain View.

True. The single most important Caltrain improvement in this regard would be to extend the line to San Francisco's new Transbay Transit Center. When TTC is up and running, and appropriately connected by underground moving ped-ramp to the BART and Muni Metro systems, Caltrain ridership will jump. The projections indicate that at least twice as many new riders will be attracted to Caltrain by this extension than by electrification.

The people of San Francisco well understand the importance of extending Caltrain. In fact they voted 69.3% for the extension way back in 1999. Yet the project unaccountably remains on the back burner. Intercity and commuter rail advocates take note.

Nelson Wong

North Beach

San Francisco

Better stations with improved connections and development around them are important for ridership growth for any rail service. The point though of the article was in the author's opinion that Caltrain should have more reverse commuter service from San Francisco and San Mateo Counties to jobs in Santa Clara County. There is travel in both directions during rush hours and it was pointed out in the article that Metro-North for some time has been expanding its reverse commute service. NB

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

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