
Subject: Great Stories on Union Stations at LA, Chicago, Denver and St. Paul this week!

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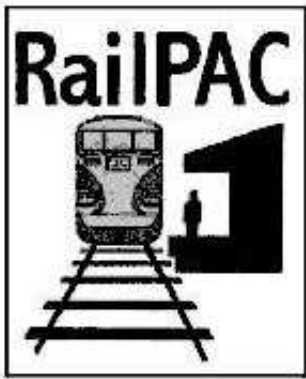
Date: Monday, April 7, 2014 9:32 AM

RailPAC Weekly E-Newsletter for April 7, 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 the cake at the retirement party for RailPAC and NARP's Art Lloyd who stepped down from the Board of Caltrain on April 3, 2014. Art has been working on the railroad since the 1940's, including working for his favorite road- the Western Pacific. Art was also one of the first Amtrak employees. He is a living database of rail. Photo by Bruce C. Jenkins

[Caltrain opens new elevated station in San Bruno](#)

San Francisco Examiner - Apr 2, 2014

Caltrain opened the doors of a new station Tuesday in San Bruno after more than three years of construction in the city's downtown area. The new elevated station at 833 San Mateo Ave. was built as part of the \$155 million San Bruno Grade Separation Project, which elevated Caltrain tracks above street crossings at San Bruno, San Mateo and Angus avenues, according to Caltrain officials.

[Longer Trains May Be No Match for Growing Caltrain Crowds](#)

Streetsblog San Francisco (blog)-Apr 3, 2014

Caltrain's rush hour trains have never been more crowded, which isn't just uncomfortable for riders — it also discourages potential commuters who instead drive along Peninsula highways, and makes rides more difficult for elderly passengers and riders with disabilities. Commuters could see some relief in 2015, when Caltrain plans to extend the length of some of its trains, but the crunch won't end any time soon if ridership trends continue.

[How to Speed Caltrain](#)

The Almanac Online (blog)-Apr 3, 2014

Use it. That is the interim answer to speeding Caltrain service from Menlo Park.

As for the long run: support electrification.

Why? Consider today's diesel Baby Bullet trains between San Jose and San Francisco. These expresses take about one hour and average four stops. With fast-accelerating electric trains, the 60-minute run could include 12 stops.

[Trains to 49er games topic of meeting Friday](#)

Modesto Bee-Apr 2, 2014

The rail commission's contract with Union Pacific railroad provides up to 10 noncommuter trains each year to special events, and some rail leaders balked at giving them all to the 49ers, who argue that fans should be able to count on trains for every home game. The railroad is open to negotiating more special trains for other events, a report says.

[Chicago Home to One of Nation's Finest Train Stations](#)

Northwest Herald-Apr 2, 2014

Chicagoland commuters hustling through Union Station may not realize it, but they are passing through one of the 23 best Amtrak train stations in America, according to Skift, a travel site.

Best known for its majestic Great Hall, often bathed in soft light, the building served more than 3.5 million passengers in 2013. It's the third busiest rail terminal in the United States, handling approximately 120,000 passengers on an average weekday.

[Amtrak to begin operating out of Union Depot starting May 7](#)

Minneapolis Star Tribune-Apr 2, 2014

Shortly after 10 p.m. on May 7, the Empire Builder will jerk to a stop at Gate C outside Union Depot, marking the return of passenger train service to downtown St. Paul after 43 years and signaling the start of a new era for the historic train station that reopened in 2012 after an expensive and painstaking renovation.

[Denver Union Station is a "Game Changer"](#)

Architectural Record-Apr 1, 2014

Today, Union Station, in the city's Lower Downtown neighborhood, is on the cusp of a major transformation. The Beaux Arts-style depot, built in 1914, is being restored and converted—by Denver firms Tryba Architects and JG Johnson Architects—into a 112-room boutique hotel with shops, offices, and restaurants, opening in July. Meanwhile, in the rail yard behind the station, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) has created a multimodal transit hub for buses, light rail, commuter rail, and Amtrak service. The \$500 million public-private project is a milestone for sprawling Denver, which has embraced transit in a big way.

[Union Station: A grand opening](#)

The Source Apr 1, 2014

Click on a photo to see a larger version or click on the first version to begin a slideshow-type display.

Photos courtesy of the Los Angeles Railroad Heritage Foundation Collection.

This is the first of a series of posts on the history of Union Station that will run on Tuesdays and Fridays throughout April. The Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal finally opened to the public on May 3, 1939 and it was celebrated with a massive parade down Alameda Street.

[INDOT Seeks Competition For Amtrak Rail Line](#)

Indiana Public Media - Apr 2, 2014

The Indiana Department of Transportation is allowing companies to compete for the passenger rail service from Indianapolis to Chicago.

Congress cut off \$3 million in funding for the Hoosier State line last year, prompting INDOT and cities along the line to step in with a promise to subsidize the line for at least another year.

Now, INDOT is looking for other long-term options.

Amtrak operates the line now, but the state is asking other companies to submit proposals for how they would run part or all of the line.

This will be interesting since Amtrak uses the Hoosier State to ferry cars to Beach Grove from

Chicago for maintenance and repair. The best idea would be to operate a daily Cardinal, which Amtrak wants but the host railroad isn't interested in doing. NB

[Train traffic disrupted as Amtrak train pulls down power lines near ...](#)

Baltimore Sun-Apr 3, 2014

An Amtrak train tore down overhead catenary power lines in an accident near Bowie on Thursday morning, disrupting rail traffic in the area and the commutes of many MARC and Amtrak riders, according to the Maryland Transit Administration.

Craig Schulz, an Amtrak spokesman, said the incident occurred about 9:30 a.m. and left the Northeast Corridor train No. 181 — carrying 177 passengers — without power.

[Amtrak restores service between DC, Baltimore](#)

WTOP-Apr 4, 2014

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Amtrak has resumed full service between Baltimore and Washington, D.C., after downed wires caused travel to be suspended.

Amtrak said in an email late Thursday that service had been restored and repairs made to overhead wires near Bowie. Friday's morning rush is not expected to be affected.

[Recent flooding leaves Amtrak passengers stranded](#)

KSHB-Apr 5, 2014

41 Action News received a viewer tip that family members had been stuck on the train for more than seven hours on Saturday. The train had left Kansas City at 8:15 a.m. on its way to St. Louis.

Amtrak confirms that two passenger trains have been stuck after recent flooding in the area washed out the Union Pacific tracks.

[Room for more freight in San Diego?](#)

RailwayAge Magazine-Apr 3, 2014

As part of a statewide \$2 billion Trade Corridors Improvement program, the California Transportation Commission in 2012 granted \$25.9 million toward a \$40.5 million total being invested in the San Diego area on upgrades to track, signals, and grade separations. The goal is to double rail freight capacity through the San Diego/San Ysidro/Tijuana border crossing, while eliminating as many as 31,800 truck trips annually.

[The Desert Line: Lies, lost money and lawsuits?](#)

KUSI-Apr 2, 104

Lies, lost money, and scores of lawsuits: those are the accusations against the owners of Pacific Imperial Railroad, the company that now controls the Desert Line thanks to a 99-year lease with San Diego's Metropolitan Transit System. However, the railroad's new chief responds with accusations of his own.... So there they were: a lawyer and a pair of Las Vegas speculators with the keys to the kingdom in their hands and a 99 year lease agreement with San Diego's Metropolitan Transit System that gave them the exclusive rights to the Desert Line.

[Refinery plans to ship 100 train cars of crude oil through Sacramento](#)

Merced Sun-Star-Apr 2, 2014

A Bay Area refinery's plan to run up to 100 train cars of highly flammable crude oil daily through Sacramento is prompting a late push by area leaders to protect cities on the rail line.

[BART unveils new car design](#)

SFGate (blog)-Apr 3, 2014

If you ever wondered what the future of BART will look like, you'll get a chance to get a sneak peek in a

couple weeks.

BART will be debuting its next generation of cars at a series of public viewings starting April 16 in Justin Herman Plaza.

[Public review underway for draft Larkspur SMART Station Area Plan](#)

Marin Independent Journal-Apr 5, 2014

Marin residents have until the end of May to submit feedback on a draft plan that would concentrate future housing and business development near the proposed Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit station in Larkspur.

[Motorists asked to avoid 215 during weekend construction](#)

San Bernardino Sun-Apr 2, 2014

Work continues on 4 train bridges off the 215 freeway in Grand Terrace Tuesday morning. The bridges are 200 feet long, 23 feet wide and 30 feet tall and weigh 1.1 million pounds each. The bridges will be moved into a temporary position over the 215 freeway, to replace older bridges, this coming month which will result in a full freeway closure on a number of different days and nights between Iowa Avenue and Barton Road.

[New solution for dangerous railroad crossing proposed](#)

Glendale News Press-Apr 1, 2014

While Los Angeles County transportation officials are considering four options for building a new overpass at one of the most dangerous railroad crossings in the area, Councilman Ara Najarian has pitched another idea.

[New Metrolink schedule to go into effect April 7](#)

Santa Clarita Valley Signal-Apr 2, 2014

LOS ANGELES - Effective Monday, April 7, Metrolink will make adjustments reflecting current operating conditions, improve service patterns and support future PTC operating requirements. The changes will also offer more efficient service and better rail connections with continued great value.

This schedule reflects efforts by LOSSAN to improve connections between the Surfliners, Metrolink and Coaster. NB

[Metrolink, Metro propose more express trains for crowded San Bernardino Line](#)

San Gabriel Valley Tribune-Apr 2, 2014

The project will involve double-tracking portions of the line between San Bernardino and Rialto and between San Dimas and La Verne, effectively adding four miles of extra track and bringing the total of double tracking on the line to 12 miles, said Jay Fuhrman, transportation planning manager for Metro. Though in the preliminary stages, the total cost for the project is approximately \$126 million, split between SanBAG and Metro.

[Antelope Valley Transit Authority expands bus service to the Santa Clarita Valley](#)

Santa Clarita Valley Signal-Apr 2, 2014

Starting Monday, the North County Transporter, a commuter bus that provides service between the Palmdale Transportation Center and the Newhall Metrolink Station, will also include several stops at the McBean Regional Transit Center...

“By extending this route, passengers can conveniently reach popular locations like Six Flags Magic Mountain or seek employment in the Santa Clarita Valley.”

We could use more bus connections like this on Metrolink and other regional rail services. NB

[Metro areas with good, cheap mass transit can promote economic advancement](#)

[and healthier living](#)

Al Jazeera America-Apr 1, 2014

Smart Growth America and the University of Utah's Metropolitan Urban Center today released their second detailed sprawl ranking of metro areas and counties. ...

One of the most striking findings is that living in more compact and connected metro areas can help low-income children get ahead financially as adults. "A child [in a low-sprawl area] born in the bottom 20 percent of the income scale has a better chance of rising to the top 20 percent of the income scale by the age of 30," said Reid Ewing, a professor of city and metropolitan planning at the University of Utah and the lead researcher.

[Why raise Metro fares when giving away free parking?](#)

LA Streetsblog Mar 30, 2014

One way to explain this is to look at overall fairness. Metro is a public agency tasked with providing transportation services. In providing a public good (transportation), Metro can and should choose to subsidize. In Metro's user fee structures, the agency makes policy choices regarding what it subsidizes. Right now, Metro subsidizes 99+ percent of the cost of parking, but only roughly 75 percent of the cost of riding transit. Metro is proposing to continue to subsidize parking at 99+ percent, but to only subsidize transit at 67 percent. Metro is proposing that "fare recovery" for transit needs to go from 25 percent to 33 percent, but parking "fare recovery" can remain at zero percent indefinitely.

[Parking Sanity: Right Price Good for Congestion, Transit, & Revenue](#)

Atlantic Cities Apr 2, 2014

Costanza's universal theory of parking states that drivers should never pay for a spot because, if they apply themselves, they'll get it for free. Most U.S. cities do everything they can to abide the theory. They undervalue the price of street spaces. They keep parking so cheap it encourages driving (and thus undermines their own transit investments, leading to more driving). And they require a minimum number of parking spaces for new developments whether residents need them or not.

[Metro explores new green energy options](#)

The Source Mar 31, 2014

You're standing on a subway station platform, waiting for the train. Suddenly, the wind picks up. You know this means the train is coming. Many of you may also know why there's wind: it's displaced air being pushed through the tunnel by the fast moving train. And some of you — including Tom Kefalas, Metro Environmental Compliance and Services Manager — may have wondered if there was a way all that generated wind could be utilized as a renewable energy source.



This is a new stretch of double track south of Sorrento Valley in San Diego. This is one more piece of double track slowly but surely being built in California. More money would help speed up the process. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

[The business of high-speed rail](#)

Visalia Times-Delta - Apr 2, 2014

Visalia forum will help small businesses bid for work on building rail line

Despite legal challenges and opposition, California's high-speed rail plan is going forward like, well, a moving train, with plans for major construction to begin later this year on the first section of track from Madera to Fresno.

[Senate Committee Grills CA High-Speed Rail Authority...](#)

Streetsblog Los Angeles (blog)-Apr 1, 2014

DeSaulnier asked all the questions at the informational hearing, since he was the only Committee member who showed up for it. However, he came well prepared, so instead of yet another presentation on how cap-and-trade works, there was a pointed exchange about the funding capabilities of high speed rail.

DeSaulnier warned Morales that the Authority may have a hard time getting the necessary votes in the state legislature to pass the governor's cap-and-trade expenditure plan, which proposes giving \$250 million to high-speed rail from the proceeds of the state's greenhouse gas emissions law, A.B. 32...

Louis Thompson, chair of the High-Speed Rail Peer Review Group, said it is fair to assume that private investment will come. "There will be private funds available, but not until 2028, because only by then will there be enough experience with the system for private funders to believe the forecasts." Meanwhile, he said, the funding gap will continue to grow.

This report is more informative than the story in the LA Times. NB

[California Drought: San Joaquin Valley sinking as farmers race to tap aquifer](#)

San Jose Mercury News Mar 31, 2014

Now those forces are renewing an age-old problem of environmental degradation: Decades ago, overpumping sunk half of the entire San Joaquin Valley, in one area as much as 28 feet. Today new areas are subsiding, some almost a foot each year, damaging bridges and vital canals.

This includes railroad structures as well. NB

[5 companies invited to bid for next Valley section of high-speed rail](#)

Fresno Bee-Apr 3, 2014

The California High-Speed Rail Authority issued its "request for proposals" Thursday for a 65-mile section of the proposed rail line from the southern edge of Fresno to just north of the Tulare-Kern county line.

The work, which is estimated to cost between \$1.5 billion and \$2 billion, represents an extension of the first construction segment between Madera and Fresno, where the state agency anticipates construction to start this spring or summer.

[Is this Summer Make or Break Time for California High Speed Rail?](#)

By Noel T. Braymer

The California High Speed Rail Authority has signed a construction contract for work in the Fresno area. Final construction plans are being made, some land has been cleared around Fresno and the process of buying right of way around Fresno is underway. This spring the Authority plans to award a second major construction contract for most of the new railroad south of Fresno to a point near the Kern County Line north of Bakersfield. What is unknown is when or even if the 4.5 billion dollars from Prop 1A bond money approved so far by the legislature out of 9.95 billion will be released by the courts. Of this money 2.6 billion dollars is the State's share for the current 5.8 billion dollars for construction in the San Joaquin Valley. The Federal share for construction is 3.2 billion dollars. Another 1.9 billion dollars is for the Prop 1A bond money planned to help fund several projects around the State for projects to help feed passengers to the future High Speed Rail network.

HSR INVESTMENTS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA RAIL PROJECTS

- **Targets \$1 Billion in HSR and Other Funds for Early Investment Projects**
 - **Regional Projects** - Southern California Regional Interconnector Project (SCRIP) Benefits Regional Rail Including Metrolink and Amtrak
 - **Local Projects** - Double Tracking, Grade Separations, etc. to Support Integrated Regional Rail Network
- **Promotes Interagency Approach to Development of an Integrated Rail Network**



This is from a PowerPoint presentation given to the LOSSAN Board on March 17, 2014. There is more to High Speed Rail funding now than just in the San Joaquin Valley.

We Get Emails

Re: the Empire Builder's new schedule

The Railway Age piece doesn't say whether the new schedule will lead to BNSF getting its on-time bonuses back from Amtrak. In other words is Amtrak paying more for a slower train? Do you have any idea where we can find out how this works.

Tom Schlegel

I don't know the answer to your question yet. But BNSF has bigger problems because of oil train traffic than just with Amtrak. This has disrupted much of their freight traffic in the upper Mid-West as well. There is no guarantee that the Empire Building will even run on time with this new schedule; only that on paper it will be less late. The current oil boom in North Dakota is just that: a boom. Like all booms sooner or later they go bust. When the boom goes bust, this could be a major headache for the railroads. NB

Re: Is RailPAC thrashing California High Speed Rail?

I love the weekly updates you assemble and distribute under the RailPAC banner, and I know I am not alone. But I'm troubled that Paul Dyson testifies to the state legislature that the initial plan for HSR in California is "completely wrong".

We have to start somewhere, and support for rail is growing in the younger generations. But Dyson's shrill negative hyperbole gives too much ammunition to those who would delay meaningful HSR in the state for a generation.

The perfect is the enemy of the good here, and Dyson is doing our state no favors. Let's let our governor make as much progress as possible, we will finish the project and we will need every mile of HSR track

soon enough. (In fact it may be easier to fund the mountain crossing into LA with 100 miles of tail track already ready to connect to it, and linking to the major cities of NorCal.)

Your own comments and editorials always strike me as balanced. Does Dyson speak for RailPAC overall and for you?

Neil Shea

RailPAC for the record supported Prop 1A in 2008 which gave High Speed Rail nearly \$10 billion dollars in bonds for rail, with nearly a billion of this for projects connecting to High Speed Rail. RailPAC also supported the 2012 Business Plan for High Speed Rail which will help fund several rail services which will feed High Speed Rail.

The problem of politics is always too many interests fighting over too little money. This is particularly true over the Cap and Trade Funds. State Senator Desaulnier was the only member of the Transportation Committee to show up at this committee meeting on March 27th. He took advantage of this to hammer the California High Speed Rail Authority over the Governor's proposal for using some of Cap and Trade revenue for High Speed Rail which he want to use for other transportation projects.

I am not alone in my personal opinion that the priority of California Rail service should be to build a new fast connection between Bakersfield and Palmdale. I agree with Paul Dyson that we should have direct service from day one using existing railroads in many places to have fast passenger service for most of California. This is done in many places. This is how the TGV is run, using both upgraded conventional and new high speed rail tracks to serve most of France directly.

Lou Thompson at the March 27th meeting pointed out that High Speed Rail can get private financing. But it first has to operate at a profit. Mr Thompson worked for years at the World Bank on rail projects so he knows what he is talking about. But it could be 2027 if all goes well before this could happen. Running non-electrified trains at speeds up to 125 miles per hour from San Diego to Oakland with service to the Inland Empire, San Jose and Sacramento by 2020 should if well managed operated at a profit. This will help speed up access to future private financing and increase support State wide for more , faster rail service.

About the issue of tax revenue: economic growth is the best way to increase tax revenue. Few things grows the economy more than transportation construction. This also leads to more construction for business and housing. 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.

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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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