

Subject:	HSR Groundbreaking, a smattering of protesters. Lake Shore 13 hours late leaving Chicago!
From:	Rail Passenger Association of California (noelnoelt@cox.net)
To:	ntbraymer@yahoo.com;
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RailPAC Weekly E-Newsletter for January 12, 2015

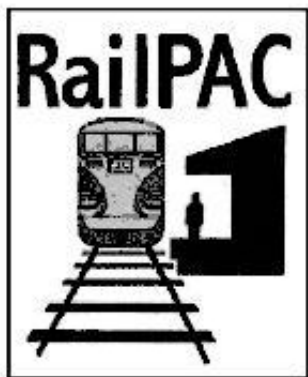
Edited by Noel T. Braymer

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Traffic? Gas Pains? We need more Trains!



California High Speed Rail Authority graphic of what the Fresno Station and downtown Fresno could look like in the future.

[Groundbreaking at Fresno for California high-speed rail](#)

Sacramento Bee-Jan 7, 2015

FRESNO- More than six years after Californians approved \$9 billion in high-speed rail bonds and three decades after the state first pursued development of a bullet train, Gov. Jerry Brown offered a measure of progress Tuesday with a ceremonial groundbreaking....

Just hours before the groundbreaking, Fresno's KMJ News Talk Radio asked listeners, "Do you think the bullet train will ever actually be built?," while local officials who opposed the project complained they were not invited to the groundbreaking and lined up to criticize it...

A smattering of protesters held up signs outside the event, and their heckling – "We don't want your train," they yelled, "Show us the money!" – could be heard throughout the ceremony.

[Rail project kicks off with Fresno groundbreaking](#)

Fresno Business Journal - Jan 6, 2015

National, state and local leaders convened in Fresno this morning to break ground on the first leg of the California high-speed rail system. Officials met at the site of the future high-speed rail station at 1625 Tulare Street in downtown Fresno. While construction crews have already demolished several buildings along the planned route in downtown Fresno, California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) officials said today's event marks the beginning of sustained construction on the project...

While leaders stressed the benefits of high-speed rail, a dozen demonstrators gathered outside the event to protest the project and at times, their shouting could be heard above the speeches being given.

After all these years and hundreds of negative news stories about how "unpopular" High Speed Rail was, the best the opponents of High Speed Rail could rally at the groundbreaking was a

smattering or a dozen? NB

[To Gov. Jerry Brown, a Legacy Project; to Critics, a Runaway Train](#)

New York Times-Jan 6, 2015

FRESNO, Calif. — One day after being sworn in to a final term as governor, Jerry Brown, a chief executive who tends to disdain the trappings of political ceremony, came to this Central Valley city on Tuesday for a decidedly ceremonial groundbreaking for his Los Angeles-to-San Francisco high-speed train — a defiant and defining act for Mr. Brown as he enters his final stretch in public life.

[Construction begins in SF on key part of high-speed rail project](#)

abc7news.com-Jan6, 2015

SAN FRANCISCO (KGO) --A key part of the high-speed rail project is now under construction in downtown San Francisco.

Governor Jerry Brown broke ground on Tuesday on what he hopes will be his legacy project -- the high-speed rail connecting the state's population centers, Los Angeles and the Bay Area.

The new Transbay Terminal takes up a four-block area in the South of Market area.

[Henry R. Perea: High-speed rail is Fresno game-changer](#)

Fresno Bee-Jan 5, 2015

How does this change our local economic landscape? Already this project has brought money and employment to hard-pressed economies in the Valley. Forty-four local companies are among the certified small businesses awarded \$296 million in active contracts. The equivalent of 632 new full time jobs have been created. That's real prosperity we can feel at home as dollars in our pocket, money spent at local businesses, and local tax revenue for improvements to Valley communities — and this is just the beginning.

These are the jobs — and careers — that change the future, not just for workers, but for whole families.

[California's Brown Seeks \\$59 Billion in Infrastructure Fixes](#)

Bloomberg-Jan 5, 2015

California Governor Jerry Brown proposed spending \$59 billion to fix crumbling roads and raising the state's renewable energy mandate to 50 percent, while projecting that California's new rainy-day fund would reach \$2.8 billion this year.

Sworn in today for an unprecedented fourth term, the 76-year-old Democrat said lawmakers must address hundreds of billions of dollars in liabilities stemming from pensions, retiree health care and the obligations of President Barack Obama's health-insurance law. He said he would proceed with a \$68 billion California high-speed-rail line, on which he is expected break ground tomorrow.

[Jerry Brown seeks new green regulations in historic fourth term](#)

Los Angeles Times - Jan 5, 2015

"Taking significant amounts of carbon out of our economy without harming its vibrancy is exactly the sort of challenge at which California excels," he said. "This is exciting, it is bold and it is absolutely necessary if we are to have any chance of stopping potentially catastrophic changes to our climate system. By 2030, Brown wants California to derive 50% of its electricity from renewable sources, up from the goal of 33% by 2020. He also wants to double the energy efficiency of existing buildings and reduce by half the use of petroleum by cars and trucks.

[Clean-diesel technologies to construct California high-speed rail ...](#)

.Oil & Gas Financial Journal-Jan 6, 2015

“While there is a debate on the merits of the high speed rail project in general, one thing that is not in debate is the readiness of the most advanced construction machines and equipment to build the project,”

said Allen Schaeffer, executive director of the Diesel Technology Forum. "It is fitting that a project of this size will be built with the latest generation of advanced clean-diesel technology. This massive project is being done with the most advanced and sustainable green construction practices, which is why the latest clean diesel engines and equipment that meet the nation's most stringent environmental standards – known as 'Tier 4' – are the technology of choice. No other fuel or technology can match the combination of power, efficiency, performance, and now near-zero emissions of these machines.

[Cap & Trade Drives Up Gas Prices A Whopping Three Cents So Far](#)

Better Institutions Jan 3, 2015

Since the new year, prices have gone up by about 3 cents. Ahhh!!! This compares favorably to apocalyptic predictions from the California Driver's Alliance, which claimed that prices would increase from 16 to 76 cents a gallon. Actual experts have estimated that the cap-and-trade program will increase gas costs by about \$0.10 per gallon in the long run, and it's still very early, so we'll see.

[What's Needed to Build a World Class Rail Passenger Service in San Diego: Money!](#)

By Noel T. Braymer

A lawsuit against the \$219 Billion dollar San Diego County Transportation Plan up to 2050 was upheld in a State Appeals court last November. The lawsuit is based on the fact that the current transportation plan doesn't meet the State's target for reducing Greenhouse Gases by 2050. The State's goal is to reduce Greenhouse Gases below 1990 levels by 2050. The transportation plan for San Diego County assumes increases in Greenhouse Gas Emissions by 2050 from increased road traffic. The point of the lawsuit is to force San Diego and other counties in California to switch spending from new highway construction to increased spending for more rail and transit service.

[The Feds Quietly Acknowledge the Driving Boom Is Over](#)

STREETBLOG USA Jan 7, 2015

The Federal Highway Administration has very quietly acknowledged that the driving boom is over. After many years of aggressively and inaccurately claiming that Americans would likely begin a new era of rapid driving growth, the agency's more recent forecast finally recognizes that the protracted post-World War II era has given way to a different paradigm. The new vision of the future suggests that driving per capita will essentially remain flat in the future. The benchmark is important because excessively high estimates of future driving volume get used to justify wasteful spending on new and wider highways. In the face of scarce transportation funds, overestimates of future driving translate into too little attention paid to repairing the roads we already have and too little investment in other modes of travel.

[Metro CEO Art Leahy to leave agency in April; oversaw nation's largest transit and highway public works program](#)

The Source Jan 6, 2015

Art Leahy, CEO of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), today announced his last day of service will be April 5, 2015, when his current contract expires. Leahy, 65, who started his transportation career as a bus operator and became one of the nation's leading transit officials, has headed Metro for six years. During that time he guided implementation of one of the largest public works programs in United States history and helped secure billions of dollars in federal and state funding to match local transit sales taxes to finance construction of dozens of transit and highway projects.

[Amid Metrolink problems, frustrated board member quits](#)

Los Angeles Times-Jan 8, 2015

A board member for the Metrolink commuter railroad resigned this week, saying she was frustrated with the line's complicated governing structure and unwillingness to significantly improve business practices. Carolyn Cavecche, a veteran Orange County politician and transportation policymaker, submitted a resignation letter Monday after serving five years as a board member and an alternate...

"I am frustrated by the real lack of interest in the board to making substantial changes in how it handles the business of Metrolink," Cavecche said Thursday. "The agency needs better financial accountability, an auditor and changes in governance. I don't see a board that is willing do this."

[Shawn Nelson named head of Metrolink board](#)

OCRegister-Jan 10, 2015

Southern California's troubled rail agency, Metrolink, has a new board chairman: Orange County Supervisor Shawn Nelson.

Nelson's appointment, approved unanimously by the agency's governing board Friday, comes as the rail agency continues to struggle with broken ticket machines, run-down trains and questions over its financial management.

[Metrolink board members want to consider hiring outgoing MTA chief](#)

Los Angeles Times-Jan 9, 2015

"I think he would be a perfect fit," said Richard Katz, a former state legislator with a long history of serving on the MTA and Metrolink boards. "Art is a known quantity. He's exactly what Metrolink needs right now."

Leahy's name was mentioned at Friday's board meeting after a closed session to discuss replacing Michael DePallo, who announced his resignation as head of the six-county railroad last month.

Having retiring LA Metro CEO Art Leahy take over at Metrolink would certainly be a major improvement over most of the former top managers at Metrolink. Leahy would have a personal stake in the success of Metrolink. Some of the projects he was responsible for like the planned makeover of Union Station and run-through tracks at Union Station will depend on a healthy and growing Metrolink service which we don't have now. NB

[Pick Who You Think Will Replace Metro CEO Art Leahy](#)

Streetsblog Los Angeles (blog) - Jan 9, 2015

Earlier this week Metro CEO Art Leahy tendered his resignation as of April, 2015. Today, in a somewhat tongue-in-cheek way, we invite you, our readers, to pick Leahy's successor.

The Twitter and Facebook buzz, soon after picking Senator Barbara Boxer's successor, bubbled up a few potential candidates for Leahy's spot. We asked a few of our friends and some seedy informants, too, and generated a list of over a dozen people who just might be able to fill his empty shoes... or something like that. Readers can vote for your favorites through the end of January.

[A long, cold wait: Amtrak passengers finally depart Chicago 13.5 hours late](#)

CNN - Jan 8, 2015

The delay for Amtrak 48/448 was caused by mechanical problems, including frozen brakes, said Amtrak spokesman Marc Magliari.

Winter weather caused other transportation problems, especially in the Midwest...

The train initially left Chicago about 8 a.m. Thursday, but Norfolk Southern realized train employees had been on the clock too long, said Robin Chapman, director of public relations for Norfolk Southern. The train was ordered back to Union Station for a fresh crew, Chapman said.

"Amtrak 48 was ready to go but it was 10.5 hours late because it had had an engine failure," Chapman said. "The crew only had 15 minutes left on their service time because of the hours of service regulation. We could not let them go."

The fault for the Lake Shore being late wasn't the weather, it was Amtrak's. The train should

never have been allowed to leave the yard until it was in safe operating condition. The work should have been done on time for the train to leave on time. The train should not have left the station with a crew that would soon reach their 12 hour limit. Too often the problems at Amtrak are caused by the attitude of let's dump the problem on someone else rather than fixing it. Once a train leaves with a problem it becomes somebody's else's problem at Amtrak. NB

[Amtrak trying to warm up Chicago's Union Station](#)

Bloomington Pantagraph Jan 10, 2015

CHICAGO (AP) — Amtrak is trying to warm up Chicago's Union Station by limiting the use of certain pedestrian entrances that had allowed bitterly cold air to blow inside.

Spokesman Marc Magliari says the changes to pedestrian traffic flow will remain in place through the end of February.

Passengers who were delayed nearly 14 hours this week because of weather-related mechanical problems had complained about cold temperatures in waiting areas.

[Amtrak looks to get Empire Builder schedule on track after year of delays](#)

The Courier Life News-Jan 6, 2015

In the fiscal year that ended in September, the Empire Builder slipped to last place among Amtrak's long-distance lines, arriving late at four out of every five stops.

On average, the route was delayed by more than an hour and a half each day. Three quarters of those delays were blamed on host railroads, with freight train interference being the most common cause.

[Amtrak overhead wire problems delay New Jersey trains](#)

NorthJersey.com-Jan 8, 2015

NEWARK, N.J. (AP) — Amtrak is expecting residual delays after an overhead wire problem slowed its trains and left New Jersey Transit passengers stomping their feet on train platforms in biting cold.

Amtrak spokesman Craig Schulz says an overhead wire came down in the Sunnyside Yard in Queens, New York, early Thursday. Schulz says the problem has been isolated and Amtrak is working around it.

[Two months of MARC delays expected from Amtrak work on Penn Line](#)

Baltimore Sun-Jan 8, 2015

Most MARC trains traveling along the Penn Line between Baltimore and Washington in the next two months will be delayed due to coming track work by Amtrak, according to the Maryland Transit Administration.

[Amtrak launches Northeast Corridor website](#)

Progressive Rail Roding-Jan 6, 2015

Recently developed by the Northeast Corridor Infrastructure and Investment Development business line, the site includes historical data on NEC; highlights of more than 20 improvement projects spanning the corridor's length from Boston to Washington, D.C.; interactive maps; ridership data; and a resource section where users can download or share reports, fact sheets and graphics about the NEC.

[Baltimore-based Parking Panda launches new partnership with Amtrak](#)

Baltimore Sun-Jan 5, 2015

Drivers transferring onto Amtrak trains can now reserve parking spaces near dozens of train stations across the country using the services of Baltimore-based Parking Panda.

[Former BART director sees Oakland BART/Amtrak transfer opportunity](#)

Contra Costa Times-Jan 7, 2015

Bob Allen, the transit system's District 5 representative from 1974 to 1988, proposes a transfer station at

Seventh Street in Oakland where BART's transbay line crosses over the Union Pacific tracks that carry Amtrak trains.

"From a transfer station there, 16 or more (BART) trains per hour would reach four BART/Muni downtown San Francisco stations in six to 10 minutes," Allen said.

[Caltrain vote paves the way for electric trains](#)

Palo Alto Online - Jan 8, 2015

Replacing the existing diesel trains with electric ones would enable Caltrain to increase the number of trains it runs during peak hours from five to six. It would also allow for longer trains, thus helping Caltrain to keep up with its growing ridership numbers.

Caltrain also estimates the electrified system will reduce pollutant emissions by 97 percent by 2040. With the increased service and a proposed extension of the system in San Francisco, the agency also expects more than double the current weekday ridership and to take more than 600,000 daily vehicle miles off the region's roadways.

[The Napa Valley Wine Train Announces a New and Exclusive Winter Train](#)

PR.com (press release)-Jan 8, 2015

Napa, CA, January 08, 2015 --(PR.com)-- The Vista Dome Premier Will Be Open with Incredibly Limited Seating.

The Napa Valley Wine Train, one of the most distinctive restaurants in the Napa Valley, is announcing an entirely new train experience designed to highlight the beauty of the winter season.



This is at Oceanside at about 3:25PM on January 9th and an OCTA bus has just dropped off Metrolink passengers for Oceanside stranded after a death on the tracks at 1:19 PM in San Clemente. At first it was expected the bus would be needed to carry passengers for trains 641 and 609. But the 609 soon arrived a

few minutes late at the station. The 641 was cancelled because of the problems on the tracks. Needless to say there was a great deal of confusion about what was happening. It was almost 4:30 PM before trains were allowed to run in San Clemente. Unfortunately these rail service disruptions seem to be on the increase. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

[San Clemente train strikes woman in possible suicide](#)

OCRegister - Jan 9, 2014

Train travelers face long delays and cancellations and the city's popular beach trail is closed from the North Beach parking lot up to the first stairs to the beach at the Dije Court access point.

The train, Amtrak Pacific Surfliner 777, was traveling northbound from San Diego to San Luis Obispo with 252 passengers, when it struck the woman at 1:19 p.m., according to an Amtrak spokeswoman. The woman was struck in the pedestrian crossing at the Dije beach trail entrance.

[Car Driver Flees Collision With Metrolink Train Causing Delays](#)

NBC Southern California-Jan 5, 2015

The driver of a car that collided with a commuter train in the San Fernando Valley fled the scene Monday morning, fire officials said.

Metrolink trains were holding north of Sylmar after a car drove into the train, Metrolink said.

The Metrolink train collided with the car at about 6:45 a.m. at 10800 San Fernando Road, the Los Angeles Fire Department said. It was carrying 220 people, but no injuries were reported.

An hour after striking the car, Metrolink cleared its train to return to continue on to Los Angeles.

[2 struck by Metrolink trains, delaying trains](#)

Los Angeles Times-Jan 6, 2015

Metrolink trains struck two people Tuesday night at two locations, killing one person, injuring another and delaying commuters during the evening rush hour, authorities said.

[Person Struck, Killed by Caltrain Near Millbrae Station](#)

NBC Bay Area - Jan 10, 2015

The southbound tracks have reopened near the scene where a Caltrain fatally struck a person near the Millbrae station Saturday morning, a Caltrain spokeswoman said.

[Report: Caltrain electrification to worsen Palo Alto traffic congestion](#)

San Francisco Business Times (blog)-Jan 7, 2015

Caltrain's modernization program is expected to boost ridership and be better for the environment as the agency prepares to switch its diesel fleet to all-electric trains, starting in 2019.

But Palo Alto will likely suffer from increased traffic congestion around its Alma Street train station, already the second-busiest in the entire Caltrain system, according to reporting in Palo Alto Online.

[First public art of Gold Line Foothill Extension installed in Duarte](#)

The Pasadena Star-News-Jan 10, 2015

DUARTE >> Artist Stan Sears watched nervously as the first public art installation of the Gold Line Foothill Extension's six train stations was carefully bolted onto the concrete platform of the Duarte/City of Hope Station on Friday morning.

[Plummeting oil price casts shadow over fracking's future](#)

The Guardian-Jan 6, 2015

Yet now the alarm bells are ringing about the financial health of the fracking industry, with talk of a mighty monetary bubble bursting – leading to turmoil on the international markets similar to that in 2008...

Fuelled by talk of the financial rewards to be gained from fracking, investors have piled into the business. The US fracking industry now accounts for about 20% of the world's total crude oil investment. But analysts say this whole investment edifice could come crashing down. Fracking is an expensive business. Depending on site structure, companies need prices of between \$60 (£40) and \$100 per barrel of oil to break even. As prices drop to around \$55 per barrel, investments in the sector look ever more vulnerable.

[Oil Prices 2015: Why Economists Fear 'Nightmare' Deflation](#)

International Business Times-Jan 7, 2015

For most consumers, it doesn't make intuitive sense that economists should fret sliding prices, but deflation can lead to a stagnating economy. The simple explanation: In a deflationary environment, consumers resist making large purchases of just about everything in anticipation that prices will continue dropping and lead to better deals are ahead. The result is a broad slowdown of economic activity. Further, deflation makes it more difficult to pay off debt, something American consumers and many U.S. employers have a great deal of.

[Moscow To Build \\$230B Bullet Train to Beijing](#)

Engineering News Record (subscription)-Jan 6, 2015

China has bagged a Russian contract to build a high-speed railway that would connect Moscow to Beijing in just 48 hours. This is part of a more grandiose plan to connect China with the United States and Canada by creating a tunnel in the Pacific.

"If the funds are raised smoothly ... the line can be completed in five years at the quickest," Wang Mengshu, a tunnel and railway expert at the Chinese Academy of Engineering, told the Beijing Times recently. Citing official sources, the paper put the estimated cost at \$230 billion.

The size of Russia's economy before the drop in oil prices wasn't much larger than California's which doesn't have a military budget. Who know what Russia's economy will be like in a few months? NB

[Metro Bike Share Coming to Downtown L.A.](#)

Curbed LA Jan 8, 2015

Metro is moving forward with its regional bike share system, expected to debut in downtown Los Angeles in about a year. Metro released its bike share Request for Proposals (RFP) in December 2014, with bids due January 27. A bike share contract is expected to be awarded by June, with full implementation of a 1,000-bike system in downtown Los Angeles nine months later.



New rental bike racks next to the downtown San Diego Santa Fe Depot. This bike rental service should be up and running by the end of January. Photo by Noel T. Braymer

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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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

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