

STEEL WHEELS

PASSENGER RAIL IN CALIFORNIA AND THE WEST

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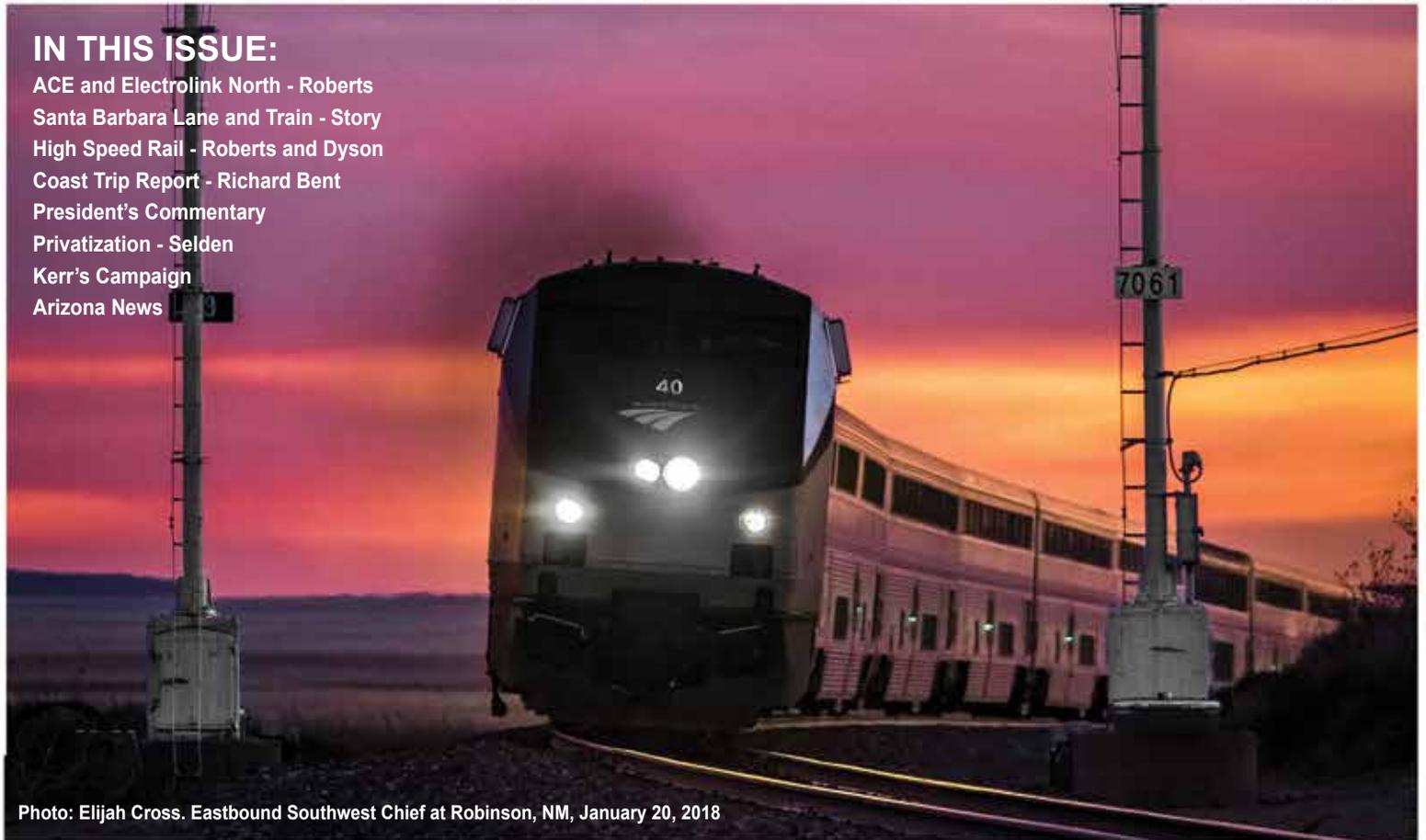


Photo: Elijah Cross. Eastbound Southwest Chief at Robinson, NM, January 20, 2018



Photo by Chris Mohs



Photo by Chris Mohs

PUBLICATION OF THE



RAIL PASSENGER ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA & NEVADA

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A statewide membership organization working for the improvement and expansion of passenger rail service.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

about RailPAC and how you can help expand and improve passenger rail, visit our website RailPAC.org or fill out and return the form on the back page of this newsletter.

RailPAC.org

Our website includes a complete listing of our current positions, as well as frequent articles and reports from around the state. Visit RailPAC.org to learn more about these and other regional passenger rail projects we support.

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RAILPAC'S WORK AT-A-GLANCE

RailPAC is working with Amtrak, Caltrans and all agencies involved in achieving the following goals for expanding and extending safe and reliable rail passenger service. We support adequate funding for these services and vigorously promote them.

High Speed Rail

Build the High Speed Rail system together with electrification for Caltrain and Metrolink.

Coast Corridor

Reduce travel times. Continue to enhance onboard amenities. Restore connections to Long-Distance trains at Los Angeles Union Station. Reestablish the Coast Daylight between Los Angeles and San Francisco. New stations at Gilroy, Watsonville, Soledad and King City.

Pacific Surfliner Corridor

Campaign for run through tracks at Los Angeles Union Station to improve punctuality and travel times for Amtrak and Metrolink. Extend service to the Coachella and Imperial valleys.

Sunset Corridor

Introduce daily service and reestablish service to Florida.

San Joaquin Corridor

Increase service to and from Sacramento, as well as a new station in Elk Grove. Extend daytime and overnight service to Los Angeles.

Capitol Corridor

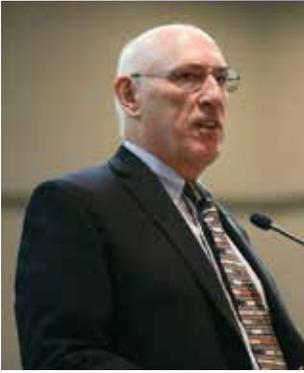
Increase frequency to hourly service between Sacramento and Oakland. Increase frequency of service to San Jose. Extend service to Reno and Redding and Salinas.

Las Vegas

Reestablish service between Los Angeles and Las Vegas.

RailPAC is a 501c3 Organization therefore all donations are tax deductible.





President's Commentary

I deliberately chose Elijah Cross's beautiful picture for the front cover as a provocation. We could be approaching the sunset for the Amtrak national network given the policies of the new management team. In the past month we have witnessed the abrupt removal

of the Pacific Parlor cars from the Coast Starlight, reduced consists on some of the network trains, and most recently the ejection of most private cars and charter trains from the system. Loudest noises from the rumor will concern the reduction in frequencies to thrice weekly service. My reaction: here's an organization that doesn't know its own strengths and opportunities. Alternatively, here's a CEO who is under orders to shut down his own company.

A few years ago now I wrote an editorial, "killing Amtrak by the indirect approach". Basil Liddell Hart, a British army officer, wrote a book called "Strategy" in which he argued that frontal attacks rarely succeed, and better results are obtained by tactics that involve deception and stealth. Either Amtrak CEO Richard Anderson read my article, or perhaps he read the book. Either way we are not seeing as many of the usual calls to shut down Amtrak. Instead Anderson is embarking on a policy of downgrading the product and limiting inventory in order to prompt a death spiral of declining patronage and revenue which will "justify" further cuts.

We are not alone in perceiving these trends. Regarding the short consists on many trains, Bob Johnston of Trains magazine commented: *Amtrak has no way of knowing how much business it is turning away, so if seats aren't available, the company doesn't know how much money it is leaving on the table or driving to other modes. Maybe it's time to come up with revenue-generating strategy that involves more than making a big deal about simply dropping fares.* RailPAC's James Smith has first hand experience. His daughter has been trying to book a seat on the Chief from Kansas to Chicago only to find it "sold out" in coach for many of the days she would like to travel. Sold out in April? Who are they kidding? As James said to me, "this situation is contrived by Amtrak".

The eastbound Southwest Chief near Gonzales NM, February 2017. Short trains like this don't make money. Photo by Kyle Yunker.



It's clear that Amtrak is refusing to add coach cars to the train to save a crew position and to avoid switching cars on and off trains. Here's some news for Mr. Anderson. Passenger trains have an inherent advantage over aircraft. **You can add seats to a passenger schedule without running another train.** That way you can move capacity around the system to take advantage of seasonal business and peaks of traffic such as holidays and special events. Fixed consists are the product of ignorance, laziness, or stupidity. These are trains, not planes.

As for the decision to drop charter trains and most private car movements, Andy Selden writes:

For a complete explanation of HOW Amtrak makes nothing but strategically dumb decisions, and has done so ever since Graham Claytor left the building, ponder this breathtakingly stupid statement from Richard Anderson's memo announcing this decision: "These operations...failed to capture fully allocated profitable margins..." NO business EVER makes decisions about any activity, at the margin, based on "fully allocated" anything. ALL decisions about any activity, at the margin, should be based SOLELY upon consideration of marginal revenues derived from the activity, collateral benefits drawn from the activity, and the MARGINAL costs required to generate the revenues of the activity. The ONLY costs that are considered are those that would not be (or have not been) incurred but for the marginal activity.

Amtrak has no internal system that calculates marginal costs. This is why Amtrak loses two billion dollars a year, can't improve its results, can't grow, suffers a steadily declining market share in every market it serves (and nationally), and can't figure out how to invest its free billion and a half subsidy every year in a manner that generates a positive return on capital. Whoever wrote the memo for Mr. Anderson's signature should be fired immediately, along with everyone who agrees with him.

All I would add to that is the obvious statement, that Amtrak will certainly lose the revenue (and the goodwill of course). Whether the allocated costs associated with the activity also disappear is a moot point.

Cover Story 2:

Front Cover bottom left is a Chris Mohs picture of the Coast Starlight in Ventura. I included the picture to illustrate both the fires and the return of "northern" rolling stock loaned to the Surfliner to help with Montecito landslide traffic (see SW 1Q18). But the main story is the new timetable starting April 2, together with changes to the San Joaquins in May. We'll go into this in detail on our website and in the next issue. Suffice it to say here that the State corridor JPAs

are actively destroying statewide connectivity, as well as the concept of intercity service in general, by scheduling trains to satisfy local commuter traffic. A case in point is the retiming of the first train north from Los Angeles up the coast to depart at 0409 (yes, AM) to provide service between Ventura and Santa Barbara. Thus, an intercity schedule will effectively run empty for nearly two hours and seventy odd miles to carry low fare passengers thirty miles. At the same time, other than weekends, opportunities for a day trip from the Los Angeles area to Santa Barbara are greatly curtailed with the loss of the 0730 departure.

RailPAC, especially director Dennis Story, has campaigned a long time for additional service on the coast route, including a combined train and express bus service for the 20,000 or so folks that commute between Ventura and Santa Barbara counties. But this is not the answer. Consultants' reports and plans have for thirty years highlighted the need for infrastructure improvements including new or reinstated sidings to allow for additional trains. These improvements have not been made so Peter is robbed to pay Paul and intercity service suffers, long haul high fare passengers are lost. And Santa Barbara County uses its rail fund to reimburse LOSSAN for loss of Surfliner revenue. This is not the outcome we were looking for, and hope, against all experience, that this is an interim step.

Similar changes on the San Joaquin service result in loss of connectivity and convenience for longer distance passengers so that trains can serve shorter haul markets. Once again it's a result of failure to build infrastructure and shifting limited numbers of trains rather than growing the business. There'll be more detail on this in the next issue and at www.railpac.org.

Cover Story 3:

Bottom right picture (thanks again to Chris Mohs), highlights the fiasco of rolling stock procurement in California. As I have mentioned in previous issues, in 2006 California voters approved proposition 1B which included funds for rolling stock for intercity corridors. Deliveries to date: ZERO. Now, in a panic, California State Transportation Agency ("Calsta") is purchasing 49 cars from Siemens to fill the gap left by the failed joint procurement of bi-level cars, the third generation of the California car. We're happy that these vehicles will be built in California. But that doesn't make up for the fact that they are the wrong cars for the job. Designed for the new Brightline service in Florida, these cars are built for high-level boarding. California has 160 stations with low level platforms.

I learned railroading with high level platforms in the UK and there are great advantages. We had station dwell times as brief as twenty seconds. Loading and unloading was generally more convenient and efficient. Thanks to our Victorian forebears every station was built with high platforms, so it wasn't an issue. Given the need for additional double track, new rolling stock and upgraded signaling systems, does anyone seriously propose that we convert our 160 stations to high level boarding? Well, it seems that there are people at Calsta that thinks this is a good idea. This nonsense began with the High Speed Rail project (CHSRA) that early on decided they want high level boarding for their new trains. This may or may not be the final decision for their dozen or so stations. They are already allocating funds to "modify" platforms to handle the new Siemens cars.

Failure to establish a sensible standard for platform height has already resulted in Caltrain specifying cars for its new electrified service with two sets of doors, low level for existing stations and high level for joint high speed rail stations. You can't make this stuff up. Now the corridor JPA Boards and staffs are fighting to ensure that the new Siemens cars are allocated to someone else's corridor, not theirs. It looks like they'll end up on the San Joaquin services as there are greater distances between stations, so dwell time is less of an issue. We'll be following this with interest.

Website: We once again have regular updates on our website, stay tuned in for information on local, regional and national issues. And as always please send me your thoughts and comments to pdyson@railpac.org.

Paul Dyson. pdyson@railpac.org

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Transportation Funding in Arizona

by Tony Trifiletti – Executive Director, All Aboard Arizona

Most states have constitutional or statutory restrictions requiring the expenditure of gas tax money on highways. This is a product of the Better Roads Movement which spent the decades after World War I getting these restrictions enacted into law. The three West Coast states have this restriction, but they also have wiggle room in applying other transportation related taxes to things like bike paths and rail. Not Arizona! Article 9/Section 14 of our state constitution requires that *all* revenue generated by transportation related taxes be spent on highways. Amending the state constitution is a high hill to climb. Going with palm extended to the general fund is just as high a hill because the education lobby has first place in that line.

But the chairmen of the state house and senate transportation committees jointly introduced a bill to permit county supervisors to place a transportation plan before the county's voters that would permit spending sales tax money on highways -- or more than just highways. It looks like the bill might make it to the finish line. This would permit counties to enter into alliances for projects such as Phoenix-Tucson rail service, but it would require that the voters of the three counties along the route all approve the plan.

In January we gave a presentation to State Sen. Bob Worsley, Chairman of the Senate Transportation & Technology Committee, on our proposal for Phoenix-Tucson rail service utilizing the existing UP tracks. He was enthusiastic enough to ask us to team with ADOT for a joint presentation to his committee, but ADOT backed out citing Article 9/Section 14 of the state constitution.

That didn't mean that doors were closed. Getting face time with state legislators during the legislative session is difficult but cultivating the staff people is just as important. One senate staffer was highly enthusiastic about our proposal. Rather than a 15-minute chat with her boss -- something I jokingly call a "smash-and-grab" -- she decided to book us into a full meeting after session was done. I asked her to join All Aboard Arizona; we need that kind of enthusiasm. A staffer for another senator was so impressed with our presentation that he found a hole in his boss's schedule right at that moment. Talk about luck! One state representative drives a BNSF locomotive when he isn't serving in the legislature, and his staff person cut me short to make an appointment to see him as soon as possible.

One of the biggest innovations in railroading today is Brightline in Florida. A group of businessmen teamed with Florida East

Coast Industries and Fortress Capital to operate passenger rail service from Miami to West Palm Beach and eventually on to Orlando. Service from Fort Lauderdale to West Palm Beach started in January, and the line is carrying three times its projected ridership. Miami comes on line in April. What has driven this effort is real estate development, something that has been a part of American railroading since the Civil War. Brightline purchased large tracts of land around their station sites in Miami, Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach and Orlando. These tracts are being turned into high density, high value office, living, retail and dining spaces. The idea is to make the Brightline station a premium destination even for people who won't be taking the train.

Real estate development is a major driver of economic development in the Sun Corridor, so I contacted the president of Brightline to get information that would permit us to fine-tune future presentations. It turns out that Fortress Capital is thinking of cloning the Brightline concept in other corridors. "Boy, do I have a corridor for you!" I said. The president of Brightline reports to the chairman of the board of Fortress Capital, so I loaded him up with information about our corridor, much of it gleaned from that \$6 million high speed rail study produced by ADOT and funded by an FRA grant. I hope to hear from the investment bank soon.

Did you know I used to be a disk jockey nearly half a century ago? Working at a 50-kilowatt rocker in Seattle (KING), I experienced a meteoric rise followed by an equally meteoric fall. I hadn't been in front of a radio microphone since September 1974. Thus, it was something of a surprise that I found myself interviewed live at the studios of KFAX in Phoenix, one of the two conservative talk stations in town.

Jennifer Davis-Paige and I were guests on the Jerone Davis Show. Yes, that's "Jerone." He does a weekly business-oriented show on Thursdays at 3 PM. Jenn and I appeared on the show, and it was an amazing hour of spreading the gospel of rail. It was fun, we got our points across, and Jerone wants us to come back to do a call-in show. I was delighted to find that my old radio instincts were still functioning even after all these years.

Next quarter we're looking at bringing contractors and real estate developers into the loop, along with local officials along the rail line.

Contact Tony at tonytrif@msn.com



WANTED: Photographers for Steel Wheels
If you have a collection of hi-res jpeg photos, especially of passenger trains in California, or enjoy taking them, contact the Editor,
pdyson@railpac.org

Don't forget to check your subscription expiration date on the mailing label and renew your membership if it is due.

Thank you for your continued support for RailPAC and passenger rail.

The Perils Of Privatization

By Andrew C. Selden

Privatization of parts of our intercity rail passenger service is the subject of growing interest and inquiry in the United States, just as it has been for 20 years or more in Europe and Japan.

Here's a spoiler: the prospects of privatization in the United States are generally favorable, and they include risks as well as (potential) rewards. But the perils lie mostly with the incumbent monopoly provider. Let's see why that is.

First, what do we mean by "privatization"? We all know that rail service was a highly fragmented private business venture from the first railroads in the 1830s until the passenger side of the business was nationalized in 1970 and assumed by Amtrak in 1971. Yes, it had some public support (eminent domain powers, some financial support under the Pacific Railroad Act of 1862, partial immunization from competition, mail contracts, and occasional state and municipal subsidy), but it was still a private business venture of the railroads (and the Pullman Company) until 1971. Since then, Amtrak (with a few quirky exceptions) has been the quasi-federal sole provider of the service.

But today, a discussion is emerging of ways that private, for-profit, business enterprises might re-enter the sector. And that's what this article is about: rail passenger service as a private-sector business venture.

Two ways exist for business to enter the sector: acquiring a franchise for an existing Amtrak long distance route under existing federal law, and plain start-up private entry by an investor negotiating an arrangement with a host railroad. Several firms are known to be exploring bids for an Amtrak route under the existing law (hypothetically, Carnival might take on the Silver Meteor, or an English company like Virgin Trains or Stagecoach might bid for the Southwest Chief). A new entrant might be a company, or joint venture, that starts up a new route (e.g., Minneapolis-Kansas City-Dallas) ignored by Amtrak, much as Brightline launched its regional service in Florida. See sidebar on Brightline. The entity might operate the trains itself, it might contract with Amtrak, or it might engage the host railroad itself to operate the trains.

Private entry has strengths and weaknesses. The strengths primarily are the opportunity to earn a decent return on an investment by creating a new market for a popular product, or to leverage another business venture such as on-line real estate development. These certainly underlie the Brightline venture. Similar opportunities exist all around the country, on both a regional and interregional scale.

Other strengths include the potential reward for innovation in product definition and service quality; increased service quantity; the positive aura of growth, both in scale and market share; partnership with labor organizations in support of job growth in the rail industry; and partnerships with suppliers (including bankers).

Private entry would require, for the first time since 1971, transparent and honest accounting for the results of rail

passenger operations. This would in turn encourage more private sector interest in the business. Brightline's financial statements will be GAAP-compliant, audited, and publicly available.

Private sector entry also entails risks and weaknesses. First, isolated routes of any length will lack the astonishing, exponential, leverage of an integrated network. Only when private providers grow to a scale that allows the synergism of connections within a larger network will the full rewards of the investment become available.

Private providers will have to raise their own capital. Just like every other input to a venture, capital has a cost: placement fees and costs, interest on debt, and dividends on equity. (Amtrak gets a billion and a half dollars of capital from taxpayers every year at no cost, affording an advantage that it squanders by "investing" most of that capital into activities with a negative rate of return on investment, in the Northeast.) Private investors will also have to negotiate access to host railroad infrastructure at negotiated market rates, rather than the legacy sub-market rates that Amtrak pays. Insurance will have to be purchased at market rates. All of these costs will have to be recovered from enterprise revenues, not taxpayers.

Private entrants will face the conflict of interest of the Federal Railroad Administration, which simultaneously regulates the industry, and owns the controlling interest in Amtrak, the entrenched monopoly competitor.

And, of course, business ventures can—and do—fail, for a variety of reasons, including undercapitalization, incompetence, technological change, public sector interference, or changed consumer preferences. Rail passenger service enterprises are not immune from market forces. Some private rail ventures in Europe have succumbed to market failures, while others have flourished. Private investors in Europe have bet tens billions of dollars in private capital on these enterprises. The private companies providing rail passenger services in Japan have largely succeeded, investing many tens of billions in new capital to expand their businesses.

What are the implications of private entry in the U.S.? First, it will demonstrate what Amtrak denies: that a robust consumer demand exists for this service in many markets, including places long ignored by Amtrak. Second, it will make evident that the greatest opportunities lie in exactly those markets where the greatest incremental output of passenger miles and revenue exists *per dollar invested*. Amtrak historically has turned that principle on its head. Markets with huge capital requirements but modest revenue streams, very high annual infrastructure costs, and modest output potential—measured as the airlines do in revenue passenger miles—will not be the first to draw competitive entry. Other markets where modest capital investment can generate more substantial output and revenue per dollar invested will be the most attractive to investors.

As an example, Brightline will succeed (or fail) on the same basis that Southwest Airlines did: by capturing very high density use of its discrete market segments. Southwest chose not to rely upon the model of network efficiency built upon hubs. Brightline's market is not common in the U.S., but neither is it unique, and it will be a long time before private operators can build a large-scale network using hubs. We can speculate that the big implication of privatization is a back-to-the-future world where new private operators comprise a combined national network like the railroads themselves might have ended up with by about 1980, had there been no Amtrak and no ICC: a rationalized and interconnected network of main line services operated by the carriers themselves, but free of suffocating government economic regulation and free of uneconomic commuter and branchline trains.

A private franchisee of an Amtrak long distance route will have to generate organic growth within that route to succeed, but United Rail Passenger Alliance demonstrated 30 years ago how easily that could be done within the Southwest Chief's broader corridor, where modest incremental enhancements projected 600% growth in average daily ridership. (See: Jan. 1986 Trains magazine).

Another implication would be really bad news for Amtrak. Successful private operators will undermine Amtrak's social foundation as more people, including rail supporters, question what the country really gets for its billion-and-a-half dollar a year annual subsidy to Amtrak.

One internal contradiction will also become immediately apparent: if Amtrak really loses money on national system routes as they claim, why would it fight strenuously against franchising such routes out to others? Is it possible that these routes really have a different financial result than Amtrak says they do?

If privatization succeeds, it also won't be long before someone gets the idea that private competitive entry into selected higher density regional corridors in competition with Amtrak is a commercial opportunity. How attractive might it be to consumers to have a choice in the NEC between Amtrak's offering, and a bright red train operated by Virgin? Or in Southern California, a choice between Amtrak California's service, and a new cream-and-navy Euro-standard service operated by DB, under license from CalTrans?

Private entry is desirable for the simple reason that it inherently promises innovation, growth, and lower costs, i.e., more and better train service, at no or substantially-reduced public cost. In this, rail markets are no different from any other market for consumer service, from food to health to clothing to communications to experiences, and even travel outside the insular rail universe. We don't tolerate monopolies in those markets because monopolies stifle innovation and growth, and increase costs. Imagine an internet controlled by the old telephone monopoly. The mind boggles. But we have yet to see the world of possibilities implicated by privatization of rail passenger services.

The new Brightline service in Florida is an example of a new business model private entry. Brightline is interesting not because it is new but because it is different in some key areas.

- Its affiliate's Real Estate ownership and income is available to cross-subsidize rail operations income, although Brightline asserts strongly that cross-subsidy will not be needed.
- Passengers from rail operations make TOD (Transit Oriented Development) residential and commercial properties nearby stations desirable and profitable.
- All Aboard Florida outright owns the part of the FEC infrastructure that was upgraded solely for passenger operations, and a new third party dispatching company jointly owned by FEC and All Aboard Florida dispatches both passenger and freight trains, eliminating any dispatching favoritism.
- All Aboard Florida started with a blank canvas, choosing only what it determined to be the best elements of passenger rail to encompass in its trains. "But, it's always been done this way" was not a consideration in designing the service.
- Reservations and ticketing are heavily dependent on millennial generation-friendly technology, appealing to an entire new generation of passengers who have no prior experience or opinions about passenger train travel.
- The service was designed by a combination of people from some of the most profitable and prominent hospitality and entertainment companies plus visionaries from the passenger rail industry. This combination allowed proven non-railroad hospitality concepts to be wed to sound passenger rail concepts producing a new product that is pleasing to both passengers and employees while meeting all current safety and ADA requirements.
- Brightline uses real-world accounting systems that comply with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. It is transparent and accurate, unlike the APT system that mires Amtrak in its distortions.
- Early results suggest that Brightline is working as intended, with ridership running three times higher than projected.

RailPAC response to California High Speed Rail Authority 2018 Business Plan.

Steve Roberts, Vice President, Policy and Research.

March 2018

The Rail Passenger Association of California since 1978 has supported a modern passenger railroad system for the State of California and the West. We campaigned actively for the passage of 1A, the High Speed Rail bond measure. While frustrated and dissatisfied with progress to date we still support the project overall. However, at this point we are concerned that there is no deliverable alternative that will meet the mobility needs of a growing population and economy.

The California High Speed Rail Authority has a new Chief Executive Officer and has just published the 2018 Business Plan. This document is available on the CHSRA website: http://hsr.ca.gov/docs/about/business_plans/Draft_2018_Business_Plan.pdf

Our comments are as follows:

1. The new Business Plan is a more realistic assessment of the current situation. The negative trends, most specifically the lack of any follow-on Federal funding, were apparent in 2016 but the Authority adjusted by shifting to a Northern California focus. The question is, can the Authority deliver its latest plan.
2. Compared to the 2016 Business Plan the physical gap in the 2018 Business Plan (Chowchilla to Gilroy) is highlighted. In 2016 the gaps were Wasco to Bakersfield and San Jose to San Francisco. The problem was a San Jose to Wasco route would not generate a positive cash flow (after expenses) meaning the Early Train Operator would have had to finance the shortfall in ticket revenues. The 2016 Business Plan had a vague discussion of closing the gaps. As information, a Bakersfield to San Francisco route is forecast to be cash flow positive (after expenses) from year 1 of operation. So it is vital that the Gilroy gap be closed.
3. The CHSRA urgently needs to develop a credible funding plan for financing full service between San Francisco, Merced and Bakersfield. There is a Legislative HSR update scheduled for Spring of 2019. RailPAC challenges the Authority to develop a detailed plan for closing the Chowchilla – Gilroy gap by that hearing. With additional information such as the EIS documents for the other route segments, with some approved, with construction further advanced and with substantial pre-engineering analysis on the Chowchilla – Gilroy route RailPAC feels making this “stretch” goal is not unreasonable.
4. This goal is also important because closing the new Chowchilla – Gilroy gap offers significant leverage by unleashing a large cash flow and is very attractive politically.

5. RailPAC also supports the prioritization of investments that generate near-term benefits;

- Extending the HSR line to Bakersfield means the San Joaquins will not face any BNSF slot issues on the south end of the route if they are shifted to HSR. There is construction taking place between Madera and Stockton on the BNSF to increase track capacity which will allow an increase in San Joaquin frequencies on that segment of the route. Marry that capacity with an HSR routing means a large potential increase in frequencies along the entire route. That said, RailPAC supports full San Francisco – Bakersfield HSR service, not this fallback position.
- Transforming Los Angeles Union Station into a run-through facility;
- The extension of Caltrain electrification to Gilroy will generate significant ridership growth. The plan seems to be suggesting a blended system but does not mention that specifically or what would happen to the four intermediate stops Tamien to Gilroy. RailPAC is very interested in the reviewing the details of this important service expansion.

6. The HSR 2018 Business Plan clearly indicates that the LAUS run-through tracks (LINKUS) is the Southern California priority. HSR funding for the project is already committed in the Southern California Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). However, RailPAC feels LA METRO and other political entities in Southern California seem to work to promote projects they champion, rather than LINKUS. LINKUS seems to be viewed as an outside project with no one championing it. While RailPAC will closely monitor MOU priorities on the LA Urban Mobility Corridor to make sure the funds don't get spent on other projects, RailPAC requests the Authority and its Board's assistance to keep the focus on LINKUS.

In summary, RailPAC feels the project's key long-term benefits, the reasoning behind the High Speed Rail, remain the same:

- A. California is the sixth largest economy in the world. Economic growth and job growth have been steady and with all of California's inherent strengths this growth is forecast to continue;
- B. California is the second largest intercity travel market in the U.S. and easily in the top ten travel markets in the world;
- C. The only other transportation projects underway in California are the completion of a third lane on CA 99 and some HOT lanes on the connecting urban

Interstates. There is no alternative to high-speed rail being planned. As we have seen, the planning and implementation of any major transportation project is a 30 to 40-year process;

- D. Any alternative transportation project would undoubtedly face the same cost pressures from inflation, delays due to litigation, changes in scope due to mitigation, etc. In short HSR is still the least expensive option because any other option would have seen its cost rise in concert with those of the HSR project;
- E. The “No Build” option is a false choice since it would bring gridlock, worsen the quality of life and stifle economic growth;

One final challenge, if the Texas Central Railway can be privately financed, then one would think an 80-mile gap, with an approved EIS, an in place ROW, partial state funding and the fact that closing the gap leverages large market and revenue growth, could be financed.

Questions regarding RailPAC policy should be directed to info@railpac.org.

Pomar Junction Vineyard & Winery

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Rail Passengers Association (RPA) Mayors Outreach Project

by Doug Kerr

President Trump’s FY19 budget proposal and infrastructure plan submitted to Congress once again zeroed out funding for Amtrak’s long distance (LD) trains. To fight these proposals we put together a project to alert the mayors of all cities/towns served only by Amtrak LD trains that these trains are in jeopardy. We asked them to contact their representatives in Congress to fight the proposals. The battle can only be won in Congress and we will need Republican support since Republicans control both House and Senate. Many of the affected cities are in Republican districts and states, so support from these cities is critical.



Westbound California Zephyr near Dotsero CO. Doug’s campaign has been reaching out to cities like Grand Junction, CO along the Zephyr’s route. Photo by Chris Mohs.

We found most small cities are focused on basic services and long-term economic viability. Threats to their Amtrak service were not be on their radar screens. Many cities contacted were most appreciative of the information and responded with letters to and conversations with their elected representatives. So far the response has been good, varying from “Thanks for the warning, we will take appropriate action” to a major effort in Grand Junction, Colorado. Salinas, California is an excellent example of what one email can cause to happen. The City of Salinas took action on their own and also forwarded our email to the Transportation Agency of Monterey County. TAMC generated their own letters that addressed not only LD trains, but TIGER grants, CRISI funding, State of Good Repair grants, etc. If we got this response from every email sent we’d have a modern passenger rail system in this country.

We still have some work left to do on this project. Anyone willing to help please contact Doug Kerr at dougker@comcast.net.



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Putting the Train in *Train & Lane*

By Dennis Story, RailPAC Director, Central Coast

Today there is good news - a Peak Hour morning train for commuters coming to Santa Barbara/Goleta from the south, beginning on April 2nd. This is the second attempt to reschedule the Surfliner from its current arrival time of 10:15am in Santa Barbara to a more commuter friendly arrival time, which is planned for 6:47am. Peak Hour train riders who contact SBCAG's Traffic Solutions will be offered free 10 Ride Ticket Books for the month of April, and MTD will have free bus rides available at both the Santa Barbara and Goleta train stations for those who have train tickets - to provide the "last mile" connections. You'll be hearing more about the new rail option for commuters in the coming weeks. This is an option which started as one of the many solutions to "congestion on the 101" that began as part of the 101 In Motion Plan in the early 2000's, and its conclusions are found in the 101 In Motion Final Report, prepared by the consultant - Parsons Brinkerhoff in 2006.

As a Stakeholder in that process, I put commuter rail forward as a solution to congestion. At that time, the usually empty train track running next to the 101 (gridlocked at peak hours) seemed like a no-brainer for commuter use, and the Train and Lane final package of solutions from 101 In Motion pretty much rolled into the failed Measure D 2006 ¾ cent transportation tax measure. Funding in the 2006 Measure put train & lane on an equal footing, just as it had been modeled in 101 In Motion. It would have provided three (3) trains to the north and three (3) trains to the south between Santa Barbara/Goleta and Ventura County. Funding in Measure D 2006 was \$140M for 101 widening, and \$126M for commuter rail.

Two years later a new ½ cent transportation tax was proposed with Measure A 2008, and when the budget was initially rolled out at the SBCAG (Santa Barbara County Association of Governments) Sub-Regional meeting, commuter rail had been cut by 88%, to \$15M while Highway 101 still had full funding at \$140M. Thanks to Salud Carbajal, who chaired the meeting, my advocacy for more commuter rail funding resulted in an increase to \$25M, now 80% less funding than in Measure D 2006. However, Measure A 2008 was still marketed as A Train and a Lane, just as it was in 2006, but this time

Train & Lane could in no way be considered equal; as they were envisioned in 101 In Motion, and funded in Measure D 2006.

Modeling for commuter rail in the 101 In Motion Plan was on an equal footing with 101 widening (in its ability to move people), and rail polled equally with county voters vs. widening. So with a Train and a Lane campaign, Measure A 2008 passed overwhelmingly, but now commuter rail was working from a serious deficit. That's what led to the efforts to reschedule the Surfliner, most importantly because the Surfliner is considered an "intercity train," and as such is not subject to the exponentially higher track fees that a commuter train is required to pay Union Pacific RR (owner of our the rail corridor). It is a positive development to finally have a morning train for commuters, and a first step to the three trains a day needed to accomplish the congestion relief envisioned in the 101 In Motion Plan, and found in Appendix D of the 101 In Motion Final Report. You can find the full report at www.sbcag.org under Planning, the document is titled: 101 In Motion Final Report.

As we get closer to April 2nd, Kent Epperson, Director of SBCAG's Traffic Solutions, reports there is a high demand for the free 10 ride ticket book for the new peak hour train, and has the first week of the service sold out. This led me to ask about the possibility of adding more cars to the train set. During the closure of the 101 after the mudslide on 1/9, the Surfliner trains were often standing room only, so I know they do allow people to stand, and this led to additional passenger cars being added. Kent tells me that with approval from LOSSAN, the rail corridor agency, additional cars could be made available.

Dennis Story
Director - RailPAC (Rail Passenger
Association of California) www.railpac.org
Chair - Santa Barbara Rail Task Force



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Stay tuned for more details!

There's so much to see Car Free in Santa Barbara!



SantaBarbaraCarFree.org



@SBCarFree

Santa Barbara Car Free is a cooperative project founded and led by Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District for cleaner air and a healthier planet. See OurAir.org.

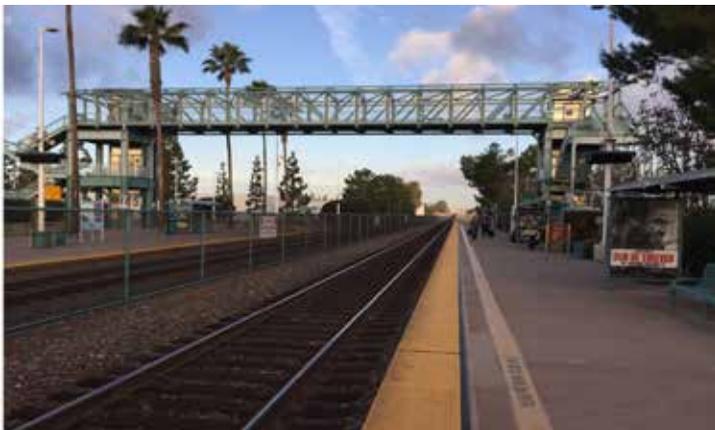
Train Ride Report

Irvine to Sacramento via Surfliner and the Coast Starlight.

By Richard Bent – RailPAC member since 1998 and California representative on the RPA Council.

(Ed. Richard also served as Chair of the former Amtrak Customer Advisory Council)

My wife and I traveled to Sacramento to visit family providing a good opportunity to compare the Amtrak Coast Starlight and San Joaquin to Northern California and return. The origin of our trip was from Irvine, CA on the Surfliner. At the Irvine station there is good covered free parking and its not too long of a walk to the platform but northbound track 1 is reached via a bridge with a noisy, slow, rickety elevator badly in need of maintenance. An announcement was made 10 minutes before our train arrived over the PA. We boarded train 763 in business class and headed to our seats. This was a Thursday morning and the train was fairly full with commuters and leisure travelers. As we began our search for seats, I noticed that in the main business car, most of the passengers were taking up two seats with laptops, luggage and whatever. The business car(s) included a Surfliner car and ? of a Superliner car, which were "full". As we entered the Superliner car, the Amtrak Lead Service Attendant (LSA) asked me if we were traveling together. I told him we were and he promptly offered us two seats that were reserved for the crew where he was sitting when we entered. This is the first time in many years of riding that I had a crewmember offer to give up his seat. The LSA's name is George Miller and my thanks to him to for helping us get a great start to our trip. The usual coffee and pre-wrapped pastries were the business class fare and the rest of the trip to LA was uneventful and we arrived on time.



Irvine Station northbound view from track 1.
Irvine serves Amtrak and Metrolink



Amtrak Surfliner
Train 763 on
time arrival and
departure with
pedestrian bridge

The Surfliner uses original Alstom bi-level car and 1/2 of a Superliner car for Business Class.



We had two large rolling suitcases and a backpack and camera bag in tow. On a trip I took last June on the Southwest Chief, I was making my way from the Chief to the southbound Surfliner in Fullerton, I was told by an ill tempered attendant that I had to haul my large and heavy bags up the narrow stairs. I told her I wasn't going to do that and she made me go to another car. This was completely unnecessary and I did file a complaint. This time, I was invited to keep my bags downstairs. One step forward.

Upon arriving in LA, we retrieved our luggage and headed to the Metro Lounge as I had purchased the Starlight business class. I didn't opt for the sleeper, as I prefer the view out from both sides of the train but it's an option. The extra money was well worth it as we were able to check our bags in the lounge and receive our seat assignments on the ocean side of the train. We could have ridden the Amtrak tram to the boarding area but we opted to walk around the station a bit before boarding.



Metropolitan Lounge Los Angeles. You can check in and either store or check your bags, grab a drink and get a shuttle to the train.



*Waiting area in the Metropolitan Lounge.
It is on the south side of the station on the second floor*

After taking in the station sites and checking on the construction progress of the former Fred Harvey restaurant (they are just getting started) we boarded in business class on the Coast Starlight train 14. I immediately noticed the worn appearance of the car interior, particularly the overhead area where the reading lights are located. Amtrak should refurbish these cars unless they want to keep the vintage 1970's look.



Train 14 Business Class is not much different in appearance from the rest of the consist.

Our departure was delayed by about 5 minutes but we started out slowly and after a few starts and stops, we were finally on our way. The train consist was 12 cars, with two of them being Capitol Corridor cars, I was told they were being used to handle the increased traffic needs because of the fires and mudslides near Ventura and Santa Barbara.



Fire damage south of Santa Barbara. The burn and mudslide area stretched from Ventura to Santa Barbara. These views can only be seen from the train

The announcements were mostly unintelligible and we commiserated again that Amtrak should give their folks a little training on how to speak into a microphone. What we didn't hear is that we could order lunch and dinner and that we could eat in the Parlor Car or at our seats. They call that service, "Meals Your Way". I assume that the same goes for the sleepers as well. We were given a coupon for \$6.00 off of a meal that could be used for lunch or dinner.

More on the Parlor Car. My checking of the Amtrak website the day before we traveled and a conversation I had with the ticket agent the day before travel, I was told that the Parlor cars were being pulled off for maintenance but then was told that they would be on our train, January 25-26 and February 1-4 but that they would be returned to service around March 19th. I found out from some rail fans on board and one CSA that the Parlor cars were to be removed permanently and that the cars were on for these weekends for rail fans to get a last ride. I was surprised to hear this but then wondered why Amtrak would say they were coming back in March when that was not the case. More on this when I talk about the wine tasting.

From the train, you get a great view of the damage done by the fires. One notices that the fire burned around and near oil pipelines so the damage could have been worse.

We had lunch in the dining car just after leaving Santa Barbara, now about 40 minutes late. I tried the Angus burger and found it seemed a bit smaller and dryer than the last time I had one, my wife had one of the salads and was pleased with it.



The Angus Burger, one of the more popular menu items. The menus on all long distance trains are the same



Beautiful Coastline view north of Ventura on a very clear day

Having come from the Aerospace business and having done work at Vandenberg AFB, I always enjoy riding through the base and checking out the launch pads, as they can't be seen from the highway.



Sightseer Lounge Near Vandenberg AFB. The ocean side view is most popular

Since learning that the Parlor car was to become a historical footnote, I had to go to the wine tasting for a last time experience. It was here that I learned from an Amtrak Trails and Rails (Adirondacks) guide from New York who had traveled from New York by rail to ride the Parlor car one last time that the rumors were real. The enjoyment of the wine tasting event was tempered by a wake-like feeling and the conversations wandered from sadness of the car coming off to wondering what Amtrak is going to do next to the long distance trains.



San Luis Obispo station. This is a full service station



Train 14 headed north near Cuesta Pass headed towards Salinas



One of the last Coast Starlight Parlor Car Wine Tasting events

The wine tasting was delightful, however it was operated in what I would call a "disciplined" manner. We business class folk were explicitly told in a command like tone that once wine tasting was finished we were to vacate the Parlor car and return to our assigned seats. The person running the event was named Michael and it was surmised by some of the passengers that his lack of cheerfulness might have been due to his losing this part of his job. He did have a good knowledge of the wine offerings and several people made purchases.

Removing the Pacific Parlor car is regrettable and unfortunate as well as a bad business move by Amtrak. This car made the Coast Starlight special and attracted more customers with disposable income. All long distance trains need a parlor car or sleeper lounge car. On long distance trains, sleeping car passengers' only option to obtain a view out both sides of the train is either in the diner or the Viewliner car which is often full with coach passengers, many of whom camp out all day and into the night with out purchasing anything. A better option for Amtrak would be to have an attendant move through this car taking drink orders and thereby encouraging more turnover and a more robust revenue stream. More important is to have a sleeper lounge/parlor car with beverage and snack service on ALL long distance trains. This would provide more revenue. This is not a new idea but Amtrak has resisted this using the excuse that they couldn't cover the expense of another employee to be a server and bartender. Once again, Amtrak's philosophy that more passengers mean more losses is still firmly in place.

Before long it was time to head for the dining car again and by this time we were running about 1 hour late. I noted that the ride approaching Salinas had improved from the last time I rode. The dinner fare was good, I had the Salmon and it was moist and very tasty while my wife had the Angus Burger. The crew didn't seem rushed but it did take us a long time to get our bill.

After nightfall and somewhere before Gilroy, we stopped for about an hour and a half. We were told of track maintenance ahead. From what I could learn, it was more like damage repair. Once we got started again, I could see that there was a large crew near the tracks and several trucks so whatever it was must have been serious. By the time we reached San Jose/Diridon station, we were about 2 hours late. There were a large number of people trying to board the train thinking it was a Caltrain to Mountain View, so its clear that signage is a problem here. (Ed. Note my comments on signs at Diridon in SW 1Q18). I wonder when the train stations will catch up to the rest of the world and supply digital lighted signs that provide the train and track number, destination and how long until arrival? We finally rolled into Sacramento about 2:20 am, 2 hours 20 minutes late. It was definitely a cold night and I am glad that Amtrak handled the baggage and provided a tram ride since it's a long walk to the station.



Trackside Sacramento station roughly a 10 minute walk from the trains



Under track passageway to trains at Sacramento station



Baggage Claim Sacramento with vending machines, the only food and drink options at this station

We recovered our baggage fairly quickly and then it was time to go out in the darkness to the Vagabond hotel which is the closest hotel to the station, right across the street. I have lots to say about the Vagabond but won't go into detail here. While convenient, it could use some refurbishment too. Total trip time Irvine to Sacramento station to station was 18 hours 21 minutes

ElectroLink North – Stockton to San Jose

*By Steve Roberts
RailPAC Vice President Policy and Research*

Linking the bedroom communities of the Northern San Joaquin Valley with the job rich Tri-Valley and Silicon Valley, the transportation corridor between Stockton and San Jose is one of the most important and has some of the highest traffic volumes in California. Travel has more than doubled in this corridor over the past two decades. Highway congestion has grown substantially but constrained right-of-way and environmental impacts limit cost effective highway expansion options.

Currently the Altamont Commuter Express provides commuter rail service between cities in the corridor but the rail right-of-way is carrying a fraction of its potential passenger rail capacity. Since transportation is the largest source of Greenhouse Gas emissions (GHG) improving the efficiency of the region's system by shifting travel from highway to rail is critical to meeting climate change goals. However, a recent initiative to increase frequency, Stockton-San Jose (*ACEforward*), has been deferred as a result of two key factors. These are:

- Overlap with an initiative by the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers (CCJPA) authority to reroute both its trains and Union Pacific trains in the Fremont/Centerville area and between Elmhurst, Newark and Santa Clara. This initiative means that the *ACEforward* rail line capacity proposal cannot move forward along this line segment until the plan is updated to reflect an approved Capitol Corridor plan;
- Recent funding opportunities combined with the willingness of Union Pacific RR to accept additional passenger rail service on the former Western Pacific RR between Stockton and Sacramento, has shifted priority to the San Joaquin Valley portion of *ACEforward* where there is an opportunity to substantially improve rail passenger service on an accelerated timeline.

The postponement of additional frequencies does not mean that ACE cannot undertake actions to serve the growing travel market between the San Joaquin Valley, Tri-Valley and the Silicon Valley. While service is extended to Modesto, actions to increase train capacity, reduce travel time, increase service reliability and accommodate unforeseen increases in demand can be undertaken on the route to San Jose to accommodate increases in travel demand. Building on current SJRRC staff recommendations for the Stockton – San Jose portion of *ACEforward*, the Near-Term Service improves would be split into three phases. The three phases are:

Near-Term Phase I – Access, Travel Time and Train Capacity Expansion

Phase I projects, many currently underway by SJRRC staff, are designed to maximize the utilization of the current four train

ElectroLink North – Stockton to San Jose (continued)

schedule in order to accommodate underlying traffic growth. Phase I would consist of projects designed to increase train capacity, improve access to the service and reduce travel time.

The projects are:

Access

- Parking; expand parking capacity at Fremont, Pleasanton, Vasco Road, Tracy Lathrop and Stockton
- Carpool incentives; development of incentives to increase carpooling to ACE stations.
- Additional shuttle services; working with key communities and business to increase the number of transit services and shuttles to ACE Stations.

Running Time Improvements

- Platform extensions; extending station platforms to accommodate 10-car trains thus speeding boarding and detraining.
- Increasing super elevation of curves; increasing the super elevation of track at key locations to allow faster operation around the curves by ACE trains.

Train Capacity

- Equipment purchase; acquisition of sufficient additional cars to operate longer trains including one ten car set.

Service Quality

- Expansion of Tamien mid-day layover facility.
- Acquisition of five new diesel locomotives.
- Mid-Day, Friday Evening Motor Coach Service; San Joaquin RTD or charter supplemental bus service between the San Joaquin Valley and Silicon Valley to supplement rail service and enable customers with personal business needs to work a half day and still utilize ACE service in one direction.

Weekend Service

- Introduce and expand weekend service.

All of these projects are distinct, stand alone, have independent utility and can be funded incrementally.

Near-Term Improvements Phase II - Contingency Planning

While the current ACE economic, ridership and capacity forecast has a high degree of confidence, external changes could occur that might substantially impact expected ridership. On the downside the risk is straight forward and mostly financial, however if greater than forecast ridership growth occurs, there will be a severe impact on customer service and satisfaction. Some of these upside external changes are; greater than expected economic growth impacting both job as well as San Joaquin Valley housing growth, a dramatic increase traffic congestion and resulting deterioration of auto travel time, extension of ACE service into new markets (Modesto/Merced/Sacramento), a greater shift to station area development especially in San Jose and/or a dramatic increase in gasoline prices. Some degree of contingency planning should be undertaken to reduce the lead time if the upside changes start to occur.



These contingency plans could entail:

- Adding an option to the new equipment order for up to 5 additional cars (allowing operation of one 12-car train set, two 10-car sets and one 7-car set);
- Planning, design and approval to extend station platforms to serve 12-car trains;
- Explore the conversion of three of the current F40's, when slated for retirement, to battery locomotives to assist primary locomotive thus improving acceleration of the large trainsets reducing running time, recapturing dynamic braking energy, reducing fuel consumption and providing hotel power to the train during maximum power situations.

Near-Term Improvements Phase III – 5th and 6th Frequency San Joaquin Valley to Stockton

To accommodate the growing travel market and enable long-term growth, additional frequencies will be required. The most critical factor is the completion of CCJPA's proposal to reroute its trains and make rail operations through Centerville more efficient. It should be a high regional priority. The reroute of Capitol Corridor trains frees up significant capacity through Centerville (Niles Jct. to Newark Jct.). Between Newark, Jct. and Santa Clara ACE service would utilize the

Coast Subdivision, improved and upgraded by the CCJPA as part of its long-term service improvement vision. The projects associated with the Capitol Corridor reroute change the assumptions around the current Centerville ACE *forward* capacity analysis that was undertaken for the proposed 5th and 6th ACE frequencies. Overall capacity changes associated with the reroute of Capitol Corridor trains may result in sufficient network capacity to enable the 5th and 6th ACE frequencies to be operated with revised set of track improvements.

These improvements are:

Siding Extensions Oakland Subdivision

- Extend Altamont Siding south (railroad east) .9 of a mile to MP 55.76'
- Extend Hearst Siding north (railroad east) 1.08 miles to MP 38.53
- Extend Fremont Siding north (railroad west) 1.3 miles with a second bridge over Alameda Creek.

Mitigation

- Install a 4,000 foot sound barrier along the east side of the Fremont siding extension adjacent to housing to help mitigate noise from Warm Springs Line BART trains.

Train Capacity

- In conjunction with system fleet planning, order additional cars for expanded capacity and replacement of life expired cars for San Jose and Sacramento routes.

Long-Term Improvements

The long-term investment strategy is designed to further serve the northern San Joaquin Valley to Silicon Valley route in a series of incremental investments and service improvements to further shift travel from the highway mode to the rail mode. Planned investments are designed to maintain current freight capacity while focusing only on those capacity increases needed to operate additional ACE frequencies with a high degree of reliability. The long-term investment strategy is also split into phases.

Long-Term Improvements Phase I – 7th and 8th Frequency San Joaquin Valley to Stockton

Service Quality

- Expansion of Tamien mid-day layover facility.
- Extend Fremont siding east through Niles Junction approximately 2 miles to MP 32.0.

New mainline track through Niles Jct.

- Realignment of Niles Subdivision tracks, construction of new connection to Oakland Subdivision and construction of new main track through Niles Jct.

Sunol Double-Track Bypass

- Reroute of the current line to new line south and east of Sunol along CA 84 and Pleasanton-Sunol Road. Construction of a new, approximately 2.2 to 2.5 mile double track, between MP 35.48 and MP 37.68 (west end of Hearst siding).
- Double-track elevated structure/bridge over Arroyo de la Laguna, Paloma Way and CA 84. Double-track elevated structure/bridge over Pleasanton- Sunol Road and Arroyo de la Laguna.

Access

- Station improvements/expanded parking at Fremont, Pleasanton, Livermore, Vasco Road.
- Construct West Tracy Station or expand parking at Tracy station.
- Explore pay parking at oversubscribed or expansion limited parking lots. Funds would be used for expanding non-SOV access to ACE stations.
- Expanded carpool incentives and additional shuttle services by continue to work with key communities and business to increase the number of transit services and shuttles to ACE Stations.

Mitigation

- Addition of Beaux Arts elements to elevated structure over Paloma Way and Arroyo de la Laguna at that location.

Train Capacity

- In conjunction with system fleet planning, order additional cars for expanded capacity and replacement of life expired cars for San Jose and Sacramento routes.

Long-Term Improvements Phase II – 9th and 10th Frequency San Joaquin Valley to Stockton

In order to expand the value of ACE commuter rail and its contribution to reducing GHG and reducing gridlock, ACE will need to further increase the number of frequencies to attract riders traveling at times outside the current schedule. Expanding the number of frequencies to ten round-trips targets those markets. Listed below are improvements to facilitate the operation of ten round-trips to San Jose.

Niles Canyon Tunnel

- Construct an approximately 3-mile single track tunnel from about MP 32 to about MP 35 just south of current line bypassing the center of Niles Canyon. Construct single track bridge over Alameda Creek.

Siding -

- Stockton; extend station track approximately 1 mile to El Pinal – Sacramento Division and ACE Stockton maintenance facility.

Train Capacity

- In conjunction with system fleet planning, order additional cars for expanded capacity and replacement of life expired cars for San Jose and Sacramento routes.

Long-Term Improvements Phase III – 11th and 12th Frequency San Joaquin Valley to Stockton

To continue to grow ACE commuter rail and expand into other time markets, additional frequencies are required. To following improvements will facilitate the operation of up to twelve round-trip frequencies to San Jose.

Siding

- Extend Tracy siding .25 miles.

Stations

- Shift Fresno Subdivision tracks east at Stockton station, build second station track and platform.
- The Oakland and Fresno Subdivisions between Palm (MP 94.1 Fresno Sub) and Stockton MP 84 represent a flexible rail network with substantial potential capacity. It should be developed and utilized to maximize capacity/throughput.

Lathrop Track Additions and Realignment

- To enhance the Lathrop/Stockton rail network, realign all connections between the Fresno Sub and Oakland Sub to increase speed, double track Hicks (MP 93.9) to Pacific (MP 93.5), realign and double track Fresno Sub through Pacific to North Lathrop for increased speeds and capacity. This alignment, not the connection to the Tracy Sub, becomes the main track. While always maintaining operational flexibility, generally, the Fresno Sub becomes the preferred passenger line while the Oakland Sub becomes the preferred freight line.

Grade Separations

- McKinley Road grade separation
- Chrisman Road grade separation

San Joaquin Valley to San Jose - ElectroLink North the Vision

The ACE commuter rail route between the San Joaquin Valley and Silicon Valley is a key link in **ElectroLink – North**, a high-capacity, higher speed electrified rail network. It offers a direct auto competitive one-seat ride from bedroom communities to Silicon Valley. The blended, flexible, upgraded conventional rail network has the potential to deliver a much improve service at less cost than other alternatives. In addition, improvements can be made incrementally and service/frequency improvements begun individual improvements come on line.

The ElectroLink – North network would serve key travel markets offering frequent daily riders relief from congested highways. It would also serve short-distance intercity and leisure travelers especially for those who are price sensitive or cannot or prefer not to drive. Electro Link – North, in addition to serving the large employment areas in the Tri-Valley and San Jose, would provide connectivity over the Dumbarton Bridge serving northern Santa Clara County, San Mateo County and SFO. ElectroLink – North would serve the transportation needs of Northern California cities without a high-speed rail station. Finally, at all stations the quality of service would incent private sector investments in Transit Oriented Development around the rail station.

Significant stretches of double track, electrification with its high acceleration profile, curve realignments, major tunnels through Altamont Pass and other constrained alignments, an increase in rail/highway grade separations would result in average speeds (including stops) of about 60 mph or higher.

Reduced Running Time

- Electrification to reduce running time through faster acceleration and improved performance.
- Double track Patterson Pass long-tunnel.
- Niles Canyon mitigation tunnel; improved alignment enables improved speeds.

Operational Capacity and Flexibility

- Second platforms or center platforms at key stations (to be determined).
- Additional extensions of double-track (locations based on operational analysis).
- Flyovers at key junctions; Newark Jct. and Stockton (BNSF crossing).

Connectivity and Market Expansion

- Shinn BART station to enhance connectivity between ACE, BART and Dumbarton Bridge rail shuttle.
- Network expansion on a new route; operation of additional ACE frequencies over the rebuilt Dumbarton Bridge (exact operational plan would be based on origin/destination market analysis and capacity analysis).
- Connection to BART in the Tri-Valley (location to be determined)

Mitigation

- Niles Canyon; approximately one mile tunnel between about MP 33 and MP 34 bypassing the dogleg at Brightside and further reducing the impact of the current rail line in Niles Canyon.
- Electrification; eliminates engine noise and local exhaust pollution and GHG Emissions.

Grade Separations

- Construction of additional highway rail line grade separations (to be determined).

Equipment

- In conjunction with fleet planning, purchase electrified rail fleet to expand capacity and replace life-expired equipment.

Sources:

Altamont Corridor Rail Project; Preliminary Alternatives Analysis, CHSRA, February 2011
ACEforward; San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA), May 2017
ACEforward Staff Recommendations, SJJPA, November 2017
ACE Service Core Capacity Analysis, AECOM, February 2018



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- Weekly eNewsletter and periodic alerts via email
- Eligibility to attend our annual Steel Wheels conference and regional meetings

MAIL TO: RAILPAC c/o Marcus Jung

P.O. Box 22344, San Francisco, CA 94122

MEMBER INFORMATION

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

DUES LEVEL

Regular (\$35-79)

Student/Senior/Fixed Income (\$25-34)

Sponsor (\$80-199)

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Organization (\$500 and above)