

STEEL WHEELS

PASSENGER RAIL IN CALIFORNIA AND THE WEST

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RAILPAC • ALL ABOARD ARIZONA • PASSENGER RAIL KANSAS • NEW MEXICO RPC • MINNARP • PASSENGER RAIL OKLAHOMA



Amtrak 11 the Coast Starlight descends the Cuesta Grade and crosses the Stenner Creek Trestle, March 23, 2021. Photo by Chris Mohs.

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RAIL PASSENGER ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA & NEVADA

From the Editor's Desk

By Paul Dyson - RailPAC President

Stimulus Fever

The smell of money is in the air, even if these days one rarely handles a bill or a coin. It's coming from the federal government, seeking to catch up on years of delayed repairs and renewals of everything from sewer pipes on up. I support this in principle, with these understandings. There will not be as much money as we would like. There will be some tough elbowing and shoving among stakeholders vying for funds for their pet project. Unfortunately, there will be some money spent unproductively, at least in our view, by those with the strongest elbows.

RailPAC has always prided itself on demanding value for money in the provision of improved passenger rail. I note on p23 the passing of Senator Jim Mills whose pioneering delivery of the initial San Diego Trolley was based on low-cost options rather than gold plating. We will continue that fine tradition by speaking up for sensible, good value projects with a high rate of return, both financial and social. This includes rebuilding diesel locomotives to transition us to low or zero emission alternatives, combining recycling with the avoidance of huge carbon production from new steel, copper and plastics.

Most of all we reserve the right to criticize expenditures which are based on pre-pandemic forecasts of business that may not materialize in the future. Hoping that the 2019 plan will work in 2022 is not a good policy. RailPAC continues to believe in a role for passenger rail, but big regional agencies such as Metrolink, Metra in Chicago and the MBTA in Boston will have to undergo major changes if they are to continue to be relevant.

Meanwhile the oft derided long-distance network is hauling Amtrak out of the Covid-19 hole with sold out trains, especially the sleepers. Who would have thought that? RAILPAC DID. We tried to prevent the cut to thrice weekly, but at least that is now ending. Now we need to step up our campaign that I first called for a decade ago: Build 1,000 Railcars! And keep building them.

Propulsion

I received a bit of flack for my obvious bias towards battery rather than hydrogen propulsion in the last issue. No apologies from me yet, only that I will be delving into this again in the next issue. I will say both technologies are in early stage development as far as rail application is concerned, and I could be proven wrong at any time. Right now, with hydrogen multiple units, up to a third of the seats are taken with fuel storage etc. Of course, all we need is some NIMBYs to start calling them "bomb trains" and the whole effort may grind to a halt.

pdyson@railpac.org



President's Commentary

By Steve Roberts –
RailPAC President

Happy New Year for the second time. With more and more of the population vaccinated, it seems like we are turning

the page to a new chapter. The economy also appears to be rebounding helped by lower infection levels, stimulus payments and more leisure/hospitality businesses partially reopening. Thanks to additional funding and a mandate from Congress, the long-distance trains are returning to daily service. Since this funding is also paying the cost of state funded trains, those routes survived and now additional frequencies are being added to the short-distance formerly state-supported corridors. And I want to give a thank you to all of you who stepped up and advocated for this key funding in the covid relief bill.

As a further indication of expected trends, commuter and state-supported rail services are reimagining their schedules to better match future travel patterns. In what I am taking as an indication of rising summer bookings, Amtrak will start selling 100% of coach inventory in late May. In another indication that leisure travel will lead the ridership rebound, the leisure focused Ultra-Low Cost Carriers (Allegiant, Frontier and Spirit Airlines) are all adding additional flights, new routes and hiring new employees for this summer. The legacy airlines are shifting their networks to focus on leisure destinations recalling furloughed employees and reporting in their quarterly earnings calls more normal booking patterns especially to leisure destinations. This bodes well for the leisure travel focused long-distance trains. Now if we can only stay ahead of the virus variants.

The next few months will be filled with legislative action so get ready to contact your Senator and Representative. Before we start, a review of definitions - authorization legislation sets the framework/policies of the program and its overall maximum budget levels usually for five-years. Appropriation is the yearly disbursement of funds for the agency to spend according to its authorization. The amount appropriated may be less than authorized.

These legislative initiatives are:

First up is Amtrak's FY 2022 Budget request. Amtrak has requested \$3.878 Billion in FY 2022 significantly more than its pre-pandemic "break-even" FY2020 budget. But of course that does include the series of pandemic related relief payments in 2020 to keep the rail line in operation and maintain the foundation of the system to support the recovery. Amtrak's request reflects the following contingencies:

1. Despite the positive signs in leisure travel, demand and revenue will still lag equivalent pre-pandemic leisure travel volumes.
2. Non-leisure travel, while expected to recover to some extent, will be slower to respond and still unknown is the impact of the work at home shift. This traffic represents significant Northeast Corridor and state corridor ridership which negatively impacts Amtrak's overall revenues.
3. Amtrak will be funding all of the expenses of the state-supported routes and NEC commuter right-of-way use payments. This is designed to preserve these services until state budgets recover.
4. Maintain a robust capital investment program by avoiding the use of capital funds for operations.
5. Repay short-term bridge debt Amtrak incurred as cash ran low awaiting various relief payments (i.e. payday loans).
6. Maintain wages and benefits to retain trained and skilled workforce currently on furlough or working minimum hours.

In addition Amtrak has identified \$1.55 billion in additional transformational capital funding for growth.

Next is the American Jobs Plan, the infrastructure bill, is designed to address the substantial state-of-good repair short-fall as well as gaps in the US infrastructure network that have developed over the past several decades. Major funding for rail and transit is included in the plan both to address state-of-good repair issues as well as funding for investments that would increase capacity and allow additional frequencies and new routes.

Third is the reauthorization of the surface transportation act, the FAST Act (be aware it may have a new name this session). This is the overarching legislation covering highway, rail and transit funding in the US. Also contained in it will be Amtrak's reauthorization. Some rail policy changes the Rail Passengers Association has proposed for the replacement to the FAST Act are:

A Passenger Rail Trust Fund.

- Right of Preference enabling Amtrak to sue the railroads directly in US District Court over on-time performance issues.
- Consideration of the Economic Benefits to communities when evaluating both the performance of existing routes as well as new routes. This would be an adjunct to the cost and revenue evaluation criteria currently used.
- Regional Rail Commissions to coordinate between regions and states for the planning and operation of new rail services – e.g. the Southern Rail Commission (Gulf Coast Service).
- Amtrak Board Reform with members that represent the interests of the American Public - Northeast, the National Network states, labor, Amtrak passengers, etc.
- Specific guidance and policies for fair passenger rail access to freight owned infrastructure at a reasonable cost.

The surface transportation authorization also contains the framework and policy around the various grant programs where the funds in these programs are appropriated to and administered by the Department of Transportation.

So the Department of Transportation's appropriation is also critical to watch. In the first release of the Administration's 2022 budget for the discretionary programs (those appropriated every year) the following levels are requested: :

- \$625 million for a passenger rail competitive grant program. This is a new program.
- \$375 million for the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI) grants. This is the same as in FY21.
- \$1 Billion for the TIGER/BUILD/now REASON grants. This is equal to FY21 levels.
- \$2.7 for Amtrak a 35% increase from FY21. Please note: Amtrak submits its own yearly appropriation request to Congress; funds appropriated are disbursed through the DOT's budget. (Amtrak's budget request outlined on page 2).
- \$2.5 Billion for the Capital Investment Grant (CIG) program for commuter rail and transit. An increase of 23% from FY21 levels.

All of these initiatives through the FAST ACT are planned by the Administration to be in addition to the rail and transit funding outlined in the American Jobs Plan. Congress could view both together and adjust the amounts with the goal of fiscal prudence.

Amtrak's recent positioning appears to indicate that they have incorporated the strong messages from Congress and the new Administration that public service, not cash flow, is the measure of success. In addition, Amtrak also seems to be incorporating the wider "community economic benefit" metric for evaluating the value of intercity rail passenger service. While expanding passenger service to all the mega-regions (Amtrak Connects-US) is the core of their forward leaning vision, that map now includes the long-distance service. Amtrak also acknowledges that perhaps the first frequency added to an emerging corridor is a long-distance train. This new posture is also reflected in the filing before the Surface Transportation Board over reasonable cost access to the CSX. This case will be a key determinant on whether Amtrak Corridors initiative or new long-distance routes are affordable.

Back to daily service, Southwest Chief in Colorado



from dome of "Puget Sound". Photo by Larry Gross

Amtrak at 50...then, and now what?

Commentary by Russ Jackson



Amtrak actually has survived to be 50 years old. When it started, way back in 1971, there were skeptics who predicted it would be gone in five years. But, the American public liked what it saw and returned to the rails. Were you among them? I was, although I was not the rail advocate I became in later

years. When was your first trip on a passenger train? Was it on Amtrak? In my case it was on the NewYorkNewHaven &Hartford back in the late 1940s when we would travel back to our home state of Connecticut to visit family, and my grandmother took us on trips to New York on the Bankers Express from Meriden to see the "big city." It was the early 1960s when I rode again, taking the SP's Sunset Limited from Los Angeles twice; the first time was a great trip riding in the Observation car listening to actress Lurene Tuttle talk show business with her friends who were enroute to New Orleans, and the next morning having a big breakfast in the diner before arriving in Tucson. The next year the disappointment set in when there was no observation car, no actors or actresses in sight, the coaches had uncomfortable seats, and the food was from an automat car. My train travel almost ended then; until 1967 when my bride convinced me we should take the Santa Fe's El Capitan to Chicago when we traveled to see her family. The two night ride in coach was "comfortable," and it was a high quality experience.

When 1971 came along Amtrak was born in a tempest. You know the story of how it came about and what happened in those early years, as it has been retold many times. We decided to "try it," and returned to the Hi-Level train that became today's Southwest Chief. It was a good experience, and we have continued to ride Amtrak frequently. One memorable 1970s trip was returning to Los Angeles from a Bay Area meeting on the low-level Coast Starlight and going to the Lounge car to watch the W.C. Fields movie, "The Bank Dick." I became a rail advocate in 1980, joining the CRC group that has been RailPAC since 1984 and been active ever since. We celebrate what we have experienced, but that does not mean we are free of offering criticism. I tell friends I've been "trying to get Amtrak to grow into what it should be" and continue plugging along to do so. Recently my RailPAC colleague, Noel Braymer, who joined up about the same time, said, "We have made lots of progress, but we're still only half way to success." Agree?

After 50 years, in 2021 Amtrak will be celebrating, we will be remembering, and we must ask where are we compared to 1971? Well, the long distance route structure is less than then, Amtrak owns the Northeast Corridor (which it didn't in 1971), and several states have joined in to sponsor regional corridors. The Amtrak on board service has evolved into a professional staff dedicated to customer service, although it took years of hiring, firing, and training, to get there. Yes, Amtrak is three-headed now: the highly productive national interregional long distance trains, the money-gulping NEC, and the overcharged

state-supported corridors. Many times they don't care much for each other. In my experience the highlight years came when the company became three separate business units: Amtrak West, the NEC, and the "rest" of the country.

Amtrak West

was highly successful under its President Gil Mallery and assistant Brian Rosenwald, who put the hugely successful Pacific Parlour Car on the Coast Starlight. Gene Skoropowski was developing the Capitol Corridor. All of the amenities that were tried back then, including trying 24 hour dining on the Sunset Limited in its early days of Coast to Coast running, have vanished into the huge hole called the Northeast Corridor, which gobbles up every spare dime and uses strange accounting to charge the long distance routes for some NEC expenses while burying its unmet needs for deferred maintenance.

By now you know that the long distance trains will return to daily service...except for the Sunset Limited and Cardinal which continue to be tri-weakly because "they have been so historically." From Trains magazine's Bob Johnston we learned on March 11 that "Amtrak wasted no time in complying with the marching orders from Congress in the just-passed economic stimulus legislation, immediately announcing the restored service would begin May 24, May 31, or June 7, depending on the route." That is a positive move by Amtrak, but I commend them for the quick action, which deprived critics of the need to prod them into action. It's possible Amtrak was going to do it anyway, responding to the constant barrage of criticism people like us have thundered since last summer. The pandemic actions taken by Amtrak were unproductive, so it is with great relief they are returning to be the service provider they were, and hopefully will get the idea that continuing a pro-growth philosophy is what is needed for them to survive. Bob Johnston also reported Amtrak told him that "forward load factor bookings are ahead for this summer." Watching the VirtualRailFan cameras it's easy to see that ridership is there! Amtrak said it is "going back into diversified media channels such as radio and television that we had de-emphasized in recent years," according to Johnston. Like the old sayings, "you have to spend money to make money," and "you have to keep letting potential customers know you are there, when you are there, and what you offer."



The Jackson family board the El Capitan at Los Angeles, 1970

How bad has it been? Well, let's look at California's Capitol Corridor for instance, one of the very successful state-supported corridors. Managing Director, Robert Padgette, reported that in February, 2021, it "continues to experience relatively low ridership due to the ongoing pandemic." During February they "experienced a slight increase compared to January, and we are optimistic about the future of our service. The additional Federal support puts us on a solid financial footing to be able to slowly rebuild. We plan to reopen cafe service in the coming months." And that brings us to the other element of Amtrak travel that has deteriorated in recent years: the on board dining car service. Perhaps going to box meals was justifiable from a narrow financial perspective, but certainly not for a traveler's positive experience. According to Bob Johnston, "Amtrak plans to restore 'traditional' dining car meals with the return of daily frequencies," which he was told by Roger Harris, Amtrak's chief marketing and revenue officer. If that takes place, and it is full restoration not just a partial one, that is a plus...but, all it does is bring them back to where they were. Where do we go from there?

If Amtrak thinks restoring service just to the levels they offered before 2020 will make rail advocates like us happy, they have another think coming. Can they continue to sell the false idea that the NEC is "profitable?" The Congress doesn't think so, neither do we, and we will continue to call the Northeast Corridor names such as "Never Enough Cash," or "Never Ending Crisis." Instead of working to grow its super productive national system of long distance trains they are only touting the ideas of new corridor services, which of course must be financially supported by the states in which they will run, but must also be approved by the freight railroad on which they will run. An example is the Gulf trains that would go from Mobile

to New Orleans twice daily. As Andrew Selden said, "This is a service that Amtrak has the legal authority and money to start up on its own, if it thought it made any commercial sense to do in the first place. The railroads would not be putting up much of a fuss over infrastructure enhancements if what we were discussing were a New Orleans-Port of Mobile stack train on a guaranteed schedule." The same fuss is brewing in Montana where the state wants Amtrak to restore service to its southern tier cities. Wait until the infrastructure costs are announced. Speaking of the NEC, did you notice that 2/3 of the stimulus money in the current bill goes there? To restore what? Ridership there is horrible. The national trains get 1/3, but how much will actually end up there except for restored daily service and rehiring employees, as great as that is. As Selden said, all this money is for the year that ends October 1. What then?

To wind up this jaunt down memory lane, I quote from a recent article by Bruce Richardson on Corridorrail.com: " 'Settle for More' desperately needs to be the watchwords for supporters of passenger rail in the U.S. These three words should be a clarion call for people who want to ride passenger trains to stop settling for the half-a-century of myriad excuses as to all the things Amtrak can't do instead of doing the right things to expand passenger rail. Amtrak can do better; it must do better. Accepting anything less merely guarantees an ongoing political organization which lives as a beneficiary of the generosity of others versus a robust, self-sustaining company charting its own course for the benefit of American travelers." Isn't that what we have been saying for most of the past 50 years? It's time for growth at Amtrak, not just begging. I'll keep advocating, if all of you will. As Richardson concluded, "For all of those supporting passenger rail, settle for more, not less. Demand more."



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Public Transportation in a Post-Pandemic World, Part 2

By Steve Roberts, President RailPAC

As was noted by Doug Kerr (RailPAC VP North) in last Quarter's Steel Wheels, the Covid-19 pandemic has created a major upheaval in public transportation with ridership declines of over 80%. Conversely work at home has exploded accelerating trends already underway. The percentage of employees working from home using video conferencing increased from 17% pre-pandemic to 44% post-pandemic. Last quarter Doug shared with readers his view of the future influenced by his extensive work-at-home experience. In this issue I will give readers my view based on my work in passenger rail market research and ridership analysis.

The question of the day: "What will travel look like post-pandemic?" We are seeing some hints as to the future. While ridership is slowly recovering, travel and ridership patterns will be different. Some other facts we know. As Doug noted about half the country's workforce interacts directly with people so teleworking is not an option. Also the wholesale transition from the workplace to the home office has essentially maxed out. How much of this shift will be permanent? Will a "hybrid" work pattern, splitting the work week between home and office, become the new normal?

Beyond the shift to teleworking from home other factors disproportionately impacted public transportation ridership. Free flowing traffic and concerns about the virus spreading more easily on public transit (since disproven) and a dramatic drop in daily trips to schools, tourism, hospitality and business travel all negatively impacted public transportation ridership. In addition, transit and rail agencies reduced their schedules, creating another inducement for employees to drive to work.

We may be seeing signs of a return to normal. Clearly remote education has seen significant challenges, especially for less advantaged students. Combined with the importance of in-person learning as well as the needs of students everywhere to socialize with their peers, communities are reopening schools with commensurate increase in commute trips and traffic. With more individuals being vaccinated, tourism and hospitality travel is returning – sporting events, concerts, museum trips, and holiday celebrations – all were a major missing piece of the non-work travel volume during the pandemic. Pre-pandemic, this travel added to the daily flow of commuters and increasing congestion.

Impacting the "new normal" is the realization that there are drawbacks to the "Zoom" work-at-home model. It's not all that it was hyped pre-pandemic. There are possible security issues and some employers are adjusting wages downward based on employees local cost-of-living (Glassdoor.com). And Zoom fatigue is real! One of the issues Tech industry leaders and academicians have noticed is the loss of valuable informal group collaboration, networking, and a fast feedback loop (East Bay Times of December 13, 2020, "Does Remote work hurt Valley's tech innovation?"). Tech managers feel that one cannot discount the value of personal relationships and casual conversations for mentoring new employees, career development and team building. The random gatherings of different teams create vital links that foster valuable innovation and collaboration. Not to be overlooked is the value of professional relationships that develop from the side banter of in-office personal interactions. Also there is the subtle psychological advantage that showing up in person telegraphs; the message that you are willing to go the extra mile for the customer, co-workers or management. Finally, the jockeying for power and recognition happens at the court (the office), whispering in the ear of those who control company resources and parcel out the plum assignments.

So while some employees relish working from home, many others miss the energy of the office environment. Based on a survey by the planning firm Gensler only 19% of employees like working at home exclusively, while 33% preferred full-time at the office and 48% wanted a mix of office and home. Some employees even relish commuting time. A December 31, 2020 Washington Post headline –Months of pandemic teleworking have left some missing their commutes noted employees report that commuting makes for a clear break, mental down time and a boundary between work and home.

With leisure, daily school trips, and some daily commuters returning, (adding to the trips by essential workers) traffic volumes are increasing. Based on traffic counts by the Bay Area Metropolitan Transportation Commission and by the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board in Washington, D.C., these cities' traffic volume is rebounding to 75-80% of pre-pandemic levels. Current traffic is heavy but still flowing. According to Deborah Dagang, Chief Planning and

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



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Programming Officer Santa Clara Valley Transit Authority, growing traffic will induce an increase in transit ridership. This is because the tipping-point at which free flowing traffic volume becomes congested is quite narrow (a 10-15% difference between free-flowing and congested). And traffic congestion drives a shift to rail travel. Amtrak and commuter rail (Caltrain and Metrolink) market research finds that avoiding traffic congestion is the major factor for commuters when choosing to use public transportation over driving. Surveys by ACE and Capitol Corridor found 85% of riders will return post-pandemic although perhaps not as daily riders.



Queue for the Surfliner in 2015. How soon before passengers return to rail? Photo by Paul Dyson

Where does that leave commuter, intercity rail and transit? As more of the population becomes vaccinated some current work-at-home employees will return to the office. The consensus is that the percentage still working from home will be much higher than the 17% working from home pre-pandemic. Google and Facebook plan to use a “hybrid” system, some days working at home, other days reporting to the office. This will add to traffic volumes and congestion. While rail travel is increasing, more will be needed to regain 2019 ridership levels. The focus on essential workers with non-traditional shifts and the change to the hybrid office system may be a foundation for this growth.

Recognizing this changed world, commuter rail systems like Caltrain, Metra and MBTA, are reimagining their networks transitioning from commuter to Regional Rail. Schedules are being revamped focusing less on rush hour peaks, to those offering more uniform service throughout the day, into the night, and on weekends so as to accommodate essential workers who have varying work schedules. The new schedules would also accommodate flexible (both time and day) hybrid work patterns. Carriers are now offering more flexible multiple trip tickets as opposed to rigid date range tickets (i.e. weekly or monthlies). These revised schedules would also be a better fit for the special event and other leisure travelers, increasing ridership in that market. Interestingly, schedules that offer travel options throughout the day was one of the frequently

request improvements suggested by participants in past market research projects I managed.

How will the travel of hybrid office/home workers impact ridership? Office utilization will likely lead companies to incentivize a more spread out travel pattern (not just travel for 9 to 5 office days on Tuesday and Wednesday). If so, the hybrid office may in fact be beneficial for rail systems. Railroad operation and finance managers already know that commuter service restricted to traditional rush hours is inherently inefficient, with track capacity stretched by closely space schedules and trainsets and crews often assigned to just a single daily round-trip. Uniform service throughout the day allows for optimized track, equipment and crew utilization. In addition, the once-or-twice per week hybrid riders will likely purchase higher rate 10-ride flex type tickets. This would make the per trip ticket revenue exceed that of a rider using the highly discounted monthly ticket. The result of these changes could improve financial results over the long-term.

Analysis of intercity ridership on key Amtrak routes (i.e. Capitol Corridor, Empire Service, etc.) over the past several decades showed an early trend for some work-from-home employees relocating away from urban centers. The pandemic has dramatically accelerated this migration. But what was also apparent among these early remote work adopters was that they still needed to travel periodically to the central office – essentially the hybrid office. The greater travel distances and increased traffic congestion has the potential to generate additional demand on intercity rail services from hybrid workers. In addition, these workers would also travel into the city for recreational events. The result is growth in a type of ridership that may partially or fully offset the loss of traditional meeting focused business travel.

To summarize, there is expected to be significant change in commuting and business travel patterns post-pandemic and over the next decade. With this in mind, agencies must continually seek to revise and improve intercity, commuter rail and transit service to meet these emerging trends. Even the long-distance routes stand to gain some ridership from the growth in work anywhere office structure, but critical to this gain is a high-level of on-time performance and reliable Wi-Fi.

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See back page for details.

Super Chief Recollection

James Smith – Vice President, Long Distance Services - RailPAC



The Super Chief in 1965 : Roger Puta

When I was in high school, the one place I went to go to get peace of mind was Los Angeles Union Station. During those visits, the one railroad out of the three that always made me feel welcome was the Santa Fe. The Union Pacific employees did not have time, and the Southern Pacific just did not like passengers in the mid to late 1960s. The agents for the Santa Fe always had time to talk and educate me about the railroad.



Graphic from Super Chief Menu

The one agent I will always remember was Mr. Parks. He worked both the Santa Fe ticket office in Hollywood on Vine Street, and Union Station. I would take my high school girlfriend on dates to the station on the bus. Mr. Parks knew when we got married in our late teens. I was working, but still went to the station, either on my day off or at night. On one visit Mr.

Parks ask about my wife. I told him about our first anniversary coming up. He asked me what are we going to do? I told him more than likely go to the movies and go our favorite burger for dinner. Between a baby and an apartment we did not have much money. Mr. Parks made a request of me, to come back to the station the next week and see him and I said OK.

When I came back the following week he gave me a Santa Fe War Bonnet ticket envelope. In it was a one-way ticket to San Bernardino on the combined El Capitan / Super Chief, and a notation in it to have dinner in the Super Chief Diner. I almost died. He told me to give the ticket to the conductor on the

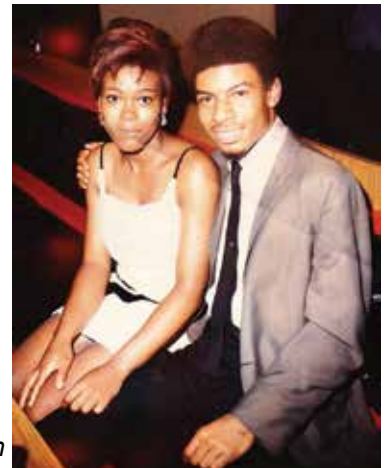


Super Chief Dining Car, Sacramento State Rail Museum

platform, and everything is taken care of. Needless to say, the next week my wife and I are dressed to the nines. We arrived early and were the only ones on the platform, early enough to see them back the train in. The conductor escorted us to the Super Chief Diner where the crew was expecting us. The Steward, Waiters, Cooks, and the Chef all in uniform, it was something to see. Here we are two Black kids with very little money, being treated as if we owned the world. I will never forget how my wife looked, and how they cared for her. We had dinner on our way to San Bernardino, and after dinner my wife was given flowers, and me a cigar. We had to run from the Santa Fe Depot to the RTD bus station in downtown San Bernardino to get the last express bus back to Los Angeles.

I will always remember how the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Co. cared about two kids on their first anniversary.

James and Glenda Smith



CHICO RECOMMENDS . . .

Our Super Chief Champagne Dinner

SUPER CHIEF SPECIAL - \$3.40

GENUINE CALF'S LIVER SAUTE WITH BACON
OR FRENCH FRIED ONION RINGS

Dinner Rolls

Dobosh Torte or Vanilla Ice Cream
Beverage

De Luxe Sandwich Dinners

\$2.85

Consomme (Hot or Cold)

OPEN FACED CHICKEN SALAD ON TOAST

Sliced Tomato, Hard Boiled Egg and Capers

Apple Pie or Fruit Gelatin with Cream

Beverage

\$3.60

French Onion Soup, Cheese Crouton

OPEN FACED GRILLED TENDERLOIN OF

BEEF ON TOAST

Onion and Tomato Slice - Dill Pickle

French Fried Potatoes

Dobosh Torte or Vanilla Ice Cream

Beverage

Salad Dinner

\$2.65

OUR CHEF'S SALAD BOWL

(A Meal in Itself)

A Combination of Crisp Lettuce, Romaine and

Escarole, Wedges of Tomato, Julienne of Ham and

Cheese, Hard Boiled Egg, Choice of Lorenzo,

1000 Island or Garlic Dressing

Plain or Cheese Rolls

Layer Cake or Apple Pie

Beverage

NOTE: When desired your steward will arrange special diet,
or will quote a la carte prices for individual items
listed on this menu.



SANTA FE DINING CAR SERVICE

Dinner Aboard the Super Chief

Table d'Hote Dinner

Holders of "One Price Ticket" Please Present When Ordering

Pascal Celery

Choice of Appetizer

Queen Olives

*CHARCOAL BROILED LAKE TROUT, HOTELIERE 4.50

*OMELETTE WITH PARMESAN CHEESE 3.95

*SPRING CHICKEN SAUTE, PIEMONTAISE 4.80

CHARCOAL BROILED FILET MIGNON (6 oz.)

A LA STANLEY 5.70

CHARCOAL BROILED SIRLOIN STEAK 6.95

Mashed Potatoes

Lyonnais Potatoes

Fresh String Beans with Almonds

Cauliflower Polonaise

Waldorf Salad

Dinner Rolls

Choice of Dessert and Beverage

CHILDREN'S MENU

(SERVED ONLY TO CHILDREN UNDER 12 YRS. OF AGE)

#1 - \$1.50

Children's portion Selected from
Entrees Marked with Asterisk

Potatoes

Vegetable

Roll and Butter

Ice Cream

Hot Chocolate or Milk

#2 - \$1.35

Cup of Soup

Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich

or

Hamburger on Toasted Bun

Potato Chips

Pickle

Melba Sundae

Hot Chocolate or Milk

WAITERS ARE INSTRUCTED NEITHER TO TAKE NOR TO
SERVE ORDERS GIVEN ORALLY.
PLEASE PAY ONLY ON PRESENTATION OF MEAL CHECK
ON WHICH YOU HAVE WRITTEN YOUR ORDER.

A la Carte Suggestions

Appetizers

Fresh Shrimp Cocktail	1.30
(On Table d'Hote Dinner 50c. extra)	
Marinated Herring in Sour Cream	.75
Chilled Tomato or V-8 Juice	.45
Queen Olives	.45
Pascal Celery	.50
French Onion Soup, Cheese Crouton,	
Cup 45; Tureen	.65
Consomme en Tasse, Hot or Jellied, Cup	.45

Salads

Lettuce, Peach and Cottage Cheese,	
Chatelaine Dressing	.85
Lettuce with Roquefort Dressing	.65
Waldorf	.75
Combination	.80

Desserts

Vanilla Ice Cream 45; with Cookies	.55
Chocolate or Wild Blackberry Sundae	.60
Apple Pie	.45
Fruit Gelatin with Cream	.40
Baked Apple with Cream	.55
Cherry Pie	.50
Dobosh Torte	.50
Layer Cake	.35
Roquefort Cheese	.50

Beverages

Coffee, Pot	.40
Tea, Pot	.40
Milk or Buttermilk	.25
Demi Tasse	.40
Sanka Coffee, Pot	.40
Hot Chocolate, Pot	.40

An extra charge of fifty cents will be made for
each meal served outside of Dining Car.
Prices shown on this menu are subject to various state,
occupation expense, school and sales taxes.

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On an Amtrak Sleeper During a Pandemic: Observations from a Springtime Roundtrip on California Zephyr

By Simon Oh



Eastbound California Zephyr train No. 6, pulling into Emeryville

As the COVID-19 pandemic within the United States is slowly but optimistically showing some signs of ease, I joined a growing number of people who believe the time is right to start traveling a little farther away from home and where outdoor activity is, by natural design, a logical fit.

It was the final weekend of March, spring has sprung and I was in the mood to travel to some national parks with abundant fresh air, hiking opportunities and visually iconic sites deserving of some photographic captures. This is where the California Zephyr comes in for my trip to Moab, Utah for Arches and Canyonlands National Parks via Grand Junction, Colorado.

That weekend's roundtrip – Emeryville, Calif. to Grand Junction, Colo. – on the Zephyr marks my sixth and seventh trips on a sleeping car of a long-distance Amtrak route and third for the Zephyr alone (Salt Lake City to Emeryville in April 2019 being the first). If the roundtrip is counted as one, it's my fifth overall across five different routes nationally. Traveling during a pandemic did seem different although it did not feel terribly different when it comes to riding on a long-distance train trip. Walk with me as I present to you some observations of each direction of my Zephyr travels.

California Zephyr, train No. 6 (Emeryville to Grand Junction)

Before going on train No. 6 during the morning hours of March 25, I boarded the first eastbound Capitol Corridor train No. 524 departing San Jose Diridon at 6:42 a.m. to make that connection in Emeryville. Train No. 524 pulled into Emeryville at around its scheduled arrival time of 7:51 a.m., giving me a little more than an hour left to wait for No. 6's departure.

No. 6 finally pulled into Emeryville from the Oakland maintenance yard at 9 a.m. – 10 minutes before scheduled departure time – with sleeping car passengers including myself being instructed by the station agent to head to the northern

part of the Track 1 platform. Once the train stopped and the sleeping car attendant (Reggie being the name of the attendant for this trip) opened the door, Reggie began checking in passengers and directed them to their room assignments. I was assigned room No. 7 on the upper level, which might be the first time I was ever given an upper-level room assignment.

As it had been almost two years since I last went on a sleeper car, the overall look and feel didn't seem too different from my past sleeper trips. Because there is this little thing called a COVID-19 pandemic which began in between those sleeper trips, there were some notable differences – masks being required to be worn when in public spaces of the train, flexible dining arrangements, no cash taken in the café car among others. The onboard Amtrak personnel and passengers were all seemingly compliant with these new guidelines with no major issues I could notice during my eastbound ride.

View from my roomette on No. 6

Because I didn't sleep the night before, I wound up staying in my roomette for much of my time on No. 6. When I wasn't resting, I passed the time by reading magazines and a book I brought with me along with listening to some podcasts on my smartphone. I found it comfortable as usual although not as easy to nap when the seats are still placed in the upright position. The good weather throughout northern California and northern Nevada offered up some great views from the window even though I previously traveled that same stretch and none of this was new to me.



Passing through Emigrant Gap

Dining service, more broadly, was certainly different. I already knew ahead of time the changes Amtrak made by reading up on the website their response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the array of modifications made to its services nationwide. With Amtrak offering a flexible dining option, this gave sleeping car passengers the option to still dine in the dining car or dine in their roomettes instead. I wound up doing a little of both, for which I didn't have a problem doing either. I did take issue with the inadequate amount of communication made between Amtrak personnel and its passengers regarding the windows of time for dining and our preference for where and when we would like to dine. Among the various meal periods on this eastbound trip and my return trip on No. 5 at the end of the weekend, any Amtrak-established policies in this area are inconsistently applied although No. 5 was a little better (more on No. 5 later in this article).

In the dining car, modifications had been made to limit the number of people present in the car at each operating period. Every other table was roped off to ensure physical distancing, each person had a whole table to themselves (unless traveling from the same household, for which they can still be seated together) and only one attendant serving all customers dining at any given time.

I recall the dining car attendant was rushing between tables and frenetically juggling a seemingly inordinate amount of tasks, affecting the quality of the service provided in the dining car. He took the orders from customers, almost slammed each item down on the tables, made us feel almost rushed to complete our meals. I personally don't blame him as he likely wasn't the one who created the modified policies but the optics and customer experience leaves much to be desired. For dinner, I wound up giving in-room dining a try after the same

dining car attendant made the rounds to take orders from passengers wishing to dine in their rooms. That was the only meal service where I received a bit of a respite from the hectic dining car service for lunch and breakfast the next morning.



Enchilada meal for Thursday lunch

Regardless of where on the train I dined, quality of the food seemed to have declined compared to my previous sleeper trips. There was little in the way of anything freshly prepared in favor of seemingly microwaved fare. Everything was covered or packaged unlike in past trips where dishes not covered or packaged were the norm. The food was not awful but not anything spectacular either. I would have preferred to see at least a burger of any kind on the flexible dining menu except it was one menu for lunch and dinner, with the dishes all being hot meals better fit for dinnertime than the middle of the day.

As for other aspects of the sleeper, a few things to point out. Bring your own shampoo as I did not find any and, while I did not ask the attendant, eventually presumed they did not have any. They still have hand towels in each roomette's closet and

bath towels and packaged bars of soap in each shower room. The same was the case going back although I brought with me leftover shampoo and conditioner bottles from my weekend hotel stay in Moab to use on No. 5 as well. Also, if you're not doing this already, tip the dining car attendant after each meal in the dining car as well as your sleeping car attendant at the end of each trip. Bring small bills and even consider tipping a bit extra, given the extra work they may be undertaking during the pandemic. I recommend tipping your sleeping car attendant no less than \$5 each way. That's what I did.



*Somewhere between Provo and Helper, Utah.
Closer to Helper, exact location unknown.*

No. 6 pulled into Grand Junction almost 1.5 hours behind schedule, having experienced a bit of a delay during the overnight hours between Provo and Helper, Utah (I was asleep during that time so I don't know what happened there). At least for me, the delay was not a problem as I was able to walk over to Enterprise Rent-A-Car near the station, where the friendly staff was still waiting for me and correctly guessed how I just came into town from the train (I'm probably far from the only Zephyr passenger ever who goes to that Enterprise). The staff there walked me through everything I needed to know before I drove off with my rental car for a two-night stay in Moab, Utah to visit Arches and Canyonlands.

Briefly about Moab, Utah

Mesa Arch at Canyonlands National Park and Delicate



*Arch at Arches National Park,
both in Moab, Utah*



I found it to be a nightmare driving within Moab due to having only one arterial – U.S. Route 191 – linking up with Interstate 70, few traffic signal lights present along that route and constant traffic congestion even at night. Making left-turns onto that arterial from anywhere along the route can be complex and, at times, scary. Nevertheless, the experience from the core part of that trip – visiting those two national parks – made up for the nightmarish driving conditions in Moab. If time is not an issue for you, the parallel Utah State Route 128 is a less-congested and more scenic route I recommend people take if one can avoid US 191. I wound up taking SR 128 and then I-70 for the drive back to Grand Junction on Sunday.

California Zephyr, train No. 5 (Grand Junction to Emeryville)



Colorado River at McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area, Fruita, Colorado.

For the trip going back west on March 28, there was not much difference from the eastbound trip except for slight improvement in dining car attendant service and upgraded in-room features.

At Grand Junction, I didn't have much of a wait after returning my rental car for the weekend at Enterprise nearby. Shortly before the train arrived, the station agent called up everyone inside the depot with tickets to scan our tickets and issue us seat check slips with our seat or room assignments. No. 5 wound up pulling into the station a few minutes early and left



only a few minutes behind schedule – both of which considered remarkably on-time by my standards.

In my assigned room numbered 3, also in an upper deck like No. 6, I noticed the reading lights and in-room controls look to be of a much newer iteration. The reading lights were fitted with brighter LED bulbs, touch pads replaced the switches and buttons for lights and summoning the sleeping car attendant; and a newer knob and easier-to-read label plate for HVAC controls within the room. This seemed like the only part of the train resembling anything derivative of the 21st century.

Garlic and herb cod for Sunday dinner on No. 5, first of only two meals for me on this train



Over in the dining car for Sunday dinner and Monday breakfast (I skipped Monday lunch as I already grew tired of the mostly microwaved fare), the attendant working the dining car could best be described as a complete opposite of the one who served me on No. 6 a few days prior. The attendant on No. 5 was not running around the car, took his time to take orders, carefully placed each item down on the table one-by-one instead of slamming them down and even made light, friendly conversations with each customer including yours truly. I felt more welcome and appreciated in this dining car.

Also, unlike No. 6, there was a better organized process on No. 5 for summoning sleeping car passengers to the dining car. The dining car attendant made announcements over the PA every half hour of each dining period when passengers can make their way to the car to dine. The waitlist didn't apply much to No. 5 as there was either a short or no wait for the three meal periods on this run. I didn't wind up having to wait much, if at all, for dinner and breakfast.

After Sunday dinner, I decided to check out the lounge car for the first time ever on any Amtrak route. It was a nice break from what had been an exhausting but beautiful weekend trip in Moab. We were traveling between Green River and Helper, Utah during late afternoon hours on that Sunday. I wish I considered doing this before on other routes. Not sure why I hadn't done so in past sleeper trips.

Rest of the ride home (Emeryville to Campbell via Amtrak Thruway Bus, Muni, Caltrain, car)

No. 5 pulled into Emeryville on Monday, March 29 about 40 minutes early, although we still had to wait another 40 minutes for the connecting Thruway Bus to San Francisco. Unlike my trip on No. 5 to Emeryville from Salt Lake City in April 2019, I did not have the option to transfer to a Capitol Corridor train to San Jose Diridon unless I wanted to wait about three hours, which I did not want to do. Capitol Corridor recently restored some of the trips temporarily cut during the pandemic but not the one bound for San Jose Diridon that departs within an hour or two of No. 5 pulling into Emeryville.

Instead of waiting hours for a connecting Capitol Corridor train, I had to go through San Francisco proper on the other side of the bay as a straight shot down to the South Bay while staying

within the East Bay was not reasonably feasible with Amtrak this time around. I took a Thruway Bus to San Francisco Salesforce Plaza on Mission Street between 1st and 2nd Streets (awkward location as it is), walked over to Market Street for a Muni Metro bus bridge (took me a while that afternoon to figure out most Muni Metro rail service is still temporarily substituted with bus service) to Caltrain's 4th & King station, hopped on a southbound Caltrain to the South Bay and got in my car I had parked at one of the stations in San Jose to drive home to Campbell (Full disclosure: I work at the San Mateo County Transit District, which is the managing agency of Caltrain). I got home after all that although I wished that Capitol Corridor train like the one in 2019 was reinstated this time around to spare me from that M.C. Escher painting of a trip home I just described.

All in all, this was an exhaustive trip for a variety of reasons but one where the fundamentals outweigh any negatives. Given the perceived decline in quality of onboard dining alone, I'm not itching to go on another sleeper anytime soon. I still like the sleepers and I hope the next time I eventually get on one anywhere in the country, the overall quality of the Amtrak sleeping car experience will improve, even if only slightly.

Simon Oh is a RailPAC board member and one of the customer experience specialists at the San Mateo County Transit District (SamTrans). As mentioned in the article, SamTrans is the managing agency of Caltrain. Unless otherwise noted, all views and opinions expressed are solely his own and not reflective of his employer.

Does Ventura County Need Metrolink?

Paul Dyson, President Emeritus

I have been kicking around some thoughts on the future of passenger rail on the southern end of the coast line. Here are the premises:

- RailPAC has always believed that passenger rail in southern California should be under the control of a single, regional authority.
- After 26 years of service Metrolink overall is underperforming. Pre-pandemic 22,000 passengers, 40,000+/- trips a day with a population base of 20 million is a failing grade by any standard. The Ventura County line in particular is a poor performer. Some of the reasons are route specific, including the unfortunate series of fatal incidents which permanently deterred some passengers. Others are common to the system, including uncompetitive door to door journey times, uncomfortable seats which are unsuitable for long journeys, and a change in demographics.
- Metrolink continues to waste expensive resources by operating peak hour only services which is 1950s thinking. Split shift crew assignments should be unacceptable in 2021.
- Overlap between the Surfliner service and Metrolink on the VC and OC lines represents waste for the taxpayer and confusion and second-rate service for the passenger.
- Commuter travel patterns have changed permanently. Passenger rail service must also change to be relevant and value for money.
- Given the realities of the railroad map and the population distribution in southern California the distinction between commuter rail and intercity is a purely artificial and bureaucratic construct. At best the Surfliner is a regional service, and by no means "intercity" in the international meaning of the term.

Here's some radical thinking for Ventura County; that the County should leave the SCRRA (Metrolink), and all passenger rail service be provided by a revamped and expanded Surfliner managed by LOSSAN. It's time to simplify and clarify the service offered to the public. Early morning and evening return "commuter" services to Los Angeles would still be offered, but instead of wasting resources and parking those trains in the middle of the day the trains become part of the all-day service pattern of the San Diego – San Luis Obispo route.

AT present East Ventura is used for overnight stabling of Metrolink trains. Instead, the layover could be used by Surfliner to start a westbound *and* an eastbound morning train. Surfliner would operate an all-day service but this would include an early am departure from E Ventura to Los Angeles and San Diego and one from Moorpark. A second train would cover morning demand from Oxnard to Santa Barbara. Given the pre-pandemic numbers the two trains to Los Angeles should capture the majority of the passengers. An agreement should be made between SCRRA, VC and Surfliner/LOSSAN to protect commuter pass fares for former Metrolink commuters.

By operating throughout the day, with evening and weekend service Surfliner offers a far greater number of travel opportunities than the classic Metrolink commuter pattern.

Passengers would enjoy "one stop shopping", with no confusion about who runs the service, which website to consult, whether their ticket is valid, and whether the train stops at their station. ALL trains would stop at ALL stations. There would be no duplication of advertising campaigns and incentives.

I believe that changes along these lines would be more responsive to the needs of passengers in Ventura County. Do you agree? Send me your comments.

pdyson@railpac.org

LOSSAN rail corridor improvement projects in Orange County

By Brian Yanity

A previous issue of *Steel Wheels* (Q3 2020) had a brief report on the Anaheim Canyon improvement project, and new Placentia Metrolink station in Orange County. This article will describe the major LOSSAN corridor projects in Orange County, which will have great benefit to passenger rail in the entire Southern California region.

x While it has the lowest ridership of any train station in Orange County, the beachside San Clemente Pier station is very popular on weekends. Metrolink and Amtrak Surfliner passengers can carry surfboards onboard to this most quintessentially Southern California station.



(photo: © Robert Davis, *Laguna Beach Secrets Photography*, used with permission)

Orange County, with 3.2 million people nestled in between the Pacific Ocean and Los Angeles, San Diego San Bernardino and Riverside counties, is located at a very strategic location on the Southern California rail network. While it has long had a reputation for being the epitome of automobile-centric suburbia, travelling by passenger rail is in fact a daily way of life for thousands of Orange County citizens. On Metrolink's three lines that run through OC (the Orange County Line, Inland Empire-Orange County Line and the 91/Perris Valley Line), combined rail ridership increased from 3.8 million 2008 to nearly 4.6 million in 2015, an increase of 21% over seven years (according to 2018 OCTA Long Range Transportation Plan). Prior to the pandemic, average weekday ridership on the Orange County Line was nearly 8,000, while there were about 4,500 weekday riders on the Inland Empire-Orange County Line and 3,000 on the 91/Perris Valley Line. On the Amtrak Pacific Surfliner, which passes through Orange County between LA and San Diego, ridership in the year 2019 was nearly 3 million, up from 2.6 million in 2010. The county's two busiest rail stations, Fullerton and Irvine, in recent years have each boasted around a million annual riders (Metrolink and Amtrak combined), or several thousand per day. At the beginning of

2020, a total of 74 passenger trains served Orange County each weekday: 13 Surfliner LA-San Diego roundtrips, 23 Metrolink roundtrips, and one roundtrip on the Amtrak Southwest Chief between LA and Chicago (which makes its Orange County stop in Fullerton).

The Southern Pacific was the first railroad to what is now Orange County, arriving in Anaheim in 1875 and Santa Ana in 1877. After the new Orange County split from Los Angeles County in 1889, the formative development of its cities, towns, and industries (mainly citrus and oil) was largely shaped by railroads. The cities of Fullerton and Buena Park were founded in the late 1880s by the Santa Fe Railway as rail-oriented developments, while a few years later the Pacific Electric created Huntington Beach and Newport's Balboa as beachside "streetcar suburbs". A century ago, trains and streetcars could get you to every town in the county except for Laguna Beach. Orange County citizens today are proud of its rail roots. For many years, the Fullerton train station hosted the annual Railroad Days festival, one of the most popular rail events in Southern California.

Figure 6-6 Orange County Rail Transit



Fig. 6.6 from OCTA OC Transit Vision, January 2018

Metrolink began serving the county in 1994 with the start of the Orange County Line, which was a continuation of Amtrak's Orange County Commuter trains which ran for several years before. Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA), one of the member transportation agencies of the Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA or Metrolink), owns 42 miles of the former Santa Fe "Surf Line" tracks between Fullerton and the San Diego County line. This is a portion of the 351-mile Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor (LOSSAN Corridor), served by the Amtrak Pacific Surfliner. OCTA also owns the 5-mile, single-tracked Olive Subdivision, which connects from the BNSF mainline at Atwood Junction to the LOSSAN corridor in Orange.

The LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency, a joint powers authority formed in 1989, is headquartered at OCTA. The LOSSAN corridor is used by both the Metrolink regional rail and the Surfliner, which is the second-busiest Amtrak corridor in the country after the Northeast Corridor between Washington, D.C. and Boston. Frequent passenger trains along the LOSSAN corridor between LA and San Diego are critical to relieving traffic congestion on the parallel Interstate 5. Phase 1 of California High Speed Rail project will extend from LA to Anaheim (with a station in Fullerton), reflecting the high demand for passenger rail travel in Orange County. Similar to the blended approach of the Caltrain corridor, high-speed trains will share the LOSSAN corridor with Amtrak and Metrolink.

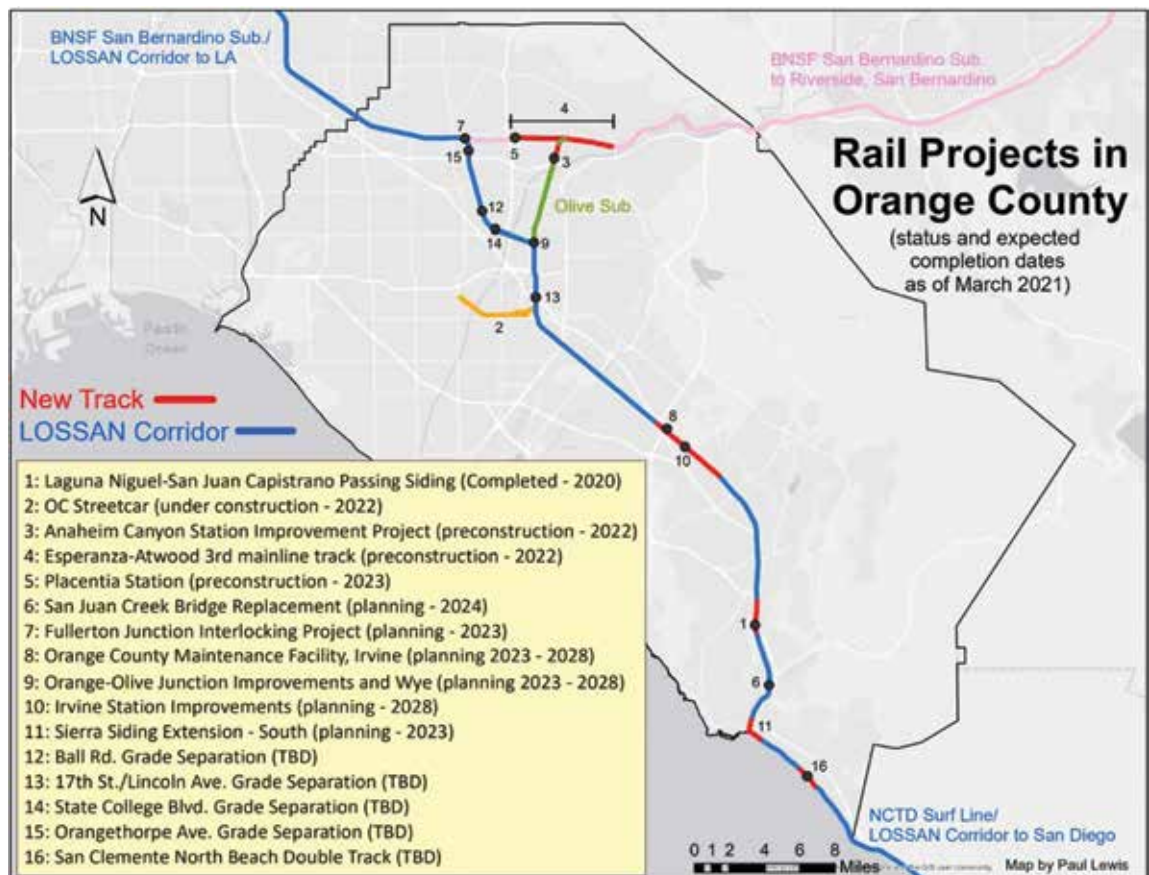
As the managing agency for the LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency and owner of the Fullerton-San Clemente portion of LOSSAN, OCTA has an important role to play in planning, funding, and managing maintenance and capital projects. The agency also partners with cities on capital projects including station access improvements and grade separations. OCTA is also advancing local rail transit with the OC Streetcar, under construction from the Santa Ana Regional Transportation Center (Amtrak/Metrolink station) to Garden Grove. Expected to begin operations on its 4-mile route in 2022, the OC Streetcar will be the first electric rail transit system to run in Orange County since the last Pacific Electric "Red Car" to Santa Ana ran in 1950.

There is pent-up demand in Orange County for more passenger rail service, particularly at off-peak hours and at night. From Orange County, one cannot return on Metrolink later in the evening from Los Angeles. Instead, a passenger must take a more-expensive Amtrak Surfliner

train- the last one each night leaves LA Union Station at 10:22 PM. Before the pandemic there were a couple late-night Amtrak Thruway buses. Monday through Friday the last Orange County Line train leaves LA Union Station at 6:40 PM, while the last 91/Perris Valley train (which stops in the OC cities Buena Park and Fullerton only) leaves LA at 6:50 PM. On a Saturday or Sunday the last Orange County Line train leaves LA at 4:40 PM, and the last 91/PVL at 7:12 PM. The lack of night trains makes visiting Los Angeles for evening events, dining or entertainment much less convenient for Orange County residents. To run more trains around the clock, not only is new Metrolink and Surfliner rolling stock needed, but also significant capital investment for new rail lines and other infrastructure.

LOSSAN Corridor Improvements

The LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency coordinates ongoing and planned capital investments and improvements along the Surfliner corridor by OCTA, LA Metro, the North County Transit District (NCTD) of San Diego County, Caltrans and other public agencies. OCTA and the LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency are working with Metrolink, BNSF and California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) to greatly expand the number of passenger trains on the LOSSAN corridor through Orange County. In 2018, the LOSSAN Agency was awarded \$40 million of SB1 gasoline tax funds for infrastructure improvements of the 'LOSSAN South'/LA-Fullerton-San Bernardino corridors. These SB1-funded projects include signal optimization, new right of way fencing, and a more robust capital maintenance program. However, many more rail capital improvement projects are needed along the LOSSAN corridor. As described by the LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency Business Plan FY 2021-22 to FY 2022-23 (pg. iv):



Though much progress has been made over the years, many segments of the LOSSAN rail corridor are still limited by the lack of passing sidings or second main tracks. There are currently more than \$5 billion in unfunded capital needs that have been identified on various portions of the LOSSAN rail corridor, including additional track capacity, station improvements, and signal and communications improvements.

Over the next decade, overall passenger rail investments planned for Orange County total over two billion dollars (see below table).

Table: Orange County Rail Projects Under Construction and Planned

Project	Estimated Cost	Estimated Completion Date	Status
Orange County Streetcar	408.0	2022	Under construction
Atwood-Esperanza 3 rd mainline track	30.0	2022	Under construction, CRISI Grant awarded by USDOT January 2019
Placentia Metrolink Station	34.0	2022	In pre-construction, scheduled construction start 2021
Anaheim Canyon station upgrade and double track	30.0	2022	In pre-construction, scheduled construction start 2021
Fullerton Junction- full buildout	225.0	2023	Construction not yet funded, in design/environmental
Irvine Maintenance Facility – initial phase	4.8	2023	TIRCP Grant from SB-1 funds
Irvine Maintenance Facility- full buildout	153.0	2028	Not yet funded, proposed 2024-2028 in SCORE program
Signal Respacing: La Palma to College	4.9	2023	Not yet funded
Signal Respacing: Maple to Solow	4.9	2023	Not yet funded
Orange Siding and Spur Tracks	3.0	2023	proposed 2019-2023 in SCORE program
San Juan Creek Bridge Replacement	38.0	2024	Funded
Orange-Olive Junction Improvements and Wye	3.9	2023	Proposed 2019-2023 in SCORE program
Orange-Olive Junction Improvements and Wye- full buildout	42.6	2028	Not yet funded, proposed 2024-2028 in SCORE program
Serra Siding Extension - South	12.5	2023	Funded, in design /environmental
Serra Siding Extension - North	10.8	TBD	Not yet funded
Irvine Station Improvements, 4th main track	184.0	2028	Construction not yet funded, in design/environmental
3 rd track between Tustin area and Laguna Niguel area	53.0	2028	Not yet funded, proposed 2024-2028 in SCORE program
LA-Fullerton 4 th main track	887.0	2028	Not yet funded
17th St./Lincoln Ave Grade Separation, Santa Ana	230.0	TBD	Not yet funded
Ball Road Grade Separation, Anaheim	138.0	TBD	Not yet funded
Orangethorpe Ave. Grade Separation, Anaheim	TBD	TBD	Not yet funded
La Palma Ave. Grade Separation, Anaheim	TBD	TBD	Not yet funded
Cerritos Ave. Grade Separation, Anaheim	TBD	TBD	Not yet funded
Broadway Grade Separation, Anaheim	TBD	TBD	Not yet funded
Vermont Ave. Grade Separation, Anaheim	TBD	TBD	Not yet funded
State College Ave. Grade Separation, Anaheim	TBD	TBD	Not yet funded
Kellogg Drive Grade Separation, Anaheim	TBD	TBD	Not yet funded
Jefferson Street Grade Separation, Anaheim	TBD	TBD	Not yet funded
Richfield Road Grade Separation, Placentia	TBD	TBD	Not yet funded
Van Buren Street Grade Separation, Placentia	TBD	TBD	Not yet funded
Santa Ana Street Grade Separation, Santa Ana	TBD	TBD	Not yet funded
San Clemente North Beach double track	TBD	TBD	Not yet funded

Metrolink's Southern California Optimized Rail Expansion (SCORE) is a 10-year, \$10 billion program to improve regional rail in Southern California in time for 2028 Olympics and subsequent arrival of High Speed Rail. The LOSSAN Agency is an important partner in the SCORE program, working with BNSF, SCRRA, Caltrans, CHSRA, and CalSTA in the development of a phased implementation strategy for the SCORE suite of projects. The strategy begins with near- and medium-term capital improvements and expansion of the region's existing passenger rail services, and allows for the eventual introduction of high-speed rail as part of the regional rail network in the long term.

Orange County Grade Separations -

OCTA is partnering with the cities of Santa Ana and Anaheim for future road-rail grade separations on the LOSSAN corridor. In addition to the grade separation projects listed in the table above, as part of the HSR Phase 1 project, permanent closure is planned of the existing crossings at Sycamore and South streets in Anaheim. After these and all of the planned grade separation projects are built (including some in LA County), the 31 miles of LOSSAN track between Los Angeles Union Station and ARTIC in Anaheim will be almost entirely grade separated. Only two at-grade street crossings are planned to remain: Lakeland Drive in Santa Fe Springs, and Santa Ana Street in Anaheim.



*Ball Road at-grade crossing in Anaheim
(photo by Brian Yanity)*

LA-Fullerton 4th Main Track

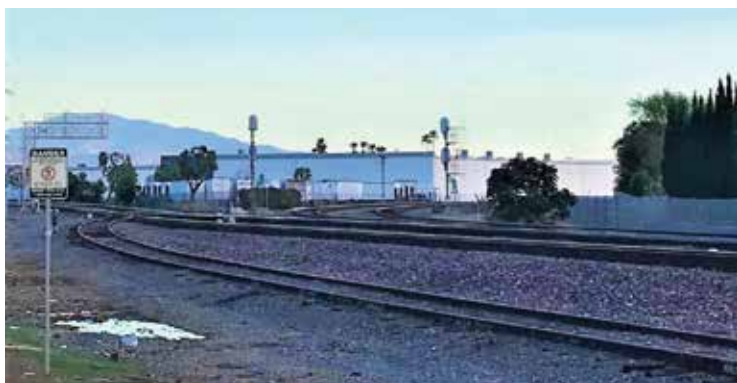
BNSF, SCRRA, Caltrans and other partner agencies have been working on the triple-tracking project between Soto Junction (near downtown Los Angeles) and Fullerton since the late 1990s. Presently the corridor is triple-tracked the entire 22 miles between the LA River and Fullerton, with the exception of one 1.2-mile segment of double track through the Rosecrans-Marquardt road crossing in Santa Fe Springs. This crossing will be upgraded to four tracks once the grade separation project is finished in

2023. While the Rosecrans-Marquardt grade separation project is in Los Angeles County, it is vital for improved rail service in Orange County. Other planned L.A. County future grade separations on the BNSF San Bernardino Subdivision between LA and Orange County include Pioneer Blvd. and Norwalk Blvd./Los Nietos.

A fourth track is planned between Los Angeles and Fullerton station, on both the BNSF San Bernardino Subdivision and the LOSSAN corridor. Among the largest of the many projects proposed in the SCORE program, these additional tracks will minimize congestion, delays and schedule conflicts for both passenger and freight trains. The 22-mile BNSF-owned track section between Redondo Junction and Fullerton Junction is the western end of the 2,200-mile BNSF Southern Transcon route which connects three of the busiest freight rail hubs in the U.S.: Chicago, Kansas City and Los Angeles (via Fullerton). Dozens of BNSF freight trains pass each day through Orange County, the majority carrying shipping containers long distance between the rest of nation and the ports of LA/Long Beach, the busiest container port in North America. One of the nation's most vital freight rail corridors, the BNSF tracks through Orange County carry a not-insignificant fraction of the nation's trade with Asia. In addition, the OCTA-owned line south of Fullerton Junction towards San Diego sees several BNSF freight trains per day. Separating passenger and freight rail traffic will reduce delays for rail passengers and make train travel safer and more reliable, while allowing more freight to get to market on schedule.

A collaboration of BNSF Railway, SCORE, and CHSRA, the LA-Fullerton 4th main track project has an estimated cost of \$887 million (according to the 2018 SCORE proposal). The four-track configuration will consist of two electric passenger tracks, and two freight tracks. The SCORE program proposal of 2018 identified "early start components (2019-2023)" of the LA-Fullerton 4th main track as Soto to Commerce 4th track and the Fullerton Junction Interlocking projects.

Fullerton Junction



Fullerton Junction (photo by Brian Yanity)

The Fullerton Junction, a half a mile east of the Fullerton train station, is where the Los Angeles-San Diego "Surf Line" joins the BNSF Southern Transcon between Los Angeles and Chicago. It is a very important node of the Southern California rail network, along one of the nation's busiest tracks.

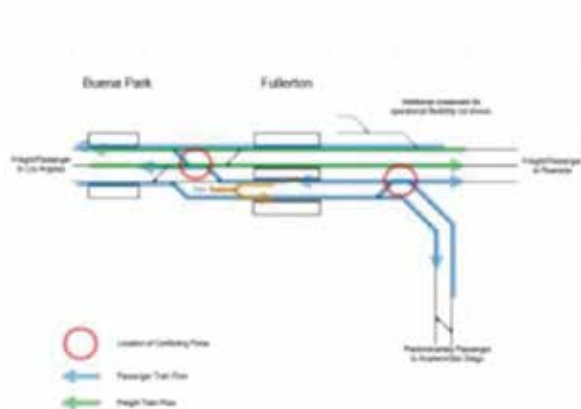
The passenger trains which pass through Fullerton Junction include the Amtrak Pacific Surfliner (between Los Angeles and San Diego) as well as Metrolink's Orange County line (to Oceanside) and 91/Perris Valley line (between Los Angeles and South Perris via Riverside), as well as the Amtrak Southwest Chief to Chicago.



Looking east from Fullerton station towards Fullerton Junction (photo by Brian Yanity)

The Fullerton Junction Interlocking Project consists of multiple track and signal improvements, both east and west of the Fullerton train station. The project will result in a two-track direct connection south to Anaheim, and a three-track direct connection to the route east toward Riverside, new station platforms between tracks at Fullerton, and a fourth main line through Fullerton. The Fullerton Junction project will separate trains which are traveling in different directions (i.e., geographic east and west and geographic south and west), with the two dedicated south and west tracks for trains coming from or traveling south toward San Diego. The Fullerton Junction project is arguably the most important rail project going on in Orange County, and will bring tangible benefits to the entire Southern California rail network. By enabling far more frequent and regular service, Orange County cities in particular will benefit from the increase in passenger trains through Fullerton Junction.

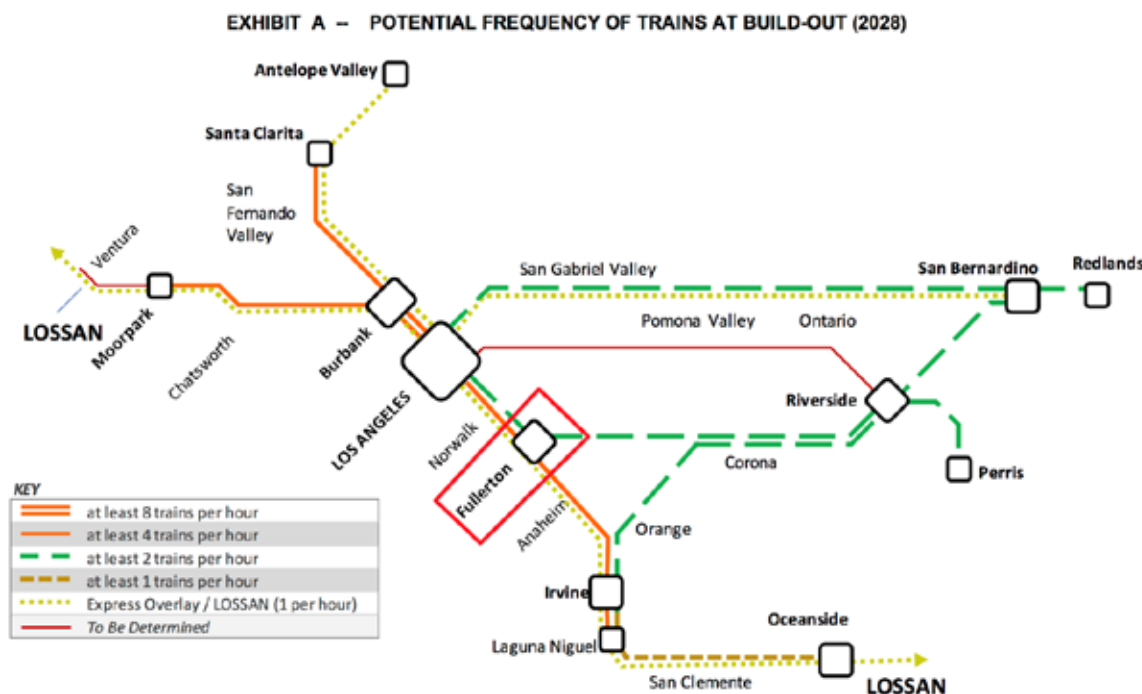
The \$226 million Fullerton Junction reconfiguration is expected to be completed in several phases over the next few years, but the timeline is not yet determined. Metrolink is the lead agency on the project, partnered with BNSF Railway (the track owner), OCTA, Caltrans, and CHSRA. The Fullerton Junction Interlocking Project is a critical part of the larger SCORE program's \$3.2 billion LOSSAN South/LA-Fullerton-San Bernardino Corridor Plan, which includes the fourth main track from Los Angeles to Fullerton, and from Fullerton- Riverside-San Bernardino third main track. According to a Rail Traffic Controller analysis done by BNSF Capacity Planning staff in 2017, the full buildout of these combined projects will enable up to 320 passenger trains/day, plus over 100 freight trains per day through Fullerton Junction. This BNSF analysis also predicted that freight train delay would be cut in half, while



Improvements:

1. Conflicting flows on east side of Fullerton station are reduced, passenger trains can access and serve the station while conflicting freight traffic clears the tracks. Northbound passenger (express) trains do not have to fully cross over but can go straight to the middle track.
2. Passenger trains from Orange County terminating at Fullerton use the turn track west of the station, untangling train flows east of the station.

Fullerton Junction diagram, after completion of planned improvements



Fullerton Junction highlighted on Metrolink map showing system train frequency proposed for 2028

the average freight train speed through the segment more than doubled: from 15.3 mph to nearly 38 mph in 2030. The overall train volumes through Fullerton could grow to three times what it is today, and passenger trains over five times (compared to 56 weekday passenger trains in 2020). The current maximum number of passenger rail “slots” in this corridor is 84 trains per day. BNSF is currently conducting a San Bernardino Pathing Study, a freight-specific analysis on accommodating future traffic growth on the San Bernardino Subdivision between Los Angeles and San Bernardino (which includes the LOSSAN corridor between LA and Fullerton).

Atwood-Esperanza 3rd Mainline Track-

In June 2019, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) announced that Metrolink and BNSF received a \$30,000,000 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grant to fund construction of a 4.8 mile segment of third mainline track between control points Atwood and Esperanza (through the cities of Fullerton, Placentia and Anaheim). A separate \$10 million FRA CRISI grant for Fullerton Junction PTC was awarded by the USDOT to SCRRA in August 2018. To be completed in 2023, the Atwood and Esperanza third main

track project will (along with Fullerton Junction) complete the triple-tracking of the BNSF San Bernardino Subdivision mainline within Orange County. A first phase of the Fullerton Junction project, as well as the Fullerton-Riverside- San Bernardino third mainline track project, this third track is also critical for the new station at Placentia.

On the 46 miles between San Bernardino and Fullerton, BNSF currently has about 15 miles of third mainline track, with the rest still double track. Full completion of the remaining 31 miles of third main track from Fullerton to San Bernardino, with key fourth track segments at Corona and La Sierra, is estimated to cost \$566 million (see Riverside County article in the Q3 2020 of Steel Wheels). Environmental planning work is underway, funded by the 2018 SB1 grant awarded to Metrolink for the SCORE program.

South Orange County

Orange County Maintenance Facility

Metrolink is proposing to build a new Orange County Maintenance Facility in Irvine. OCTA received a \$4.8 million TIRCP grant from SB-1 funds for the first phase of the project, which will be to be completed in 2023. Full buildout (2024-2028) will cost an estimated \$153 million. The facility will be located northeast of existing LOSSAN tracks about a mile from the Irvine station, near Orange County Great Park.

Irvine Station Improvements

Irvine Station Connect is a City of Irvine planning project to improve bicycle and pedestrian access and connecting bus transit within a 1-mile radius around Irvine station.

As part of the SCORE Program, Metrolink is proposing additional improvements to increase

the operational flexibility at Irvine Station. The Irvine Station improvements include a 4th Main Track expansion between west of Milepost (MP) 184.0 and east of CP Bake, MP 186.9, with two center island platforms. OCTA is the lead agency working cooperatively with Metrolink and the City of Irvine to begin the environmental phase of this project. It is estimated to cost \$184 million, with an anticipated completion date of 2028.

Laguna Niguel to San Juan Capistrano Passing Siding Project-

OCTA, in coordination with Metrolink and the cities of Laguna Niguel and San Juan Capistrano, recently completed 1.8 miles of new passing siding railroad track between the Laguna Niguel/ Mission Viejo Metrolink Station and Trabuco Creek in San Juan Capistrano. The project in southern Orange County was completed in November 2020, several months ahead of schedule. The passing siding will reduce delays, increase safety and provide more reliable rail service to all Orange County stations. This \$36.4 million project was funded by OC Go (formerly Measure M), Orange County's half-cent sales tax to fund transportation investments, along with state and federal funds. The passing siding track will run adjacent to the existing track, connecting to it at each end, which will allow trains traveling in opposite directions to pass each other without stopping.

Laguna Niguel- San Juan Capistrano Passing Siding (OCTA)

San Juan Creek Bridge Replacement-

This \$38 million project in San Juan Capistrano involves the replacement of a 304' long single track rail bridge. Construction is anticipated to occur from June 2022 to December 2024.

Serra Siding Extensions-

Serra siding runs alongside the mainline track between

the cities of Dana Point and San Juan Capistrano. The \$12.5 million, 1.2-mile south siding extension from Victoria Blvd. to Beach Road in Dana Point is currently in environmental studies, and is expected to be completed in 2023. The 0.7-mile north Serra siding extension, south of San Juan Capistrano station, is expected to cost \$10.7 million and is not yet funded.

Capacity expansions south to San Diego County-

OCTA is collaborating with San Diego County's North County Transit District (NCTD) and San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) on plans for additional sidings and double-tracking in southern Orange County and in San Diego County. These include two SCORE projects proposed for the 2024-2028 timeframe, the third track between Tustin area and Laguna Niguel area (\$53 million) and the double track between CP Songs to San Mateo Creek Lagoon (\$19 million). Double tracking has also been proposed for north of the San Clemente Station (north beach), though the corridor will remain a single-track south of this station south to the county line. This project would increase capacity on this segment of LOSSAN from 3 to 8 trains per hour, according to BNSF's SANDAG Pathing Study Final Report.

Just south of the county line in San Diego County, the SONGS siding extension and San Onofre Creek passing track are planned. These capacity improvement on the south Orange County section of LOSSAN corridor will be developed concurrently with SANDAG double-tracking projects such as the San Onofre to Pulgas (Stage 2), North Oceanside and Carlsbad Village (see San Diego projects article in Q1 2021 issue of Steel Wheels).

Slope stabilizations and proposed South County Bypass-

Slope stabilization work of trackside slopes from Irvine to San Juan Capistrano is ongoing. Further south through Dana Point and San Clemente and into San Diego County, the 'Surf Line' lives up to its name by running next to the beach, with ocean swells at high tide sometimes literally spraying the surf



onto the tracks. While affording a famously picturesque view of the Pacific Ocean from the train, this proximity comes with coastal erosion and flooding problems.

In January 2021, OCTA and Caltrans, completed a rail infrastructure study titled the OCTA Rail Defense Against Climate Change Plan. The study identified opportunities and challenges to improve service, operation, and infrastructure to better withstand severe weather conditions. The study identifies implementation strategies and preventive measures to reduce the risk to rail infrastructure from mudslides, flooding, severe storm/weather events, coastal surge, and sea level rise. The study focused 25-mile section of the LOSSAN corridor from Jeffrey Road in Irvine to the Orange/San Diego county border, along with evaluation of all 12 Metrolink Stations in Orange County.

RailPAC has long supported the proposed 'South County Bypass' concept, a new route for the LOSSAN rail corridor further inland between Laguna Niguel and San Onofre. This would provide a more direct double track route for intercity trains, and better shield LOSSAN track from severe weather, flooding and coastal erosion. Local service could be maintained on the existing beachside line. The 2004 LOSSAN Programmatic Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement by Caltrans identified several project alternatives, with the preferred alternative called the San Clemente Long Two Segment Tunnel – Double Tracking option. The Google Earth image below shows a rough concept of this project configuration: a two-segment rail tunnel built along Interstate 5 from San Onofre State Beach in northern San Diego County to Avenida Aeropuerto in San Juan Capistrano, a length of 9.6 miles total. This two-segment design would allow for a new station in San Clemente. The technical feasibility of the tunnel was not evaluated in detail by the 2004 study, so a new design study is needed to determine costs, environmental assessments needed and a construction timeline.



Potential Coastal Alignment Relocation, or “South County Bypass” between San Juan Capistrano and San Onofre
(Figure 26- from OCTA Rail Defense Against Climate Change Plan in January 2021)

Pooling of Metrolink and Coaster rail rolling stock-

The 2012 LOSSAN Strategic Implementation Plan called for both Metrolink and NCTD COASTER to operate through service (one seat ride) from LA Union Station to San Diego's Santa Fe Depot. Cost savings could be realized by pooling Metrolink and COASTER rolling stock, and RailPAC has long supported this concept. The pool trains could connect to the Metrolink 91/Perris Valley Line and Orange County line trains at Fullerton, on continue to LA Union Station. SCAG, Metrolink and the LOSSAN Rail Corridor Agency should start a working group on the concept with NCTD or SANDAG. Such a working group would figure out technical issues such as equipment compatibility between COASTER and Metrolink, voltage of passenger car 'hotel power', position of wheelchair ramps, position of locomotive on the train, etc.

Future Vision for LOSSAN in Orange County

There are ambitious long-range plans to significantly upgrade passenger rail service and infrastructure along the LOSSAN corridor in Orange County. The LOSSAN Corridorwide Strategic Implementation Plan several years ago called for Orange County service to increase by 2030 to 124 weekday trains (88 Metrolink and 36 Surfliner), up from the pre-pandemic 72 weekday trains (46 Metrolink and 26 Surfliner) in 2020. In addition to Metrolink/Coaster LA-San Diego pooled service, it was proposed that some trains going north from Orange County that now terminate at Union Station near downtown Los Angeles would continue north to Santa Clarita and Antelope Valley. The Metrolink Integrated Service and Capital Plan (with Discussion on Electrification), released in November 2017, called for a series of improvements to be completed by 2028 Olympics, including electrification of segments including the LOSSAN corridor north of Irvine, with 15 minute peak headways.

2018 California State Rail Plan-

The 2018 California State Rail Plan “establishes a statewide vision describing a future integrated rail system that provides comprehensive and coordinated service to passengers through more frequent service, and convenient transfers between rail services and transit.” The State Rail Plan calls for a variety of improvements to intercity rail lines throughout the state by 2040. These include faster, electrified service (up to 125 miles per hour on Orange County lines), more frequent service (starting with 30-minute local and hourly express service between Los Angeles and San Diego by 2022, electrification (as far south as Laguna Niguel/Mission Viejo), and greater multimodal integration. The State Rail Plan's 2022 goals for the Los Angeles Urban Mobility Corridor, extending from Burbank to Anaheim, using the capacity benefits of the new Rosecrans-Marquardt grade separation, include:

- Hourly express and half-hourly peak (hourly off-peak) local service between Anaheim and Los Angeles.

- Additional local service between Fullerton and Los Angeles from increase in service from Perris Valley and Riverside.

By 2040, the State Rail Plan calls for even more ambitious goals, with fast, very frequent service between Los Angeles Union Station and Fullerton via Norwalk/Santa Fe Springs hub, with connections between services and connections to urban transit. With frequent high speed service, Orange County is proposed to have:

- Hourly express service to the Inland Empire.
- Half-hourly express service to San Diego.
- Half-hourly service continuing on to the Inland Empire, making local stops.
- Half-hourly service continuing on to San Diego making local stops.
- Frequent HSR service terminating at the Anaheim hub

Fullerton highlighted on 2018 California State Rail Plan map of proposed 2040 intercity passenger rail, showing the strategic importance of Fullerton Junction to the Southern California region (at right)



Exhibit 4.4: Southern California Service (2040 Vision)

Special thanks to Roger Lopez (OCTA), Jason Lee (OCTA), Dana Gabbard (Southern California Transit Advocates & Rail Users Network), and Robert Frampton (RailPAC board member) for providing information and review of this article.

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From the Rear Platform –

By Paul Dyson, Editor

I'm devoting this column to two great passenger rail advocates who have recently died.

Bruce Jenkins



RailPAC Director Bruce Jenkins was a good friend and colleague. His family provided the following obituary:

On March 30, 2021, Bruce Cagley Jenkins passed away with his wife, Teresa by his side. Bruce was a very active member of RailPAC, as a representative at Caltrain Board meetings and attending all of its events. He served on the RailPAC Board for more than ten years and was a big support to President, Paul Dyson and Treasurer, William Kerby.

Bruce was born in Grand Junction, Colorado, August 20, 1932. Ten years later the family moved to Indio, California to help his uncle establish bus service for troops training with General Patton near the Salton Sea. The route ran through the desert cities to Los Angeles and back.

During the Korean War, Bruce enlisted in the Navy where his engineering skills were honed. Moving up the ranks he eventually became a Plane Captain stationed at the Naval Air Station, San Diego and was also deployed to Kodiak, Alaska to keep an eye on Soviet activity. Bruce graduated Northrop University with a BS degree in Aeronautical Engineering and was hired at Lockheed Missiles and Space Company in Sunnyvale, CA. He and another engineer who were part of the Corona program (satellite surveillance of the Soviet Union) inspected the capsule and parachute of the first recovered missile, Discoverer 14, which is now on display at the Smithsonian in Washington DC. In February 1969 he married Teresa Zimmer, an IBM "lifer" who is affectionately known as TZ. Bruce continued working with Lockheed on various satellite systems including, the Hubble Telescope, new tiles for the Space Shuttle on reentry to earth, Poseidon and Trident Missile systems and biological research with primates and rodent modules for the Space Shuttle.

Bruce took early retirement at age 59 and became a true rail aficionado. He always carried some kind of Timetable in his shirt pocket. Bruce was an advocate for passenger rail and whenever his granddaughters visited him in Sunnyvale, but wanted to head north to San Francisco to sight-see, he'd tell them, no driving, you're taking the train! After their first ride, they got it! Bruce and TZ would often tour the country in the private rail car, Virginia City. They were very generous about inviting family and friends to ride along while being hooked up to an Amtrak train going somewhere. You'd see Bruce and Art

Lloyd at all meetings. Together, they were a force with strong convictions always rooting for the benefits of passenger rail. Fortunately, Bruce was not in prolonged pain. After being diagnosed with a swift moving form of lymphoma he passed away quietly.

Bruce is survived by his wife, Teresa, son, Jerry, two granddaughters, Jessica and Megan, grandson-in-law, Jason Barnett and great-granddaughter, Blake, Nephew, Chris Jenkins and sister-in-law, Nancy Jenkins. He was predeceased by his brother, Everett Boyd Jenkins.

Jim Mills, Father of the San Diego Trolley

James R. Mills, a retired San Diego state legislator who never met a streetcar he wouldn't ride or a historic building he wouldn't save, died March 27 at age 93. The San Diego native and longtime Coronado resident died of kidney cancer at a hospice facility in Bonita, family members said.

In his 22 years as a state Assembly member and state senator, Mills was the author of legislation that created the local trolley system and Old Town San Diego State Historic Park. The Mills Act, named after him, has been credited with saving thousands of historic residential and commercial buildings from destruction in California by reducing property taxes for owners who preserve them.

In 1960, when a local Assembly member resigned from the 79th Assembly District seat to become a Municipal Court judge, Mills' then-wife, Joanna, encouraged him to run in the special election. He won. He served in the Assembly for six years and then ran for state Senate, winning a seat that he held until 1982. He was elected senate pro tempore from 1971 to 1980, the body's top leadership position.

His 1975, legislation creating the trolley became a model for other light-rail systems around the country, but it drew some opposition from local government officials who felt it was being forced on them. It was, Mills told Transit California in 2015. If he'd waited for local officials and the public to approve, it would never have been built. "I thought that if the people of San Diego could see it, they would like it and want more," he said. "It's expanded since, as I knew it would." The trolley now covers about 54 miles, with a new line to University City expected to open this fall.

After he left the Legislature, Mills chaired the Metropolitan Transit Development Board in San Diego for nine years. Its headquarters is named after him. He also served stints on Amtrak's board and the California High-Speed Rail Authority.

Advocates remember that the original San Diego system was built at a very low cost in comparison to later projects. Maximum use was made of existing rights of way and designed for incremental additions.

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