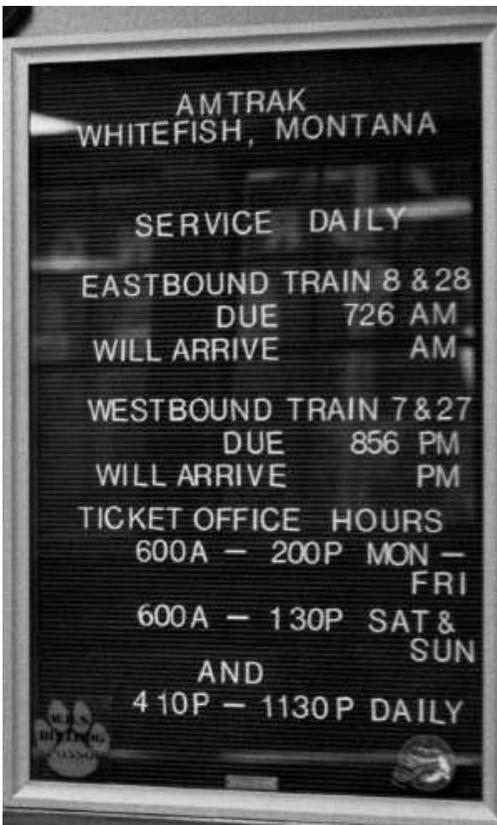


ColoRail Passenger

January-February 2004

Issue #44

Union Pacific replies to criticism of delays — “busy maintenance”



The train board tells the story!

No need to insert “will arrive” times on October 7, 2003, as Train 28 delivers your editor *on time* to a close connection to the once-a-day Trailways bus for Denver in a convenient Montana intermodal terminal. Smoothly passing freights “at speed” over the North Bank line from Portland, the

(Ed. Note: On July 28, ColoRail President Jon Esty wrote to Union Pacific Chairman and CEO expressing ColoRail’s concerns regarding excessive delays experienced by Amtrak while on UP track. This is the reply.)

September 3, 2003

Mr. Jon Esty, President, Colorado Rail Passenger Association

Dear Mr. Esty:

Your recent letter to Mr. Davidson concerning the California Zephyr has been referred to me for response.

2003 has been a particularly busy maintenance season on the route of the Zephyr. We have had two track gangs that have particularly impacted the on time performance on this route. A tie gang on the Roseville Subdivision created a single-track operation over the Sierra Nevada Mountains. This is especially challenging because trains #5 and #6 are scheduled to meet in this vicinity, and one train must wait for the other to negotiate the single track. We have also had a tie gang and a curve rail gang working between Grand Junction and Denver. Our operating plan is to delay the gangs until the passing of train #5 and stage the departure

of train #6 for two hours at Grand Junction. This creates a work window for the gangs. If #5 is late for some reason, it reduces the planned window and therefore delays overall production. We do regret interruptions to the passenger trains, but it is necessary for UP to perform maintenance and track improvements to preserve a safe track structure.

Union Pacific is committed to operate our Amtrak service on time. Operating managers from Amtrak and Union Pacific meet on a regular basis to review the performance and develop actions to improve the California Zephyr. After the summer work season is complete we will see a definite improvement in the performance.

Sincerely,
(signature)

Thomas M. Mulligan
Director - Passenger Operations
Union Pacific Railroad Company
Omaha, NE 68179

Page 3: Bold ideas for long-distance rail passenger service at the January 24th, ColoRail meeting.

“A Voice for Colorado’s Rail Passengers”

Studies-
R-
Us?

ColoRail keeps track of the studies

If it is transportation studies you like, then the Metro Denver area is the place to be. There are many of them and most of them actively seek public input.

Take the recently completed West Corridor Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) study for example. Since a prior major investment study (MIS) had recommended light rail utilize the former Associated Railroad corridor along 13th Avenue, a quiet residential area west in Lakewood, the Regional Transportation District and study consultants paid very close attention to public relations. Numerous citizen gatherings were held as well as informal meetings with individual homeowners in an active attempt to dispel anxieties about light rail trains running through the neighborhood.

This close attention to public relations and the early perceptions about light rail appeared to have paid off with the largely favorable comments by local residents when light rail as the preferred alternative for the corridor was selected.

Construction is now ready to move forward once FasTracks is approved.

Colorado Department of Transportation's study of the I-70 Mountain Corridor is coming to a conclusion with the selection of alternatives that include highway expansion and guided hybrid or diesel buses. Passenger rail and advanced guideway systems were eliminated largely because of their cost as proposed. This conclusion did not sit well with officials and residents of Clear Creek, Summit, and Eagle Counties who had hoped for a rail-oriented alternative which could provide sufficient capacity and speed to attract riders out of their cars making additional highway construction unnecessary.

Clear Creek County Commissioner, JoAnn Sorensen comments in a *Denver Post* opinion article typify the thoughts of mountain area residents. "We know that the highway widening mentality creates a no-win situation. All you have to do is look at southern California to see where it will all lead. If six lanes is the answer today, what will we do when we revisit the problem in 10 years?" (December 14, 2003).

There is plenty of time for more discussion (and acrimony). C-DOT Executive Director Tom Norton says that it is his goal is to chose the specific preferred alternative by 2005.

In Denver, the Union Station study is winding down with the selection of a below grade location for all Amtrak, commuter rail, and light rail trains, as well as the local and regional bus network. This will allow for a more open flow of pedestrian travel in and through the station environs which also promises to be a major employment, commercial, and entertainment destination.

ColoRail supports recommendations that all transportation modes will be located at Union Station (not elsewhere in the South Platte Valley) and that the station will eventually provide for through passenger rail

service to Castle Rock, Colorado Springs, and Pueblo. The project management team will not commit to any specific route between the southern portion of the station property and the Consolidated Mainline (CML) as the route lies outside of the study area.

The project team is made up of RTD, C-DOT, City and County of Denver, and the Denver Regional Council of Governments, all agencies that contributed to the purchase of Union Station in 2001.

ColoRail has referred the issue of a southern connection routing to yet another study, the Downtown Multimodal Access Plan (D-MAP) which is looking at how to distribute transit riders through the Denver downtown area once they have arrived at Union Station or other downtown transit centers. Denver transportation officials hope to have a preferred plan for downtown circulation alternatives ready by May, 2004. Any routing of a southern connection from Union Station to the CML falls within the D-MAP study area.

Some studies are just beginning such as the jointly RTD/C-DOT funded US36 Corridor EIS and the I-70 East EIS. An earlier US36 Corridor MIS recommended bus rapid transit on the highway and commuter rail along the BNSF alignment from Denver to Boulder. The I-70 East MIS recommended an "Air Train" between Union Station to DIA, however C-DOT has recently become enamored with the idea of an elevated toll road on I-70 east of the junction with I-25 (The Mousetrap).

The prospect of an elevated road above the already elevated portions of I-70 through northeast Denver has local residents and environmental justice advocates hopping mad.

(Continued on page 7)



**ColoRail
on the Internet
at:**

Ed Wright puts it
on the line

Future for the long distance passenger train

Professional engineer and author, Edward S. Wright, will be the featured speaker at ColoRail's winter meeting. He will be speaking on the topic: Modern Long Distance Passenger Rail, A Vision for the Future. The meeting will take place at the North Presbyterian Church in Denver on Saturday, January 24 from 9:30AM to 12:00Noon.

At a time when many rail advocates have written off long distance trains in favor of shorter, higher speed corridor service, Ed has formulated a way that Amtrak's national network of trains can be preserved and expanded. He has developed a program on this topic which he is showing to Denver area service clubs.

Ed has a distinguished career as a professional engineer and manager in the development of transportation, power generation, and other

advanced technologies in the private as well as in the public sector. He is a Fellow of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers and is a member or former member of a number of engineering societies. He authored *SMARTrans: Sensible Mountain Area Railway Transport* which was published in 2000. The book describes utilization of an efficient, cost effective passenger rail technology in the I-70 Mountain Corridor.

Other rail issues of national, state, and local significance will also be reviewed prior to Ed's presentation. ColoRail members as well as interested members of the public are cordially invited to attend. Refreshments will be served.

The North Presbyterian Church is located on the northwest corner of W. 37th Ave. and Federal Blvd. in North Denver. Parking is available directly south of

the church across W. 37th Ave. Please enter through the south first floor door to the church. The church is served by RTD bus **Rtes 31 and 38**.

Attendees needing assistance with disabilities should call Robert Rynerson at (720) 570-0647 or send an e-mail message to: rw.rynerson@worldnet.att.net 24-

After the rush, it's time for reflection. In this photo, a *California Zephyr* dining car steward finally has time for coffee and laying out plans for the next meals. ColoRail members have learned that after the holiday rush, the January general meeting is a good time for a coffee and reflection on what's next on America's



ColoRail Board Elections Announcement

ColoRail invites members to run for the Board of Directors. If you would like to nominate someone or yourself, please contact Don Zielesch, Chairman of the Nominations and Elections Committee, by February 15, 2004, at (303) 934-4949 or <dwz1@juno.com>.

The Nominations and Elections Committee will talk with nominees and present a slate of candidates for approval at the May membership meeting. Nominations from the floor may also be made at that meeting but the candidate must be in attendance and approve his/her name for nomination. This year there will be five Board openings.

ColoRail's Board meets every second Monday of the month from 6:00 to 8:00PM at the offices of Bicycle Colorado, Room 236, Denver Union Station. Member attendance is welcome.

Gene Putnam
informs ColoRail

Thornton moves ahead

"The highway system is falling apart yet even more demands are being made on it. We need to be looking at a resource which is underutilized."

These were the words of Gene Putman, Special Projects Manager for the City of Thornton who was the featured speaker at ColoRail's Fall meeting on October 27 which took place at Thornton's modern city hall. Gene was referring to the numerous rail corridors in Colorado which could be put to good use moving people as well as freight.

By way of illustration, Gene described UP's Boulder Branch which winds its way northward

through northeast Denver to Commerce City and Thornton [also known as the Dent Branch]. The railroad hosts a couple of local freights a week and is the North Metro Corridor in RTD's FasTrack plan. Gene is fortunate to have as a boss, a mayor and city council that believe in this vision. Thornton Mayor Noel Busck and the city council have reserved and purchased land along the railroad right-of-way for stations and parking. Their actions fit the image identified by the City of Thornton logo, showing it as a crossroads of the region.

Last year, Thornton officials conducted a poll which told them town residents supported rail transit,

a finding which has not only been duplicated several times nationally but has also been found to be true in Colorado by a recent survey by the Colorado Department of Transportation. Gene and his staff took the poll one step further, however. Thornton residents were shown the four station stops to be served by trains in the North Metro Corridor and they were asked again to respond to their travel preference. The already favorable selection of rail transit increased about 20%.

"When people can actually see how rail will directly effect their lives, their approval rating goes up," concluded Gene.

"They can see how easily they can get to jobs, school, and even a baseball game in town."

Continuing to build on the enthusiasm for rail transit, Gene received funding from the city council to construct an operating HO scale model railroad which depicts the North Metro Corridor route through Thornton in miniature. The model railroad has created much interest and excitement for rail transit at local fair and town events. It is now on display in the atrium of the city hall where it was viewed by meeting attendees.

Last year, he also arranged for a static display of Colorado Rail's Diesel Multiple Unit (dmu) demonstrator in Thornton and described for ColoRail meeting attendees the enthusiastic reaction from the crowds which had a chance to tour the car.

Gene then gave a Power Point presentation which took an imaginary look back from 2030 at the development of rail transit in Colorado. He described the gradual formation of a Front Range rail system first followed by extensions west into the mountains. He said all

What they're saying...

"All the members... are in Europe riding high speed trains"

Notable Quotes:

"There's not much going on in the (US) Capitol this month. All the members of the House and Senate Transportation Committees are in Europe riding high speed trains." Diane Koller, C-DOT Government Liaison, addressing a meeting of the TEA-21 Reauthorization Task Force at the Denver Chamber of Commerce on August 26, 2003.

"Today, intermodal has overtaken coal as the top source of revenue for major U.S. and Canadian railroads combined, and it is expected to continue to grow steadily in the years ahead." Craig F. Rockey, Vice President, Association of American Railroads as quoted in *Railway Age*, November, 2003.

"Despite railroads' investments, certain parts of the railroad system have become severely congested and cannot accommodate the conflicting demands of both increasing freight movement and increasing commuter and (Amtrak) traffic." US Department of Transportation Inspector General Kenneth Mead commenting on a 64% increase of rail traffic across the country since 1980 as reported by Reuters, December 15, 2003.

"Yes, Amtrak has received \$26 billion over 32 years, but just since 9/11 the airlines have received \$30 billion. The defense rests." Sen. Ernest Hollings (D-SC) responding to an attack on Amtrak funding from Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) during an Amtrak Board conformation hearing, November 6, 2003.

(Continued on page 5)

to enjoy rail benefits

Rep. Bob Briggs
working on plan

(Continued from page 4)

of this could be accomplished through the formation of a statewide Colorado Rail Transit Authority which could be adopted by the legislation in 2004.

He said State Representative Bob Briggs (R-Westminster) had already formed a committee made up of local and regional government officials who support rail and was drafting a bill. The proposed bill would create a framework which would allow towns/regions to come into the authority whenever they had the desire to join.

The proposed authority could assist in the construction of the Front Range freight railroad bypass which would free up existing rail corridors from Fort Collins to Pueblo for passenger rail. Gene suggested that Denver Union Station and the light/commuter rail network proposed in FasTracks could serve as the nucleus for future passenger rail development.

"Once FasTracks is approved by the voters in 2004, then extensions to Castle Rock, Colorado Springs, Fort Collins, Loveland, and Greeley could be initiated," he said. Connections to Pueblo, La Junta, and Cheyenne would be added followed by additions Aspen-Glenwood Springs, Denver-Grand Junction, Steamboat Springs to Glenwood Springs, and Vail to Leadville all being completed by 2030.

Though this might be an ambitious schedule, the idea must be given serious consideration given that C-DOT officials have predicted the level of traffic congestion in

Trip provides rough idea— ownership is not issue

"If you think our track is in bad shape, you should take a ride on the old Monon from Chicago to Indianapolis as I did to Beech Grove. That is one rock-and-roll of a ride, and I believe that railroad, if I am not mistaken, is owned by the private sector." Amtrak President David Gunn in a memo to employees criticizing members of congress who are pushing for privatization of the passenger railroad, September, 2003.

Running time on today's *Cardinal* over this rough track is 4 hours, 50 minutes. The editor's Hoosier grandparents could take the Monon's "all-Steel, Electric-lighted" Train 35 in 1916 and reach Indianapolis in the identical amount of time, even though it made five more stops. Of course, the cars now are safer and more comfortable, but that's the

Beehive State governor

Notable Quotes:

"So we went to Governor Leavitt and asked for his help. We said, 'Governor, we have a problem. We want to buy a corridor from the Union Pacific, and it's a heavily used corridor.' And he says, 'Okay, I'll call the president of the railroad.' So he stands up and walks over to the phone and says, 'Get me the number of Dick Davidson.'" Utah Transit Authority General Manager John English referring to the assistance he received from Utah Governor Mike Leavitt in the acquisition of a 175 mile corridor along the Wasatch Front from the Union Pacific Railroad as quoted in *Mass Transit* magazine, September/October, 2003.

our problem 'auto-arterial-sclerosis' (hardening of our transportation arteries)." Gary Lindstrom, Summit County Commissioner, responding to the selection of highway expansion alternatives in the I-70 Mountain Corridor EIS, *Denver Post*, December 14, 2003.

"Phenomenal cost. If I advocated that they'd come with a butterfly net to get me." Amtrak President David Gunn in response to a question why Amtrak does not utilize maglev or other advanced guideway technologies. (C-SPAN radio, November 10, 2003)

"Highways closed, airports shut down all on a Saturday night, / Can't find a taxi anywhere / but Amtrak's running all right." *Snow Storm Boogie* written and sung by Pat Donahue on the Prairie Home Companion hosted by Garrison Kellor, PBS, New York City,

"We are being offered a Band-Aid to stop a major hemorrhaging of our transportation artery. I like calling



Front Range
commuters could
benefit

C-DOT finds potential for service

Formation of a commuter bus network connecting Front Range cities is a very realistic goal according to a recently published study on the subject by the Colorado Department of Transportation. The Front Range Commuter Bus Study concludes a peak hour service from Colorado Springs to Denver might even be able to cover its operating cost as soon as its second year.

The other corridor showing promise is Fort Collins - Denver. The study suggests that these services could ultimately be a precursor to commuter rail by demonstrating a public demand for it.

The study proposes a weekday 12

bus each way schedule on South I-25, with six buses traveling from Colorado Springs to the Arapahoe Park "n Ride for transfer to buses serving the Denver Tech Center. These buses would then continue into Downtown Denver. The other six would provide Castle Rock to Denver service with two of the buses connecting with light rail trains at the Littleton Mineral Station. Once the Southeast Corridor Light Rail Line is open in 2006, all buses would terminate at the Arapahoe park-n-Ride where passengers would make a transfer to light rail for destinations further north.

An estimated 500 passengers would utilize the service in each direction with a Colorado Springs to downtown Denver ticket costing \$12.00. Multiple ride and monthly passes

would be available.

The study has already sparked interest in Colorado Springs where Springs Transit has obtained a three year Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality grant to start a commuter bus program to Denver. It is anticipated this service will begin in early summer.

Besides Colorado Springs - Denver and Fort Collins - Denver, the study looked at services between Pueblo -

News round-up from around here

RTD Wins Best Transit Award

The American Public Transit Association has chosen RTD as the best transit agency in North America for 2003. Responding for RTD at an awards ceremony at Denver Union Station on October 16, General Manager Cal Marsala said, "This award is really all about good government, because it judges how safe, cost effective and comprehensive a transit agency's operation is. Our business-like approach to running RTD has been recognized in competition with agencies around the country, and shows RTD truly is the best of the best."

Denver Most Congested City

The Texas Transportation Institute ranks Denver as the most congested city of its size in the country. In the Institute's 2003 Urban Mobility Study, Denver is listed as the third most congested of all cities nationally.

The report also calculates what impact transit is having on congestion. Drivers in Denver, for example, spend 13% less time stuck in traffic because other commuters are using rail and bus transit, that's a savings of 5.6 hours annually. Transit saves the Denver region \$220 million annually just in congestion costs, which is fuel and time lost. The full report can be found at

<http://mobility.tamu.edu/ums/>

(Transit Alliance, September 30, 2003)

UP Announces Track Work

The Union Pacific will be installing 60,000 new ties and eleven miles of new curved rail between Denver and Bond on the Moffat Line over several weeks this summer. Crews will performing the work during daylight hours, necessitating operation of the *California Zephyr* through southern Wyoming. UP officials are currently negotiating arrangements with Amtrak.

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improvements have broad support

Survey results show Coloradans want alternatives

(Continued from page 6)

Colorado Springs and Greeley - Denver. The study consultants determined that a fairly large subsidy would be needed in order to operate these services. An electronic copy of the study may be found on the C-DOT web site at:

<http://www.dot.state.co.us/CommuterChoice/Transit/CommuterBus.pdf>

In contrast to the bus study, C-DOT has been staying low-key about the 2003 Statewide Customer Survey which was completed in June by URS. The C-DOT funded study, which conducted some 3,200 calls to Colorado residents, found unprecedented support for C-DOT participation in projects which supported alternative (non-highway) transportation modalities. (Please see *ColoRail Passenger*

Big possibilities with study of Front Range freight movement

(Continued from page 2)

Each corridor just completed "scoping" meetings with the public to get an idea of the range of community concerns that each study needed to consider. If there was a contest for the best scoping meeting, the I-70 East EIS study has got to be the all time winner. The public was enthusiastically welcomed by a corps of young Corridor residents decked out in yellow polo shirts embossed with the study logo. Once signed in, attendees were able to partake in sumptuous buffet dinner catered by a local restaurant.

The study that may have ultimately the biggest impact on rail activity in Colorado is the Public Benefits and Cost Analysis Study, the effort by C-DOT to examine the movement of

freight along the Front Range and its effect on traffic congestion. The study is expected to be completed by late spring, 2004, by the consulting firm, DMJM-Harris and has the full cooperation and participation of the state's two major railroads, UP and BNSF.

A full explanation of the project which appeared in the *Rocky Mountain News* may be seen at:

http://www.rockymountainnews.com/drmn/real_estate/article/0,1299,DRMN_414_2376043,00.html

New timetable for Denver LRT

Effective January 4th, Light Rail trains on both Denver routes have been operating on a new schedule. Time changes now are able to take effects of the new Convention Center deviation and traffic signals into account.



ColoRail Membership

P.O. Box 480452
Denver, CO 80248

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Postal Code: _____

Telephone, with area code: _____

E-mail address, fax number or other contact information: _____

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News from here and there

Feds Support Local Transit

The US Department of Transportation has awarded five Colorado communities \$3.5 million for transit projects which include new transfer centers and buses. The money will go to Steamboat Springs, Mountain Village, Telluride, Breckenridge, and Weld County. No state funds were contributed to these projects.

(Mass Transit Magazine, September/October, 2003)

Governor wants choices on I-25

New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson has signed a \$1.6 billion transportation package which includes a new commuter rail service between Belen and Bernalillo. The \$6 million rail line, which includes a stop in Albuquerque, would run on existing Burlington Northern Santa Fe tracks

to park and ride depots at either end and would be operational within 18 months. He said this would be the first leg of rail service that would eventually extend to Santa Fe.

"The goal is to give our commuters choices... particularly for the I-25 Corridor."

New Mexico Transportation Secretary Rhonda Faught, said she would be working with Amtrak officials to establish a demonstration train to operate between Albuquerque and El Paso, TX next summer. (*Albuquerque Journal*, November 14, 2003)

Rail in, Maglev out in China

Traditional steel rail, not Magnetic Levitation is the final choice for the new high-speed Beijing-Shanghai railroad, according to the *Chinese People's Daily*. The line is projected to be operational by 2009 and cost

just over \$15 billion. The cost was apparently a major factor, as Maglev technology, if adopted, was expected to cost about \$50 billion. Rolling stock for the line will be selected through competitive bidding from German, Japanese

Briggs to provide update for bill on Regional Transportation Authority

State Representative Bob Briggs (R-Westminster) plans to provide an update on his proposed Regional Transportation Authority bill at the ColoRail general meeting (Saturday, January 24th - see page 3 for meeting details). It is Rep. Briggs' hope that this legislation can eventually be utilized to fund Front Range passenger rail developments.

ColoRail Passenger

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