

# ColoRail Passenger

January-February 2005

Issue #47

## Regional rail in the cards?

It seems like a dream: Traffic is tied up on the Interstate again. A truck is turned sideways on the hill that divides here from there. And two boys relax on a Regional Rail train on their way to see the... Mariners play. Wait! Didn't you mean the Rockies?

Well, it's a dream come true for these young riders at right on the *Talgo* tilting trains easing at speed through the curves on the Eugene to Vancouver, BC Cascades rail line run by Amtrak for the States of Oregon and Washington. They are heading for a Seattle Mariners game from Portland, but they could be going to the State Fair in Salem, the Aquarium in Seattle, or someday to visit a college in Tacoma.

When they are older, they will visit friends and family, attend an international conference in Canada, then make business trips on these trains. A similar line for similar purposes in Colorado might not reach to Canada, but **now that FasTracks has been approved by the voters, is rail travel along the Front Range from Fort Collins to Pueblo far behind?** This will be the topic at ColoRail's winter meeting scheduled for Saturday, January 29, 10:30AM to 12:30PM at the Virginia Village Library, 1500 S. Dahlia St. in southeast Denver.

The program will feature Dave Ruble, LSC Engineering, who will present his ideas of how a Front Range passenger rail system can be initiated. Mr. Ruble worked on



passenger rail issues at C-DOT before his retirement in 1998 and authored C-DOT's comprehensive Passenger Rail Feasibility Study (1997) which detailed potential ridership and cost estimates for 18 possible rail corridors across the state. He received ColoRail's Rusty Spike Award in 2001 along with fellow retiree and current ColoRail Board member, Joe Tempel, for their promotion of passenger rail at C-DOT.

Mr. Ruble's remarks will be followed by a panel which will discuss the merits and issues raised in the development of a Front Range passenger rail system.

Panel members will include Bill VanMeter, Senior Manager of Systems Planning at RTD, Tom Mauser, Modal Program Manager at C-DOT, Berthoud Mayor Milan Karspeck and State Representative Dorothy Butcher (D-Pueblo) who has sponsored Front Range passenger rail study resolutions during the past two legislative sessions.

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Measure carries all but one county

# FasTracks rings bell with

FasTracks, the \$4.7 billion plan to build and add new rail and bus transit in the Denver Metro area, passed by a solid 57.9% to 42.1% margin. All counties within the Regional Transportation District with the exception of Adams, approved the measure by comfortable margins. On January 1, residents in the District began paying a full one percent sales tax to RTD, an amount that is in line with other major US western cities.

This campaign brought together a strong coalition of local political leaders, business people, and environmental and pro-transit groups who were able to raise approximately \$3.5 million

as well as hit the streets with a consistent message that the region needed to vote for what they wanted the Denver Metro area to be like in 20 years with an additional one million new residents.

The FasTracks Yes! Campaign staff effectively organized a vast number of volunteers and carefully avoided the traps which defeated the Guide the Ride initiative seven years ago. Anti-rail proponents failed to derail the measure though they were ever present in the debate and even got vocal and financial support from Governor Bill Owens and several other prominent state leaders.

ColoRail members were among the volunteers. One ColoRail member who walked his precinct for his regular activity as a precinct committeeman noted that he grew certain that the measure would pass when he saw yard signs for "Yes on 4A" at houses of voters registered with different parties.

Though having some 1400 volunteers gather petition signatures to place the measure on the ballot was a logistical nightmare for the campaign staffers, this strategy ultimately paid off in the formation of a core group of proponents who were able to explain the initiative to friends and neighbors on a one to one basis.

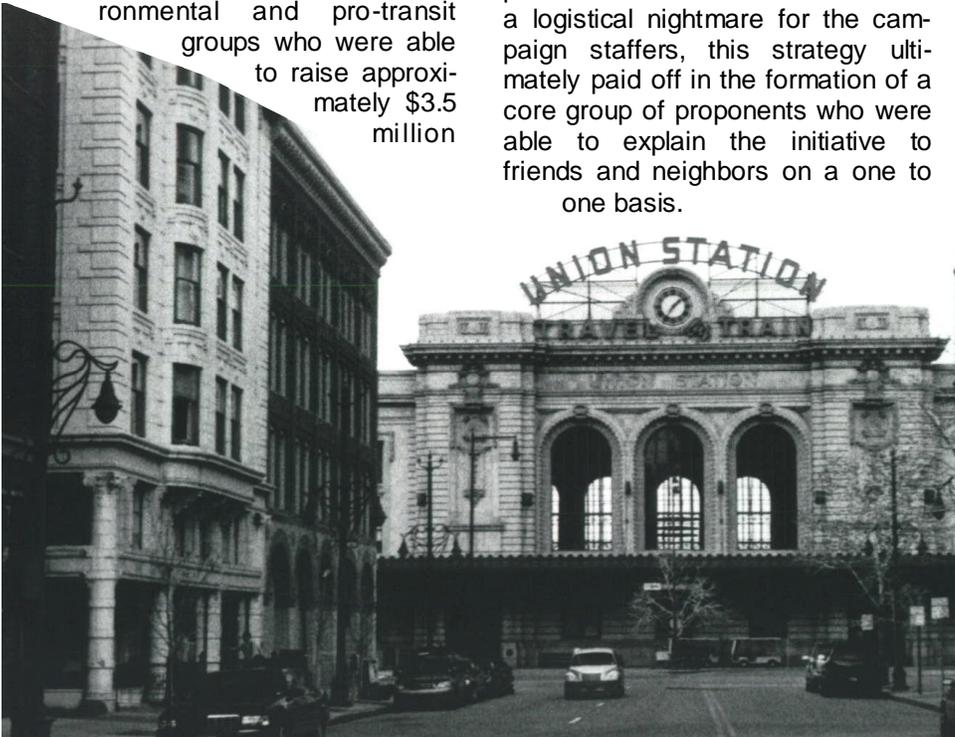
Other than the benefits of the development of a comprehensive transit system in the Denver Metro area, passage of FasTracks provides a number of other positive potential benefits. FasTracks creates a central structure for expansion of passenger rail to other Front Range cities and towns and will be the main source of funding for the relocation of rail freight traffic which is being studied by C-DOT.

The gamble taken by RTD with help from Denver, C-DOT, and the Denver Regional Council of Governments to purchase Denver Union Station has now paid off.

Union Station will be the major transfer point for the system and will stimulate development in the surrounding area. Many of the 57 new rail stations will serve as the focal point for commercial and residential development throughout the Metro area.

The positive vote on FasTracks demonstrates that the public will support a transit only transportation measure when conventional wisdom says such efforts must have a highway component in order to pass. The vote also sends a strong message of what the public wants to the legislature which in the past has tried to marginalize the importance

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***In the meantime, Union Station's importance has already increased.***

On January 2nd, route changes added Union Station stops on designated trips of Rtes 6, 58X, 68X, 72X, 76X, 120X, B, L, and S. Stops now shown in the public timetables will add connections from Boulder for Amtrak trains, where previously passengers had to get between RTD's Market Street Station and the train station.

# voters-- appeal is broad

Planning for four  
car trains

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of RTD and divert its funding elsewhere.

The successful adoption of FasTracks signals the development of a regional approach to Metro Denver's transportation problems, an approach which will undoubtedly expand to other areas of governmental cooperation in the decades ahead.

The RTD Board has already approved a revised budget to take into account its increased revenues generated by the additional sales tax. Among other things, the new 2005 budget allocates funds to expand studies on all six FasTracks corridors, purchase new buses and light rail vehicles, locate and acquire space for new bus and rail maintenance centers, and construct additional parking and longer station platforms to accommodate four car trains on existing light rail lines.

## Colorado's Front Range regional rail service one of several items on ColoRail January agenda

(Continued from page 1)

The meeting will also include a brief discussion of other current national, state, and local passenger rail issues. ColoRail members as well as the public are cordially invited to attend. Refreshments will be served.

Please note the change from the previous location of our winter meetings at the North Presbyterian Church. The Virginia Village Library is located at the intersection of S. Dahlia St. and E. Florida Ave., eight blocks from S. Colorado Blvd. Take I-25 to the Colorado Blvd. exit. Go north 3 blocks on Colorado Blvd. and then east on Florida Ave. to the Library. Off street parking is available at the library.

If traveling by public transportation, take RTD **Route 40** or the Boulevard Bee Line to the intersection of Florida Ave. and Colorado Blvd. Please contact Jon Esty (303) 756-6910 by Friday evening, January 28, if you would like a ride from the intersection of Florida Ave. and Colorado Blvd. to the meeting.

### Denver enjoys the Zephyr, but Boulder may feel a bit of the Breeze

Graham Hill, a transportation consultant and owner of 21 Wheels, gave a brief overview of this Boulder Breeze streetcar proposal at ColoRail's Fall Membership Meeting on October 2nd. He reviewed the success and popularity of street cars in Tampa, Memphis, Little Rock, and Portland, OR, and described the proposed four mile line along Pearl St. from the Pearl St. Mall in downtown Boulder through the Crossroads shopping district.

Tampa, Memphis and Little Rock have "vintage" streetcars, while Portland has both modern and old-

fashioned style cars.

Mr. Hill pointed out that some cities are starting to use streetcars as economic development catalysts in connecting major transit centers with hotels, restaurants, shopping and recreational activities. In Boulder's case, the streetcar would link the RTD Boulder bus station adjacent to the Pearl St. Mall with the proposed commuter rail station and transit village at 32nd and Pearl.

Mr. Hill suggests a business improvement district with support from private and public interests be established to help finance the construction and operation of the streetcars. Four or five cars with a capacity of 80 passengers would ply the route on 10 minute headways. He would like to see wind

power utilized to supply electricity for the cars.

Mr. Hill said he plans to continue championing the idea with Boulder business owners, citizens, and local political leaders.

For more information about the Boulder Breeze, please see:

[www.boulderbreeze.org](http://www.boulderbreeze.org)



## “Now departing for Northern Colorado!”

### **Passenger rail is considered a viable transportation option in two studies that were presented at the ColoRail Fall Membership Meeting at the Boulder Public Library on Saturday, October 2.**

Tim Baldwin, Deputy Project Manager for the US36 Corridor Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Study, described ridership modeling and station placement and Craig Gaskill, Transit Project Manager on the North I-25 EIS reviewed the scope of his study which includes passenger rail options as some of the study's transportation alternatives.

Mr. Baldwin briefly reviewed the highway as well as the transit elements of this comprehensive and expedited RTD/C-DOT jointly funded study. The study consultants have already turned in a draft of their findings just a year and three weeks from the initial starting date.

One “no-build” and four packages of alternatives for Highway US36 are included in various combinations, additional general purpose lanes, bus rapid transit (BRT) or express bus, high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, express tolling lanes, and high occupancy toll (HOT) lanes which are toll lanes that provide free or reduced cost access to HOVs.

Commuter rail along the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) alignment from Denver Union Station to Boulder is also included.

Less expensive Transportation Management options are being reviewed which include intersection improvements, expanded park 'n Ride facilities, bus route restructuring, and development of bicycle facilities.

Utilizing the Denver Council of Governments' ridership demand model, Mr. Baldwin reported that estimated ridership increased on the commuter rail line as prospective stations were added even though the total trip would take longer because of the additional stops. Study consultants have concluded that the line should have eight intermediate stations between Union Station and an end of line station at Gunbarrel Road in Boulder. The Longmont extension of the commuter rail line as envisioned in the FasTracks initiative is part of a separate environmental assessment (EA) study funded by RTD.

Daily ridership on commuter rail between Boulder and Denver is projected to be 20,000 each weekday by 2025 with a trip between the two endpoints lasting 52 minutes. Average spacing of stations along the line would be 3.5 miles which would probably limit trains to a top speed of 60 mph.

Mr. Baldwin anticipated that most of the ridership would come from areas around Westminster where extensive mixed use development is planned.

Mr. Gaskill with the assistance of Kim Podobnik, North I-25 EIS Public Involvement Manager, outlined a much broader scope of study than did Mr. Baldwin.

The North I-25 EIS is a three and a half year study funded entirely by C-DOT which is in the process of examining numerous transportation alternatives in an area along the

eastern side of North Front Range which is roughly the size of New Jersey. The goal of the study is to develop the best transportation options for the area.

The study, like the US36 study, has been underway for a year but because of the huge number of options under review, only a few of the more esoteric technologies have been ruled out. What remains are 31 transit alternatives which include high speed rail, commuter rail, heavy rail (Metros), light rail, and bus (local, regional, & express) along with assorted possible alignments.

The previous North Front Range Transportation Alternatives Feasibility Study completed about three years ago recommended a high speed rail line as its centerpiece mostly along new track paralleling I-25 to Denver from a new large parking transfer facility situated between Fort Collins and Greeley. A second phase would extend the rail lines directly into Fort Collins and Greeley.

The present study is looking at this recommendation but is also considering train service along the US 287 Corridor from Fort Collins through Loveland and Longmont with a connection at Broomfield with the BNSF Boulder Line.

Also under consideration is commuter rail along the eastern side of the study area beginning in Fort Collins to Greeley and then southwest to Fort Lupton, Brighton and Denver, all on Union Pacific alignment.

For more information on these two project, please see:

[www.US36eis.com](http://www.US36eis.com)

[www.cdot.info/northi25eis](http://www.cdot.info/northi25eis)

## ColoRail Board Elections Slated

Nominations due  
February 15th

ColoRail invites members to run for the Board of Directors. If you would like to nominate someone or yourself, please contact Ira Schreiber, Chairman of the Nominations and Elections Committee, by February 15, 2004, at (303) 750-4507 or:

[Ishcreiber@aol.com](mailto:Ishcreiber@aol.com).

The 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 seven Board openings which

include regional representatives from northeastern and southeastern Colorado as well as the Western Slope.

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



**COLORADO RAIL PASSENGER ASSOCIATION**

### **Jo Campbell (1927-2004)**

Josephine (Jo) Campbell, a member of the ColoRail Board of Directors, died in her Denver home on October 16. She was 77. Jo was a charter member of ColoRail and served on the association's Board of Directors from its inception in 1989. At various times during the past 15 years, she also served as ColoRail's membership chairperson as well as its legislative liaison.

Jo participated extensively in Capitol Hill area community activities and was an active volunteer in the Democratic Party. Prior to her retirement, she worked as a secretary at the Colorado State Department of Natural Resources.

Former and current ColoRail Board members are purchasing a Union Station brick paver in her name to honor her memory and service to the association. It will specifically note that her work benefited rail passengers, as Jo understood the need for organized work to gain improvements.

Jo devoted much effort to keeping up with events, even when she was ill. She read newspapers regularly and attended the October ColoRail general membership meeting in Boulder.

Her involvement in ColoRail began when there was still a likelihood that the Union Station would be stripped of its transportation functions and turned into the atrium for a pair of office high-rise buildings. Officials in other metro areas chortled that Denver would never have a rail transit system.

Jo was born at what was really the end of the electric railway era in North America and grew up as the remaining systems ran out the life of their rolling stock and physical plant, victims of legal maneuvering, local wheeler-dealers and big highway programs. While most Americans fell back on simplistic explanations that implied that we have no choice in the matter, Jo knew that second-rate transportation service was a political choice that could be changed by hard work.

### **ColoRail Board Members:**

(with telephone numbers)  
and <e-mail addresses>

Jon Esty, President  
(303-756-6910) Denver.  
<rkrza@aol.com>

Ron Vander Kooi, Vice-President,  
Arvada.  
<ronvanderkooi@juno.com>

Don Zielesch, Secretary, Denver.  
<dwz1@juno.com>

Hugh Wilson, Treasurer, Lakewood.  
<acelawilson@hotmail.com>

John Ayer, Board Member, Frederick.  
<johnayer@aol.com>

Daryl Kinton, Board Member, Littleton.  
ColoRail Webmaster  
<DarylKinton@hotmail.com>

Mark Reeve, Board Member,  
Cedaredge.  
<wmreeve@aol.com>

Ira Schreiber, Board Member, Aurora.  
<ischreiber@aol.com>

Sheila Sloan, Board Member, Pueblo.  
<sheila\_sloan@msn.com>

Joe Tempel, Board Member Morrison.  
<joe\_tempel@dinoridge.org>

-----  
Jay Jones, NARP Board Member,  
Denver.  
<sunjones@aol.com>

-----  
Robert Rynerson, Newsletter Editor,  
Denver.  
(720-570-0647)  
<rw.rynerson@worldnet.att.net>

Setting a new tone for NARP

# National board meets in Denver

The National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) held its annual fall Board meeting at the Downtown Comfort Inn in Denver on October 15-16. Sixty Board members from all parts of the country attended. This was the first meeting chaired by NARP's newly elected president, George Chilson of Dallas, who promised to set a different tone at the 15,000 member passenger rail advocacy organization.

That new tone and direction was evident in the meeting agenda which primarily focused on the internal resources NARP has to improve and promote a national passenger rail system. Rather than hearing from a parade of Amtrak and other outside rail related organizations which had been NARP's typical practice in past years, President Chilson drew mostly on the experience and knowledge of Board members for presentations on how best to advance the cause of passenger rail in the US.

Director Robert Conheim (CA) describe the Capitol Corridor frequent rider program dubbed "CC - Riders," a group of 40 to 50 regular passengers who ride the train from Auburn and Sacramento to the Bay Area and return each weekday.

The group is not only a social club which arranges holiday parties and other events, but it also supports the train service at legislative hearings and protested recent efforts by the host railroad, Union Pacific, to lengthen trip times.

Other CC-Rider groups have formed which now cover different trains and origin and destination points. Joint Powers Authority Executive Director, Gene Skoropowski, who supervises the overall operation of the Capitol Corridor and is also a NARP Director, welcomes the CC-Riders as allies in helping to maintain quality intercity rail service in northern California.

Texas directors Will Bozeman and

Ray Dunbar described their efforts to support the operation of the Texas Eagle, Amtrak's Chicago to San Antonio daily train. Their group, the Texas Eagle Maintenance and Planning Organization (TEMPO), is a coalition of local politicians, business persons, and interested persons who dedicate themselves to make sure the train's existence continues and that a quality service is provided. Over the years the Texas Eagle has been frequently targeted for service downgrades by Amtrak which TEMPO has been successful in opposing. As a result, the Texas Eagle ridership levels and on time performance has steadily improved.

Board members did hear from outside speakers which included Martha Roskowski, Executive Director of GO Boulder, and Kevin Scott, Amtrak's Chief of Service Delivery.

Ms. Roskowski, a former lobbyist for the bicycle community in Washington, DC, and Colorado provided the group suggestions and strategies of how to mobilize a grassroots efforts to effectively lobby Congress. She used the recent efforts by bicycle supporters to successfully achieve transportation supplemental enhancement funding for bike paths over the threats to eliminate the program by House Transportation Chairman Ernest Istook (R-OK).

Mr. Scott described various initiatives Amtrak is taking to improve onboard service and then bravely answered numerous questions posed by directors who illustrated their comments with stories of problem and inconsistent on-board staff. He invited any Amtrak traveler to personally contact him as soon as possible after an incident at: [scottkev@amtrak.com](mailto:scottkev@amtrak.com). He promised a speedy reply to all complaints.

The day prior to the meetings, most of the directors toured the ColoRail Railcar plant in Fort Lupton and the Transportation Technology Center, Inc. in Pueblo. Before the Saturday sessions, directors took a quick round trip via special train over the RTD's light rail lines and Free Mall Ride, with a look at the start of Union Station intermodal terminal developments.

Looking for economical overseas travel this year? Or just want to try out a nicely arranged transportation website? Northern Ireland's address: [www.translink.co.uk/](http://www.translink.co.uk/)

Follow the development of FREX on its own website: [www.frontrangeexpress.com](http://www.frontrangeexpress.com)

## Colorado Rural Towns Support Amtrak

If funding cuts shut down Amtrak's Southwest Chief, the Lower Arkansas River Valley's economy will suffer, two city administrators from La Junta and Lamar told the *Pueblo Chieftain* newspaper on September 24. The managers were responding to Bush Administration funding proposals which would force Amtrak to stop running next year.

La Junta's manager said that the loss of the passenger rail service would be a blow to the city -- "it's

one of our major transportation links." Lamar's city administrator said Amtrak is a vital part of Lamar's transportation infrastructure. He said Amtrak is important to Lamar's ability to provide another mode of transportation to its citizens and tourists.

Both said rail transportation is one of the very few transportation modes that serve rural communities. Without Amtrak, there will be less of a need for the BNSF tracks that run through Southeastern Colorado.

# New facility to aid *Zephyr*

Amtrak was paying taxes to help build highways

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in 1982 according to the Texas Transportation Institute' annual Urban Mobility Report. The Institute, part of Texas A&M University, looked at data from 1982 to 2002.

The biggest time-saver is public transit, which shaves 32 percent off the time drivers spend sitting bumper-to-bumper. "If public transportation service was discontinued and the riders traveled in private vehicles, then the 85 largest urban areas would have suffered an additional 1.1 billion hours of delay in 2002," the report said. Associated Press, September 7, 2004

### Amtrak Maintenance Facility Open

Amtrak trains operating in the San Francisco Bay area will now be receiving their servicing at the new 22 acre, \$71 million Kirkham Street Locomotive and Car Repair Shop in Oakland. The 13 track facility was dedicated on October 12 and

opened its doors for business on November 1.

A joint project with the state of California (Caltrans), the facility is located adjacent to the Union Pacific mainline and was modeled after the Los Angeles locomotive and repair shops. Prior to its opening, Amtrak paid Union Pacific a fee plus the cost of fuel to service locomotives at the old West Oakland maintenance shops, once home to forgotten trains such as the *Oakland Lark*, along with well-known streamliners such as the *City of San Francisco*.

Passenger train equipment which was previously sent to Los Angeles for extensive repairs and servicing can now be done locally allowing for a speedier return to revenue service. The new facility will service the Capitol Corridor and San Joaquin trains as well as the *Coast Starlight* and *California Zephyr*. *Amtrak Ink*, October, 2004.

### Railroads Gain Tax Relief

Part of a massive corporate tax relief package passed by Congress and signed by President Bush in mid-October will totally eliminate a 4.3 cent per gallon fuel tax on the nation's railroads by January 1, 2007. The tax was imposed during the energy crisis in the early 1970's on both the trucking and railroad industry as a means of paying for highway construction.

Ironically, trucking firms were exempted from the tax several years ago but railroad companies which construct, maintain, and pay taxes on their own rights-of-way were required to continue to pay the tax. The bill will save railroads an estimated \$170m a year and short line railroads will get \$500m in tax credits. Amtrak anticipates the legislation will save it about \$2.7 million annually. *Railway Age*, November, 2004.



# 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: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**\$10 PER YEAR**  
pays for mailings,  
printing, publicity

Time in mountains  
more attractive than  
time in traffic

## News from here and there

### Mountain Resorts Hesitant

When it comes to improvements in transportation to the high country, Colorado mountain resorts along the I-70 Corridor, may like things the just the way they are. Ski and resort areas are finding that growing congestion on the Interstate particularly on weekend afternoons is having beneficial effect on their revenues.

"We've seen dramatic growth in in-state residents making an overnight trip - it's our fastest growing segment in the last three years," says Vail Resorts Vice-president and Chief Operating Officer Bill Jenson. "I attribute a significant portion of that growth to people's desire to avoid the lengthened commute to and from the mountains."

For several years, C-DOT along with mountain businesses and communities have been trying to find a solution to unplug the congestion on I-70. It is possible the lodging industry may

now not be as enthusiastic about resolving the problem particularly if the solution is costly to them which it most likely will be. *New York Times*, September 19, 2004.

### Esty Wins Award

ColoRail President Jon Esty has received a special distinguished service award from the Colorado Association of State Transit Agencies (CASTA) in recognition of his efforts to promote transit and passenger rail beginning with the foundation of ColoRail in 1989. The award was presented by Margi Ness, Executive Director of the Colorado Mobility Coalition, who described Mr. Esty's contributions to the development of balanced transportation in Colorado over the past decade. Bert Melcher, former RTD Board Chair and Highway Commissioner, nominated Mr. Esty for the honor. Mr. Melcher chairs the Transportation Committee of the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Sierra Club.

CASTA is an organization of transit agencies large and small across the state. It provides training and management assistance to transit agencies as well as serves as a clearing house and advocate for federal funding for local transit services. The award was presented during CASTA's 25th Anniversary Annual Meeting in Vail on September 21.

In receiving the award, Mr. Esty expressed appreciation for the honor and praised the work CASTA does in providing quality transit services throughout the state.

### Rush-hour Tie-ups Costly in Time

Snarled traffic is costing travelers in the biggest US cities a whopping 3.5 billion hours a year, up from 700 million two decades ago. The average urban traveler was stuck in road traffic 46 hours a year in 2002, a 187 percent increase over 16 hours lost

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P.O. Box 480452  
Denver, CO 80248