

# ColoRail Passenger

January-February 2006

Issue #50

## America "votes" with its seats

*Editor: Below are comments which reflect the thinking of a growing number of forward thinking state DOT leaders that passenger rail must be an integral part of the transportation services available to the country.*

### Building a Passenger Rail Future

Travelers across America are voting in record numbers for expanded passenger rail service in the United States. These "votes" are coming in the form of record passenger rail ridership.

Amtrak ridership increased in fiscal 2005 to more than 25 million, marking the third straight year of passenger gains for the national intercity passenger railroad, despite service disruptions that included major hurricanes in the South and repair work that impacted Acela Express service in the Northeast.

Gains in passenger rail travel are occurring in all parts of the country. In Wisconsin, we are also seeing impressive growth. The Chicago-Milwaukee *Hiawatha* service carried more than a half-million passengers in the federal fiscal year ending in October, an increase of 14.1% in ridership on trains supported by Wisconsin and Illinois.

What do these numbers mean?

Americans are struggling with worsening highway and airline congestion, even as fuel prices rise. In the post-Sept. 11 environment, travelers are wary of a system that depends so heavily on airline travel. And everyone from business travelers to older citizens are looking for options that won't cost them more time or money. In short, Americans want transportation alternatives, with rail playing a significant role.

The States for Passenger Rail Coalition, of which I am

chairman, was founded in 2000 just as we started to see passenger demands increasing for expanded rail service. Today, there are 24 states represented from all parts of the country, and we will continue to make the case for strong state-federal partnerships to expand our nation's passenger rail network.

We owe the traveling public the transportation choices they demand, as evidenced by their increasing use of rail. But improved rail service will not come without a strong commitment by the federal government.

For too many years, passenger rail service in America has been hamstrung by the year-to-year funding decisions of Congress. This unpredictable funding process has varied with the shifting political winds.

This is no way to run a railroad! It makes planning extremely difficult.

The States for Passenger Rail Coalition is calling on Congress to provide a dedicated source of capital funding for passenger rail, just as Congress does for highways and aviation. We support federal legislation that gives passenger rail the same 80/20 federal-state funding split that highways receive. It is time to level the playing field for all forms of passenger transportation.



**Americans are struggling with worsening highway and airline congestion, while former second-rank countries pass us**

I traveled to Spain recently to tour its passenger rail system. It is fast and reliable - trains will travel between Madrid and Barcelona at 217 mph. This is happening in a

*(Continued on page 8)*

*"A Voice for Colorado's Rail Passengers"*

Hope was running high, but no specific ideas

## Policy makers voice concerns

For quite some time, Front Range regional councils of governments (COG's) have voiced concerns that C-DOT's long range plans to add more highway lanes from Fort Collins/Greeley to Pueblo may not be totally responsive to future travel demands along the I-25 Corridor. Four regional COG's (North Front Range, Denver, Pikes Peak, and Pueblo Area) along with the Upper Front Range Transportation Planning Region held the Front Range Transportation Forum at the Colorado Convention Center on September 21 to discuss ways Front Range mobility might be improved and how to pay for it.

Hope was running high that the COGs just might come up with an alternative to C-DOT's myopic road building plans but despite a spirited presentation by Envision Utah's founder, Robert Grow, and a comprehensive discussion of Front Range demographics by Rob McDonald, Pikes Peak COG, and Jeff May, Denver Regional COG, no specific ideas emerged from the forum except expression that unless something is done, traffic congestion will get a whole lot worse and solutions will be very expensive.

Mr. Grow described Envision Utah's "visioning strategy," a series of questionnaires to get the general public's input as to what they wanted Utah to look like in the future. He mentioned that passenger rail was a top vote getter and described Utah DOT's and Utah Transit Authority's cooperative effort to initiate commuter rail service north and south of Salt Lake City.

Mr. McDonald and Mr. May stated that population and job growth are producing one giant single Front Range region along major highway corridors where some 5.7 million

people live in 2030 an increase of 61% from 2000. Approximately 79% of Colorado's population will live and 81% will work along major Front Range highway and transit corridors they predicted.

Projected vehicle miles traveled will increase even faster than population growth while only a 10% increase in highway lane miles is slated to occur. Even though the presenters showed an attractive slide of a NJ Transit train at a station to illustrate "healthy economies are linked to efficient travel between Front Range areas," passenger rail did not seem to gain much traction with policy makers who attended the session.

Staffers from the four COGs now meet periodically to discuss policy options in how to handle growth in

### It's not rocket science

The Rail Products unit of L.B. Foster Co. has purchased the 55,000 square foot former Boeing Delta III Rocket Parts facility in Pueblo. The Company which supplies products to the transportation, construction, utility, and energy industries will produce insulated rail joints and assemble Electro 20 Track Lubricators which are designed to reduce friction and extend rail life.

The facility is adjacent to the Pueblo Municipal Airport and is expected to create 30 new jobs when it opens in March. *Railway Age*, December, 2005.

Front Range communities but discussion of specific transportation solutions are avoided. The COGs are planning another forum for sometime in 2006.

For additional information, please see:

<<http://www.drcog.org/index.cfm?page=TransportationFrontRangeTransportationForum>>

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You can look it up...

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cascades\\_\(passenger\\_train\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cascades_(passenger_train))

...gives details of a popular *state-sponsored* corridor rail service

## Now our turn for NARP regional

New look at NARP  
brings David Johnson  
to speak

ColoRail will be hosting the annual meeting of the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) Region 10 on Saturday, March 25, at the Oxford Hotel (Sage Room, 1st floor), from 9:30 AM until 2:00 PM. Registration will begin at 8:30 AM.

NARP Associate Director David Johnson will be providing a look at current passenger rail legislative issues as well as Amtrak developments. Attendees will also be receiving updates on FasTracks, Front Range Commuter Rail and passenger rail progress in the Region 10 area. A rail-oriented activity is being planned to follow the conclusion of the meeting.

The Oxford Hotel is located in lower downtown Denver just 1/2 block from Union Station. Information sheets

will be mailed out to ColoRail and NARP Region 10 members in early February. Region 10 encompasses Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming, and Colorado. Two directors who will represent the region on the NARP Board will be selected at the meeting.

The LoDo (Lower Downtown) area in which the Oxford Hotel and Union Station are situated offers many advantages for visitors. On Saturday mornings, family-oriented breakfast spots such as the Egg Shell & Incredibles Café on Blake Street (between 15th and 16th Sts.) or the Delectable Egg on Market Street (between 16th and 17th Sts.) join the offerings of all-day favorites such as Dixon's (at 16th & Wazee Sts.) and McCormick's Restaurant right in the Oxford itself.

### ColoRail Station Hosts Bring Cheer to Holiday Travelers

For a number of years now, ColoRail members have generously volunteered their time to serve as hosts at Denver Union Station during busy holiday travel times. ColoRail station hosts welcome and assist passengers arriving or departing on the daily *California Zephyr* with questions they may have about train travel, facilities at Union Station, etc. Volunteers may choose to work at either morning or evening train arrival/departure times.

This is the list of station hosts who volunteered at Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years. Mention should also be made of hosts who agreed to volunteer but did not because of late trains. Their good intentions are appreciated, even though they were sabotaged by weather or what might euphemistically be called "underinvestment in transportation infrastructure."

- Keith Dameron
- Jay Jones
- Eric Miller
- Tom Peyton
- Ron Vander Kooi
- Rob Rynerson
- Lori Sittner
- Sarah Mc Dowell
- Bob Shedd
- Mike Cronin
- Paul Steinhauer
- Don Zielesch

If you are interested in becoming a station host, please contact ColoRail's station host program coordinators, either Jay Jones <sunjones@earthtones.com> (303) 733-1519 or Don Zielesch <dwz1@juno.com> (303) 934-4949.

### ColoRail Board spots to open soon

ColoRail members are invited to join the Board of Directors. A slate of candidates will be developed by the Board's Elections & Nominating Committee, chaired by ColoRail Board Secretary, Don Zielesch, for election at the May membership meeting.

Four positions on the 11 member Board are available. Board members serve for two year terms. Don may be reached at

(303) 934-4949

or by e-mail

<dwz1@juno.com>.

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

Member attendance is welcome. Members from points south enjoy a train ride home on Light Rail. See you on the C-Line!

Amtrak looks instead to retain revenue while cutting costs

# Critics want to mess

Congress and almost every Amtrak critic are raising questions about the cost of providing meal service to passengers. This had already gotten the attention of Amtrak managers who are trying to discover ways appropriate food service can be provided, but not at such a high cost. One four month experimental pro-

posal was attempted on Empire Service trains between New York City and Albany utilizing Subway to provide food and drink to passengers, but the contract was terminated on November 23 after only six days with no reason given, according the Albany *Times Union*. As an economy move, Amtrak had previous cut food

service on these trains but made it available on longer distance trains traveling west of Albany.

It was against this background of growing food service cost that Brian Rosenwald, Superintendent of Passenger Services for Amtrak's Central District, addressed the fall Board meeting of the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) on October 21. By way of illustration, Mr. Rosenwald used food service figures for the month of August for the Texas Eagle which operates daily between Chicago and San Antonio.

Total food service revenue was \$138,000 while food costs were \$109,000 and labor costs were \$253,000 for five employees in the dining car and one attendant in the lounge car. Mr. Rosenwald said that typically food service costs Amtrak 2 to 3 times the revenue it receives, but that the railroad is strongly committed to providing quality meal service because it definitely attracts patronage since it adds to the overall quality of the travel experience.

Amtrak is considering converting Superliner lounge cars into dining/lounge service on some of its overnight trains such as the Capitol Limited between Washington and Chicago. Part of the lower section of the lounge car would be turned into a food preparation area and part would be made into a tavern. Part of the upstairs Superliner lounge area would be converted to dining tables with the rest of the car remaining as is. A regional menu of food items prepared off the train would be available for passengers at any time between the hours of 6:00 AM to 12:00 Midnight.

Mr. Rosenwald estimated three workers could staff the service with a fourth available for peak hour demand. He explained the biggest saving would result in only having to operate one car for food service instead

of two.

“ P r e m i e r e

## NOW THERE ARE TWO GOOD REASONS TO VISIT THE AUTOMATIC BUFFET CAR



**FOR FOOD.** The Automatic Buffet Car on this train is a convenient way to enjoy a snack or light meal whenever you feel like it. Food and beverage items are dispensed from self-service vending machines. There are dining tables in the car or you may take your meal back to your seat on a tray. An attendant will be on hand to make change and assist you in any way that he can. Please see reverse side for menu.

**FOR BEVERAGE SERVICE.** A representative selection of quality beverages—including soft drinks—is now available for your enjoyment in the Automatic Buffet Car. Beverage service subject to suspension during busy meal periods.

**COCKTAILS**

Manhattan . . . . . 1.00  
 Dry Martini . . . . . 1.00  
 Vodka Martini . . . . . 1.00  
 Old Fashioned . . . . . 1.00

California Port or Sherry Wine (2 oz.) . . . . .75  
 Beer . . . . .50

Club Soda . . . . .15  
 7-UP (12 oz.) . . . . .25

**WHISKEYS, Etc.**

Scotch . . . . . 1.00  
 Bourbon, bonded . . . . . 1.00  
 Bourbon, straight . . . . . 1.00  
 Gin or Vodka . . . . . 1.00

Ginger Ale . . . . .25  
 Coca-Cola (12 oz.) . . . . .25

Sale of Alcoholic Beverages subject to State and County regulations.

# Southern Pacific

The late Southern Pacific Transportation Co. experimented with ways to slash dining car costs in the 1960's. Automatic vending technology was promoted, but chronic failures and mediocre food drew criticism.

# with dining cars

Some critics favor ordering out for food

(Continued from page 4)

Trains" such as the *California Zephyr* and *Southwest Chief* which operate over a period of two nights would retain both the dining and the lounge cars in order to provide a greater range of quality service to the traveling public Mr. Rosenwald said.

financial management practices and cost containment measures, and started operating the railroad like a business. With David Gunn no longer standing in the way, the Bush-appointed Board should be able to implement the necessary reforms, these participants suggested. One tangible expression of change that

the Board has already been able to implement has been the outsourcing of food service to private providers—something that Gunn consistently resisted."

Or, perhaps David Gunn knew that a more methodical approach to something with such a record of pitfalls was needed?

## Dinner in the diner -- -- different courses

-- by R. W. Rynerson

Dining car and other food and beverage services for trains have always been complex subjects. Before the invention of dining cars, travelers had to make mad dashes to station lunch counters. In fact, that continued to be the case on long branch line runs or mail trains such as the Union Pacific's Trains 11/12 across Idaho and Oregon in the 1960's.

With lunch stops organized and travelers informed, that was little problem for lightly patronized mail trains. However, that whole concept -- being promoted by some Amtrak opponents -- is no longer functional because station restaurants or nearby coffee shops rarely exist.

It is hard to picture 250 passengers off of the *California Zephyr* running across Wynkoop Street and being served in the elegant restaurants of LoDo in 45 minutes.

Other critics favor SP-style economy measures or the Amtrak cuts of the 1980's. These are sometimes described as being businesslike. C. Kenneth Orski, whose essays appear right along with such as Randall O'Toole in the Heritage Foundation's website reported favorably on a conference:

"Other participants placed hope in internal reforms within Amtrak. Inter-city passenger service could be made financially viable, these participants contended, once Amtrak instituted appropriate

Not known for commenting about his business affairs, investor Phil Anschutz let slip after taking over SP that he was amazed at the public enmity it drew. He never dined with SP?

### THE AUTOMATIC BUFFET CAR

(Individual items may vary from trip to trip)

#### BREAKFAST SUGGESTIONS

Orange Juice . . . . .	.25
Prunes in Syrup —or— Grapefruit Wedges . . . . .	.35
Dry Cereals . . . . .	.25
Waffles (2) with Butter & Maple Syrup . . . . .	.60
Donuts (2) . . . . .	.25
Sweet Roll . . . . .	.25
Bread (Two Slices) with Butter & Jelly . . . . .	.30

#### LUNCHEON & DINNER SUGGESTIONS

Assorted Hot Canned Soups . . . . .	.35
Salad . . . . .	.35
Crackers . . . . .	.10
Sandwiches—Cheese . . . . .	.65
Other . . . . .	.75
Hot Tray Meals . . . . .	1.50
Assorted Hot Canned Foods . . . . .	.50
Bread (Two Slices) with Butter & Jelly . . . . .	.30

#### DESSERT SUGGESTIONS

Frozen Bars . . . . .	.20
Pie . . . . .	.40
Fruit Jello . . . . .	.35
Candy . . . . .	.15

#### BEVERAGES

Coffee, Hot Chocolate, Tea, or Sanka . . . . .	.15
Cold Beverage . . . . .	.15
Milk . . . . .	.25

6-6B

ColoRail  
President...

# Legacy must outlast critics

## comments from Jon Esty

At a time when government needs all the capable and efficient managers it can get, the Amtrak Board decided to fire the most competent president Amtrak ever had, David L. Gunn. It seems as though the trend in Washington these days is to reward incompetent people by promotion or even a Medal of Freedom. Who you know, your political philosophy, and how much money you contribute gets you the job.

Never mind that Mr. Gunn rescued a floundering organization when he arrived on the scene in May, 2002. Amtrak management had just mort-

gaged Penn Station in order to keep afloat, financial accountability was a mess, Amtrak bureaucracy was bloated, damaged equipment was not being repaired, and the Northeast Corridor was rapidly deteriorating.

A railroad man with solid credentials for pulling troubled transit systems out of difficulty, Mr. Gunn went to work paring down the Amtrak workforce including the 80 or so vice-presidents, creating financial transparency, repairing equipment and returning it to service, and initiating a massive rehabilitation of the Northeast Corridor. Employee productivity rose, the budget was contained,

and ridership increased to just over 25 million this past Fiscal Year despite Katrina and problems with the *Acela* trainsets. Gunn was able to earn the respect of workers, Class 1 railroad officials, the traveling public, and most members of Congress.

This apparently was not good enough for US-DOT Secretary Norman Mineta who traveled about the country last year making horribly misleading statements about Amtrak particularly its national network of long distance trains. When the Congress and the public ignored him, the Bush Administration decided that the Board, which had praised Mr. Gunn before a congressional committee several weeks earlier, had to fire him.

What is so terribly sad about this whole situation is the failure of the administration to recognize that corridor and national passenger rail systems need to be preserved and enhanced to offer an efficient, safe, reliable, and comfortable alternative to air and highway transport. All other industrialized nations in the world are making huge investments in rail infrastructure and equipment knowing that roads and air corridors will become hopelessly congested if they don't.

This lesson is lost on the US despite the rapidly growing list of highway projects deemed necessary to keep traffic flowing such as what we see from our own Colorado DOT. A longer term vision is needed. Amtrak or any other viable passenger rail system is not going to be able to be reorganized into profitability which is what the administration wants. Serious financial investments in passenger rail must be made beginning at the federal level. There is no escaping that fact if we are to maintain our mobility. That must be Mr. Gunn's legacy, not a fracturing and subsequent disappearance of passenger trains from this country.

## To the Editor:

David Gunn, widely recognized as Amtrak's best president ever, was fired by an Amtrak's board consisting of three members, all appointed by Pres. Bush and reportedly lacking a legal quorum of the seven potential members. The reasons given, by a board that is said to know nothing about railroading, point to an administration simply trying to get rid of Amtrak (and it may succeed!) Please note that the Congress, which heard loudly heard from us, is saving Amtrak from the administration's "zero budgeting" -for another, struggling year. That Congress saved it is reason enough for you to urge your congressional delegation to give Amtrak an even break with funding sufficient for le operating better trains while maintaining it equipment -and do for more than one year at a time.

Tell them that that airlines and roads are also clearly subsidized! Beyond airports and, air control , etc. being subsidized by our taxes, some airlines are being rescued from total collapse. (It is said that the recent rescue of United's pension fund alone would run Amtrak for five years!) Moreover road user taxes do not cover road costs and we must also pay for them in local, state and federal taxes. (Truckers, notably, don't pay their full way -while the freight railroads go far beyond in paying property taxes on their "rights of ways." True taxing would put many more trucks on piggyback trains thus relieving the roads.)

Please let your congressional representatives, by phone, e-mail or letters, that you favor a "fair and balanced transportation system." Let them know that you personally favor a true choice between "planes, trains and automobiles." Given the growing congestion of the highways and airports, I am confident that we will someday have more short and long distance trains. My only question is, "Will it be in my lifetime," also given that it will cost more later.

Ron Vander Kooi, Arvada CO

## Second shuttle to access Union Station

From commuter trains to the Civic Center

Denver is in the process of planning for a new downtown bus shuttle that will largely parallel the popular 16th St. Mall Shuttle. The new line is a major part of Denver's Downtown Multimodal Access Plan.

The final draft of that plan was presented to Transit Alliance members at their quarterly meeting on December 15 by Mark Najarian a transportation planner for the City and County of Denver.

Mr. Najarian said that city planners have decided not to recommend the addition of any more lanes in and out of Denver. Right now there are 57 lanes into and 61 lanes out of downtown. Mr. Najarian estimated that about 16,000 people will pass through Union Station per peak hour once all of the FasTracks corridors are completed with 6,200 transferring to other routes and

9,800 remaining in the downtown area.

Since this will place an added burden on the current shuttle which boards 50-60,000 people per day, RTD, with the necessary cooperation of Denver, will initiate another shuttle from Union Station in special lanes along 18th and 19th Streets. It will connect with the existing cross-town light rail line, RTD's Civic Center Station, and the Civic Center Cultural complex. The line will terminate near 12th Avenue and Acoma Street.

FasTracks funds will pay for construction of the new shuttle which will begin service in 2013.

The Transit Alliance is a group representing 41 Denver Metro area political, business, environmental, and pro-transit organizations which helps educate the public on the need and benefits of mass transportation.

### Potential for increased revenue illustrated by opening surplus dormitory space for reservations

From time to time in the past, Amtrak has utilized empty room space in transitional sleeping cars (transdorms) on their long distance trains to accommodate passengers but there has never been a systemwide effort to make this space available on a consistent basis. Transdorms have been reserved for train crews and are usually off limits to the traveling public.

This all changed this when Amtrak management decided they were missing out on a potentially significant revenue stream. On most long distance routes, there is almost always more space available in the transdorms than is needed by the crew. This past summer transdorm space was available for public use on the *California Zephyr* and other trains. The *Zephyr* posted the highest transdorm revenue, at \$541,668 earned.



# ColoRail Membership

P.O. Box 480452  
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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone, with area code: \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**\$10** for 2006  
pays for mailings,  
printing, publicity

Train riders are "refugees from the automobile"

# News from here and there

(Continued from page 1)

country with a gross domestic product similar to that of Korea and Mexico. The key in Spain as in most European nations is that passenger rail development receives strong government funding.

Many Americans return from Europe every year and ask, "Why can't an advanced nation like the United States have first-class, high-speed rail travel like the Europeans enjoy?" The answer is simple. If Washington policy-makers would cease bickering over Amtrak and follow their own advice to provide a dedicated source of capital funding, we could have the same level of service Europeans enjoy.

Prudent oversight and accountability are essential for any undertaking of this scale, but it is crucial to our economic security and to future generations that we make progress now. We can no longer allow passenger rail to lurch along on unpredictable

annual appropriations. We can provide Americans with the level of service they seek and for which they vote as they step aboard passenger trains in record numbers.

Frank Busalacchi is secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and chairman of the States for Passenger Rail Coalition, December 7, 2005.

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### Notable Quotes:

"The US railroads are moving each ton of freight 400 miles on a gallon of diesel fuel. The train does consume thousands of gallons of fuels, but it is also moving thousands of tons. It remains the most efficient means human beings have ever

"I have been fired. I have enjoyed working with you. Good luck. David Gunn.", 2005.

created to move large volumes of freight over land." BNSF Railway Spokesperson Steve Forsberg, The Newton Kansan, September 29, 2005.

"Let's face it, passenger rail is never going to get rid of highway congestion, though it will slow the rate at which congestion grows. What is important here is that people have a choice - they aren't forced to use their cars, they can take the train. Virtually all Capitol Corridor riders are 'refugees from the automobile.'" Gene Skoropowski, Managing Director, Capitol Corridor (CA) Joint Powers Board, as interviewed by William Vantuono, Railway Age, October, 2005

"Amtrak is being run by a board of members who have virtually no experience in passenger rail. ... Mr. Gunn was fired because he would not agree to the 'FEMA-tizing' of Amtrak." Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), hearing, November 15, 2005.

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