

ColoRail Passenger

January-February 2010

Issue #62

ColoRail member keeping track of DUSPA mysteries:

Notes from the underground

DUSPA report from Thursday December 17, 2009

ColoRail board member Edie Bryan has been tracking the Denver Union Station Project Authority's efforts, as they continue to re-do the plans, veering further from the Environmental Impact Statement and plans presented for public support earlier in the process.

1. \$17 million originally for historic building renovation is now cut in half (no explanation).
2. Plan to go to Denver Planning Board January 20.
3. Executive session was on "financial negotiations on the loan program." Alex Brown will prepare a new time table for the finances. No approval by federal "Credit Council" yet.

Some of the Council wish to come to Denver to see the site. Not yet scheduled.

4. Both Mario Carrera and Bill Mosher referred to the size of the DUS site as 42½ acres. (Originally 19½ acres sold to RTD in 2001, 32.8 acres in the EIS.) No explanation.

5. More design changes recommended by the local architects peer group:

- a. Plazas are to be "A Unified Transit Realm" to link all modes of transportation with a series of outdoor rooms between the skylights.

- b. A new long, L shaped pedestrian bridge over the tracks which gives access to the train tracks, at the Ice House end, extending to 18th and Wewatta to the huge B block building, and the North Wing building. Mention of a 6 story parking garage, and building the base infrastructure for the office building to be built over the tracks. Question was asked if this was for public parking. Answer murky.

- c. Tubular steel for canopy over the train hall will be turned at right angles from original design. That is, these supports will parallel the train tracks instead of being at right angles to the tracks. Originally they were going to hang catenary wires and signs from them. No word on

how they will hold the signs or catenary up now.

- d. Re do the train room: Thin the structure for 17th street view. Change radius of the steel tubular ribs. Turn the ribs for the canopy over the train hall 90 degrees from original design. These supports will then parallel the tracks. Originally they were going to hang catenary wires and signs from those ribs. No mention of how they will hang signs now.

- e. Mention of a drop off area, but no specifics, maybe on Wewatta.

6. Mario Carrera asked how bicycles are incorporated in the plan. One person at the public meeting asked the same. Answer – 4 or more locations for bicycle racks and maybe lockers. Plus shared lanes on the surrounding city streets, including 16th street specifically. The plaza along 17th where passengers would alight from the light rail will be a dismount zone. Other details "We hope to have" include a Bike Share program and a Bike commuter area at the site where the tail tracks would be removed.

7. By 2030 there will be 200,000 daily trips. Only 5% will be from people getting off the light rail and going to the intercity and commuter trains. The moving sidewalks were to serve them. 10% of users will be using the buses in the bus box.

8. Comparison of Market Street station and the bus box:

Bus Box is two and a half times longer and skinnier.

Market Street Station is 58 feet wide versus the Bus Box 44 width, with the bus box having an area for staging buses, which RTD insisted on [versus doing this on the street].

And there's more! If you can't attend DUSPA meetings, you can attend the ColoRail meeting to keep up.

ColoRail General Meeting in Englewood

January 23rd - see page 3.

Both UP and Amtrak mixed providing crew

Ski Train gets red block

Rail advocates and skiers were pleased to see the equipment being assembled in Denver Union Station for a revived Ski Train, then were shocked by the unhappy falling out between the negotiating parties just before Christmas.

Some of the issues may be settled quietly later on, some may not be settled until court action proceeds. It has been estimated that it will take at least two ski seasons -- that's how some people in Colorado tell time -- to learn whether there will be a Ski Train or not.

STATEMENT FROM AMTRAK ON IOWA PACIFIC HOLDINGS (IPH) DECISION TO CANCEL SKI TRAIN PLANS

CHICAGO — "Amtrak was willing to help bring the ski train back after Iowa Pacific Holdings (IPH) could not arrange with Union Pacific (UP)

to provide train crews to operate a ski train over UP owned tracks, as UP had in the past. We worked for three months on a plan to run these trains for IPH while not putting our scheduled intercity passenger trains -- and U.S. taxpayers -- at risk.

"Two days before Amtrak planned to operate a test train for IPH and five days before the start of its season, IPH could not provide to Amtrak a federally certified safe train to operate and adequate insurance. IPH has not been able to supply locomotives with adequate power and brakes to even test their rented railcars back and forth into the mountains. Nevertheless, since October IPH sold tickets for a schedule they knew could not be met even in the best circumstances.

"IPH had many things to put in place before the ski train could become a reality and their failure to execute their own plans is why this train never left the station."

HERES IOWA PACIFIC'S ACCOUNT OF WHAT THEY WERE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH

When the ski train was sold and discontinued in Spring of 2009, everyone thought it was gone forever. There was really no chance to say goodbye, no last ride, no chance even for a "first last ride" for those who always wanted to ride but just didn't get around to it.

Iowa Pacific Holdings, LLC is a Chicago-based company owned by a group of investors who like passenger trains. We operate scenic excursion trains in Arizona, Oregon, and in Southern Colorado. We were disappointed to hear of the ski train's discontinuance as well.

But we were in a position to do something about it. We have worked diligently with the Union Pacific Railroad, Amtrak, Winter Park Resort, the City of Denver, the State

of Colorado, the Denver Union Station Project Authority, the RTD, the Anschutz Corporation, the Federal Railroad Administration and other organizations to provide a ski train for the 2009-2010 season for Denver and for Colorado.

At this point [early December] we have permission to run it for the 2009-2010 season ONLY. And we are still working to finalize our contract with Amtrak, and we are working through regulatory issues with the Federal Railroad Administration in order to ensure a successful operation this season.

Will this be the last year, or the beginning of a new era? It isn't really up to us. It's up to the list of organizations above, but more importantly it's up to you, the person reading this letter. You can do something very important to the survival of the ski train: Buy a ticket! The Anschutz Corporation did a great service for the people by running the ski train, even though it didn't make money. Iowa Pacific Holdings is in the railroad business to make money, and the ski train will have to cover its costs in order for us to ask for permission to run it a second year. We have more seats to sell than the previous train, and if we sell them, we will cover our costs. It's important for your elected officials to know you like trains, and want a ski train. Buying a ticket also tells them that trains are important to you.

The ski train is a safe, environmentally-friendly, comfortable, enjoyable way to get to Winter Park. It needs you on board. Let's make it the start of a new era.

Thanks!

Ed Ellis

President

Iowa Pacific Holdings, LLC

San Luis and Rio Grande Railroad

Rio Grande Scenic Ski Train

New book a gem

Waiting on a Train: The Embattled Future of Passenger Rail Service – A Year Spent Riding Across America

James McCommons Foreword by James Howard Kunstler

\$17.95 paperback -- 304 pages -- ISBN 9781603580649

"... James McCommons' *Waiting on a Train* is a celebration of America's past and a hopeful prescription for its future. It is one of those rare books that will change the way you see the world, a fascinating and engaging tale of how this nation's infatuation with the automobile all but destroyed a once glorious passenger rail system. If you are not already a rail lover, you will be by the time you finish this book. You will want to pack your bags and hop aboard." —John Grogan, author of *Marley & Me*.

Bring ideas for Ira's Amtrak Town Hall trip.

Plan to be in Englewood on 23rd

ColoRail is back on track -- er, tracks -- to well-situated Englewood again for its winter General Meeting. The walk from Light Rail is shorter than the daily run between trains would be for some commuters in the Denver Union Station plans.

Members will meet on Saturday, January 23rd, in the Englewood City Hall. Doors open at 10 a.m., with refreshments organized by Jay Jones. The meeting will begin at 10:30 a.m.

This will be an opportunity for members and guests to learn more details about the Denver Union Station issues as well as checking in on the *Pioneer* restoration proposals and regional rail matters.

Englewood City Hall and Library -- at Englewood Station -- is served on Saturdays by light rail **D-Line** and by buses of **Rtes 0, 12, 27 and 51**.

FROM OUR PRESIDENT:

Greetings for the New Year to all.

First, let me thank all of you who have donated to our legal fund and to those who have paid their 2010 dues of \$15.

It has been interesting since the October meeting. Number one has been our law suit. The process is akin to watching paint dry. With over 30,000 pages to review and digest, you can see why the time span. As of this writing, the filing deadline for our brief is Monday January 11. We have asked for and been granted several extensions just due to the sheer volume of material.

After the filing, the FTA has 30 days to respond and then we respond. This COULD wrap up by March. Meanwhile, while the suit is ongoing, no federal funds can be expended.

Stay tuned.

Amtrak will be holding a Town Hall meeting, in Chicago, in early March and I hope to attend and be heard.

Stay warm and thanks again for remembering our ongoing need for our legal fund.

Ira Schreiber, President

ColoRail Board and Colorado NARP Council Members:

(with telephone numbers and <e-mail addresses>

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ColoRail, the Colorado Rail Passenger Association, is in correspondence and coordinates with NARP, the National Association of Railroad Passengers. Membership in both organizations is encouraged.

ColoRail member Jim Ozment passed away on December 7th. Jim was well-regarded in professional rail and transit circles for both his intimate knowledge of railway engineering and for his willingness to effectively share in that knowledge.

According to his son, Doug Ozment, Jim and his family had begun the

process of digitizing his rail photo collection. Learn more at this site:

www.westernrailimages.com

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Brian Holtz of Hot Springs, AR has advised ColoRail of the passing of his father, **Paul Holtz**. Brian wrote to us with a check to carry on his father's **ColoRail membership** and a letter emphasizing the importance of Denver Union Station as a nationally important part of the rail network.



Colorado DOT
formed in 1991 from
old Highway Dept.

Amtrak Fact Sheet, Fiscal Year 2009, State of Colorado

Amtrak Service & Ridership

Amtrak operates two long-distance trains through Colorado:

- The *California Zephyr* (daily Chicago-Denver- Emeryville/ Bay Area)
- The *Southwest Chief* (daily Chicago-Kansas City-La Junta-Trinidad-Albuquerque-Los Angeles)

During FY09 Amtrak served the following Colorado locations:

City Boardings + Alightings (FY2008 in *italics*)

Denver 120,236 (129,773)

Fort Morgan 2,979 (3,178)

Glenwood Springs 29,371 (36,484)

Granby 3,021 (3,629)

Grand Junction 23,392 (28,302)

La Junta 6,809 (7,475)

Lamar 1,722 (1,644)

Trinidad 3,923 (4,628)

Winter Park-Fraser 8,390 (9,400)

Total Colorado Station Usage: 199,843 (224,513)

Procurement/Contracts

Amtrak expended \$11,489,576 for goods and services in Colorado in FY09, of which \$10,027,755 was spent in Denver.

Employment

At the end of FY09, Amtrak employed 67 Colorado residents. Total wages of Amtrak employees living in Colorado were \$6,161,976 during FY09.

Station Improvements

Denver Union Station, beginning in April 2010, will undergo a \$500 million redevelopment into a regional, intermodal transportation center. During the three-and-one-half years of construction at Union Station, Amtrak activities will be moved to a temporary location at 21st and Delgany Streets, about four blocks northeast of Union Station and alongside Coors Field. Union Station was built in 1894, significantly rebuilt in 1914, and purchased by the Regional Transportation District in 2002.

Stimulus Funding, Fiscal 2009

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) provided Amtrak with \$1.3 billion for capital investments, including \$446 million for security and life safety improvements and \$842 million for rebuilding and modernizing infrastructure and equipment. Included in the latter category is a Mobility First program, designed as an immediate-action program to reduce as many accessibility barriers as possible prior to Amtrak's deadline of July 26, 2010, to bring stations into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Mobility First investments can include wheelchair lifts, connecting walkways, and designated parking spaces. Investments planned for Colorado include:

Fort Morgan - Mobility First - \$60,000

Granby - Mobility First - \$14,000
Granby platform tactile edge - \$75,000

Grand Junction - Mobility First - \$14,000
Grand Junction - platform tactile edge - \$100,000

Glenwood Springs - Mobility First - \$53,000

La Junta - Mobility First - \$14,000
La Junta - platform tactile edge - \$125,000

Lamar - Mobility First - \$9,000
Lamar - new 550-foot platform - \$500,000

Trinidad - Mobility First - \$14,000
Trinidad - new station shelter/platform - \$1,250,000

Winter Park/Fraser - Mobility First - \$14,000
Winter Park/Fraser - platform tactile edge - \$85,000

Total Colorado ARRA funds: \$2,327,000

Denver still ahead of Eugene in ridership:

If current trends continue, Eugene, Oregon will overtake Denver, Colorado in Amtrak boardings and alightings. Denver is the top draw in the 22nd most populous state in the Union, with the 8th largest square area. We're not crowded in the 37th densest state.

Colorado depends more on Federal government spending and comes out ahead of Oregon's 2009 stimulus funds due to years of neglect.

Amtrak Fact Sheet, Fiscal Year 2009, State of Oregon

Oregon DOT
formed in 1969,
included highways.

Amtrak Service & Ridership

Amtrak operates one short-distance corridor service, the Amtrak *Cascades*, (Eugene-Portland-Seattle-Vancouver, B.C.), with two roundtrips Eugene-Portland; four roundtrips Portland-Seattle; and two roundtrips Seattle-Bellingham, with one extension to Vancouver, B.C.). Also, there are two long-distance trains serving Oregon:

The *Coast Starlight* (daily Los Angeles-Klamath Falls-Portland-Seattle) Amtrak relaunched the Coast Starlight in June 2008, featuring enhanced amenities and upgraded equipment.

The *Empire Builder* (daily Portland/Seattle-Spokane-Chicago) The Empire Builder was Amtrak's most heavily used long-distance train, carrying 515,444 passengers in Fiscal 2009.

During FY09 Amtrak served the following Oregon locations:

City Boardings + Alightings

Albany 35,735 (31,870)

Chemult 8,717 (7,030)

Eugene 104,481 (100,211)

Klamath Falls 29,382 (31,908)

Oregon City 7,787 (8,061)

Portland* 618,131 (598,633)

Salem 61,783 (56,436)

Total Oregon Station Usage: 866,016 (834,149)

* Portland is the 15th busiest station in the national Amtrak System.

Fewer people, better transportation service:

Oregon is the 27th most populous state in the Union, with estimated 2009 population of 3.826 million. They live in the 9th largest U.S. state, barely touching elbows within the 39th most dense settlement.

“We still have an economy that makes things - wood products, high-tech equipment, machinery,” says Oregon economist Joe Cortright, which explains timber-rich Klamath Falls’ drop.

Procurement/Contracts

Amtrak expended \$2,895,718 for goods and services in Oregon in FY09, of which \$1,808,621 was in Lake Oswego.

Employment

At the end of FY09, Amtrak employed 82 Oregon residents. Total wages of Amtrak employees living in Oregon were \$5,599,248 during FY09.

State-Assisted Services

The State of Oregon provides funds for the operation of two daily Amtrak Cascades roundtrips between Portland and Eugene. The state also funds a network of connecting motor coach service. Amtrak operates also four daily round trips between Seattle and Portland, with support from the State of Washington.

The State of Oregon also funds the operation of several connecting buses that enhance the reach of the train service.

With over 740,000 riders in FY08, the Amtrak Cascades is the seventh most heavily traveled corridor in the country and often viewed as a model partnership among two states, a Canadian province, Amtrak, freight railroads, a commuter railroad, and local communities.

Service Expansion

The Pacific Northwest Corridor extends 466 miles from Eugene to Vancouver, B.C. Both Washington and Oregon have established 20-year plans for the service that will accommodate the growth expected in the region. Oregon's plans call for six roundtrips between Eugene and Portland. Washington State's plans call for 13 roundtrips between Portland and Seattle, and four roundtrips between Seattle and Vancouver, B.C.

Stimulus Funding, Fiscal 2009

Investments planned for Oregon include:

Chemult - Mobility First - \$244,000

Klamath Falls - Mobility First - \$33,000

Portland - station security and life safety - \$890,000
Portland - wireless access, field operations - \$105,000

Total Oregon ARRA funds: \$1,272,000

SB94 in 2009 opened the way

View from the Ridge... *by Jon Esty*

A new role for Transit & Rail at C-DOT

Last Spring, the Colorado Department of Transportation joined the growing ranks of state DOT's that have rail and transit divisions to complement their traditional roles devoted to building, operating, and maintaining highways. SB-94 co-sponsored by Sen. Suzanne Williams (D-Aurora) and Rep. Claire Levy (D-Boulder) created a Division of Transit and Rail within C-DOT.

According to Sen. Williams the new division "has the authority to promote, plan, design, build, finance, operate, maintain and contract for transit services including bus, passenger rail and advanced guideway systems services." (Excerpted from *Interchange*, a monthly publication of the CDOT Office of Policy and Government Relations, September, 2009.)

The first step taken this fall was to appoint an Interim Transit and Rail Advisory Committee to advise C-DOT leaders as to the mission and organization of the new division. The interim committee is chaired by Elena Wilken, Executive Director, Colorado Association of Transit Agencies and is made up of representatives from railroads, transit systems, and locally elected officials. The Vice-chairman is Paul Smith, a well-known local railroad consultant. Besides developing approaches and procedures to help coordinate and move rail and transit efforts forward in Colorado, the interim committee is also charged with forming a structure for a permanent advisory committee which includes the future committee's purpose and role.

Even though the legislature created

a Department of Transportation out of the old Colorado State Highway Department in 1991, slight progress has been made at the state level in taking a serious look at transportation as a whole rather than focusing specifically on highways. Few actual institutional changes were made to accommodate the DOT's newly expanded role.

Only recently, for example, has the membership of the Transportation Commission reflected alternative modes in the selection of commission members. Though Governor Ritter has balanced the commission with appointees having transit experience, no one on the commission has a freight or passenger railroad background.

A number of passenger and freight rail studies have been completed over the past 18 years since the creation of the DOT, but there has been no major state investment in rail other than the state's purchase and subsequent leasing of the Towner Line in southeast Colorado. Intercity bus transit has fared a bit

better with C-DOT utilizing SB-1 funding to help purchase equipment for FREX, the popular commuter bus route which provides service between Colorado Springs and Denver. SB-1 funds have also been used by various local transit agencies for the purchase of buses and construction of maintenance buildings and intermodal facilities.

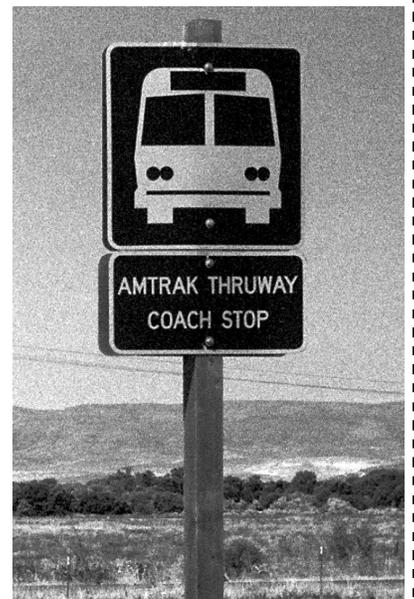
In recent months C-DOT has begun working with bus companies to first identify and then try to reverse the decline in intercity bus service across the state. One example of this new effort is the establishment of a five days a week route serving Denver, Salida, and Gunnison this past summer in partnership with Black Hills Stage Lines and the Gunnison Valley Rural Transportation Authority, with the cooperation of RTD. [This service has now been expanded to daily.]

Here are some suggestions as to what a C-DOT Rail/Transit Division might do in the future to encourage state-wide rail and transit development and to bring its transportation activities into better balance:

- Initiate a unified passenger and freight rail plan as defined in a revised Colorado State Rail Plan. Develop the same kind of coordinated approach with transit systems and intercity bus lines.

Road to cooperation:

One discovery made some years ago in intermodal Oregon was that newcomers in small towns did not know where intercity buses stopped, or even that they had service. The second discovery was that Highway Division crews could legally post signs showing the stops, as part of their routine duties. Now they do.



• View from the Ridge...

(it's clearer out there)

Take a look at N. Carolina

(Continued from page 6)

- Form active liaisons with representatives from local transit agencies, intercity bus companies, freight railroads, and Amtrak.
- Inventory Rail/Transit facilities and how these facilities might be integrated across modes to provide convenient, logical, and efficient connections.
- Provide professional expertise as well as financial support for the coordination and expansion of transit and passenger rail services.
- Assume a leadership role in the planning, financing, and construction of regional and state-wide rail and transit services including stations which provide convenient multi-modal connectivity.

- Increase the number and amount of federal and state grants for public transportation making sure there is an appropriate tracking system in place to evaluate subsequent progress.
- Form partnerships with adjoining states to plan, construct, operate, and fund interstate bus and rail (freight and passenger) services.
- Develop educational programs for elected officials and the general public which emphasize the environmental, economic, and social benefits of an integrated public transportation system.

All of these efforts should be organized and publicized beginning with a thorough redesign of the C-DOT web site. For inspiration, C-DOT staffers should check out the

North Carolina DOT site at <www.ncdot.org>. Not only is the NC-DOT web site well organized and interesting, it describes a role especially in its transit and rail activities which DOT's everywhere should emulate.

Jon Esty is past president of ColoRail. He resides in Ridgway.

"That old-time religion..."

Higher state taxes and a bond-issuing plan are among the ideas being pushed by some lawmakers to steer Nebraska out of its crisis in financing road maintenance and construction," says Paul Hammel of the *Omaha World-Herald* Lincoln bureau. His January 3rd article then goes on to discuss using the new funds to build even more expressways!



ColoRail Membership

1550 Larimer St., Ste. 271
Denver, CO 80202

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Postal Code: _____

Telephone, with area code: _____

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

\$15 PER YEAR
pays for 2010 mailings,
printing, publicity

Inclement weather = beauty.

◀ ◀ “Let it snow, let it snow!” ▶ ▶

Winter Wonderland Express
January 2nd - through Spring

Departs **Saturdays**, 9:00am from Alamosa and travels to La Veta. Returns at 5:45pm, to Alamosa.

Cost \$58 dome, \$48 coach adult, \$43 senior, \$33 kids.



The La Veta Pass Route’s operators ask us to “see spectacular winter wonderlands from the warmth and comfort of our dome cars. Stay tucked inside as our engines carry you to view snow packed mountain peaks contrasted with evergreen pines in remote valleys inaccessible by cars.

“Delicious sandwiches, soups and hot drinks will be available for purchase to enhance the winter experience.

“Note: Winter Wonderland Express pulled by diesel engines; steam service runs Memorial Day weekend through the last weekend in October.

“Be advised: Book In Advance; winter train may be cancelled due to inclement weather, we suggest calling 1-877-726-RAIL to confirm train is running morning of departure.”

FREX reduces service effective January 4th due to budget woes:

“Due to a decision by Castle Rock Town Council to discontinue the contribution of local FREX operating dollars, FREX service in Castle Rock will be terminated effective January 1, 2010.

“At this time, [Jan. 4th] remaining FREX service between Colorado Springs, Monument, and Denver is scheduled to continue through mid-February on a reduced schedule. There will be no fare changes.

“A proposal regarding using the proceeds from the sale of five to nine surplus FREX buses for operating expenses in 2010 was approved by CDOT at the December 18 State Transportation Commission meeting.”

For more information:

<http://www.frontrangeexpress>

ColoRail Passenger

1550 Larimer St., Ste. 271
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