

ColoRail Passenger

May-June 2010

Issue #63

ColoRail volunteers put heart into DUS

It starts with a simple e-mail from Don Zielesch: "ColoRail will again provide volunteer hosts at Denver Union Station..." but it leads to the human drama and some comedy that plays out on the stage of Denver Union Station. ColoRail volunteers assist passengers and guests in the station at train times during holiday periods and major events.

Your editor was there as a family bade farewell to their soldier who was beginning his journey back to Afghanistan. He explained that taking the train to his base was a way of easing the transition and seeing some of the country. On that night, there about 140 boarding passengers, each with a different reason for violating the media's demand that they fly or drive.

From another evening, John Bishop reported:

For the record, yesterday was busy with about 50 boards and probably slightly more deboards. One gentlemen had not ridden since the days of the Santa Fe passenger service through Kansas. He was on his way to the annual Berkshire Hathaway meeting with Warren Buffet, new owner of the BNSF. This man had never taken or thought about doing anything but flying to Omaha when Mr. Buffett encouraged all attendees to take the train to Omaha for the meeting!

Here's a list -- we hope that everyone's name was recorded -- of those who served over the last Thanksgiving / Christmas / New Year's peak days. The number in parentheses shows how many train times they logged:

- **John Bishop (2), Jay Jones (2), Ron Kaminen (6), Sarah McDowell (2), Tom Peyton (4), Richard Rader (7), Jim Souby (6), Vincent Szafranko (1),**

Betty Vander Kooi (1), Ron Vander Kooi (1), Don Zielesch (2).

Contact Jay Jones or Don Zielesch for more information.



But wait... there's more!

Inside, find information on the May 22nd
ColoRail general meeting.

In many towns across the American heartland, it's easier to get money for Art in the Stations than it is to get stations. Reunions in those cities are dimming memories, while ColoRail volunteers see them happening now.

"A Voice for Colorado's Rail Passengers"

Englewood Civic Center easy to access.

Marc your calendar

ColoRail members and friends can look forward to May 22nd. They'll hear first-hand about passenger travel in the region from Mike Timlin and Marc Magliari, two men who are directly involved.

Marc Magliari, responsible for media relations for Amtrak out of Chicago, is familiar to ColoRail members who remember his previous informative visits. His district includes Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

Mike Timlin is the regional manager for Greyhound Lines and is knowledgeable about intermodal connections, having worked on numerous projects as his firm reshapes itself for the challenges of a deregulated

marketplace. He was a commuter on Metra's BNSF rail line while assigned to a senior GL post in Chicago. Greyhound is working with the State of Colorado and local governments to improve service and maintains relations with Amtrak for intermodal cooperation.

The meeting time has been extended in order to conclude with a showing of the recently produced documentary *Denver Union Station - Portal to Progress* by Havey Productions.

Plan to be in the Community Room on Saturday, May 22nd from 10 am to 2 pm for the ColoRail meeting. Refreshments will be served, and those wishing to go out for a late lunch will be welcome to join ColoRail board members in doing so.

This meeting is open to and of general interest to the public. The Englewood Civic Center is located at 1000

Englewood Parkway, one block north of Hampden and west of Inca in Englewood and the Community Room is on 2nd floor. The building opens on Saturdays just before 10 am.

It's easy to reach the Englewood Civic Center on RTD **Rtes 0, 12, and 27**, as well as on the Light Rail **D-Line**.

ColoRail Board and Colorado NARP Council Members:

(with telephone numbers and <e-mail addresses>

Ira Schreiber, President, Aurora (303-750-4507). <ischreiber@aol.com>

Bob Brewster, Vice-President, Boulder. <railbob@pop.ecentral.com>

Edie Bryan, Board Member, Lakewood, <twobryans@aol.com>

Jay Jones, Secretary-Treasurer, Denver, <sunjones@earthtones.com>

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Eric Miller, NARP Council Member, Highlands Ranch. <eric@rockrail.com>

Mike Rowe, Board Member, Boulder, <mikerowe@ecentral.com>

James Souby, Board Member, Denver, <jsouby@comcast.net>

Don Zielesch, Board Member, Littleton, <dwz1@juno.com>

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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 board elections will be held in the general meeting:

The following Board members have agreed to run for re-election at the general membership meeting to be held May 22, 2010. TWO YEAR TERM: Ira Schreiber, Bob Brewster, Edie Bryan, and Jim Souby. The following new candidates have agreed to have their names put in nomination for a ONE YEAR TERM: Helen Bushnell, Elia Fisher, Hugh Fowler. That makes seven standing for election or re-election. Two current Board members are serving a two year term, which term will expire in 2011. They are: Jay Jones, Mike Rowe.

Donald W. Zielesch, Chair, Nominating Committee

"Eagle P3" team presentations set to take flight:

The two teams competing for the Eagle P3 Project contract for FasTracks commuter rail electric lines will conduct public presentations of their technical proposals on Tuesday, May 18. Denver Transit Partners and Mountain-Air Transit Partners will be presenting their final proposals at the Paramount Theatre, 1621 Glenarm Place in downtown Denver, with one team presenting at 1 p.m. and the other at 3 p.m.

The presentations will be open to the public. Seats will be reserved for the RTD Board, RTD executive staff and elected officials. Other seating will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. The Eagle P3 Project is a public-private partnership in which RTD will contract with a team of private partners to design, build, finance, operate, and maintain the East Corridor, Gold Line, a short segment into Westminster of the Northwest Rail and the commuter rail maintenance facility projects as one project.

Taking a look at East Colfax improvements

Would another route be better?

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Enterprise (HPTE) group, created by the recent FASTER legislation and supervised by C-DOT, would be responsible for the study.

Even though the bill died in committee in April, the concept does have the enthusiastic support of many Denver elected and civic leaders including City Council President **Jeanne Robb** who sponsored a conference on the subject a number of years ago. The idea is to not only provide improved public transportation on this busy corridor but to also to stimulate commercial and real estate development similar to the impact streetcars have had in Portland, Oregon and elsewhere.

Anyone who has had the experience of riding the rear section of the 15 Limited bus as it careens along East Colfax through the Capitol Hill neighborhood knows that a smoother ride offered by rail would be most welcome; however there are some other considerations that need to be taken into account. If the service is to resemble the route currently operated, then planners must give

serious consideration to constructing four sets of tracks, two for locals and two for express streetcars. This approach assumes that the idea of a four track mainline down Colfax Street can be sold to local residents and businesses, the driving public, and taxpayers.

If the route is to have only two tracks, then planners will have to decide whether to adopt a slow frequent stop schedule, an express schedule, or some combination of the two. There is sure to be many who will be disappointed by whatever choice is made.

A rapid bus system might provide a more reasonable and cost effective approach to this problem. Keep the local and limited scheduling and make improvements to the pavement to smooth out the ride. Give buses priority at traffic lights. Improve the street curbing, gutters, and sidewalks as well as the overall appearance of the corridor with appropriate streetscaping (trees, planters, benches, etc.) developed with neighborhood cooperation and involvement. Improve shelters at all major stops and include electronic

"next bus" signs. Commit to actively maintain all improvements including the immediate removal of graffiti. Since the corridor is providing the main connection between RTD's Central Light Rail Corridor and the planned I-225 Light Rail Corridor, some thought also might be given to adding additional

express bus service during peak commuting hours.

This may not be a very flashy solution, but it can be a practical, cost-effective one.

One additional thought: If city leaders want to initiate a streetcar route somewhere in the Denver area, there is no better candidate than the 2.5 mile Platte Valley Trolley Extension studied several years ago by **Jim Graebner**, a well-known local resident who consults widely on streetcar and rail transit projects around the country.

The proposed streetcar line starts just to the west of Coors Field on Wynkoop St. across from the Chop House Restaurant and travels past the Wynkoop Brewery, Union Station, and the Tattered Cover Bookstore before turning right on 15th St. and passing under the Consolidated Mainline and over the Platte River at Confluence Park. The route then turns left on Water St. to the REI store and joins the historic Platte Valley Trolley route currently operated by volunteers from the Denver Rail Heritage Society. This route follows the Platte River past the Children's Museum, Aquarium, Mile High Stadium and future Transit Museum/Car House <<http://www.denvertrolley.org/TransitMuseum>> to a connection with RTD's West Light Rail Corridor at the Federal-Decatur Station.

This streetcar line provides a connection between numerous entertainment and commercial venues and could be constructed relatively cheaply since some of the infrastructure is already in place. Beside the existing Platte Valley Trolley right-of-way, the 15th St. segment was designed and built to allow for the construction of a future double track streetcar line.

Jon Esty is the past president of ColoRail and a long-time resident of Denver. He lives in Ridgway.

As you read this, no matter what time of day, buses are rolling on East Colfax...



East Colfax had Bus Rapid Transit before the term was invented. Now, technical advances in other cities have overtaken it. Prior to the streetcar study, an intergovernmental project to improve signaling for buses was authorized.

Run your own city via the Internet.

A FEW KEYSTROKES

Want a quick way to illustrate advantages -- and appropriate choices -- of the many types of rail technologies? The Bombardier company, which competes in many rail equipment markets, has introduced a website that lets you experiment with their products in a simulated city. Instrument displays on the screen show the effects that you're having on typical environmental indicators. Pass this on to someone who is doing a school project:

<http://www.mytransitsystem.com/City2.html>

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Kansans are looking into the potential rail passenger routes for the Sunflower State with greater interest than has been seen in many years. Amtrak and the State Department of Transportation have completed a study that found

slightly higher projected ridership numbers than previously assumed:

http://ksdot.org/PDF_Files/FINAL-Amtrak-Study.pdf

Most interesting has been the public interest expressed spontaneously

since for routes to Denver and other Colorado points. **John Bishop** of ColoRail functions as liaison with the Northern Flyer Alliance, which is working toward expansion of the current Oklahoma-Texas service, which could include a Colorado link.

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

Please don't take my ColoRail membership card away from me but I am about to say some nice words about bus rapid transit. We all know that BRT has become the highway lobby's answer to the national popularity of light rail but I think most reasonable passenger rail advocates would agree that there are some places where its application is probably more appropriate than rail.

One of those places is on East Colfax, RTD's only 24 hour bus operation. The route is served by the local Rte 15 bus with stops about

every two or three blocks as well as the speedy Rte 15 Limited which only stops at major intersections.

In January, State Senator **Chris Romer** (D-Denver) introduced a bill to study the feasibility of establishing a public-private partnership to construct and operate a Colfax Avenue streetcar between the Auraria Campus in Denver and the Fitzsimmons Hospital complex in Aurora. Under Senate Bill-145 the High-Performance Transportation

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