April 26th saw a new era in transportation launched for West Denver, Lakewood and Golden, as well as the adjacent cities of Wheat Ridge and Edgewater. Built today to meet demand projected decades in the future, the West Rail Line began operations with festive events - including ColoRail - and large crowds.

With the start of revenue service on Sunday, April 28th, the line carries many burdens, including issues that were pointed out by ColoRail and individual members. Inside, on Pages 4-5, read how step-by-step the W-Line can climb out of its low beginnings.

... key step to strong system to be covered in ColoRail meet

Rail access to Denver International Airport and the Airport’s new facilities will be the topic of ColoRail’s Spring Meeting, June 1st. Well known Denver journalist Kevin Flynn, Public Information Manager for the RTD FastTracks Eagle P3 Project, will make the presentation.

Following Kevin, representatives from CDOT and RTD will discuss the newly inaugurated State Transit Plan and RTD Northwest mobility study.

The meeting will be held at the Eloise May Public Library, 1471 South Parker Road at East Florida Avenue. It will begin at 12:30 pm and end at 3:30 pm in Community Rooms C and D. Officers are to be elected.

RTD service (Rte 83Ltd) and parking are available at the library.

“A Voice for Colorado’s Rail Passengers”
ColoRail booth successful at RTD W Line opening
by Jim Souby
April 26th, 2013
Great day for RTD, Lakewood, the West Line and ColoRail! We signed up fifteen new members and spoke with many more people who took our brochure. Thanks go to our volunteers including Edie and Dick, Bob, Daryl, Ira, Mike, Jay, Jim, John and Leslie. Dr. GwenEllyn of Lakewood also helped out when we were short-handed. All together a great day that we can all be proud of.

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Damerons on track for W-Line
Adding to the fun on April 26th with a barbeque at their trackside home in Lakewood, Keith and Tammy Dameron put new meaning into the term “on-line chatting.” Celebrants and participants in the West Rail opening stopped by, caught up with old friends and met some of the line’s neighbors. This was also something of a housewarming, as they had completed a deck on the south side of their home. Wave to them from W-Line trains on the north side of the tracks between Lamar and Lakewood-Wadsworth Stations.

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Sustainable Transportation Conference Postponed
The Denver University Institute for Intermodal Transportation’s Sustainability, Transportation and the Supply Chain has been postponed until October, 2013. The conference will consider freight and passenger systems from both the customer and provider perspectives. More information will be coming from ITI in the future.

Even high fares don't prevent sell-outs for equipment-shy Amtrak
If you plan on enjoying rail travel after the kids are back in school, plan your trip now. Space is already being booked up, in spite of Amtrak’s efforts to boost fares to prevent sell-outs.
A ColoRail survey on May 18th of some sample trips from Denver for September 16th this autumn found that Roomettes and Bedrooms on the California Zephyr to the SF Bay Area were already booked up. One-way coach was quoted at $135.
Going the other direction on the CZ, same story. Roomettes and Bedrooms to Chicago were sold out. One-way coach was selling for $143. The sell-outs continued until the following Thursday, when a Roomette to Omaha cost $247 and a Bedroom cost $627. Coach to Omaha was $96.
The Southwest Chief still clings to its glamour, in spite of the downgrading of its track. (It’s the only train where your editor has met a movie producer who was traveling coast to coast.) Denver to Los Angeles via Raton showed a coach fare of $164, a Roomette

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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.

Daily Yonder website features small-town access by rail
http://www.dailyyonder.com/small-towns-fight-passenger-rail/2013/05/14/5911
Headlined Small Towns Fight for Passenger Rail in their section titled “Growth and Development | Main Street Economics” and posted 05/14/2013, the article by noted rail writer C. B. Hall is summarized as:
Amtrak’s one-track mind focuses on urban corridors. But smaller communities armed with facts, successful examples and dogged persistence are making the case for passenger rail.
**ColoRail rides the Southwest Chief**

by Jim Souby

On National Train Day, thirty Coloradans boarded the Southwest Chief in La Junta and Trinidad for a roundtrip ride to Las Vegas, NM. The trip demonstrated support for keeping the train in Colorado. Due to funding problems needed maintenance for older portions of the route has been deferred and the train may be rerouted and bypass Colorado and Northern New Mexico in 2015.

Joining ColoRail members for the trip were Colorado State Senator Angela Giron, State Representative Leroy Garcia and Pueblo City Council President Steve Nawrocki. The trip was coordinated by Gary Carter, ColoRail board member from Pueblo.

Las Vegas Mayor Alphonso Ortiz and New Mexico coalition members met the train. The New Mexico delegation was led by NARP member Ford Robbins who coordinates Coalition activities in Santa Fe. Robbins and ColoRail President Jim Souby convened a luncheon and rally at the depot.

The need for maintenance and improvements on the line was well demonstrated when the train slowed to a stop north of Las Vegas due to signal malfunctions. The problems were corrected and the return trip to Trinidad over Raton Pass was on time.

ColoRail travelers celebrate National Train Day in Las Vegas, NM, one of the cities which could be bypassed by a rerouted Southwest Chief. This is also a potential stop on future Denver - Pueblo - Albuquerque service.
First a disclaimer. 
This is all my personal take based on my research.

The new W rail line is not carrying the traffic projected due to several serious flaws.

First is the fact it does not go where people want to go. This should be a basic premise of public transportation. Over ten years ago I brought up this point.

My personal hands on survey of West Corridor travelers reveals that Auraria students want to go to the main campus area currently served by the D, F & H lines.

The same holds true for a majority of the business commuters. They do not want a transfer and shuttle ride of up to twenty minutes.

The route 16 is overwhelmed and I know RTD is working on this but it will not solve the basic problem of getting people to where they want to go, not where RTD wants to take them.

The real solution is to build the necessary switches at Auraria West and Central Platte Valley junctions to allow West trains downtown access. I have been told there is currently adequate capacity in the down town loop.

Merely starting a new route, call it the "J", from Jeffco to 18th & California would do this. This would replace the current Golden trips of four per hour.

Now commuters can get where they want to go with a one seat ride.

The cost should fit within my topic subject.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to some serious follow up.

Ira

Ira P. Schreiber
and some criticisms

The ‘W’ in W-Line might stand for a work in progress. Planned during a period of expansion, it opened after the economic slide led to cuts in forecasted connecting bus service and weak demand for Downtown Denver commuter parking (rates for early bird spaces are about the same as transit fares). Planned to provide a fast ride, it is slowed down at multiple locations by tedious grade crossing technology that appears designed to tempt motorists to avoid waiting.

Its isolated terminal in Denver, shoved into a corner for real estate development purposes, is in the middle of a construction zone. Many of the buildings are residential, likely to generate some pleased reverse commuters to the Federal Center area, but most likely to generate FREE Mall Riders.

Sounds bad?

Things will get better.

This June, RTD will add Rte 16 shuttle trips to the Colfax Viaduct, linking Decatur-Federal Station to the Colfax at Auraria Station area, the Civic Center area and Capitol Hill offices.

The line taps rental housing and the Auraria campus. Starting at the end of this August, students will have another choice of rail lines for apartment hunting. Each year for the next four years, there will be more students riding. Auraria West transfers with C/E-Lines already are growing.

A year from now, Market Street Station will be closed and the Denver Union Station bus concourse will open. A number of new connections will be made with the W-Line. Amtrak is due to have already moved into the historic station building, but will require a Mall Ride connection for Light Rail until the linking bus facility opens.

With the bus facility at DUS will come improved circulation service into midtown and the Civic Center area. That will offer commuters more choices.

Three years from now, three commuter rail lines are due to open at DUS. Most importantly, the DIA/ East Line forms a logical connection for the W-Line to DIA, a major employment center. And, commuters from East Denver and Aurora neighborhoods will add to the reverse peak ridership.

In the meantime, work is underway on office buildings in the DUS area that will generate peak ridership.

For the short run, innovative marketing will be needed. It’s a beautiful ride; perhaps instead of wrapping a car with ads, install tables and serve weekend brunch?

Passenger: “When the train gets to downtown, it turns away.”
Much ink is spent on debating the merits and demerits of high or higher speed rail, but travelers (and regional economies) can obtain benefits from making a series of minor improvements on existing lines. Last October, your editor had the opportunity to see the changes that a long-term program of capital investment can bring about.

In 1970, a trip from Berlin to northwestern Germany plodded along behind steam power in East Germany at speeds in the 45-55 mph range, slower than most of the remaining U.S. passenger trains back then. Crossing the inter-German border, speeds picked up to the 55-75 mph range behind Diesels and electrics, about the same as in the U.S. As in the U.S. and Canada, a few “name” trains on priority routes moved at higher speeds, but most travelers were on trains that were easily raced by the “unlimited” speeds on the autobahn. That was certainly true of trips to backwater Ostfriesland, the region of Germany by the North Sea.

Four decades later, I booked my trip to Ostfriesland on-line from Denver, including a seat reservation for a window on this new era. A few weeks later, I found my designated seat in Car 12 and settled down as we flew past former Soviet military installations and dashed into and then out of towns. Traffic on parallel roads appeared to be going backwards, but my coffee barely rippled. I walked to the vestibule and snapped this picture -- 100 mph on a secondary line -- and then settled back to enjoy my trip to a town the size of Julesburg, Colorado.

SNAP! Cameras catch us everywhere. ColoRail members Bob Brewster on left and Dick Luckin on right were on different itineraries, but their paths crossed recently in Grand Central Terminal. Bob contributed the W-Line photos in this edition, as well as the Austin dmu photo on the right. Dick is the noted producer of video documentaries whose work has graced ColoRail meetings.

Bob Brewster’s travels recently took him to Austin, TX, where he checked out the Diesel multiple unit (dmu) service shown below. With high level platforms it can provide a similar service to RTD’s planned commuter rail lines, literally without as much overhead expense. Like the San Diego County Sprinter, it is not permitted to mingle with freight traffic, but could run as a feeder to other rapid transit lines on RTD-owned track, such as lines north from Thornton.
Texas Eagle also sold out

(Continued from page 2)
rate of $221, and a Bedroom rate of $1034. Going via Sacramento would not bypass that, because the sleeper space on the CZ was sold out.

If you were thinking of going to St. Louis via the interesting Galesburg - Springfield connection, the CZ sleeper portion of the trip is sold out, as described above, but the coach portion on the Texas Eagle from Springfield to St. Louis is also sold out. Bedrooms on that leg are also sold out, but a seat in a Roomette was still open.

Some other sample coach fares one-way from Denver:
√ Portland = $205
√ Seattle = $222
√ San Diego via Raton = $206
√ St. Louis via Chicago = $169.

ColoRail Elections June 1
The ColoRail Nominating Committee consisting of ColoRail members Sarah Mc Dowell, Thomas Peyton and Donald Zielesch is submitting the following list of five nominees for the five vacant positions to the ColoRail Board of Directors for the election to be held at the Spring 2013 ColoRail member meeting.

Edie Bryan, Bob Brewster, Gary Carter, Ira Schreiber, Jim Souby
They are all currently on the Board of Directors and have all indicated their desire to run again.
Nominations are accepted from the floor at the Spring meeting.
Anyone wishing to nominate a candidate other than her/him self must first secure the approval of the member/s they wish to nominate.

ColoRail’s open Board meetings relocated -- but still handy to Market Street and Union Stations in LoDo Denver.

COPIRG has graciously agreed to host our board meetings in their conference room at 1543 Wazee St. Ste 330. I found it to be quite suitable and convenient to most transit. They are between Market Street Station and Union Station in Denver. The conference room can hold 12 easily and has a telephone for call ins. It is located almost directly behind the Alliance Center. Parking will be no better or worse than before.

Jim
James M Souby, President
Colorado Rail Passenger Association (ColoRail)
Unofficial celebration

‘Grass routes’ celebrate

Denver’s Temporary Station
Gets Train Day Greetings

By Ron Vander Kooi

Amtrak this year celebrated National Train Day on Saturday, May 11. We decided to host that day for the west and eastbound train times at Denver’s Amtrak temporary station. We gathered a variety of material from ColoRail, the National Railroad Passenger Association, Amtrak and our own collection. Seven of us were there to greet passengers and their friends waiting in the station as well as those arriving on the California Zephyr.

Many passengers were made aware of Train Day, of Amtrak’s development since May, 1971, its increasing ridership since then and its hopeful future. They were also introduced to ColoRail and a few people made donations or joined. Overall this was a very good experience and we trust that we will help Amtrak truly celebrate next May (when they are scheduled to be back in a newly renovated Denver Union Station).

As with ColoRail’s regular holiday time station hosting program, we had many interesting interactions with the travelers and others and received much thanks for our participation and specific helps.

We urge others to join the hosting program.

ColoRail members who participated were:

Ron Kaminen
Keith Dameron
Hugh Fowler
Bruce and Mrs. Eller
Ron and Betty Vander Kooi

Plan ahead: 2014 National Train Day may coincide with opening of the Denver Union Station bus gates.

ColoRail Passenger

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