A big Saturday is ahead for ColoRail and National Association of Railroad Passengers on September 14th. Meeting at the Southeastern Colorado Heritage Center, activities in Pueblo will begin at 1:00 p.m. Before that, however, some members and friends from the Denver metro area will have started the day on a charter bus tour of Front Range rail sites.

The Heritage Center, at 201 West “B” Street is handy to the beautifully restored Pueblo Union Dept. The landmark station was last served by the Chief connection between La Junta and Front Range cities when Federal planners deleted it in 1971. Now Amtrak’s Southwest Chief itself is threatened with relocation to Texas, or possible dismemberment.

Ross Capon, President and CEO of NARP will join a panel discussion of “How Do We Save the Chief?” He will share experience gained in other projects.

(Continued on page 2)

“Hail to the Chief
ColoRail and regional NARP to meet in Pueblo on September 14th

(A Voice for Colorado’s Rail Passengers)”
ColoRail activities show variety

Hail to the Chief...

(Continued from page 1)

battles. Other speakers will include Rick Klein, City Manager of La Junta, activist Ford Robbins of Santa Fe, Steve Nawrocki, President of the Pueblo City Council, a representative from Amtrak and special guests.

The meeting will begin with coffee and refreshments in the Heritage Center. A special lunch offer available to attendees is described in the adjacent column. The meeting is expected to wrap up at 4:45 p.m., according to Jim Souby, President of the Colorado Rail Passenger Association.

Key in this meeting is that Amtrak may have to move the Chicago to Los Angeles Southwest Chief out of Colorado due to maintenance issues and related speed reductions on the BNSF Railway line that runs from Newton, Kansas through southeastern Colorado to Albuquerque, New Mexico. The transcontinental stops in Lamar, La Junta and Trinidad. A Thruway bus services links it with Pueblo, Colorado Springs and Denver, and knowledgeable travelers use that in conjunction with the California Zephyr for circle trips and Denver stopovers.

Due to low freight traffic, BNSF no longer needs to maintain the line for heavier, high speed traffic of its own and wants Amtrak to pay for the higher level costs. The current contract for maintenance expires in 2015. Costs are estimated to be $20 million per year for upgrades and regular maintenance. Amtrak has proposed that the three affected states, BNSF Railway and Amtrak split the costs 5 ways. Local leaders from the three states believe the national line should be funded by the federal government with limited state and local support.

A round trip charter bus has been arranged on September 14th for Denver region members and guests at $30 per person.

Reserve your seat by emailing volunteer@colorail.org or better yet, go to our membership page at www.ColoRail.org and use PayPal or a credit card to pay your charter fare. Please indicate in the comment box that you are paying for the charter bus. You may also use the reservation form on Page 7 of this newsletter, but please mail it by Wednesday, September 11th. For more information please contact Bob Brewster at:

railbob@q.com

Our bus will depart RTD’s I-25 & Broadway light rail station at 8:00 AM and follow the joint BNSF/Union Pacific rails south, via the Palmer Lake commencement of single track operation – the biggest physical impediment to Front Range passenger rail or fast intermodal freight.

We’ll make a brief stop at the Pikes Peak Historical Street Railway Foundation museum, where we will take a (very) short ride on a former Philadelphia PCC trolley.

We will make a second boarding stop near the Briargate interchange of I-25.

Upon reaching Pueblo we will have an opportunity for lunch and visits to the beautiful Pueblo Union Depot and the operating Pueblo Railway Museum. The museum’s staff is offering ColoRail a great “Boxcar Burger” lunch and train ride for only $10 – in a genuine former BNSF crew car.

We expect to return to Denver about 7:30 PM.
of opportunities to participate

Station volunteers sought for Labor Day weekend

ColoRail will again provide volunteer hosts at Denver Union Station during the Labor Day weekend holiday period. (Friday evening 8/30/13 through Tuesday evening 9/3/13). If you are available to help out anytime from 8/30/13 through 9/3/13, would you please either e-mail Jay Jones at sunjones.railguy@gmail.com or call him at 888.464.0199 X1.

The evening slots are the hardest to fill and if any of you can volunteer evenings that would be very helpful--but know that you are welcome to volunteer for any time period.

Amtrak's on-time performance has been fairly good, but at times they still run late. Even though the train is running late, it does help to have us there to answer questions and try to calm the anxious impatient riders.

And if you would please sign in on the sheet provided in our "office" box at DUS it will help us to determine who is eligible for a free Volunteer Host Shirt. As you know, the Board approved providing a free shirt to each volunteer who has volunteered for ColoRail at DUS five times or more. This is how we keep track of the number of times you have volunteered. Please also let me know if you have served 5 or more times and have not received your shirt.

Hopefully, next year at this time, we will be back at DUS.

Thanks. We appreciate your help.

Don Zielesch

Pioneer impasse shows difficulty of restoring a discontinued route

Hi everyone,

I've reached something of an impasse with the Pioneer restoration effort. Our need continues to be an independent study that would analyze the potential for a Pioneer train operating under a realistic scenario, rather than the sort of rehashing of the train's historical problems - as in the Amtrak study of 2009.

I have spent the last couple of years exploring possibilities for funding such a study. This has been a very slow process - it's not as if it's taken much of my time - but now I've exhausted the funding sources to which people have referred me. Some foundations do not even answer phone messages; it is not easy to get one's foot in the door.

Does anyone out there have any ideas how such a study could be funded? Right now we have a researcher interested in doing the work, but he will need as much as $83,333 in matching funds from a foundation, interested wealthy individual, or the like, to complete the research budget.

Barring that funding, we are not going anywhere with our effort. Any brainstorming out there?

Thanks,

C.B. Hall

360-468-2611

Pioneer Restoration Organization coordinator

[Editor's note - - C. B. Hall is being modest in describing the effort he put into this project, as well as the efforts of ColoRail members such as Peter Richards and Mike Rowe and activists all along the line. The resistance to restoring the service was mainly based on the fact that it had been discontinued, not on a realistic analysis of the marketplace, nor on a realistic request to the host railroad. Restoring a train is far more costly than keeping it.]

Aid Amtrak travelers

States step up rail programs

Virginia is the latest state to take over planning and funding for Amtrak service in its commonwealth, as part of the U.S. government's big "going out of business sale" known as the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (this act raised the barriers to restoring the Pioneer and mandated that states take responsibility for routes under 750 miles in length).

19 states that participate in Amtrak route support are required to complete takeover agreements by October 1st. The 2008 act is intended to standardize arrangements with the states, which currently vary widely. When Amtrak was created in 1970-71, state participation was an afterthought. Some states obtained regional routes without state or local contributions, while less influential or inconveniently located states had to pay a variety of expenses.

The new law is interesting other states that have no regional trains, most recently including Minnesota.
High points of U.S. tourism

ColoRail member tours the rails

by Bob Brewster

Inspired by last year’s ColoRail seminar on Colorado’s tourist railroads, and the 50th anniversary of my first visit to Colorado, I decided it was high time for me to visit the high country and its world-class rail treasures.

I confess to not having visited other regions of our beautiful state in a couple of decades, but I was immediately reminded of what I had neglected when I headed west. Every turn in the road reveals a new panorama worthy of an extended stare - but don't dare - unless you like intensive care! I often thought how preferable it would be to consume the kaleidoscopic vistas through a train window.

Which brings me to our wealth of tourist railroads. That there are railroads penetrating what was thought to be impenetrable remains a marvel of man's ingenuity and entrepreneurial ambition. The early railroads were the more efficient successors to crude trails and wagon ruts, but financial failures were often the rule rather than the exception.

And, devised to haul away the hidden riches of Mother Earth, the railroads also imported “riches” in the guise of tourists clamoring for the breath-taking (literally, at 10,000 ft.) scenic wonders. Thankfully for us, despite a plethora of challenges, portions of these rail marvels still exist for our enjoyment - for the very same reason: Colorado’s abundance of spectacular beauty! These railroads are living history.

My first stop was the Leadville, Colorado and Southern in Leadville. This line clings to a hillside for about 9 miles - the last 9 miles of a line that once originated in Denver. The profuse stands of aspen make this a must-see in September. I shall return. Leadville also hosts a number of other attractions well worth the journey.

Next up is what some might call the ‘granddaddy’ of rail tourism, the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge. Still an incredible ride - and 50 years to the day since my first trip! This tourism magnet is what business people call an economic generator for both endpoints. And Durango has grown ten-fold since my first visit, when the train was still operated by the D&RGW Railroad.

The Rio Grande Scenic Railroad in Alamosa was 3rd on the agenda. This former D&RG line traverses La Veta Pass and serves the San Luis Valley with both freight service and passenger excursions. Noted for special concerts in a beautiful mountain meadow (Fir Station), accessible only by train, this line is a newer but very welcome entry in the state’s rail tourism portfolio.

I was a week too early for the steam train trips but I did see one of the two Rails and Ales special trains headed for said meadow for an afternoon of beer-tasting. Eight hundred train tickets were sold for the event, requiring all hands on deck for the railroad! General Manager Matt Abbey spoke at ColoRail’s rail tourism summit last year and I promised a

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visit: promise kept. Parent company, Iowa Pacific, is led by Ed Ellis, also a former ColoRail speaker while in his former Amtrak role. "Ed's Empire" was featured recently in *Trains*, highlighting his other rail tourism endeavors and Ed's growing collection of rail equipment in Alamosa, creating some welcomed restoration jobs.

www.coloradotrain.com

The amazing Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad was my 4th stop. Located at the other end of the former D&RG narrow gauge network, and now owned jointly by the states of Colorado and New Mexico, this operation exists because of "extreme volunteerism." Hyper-dedicated individuals come from near and far for the "privilege" of working on this railroad - and pay their own way. What a business paradigm! But more are always welcome.

Just another breathtaking marvel and scenic wonder, of course. Yes, I know it's a drive from the Metro area but do it! And if you time it right, the Rio Grande Scenic will take you to it, nose-to-nose. This is an obvious pairing for the rail tourist.

www.cumbrestoltec.com

I was able to squeeze in one more rail adventure before heading home: the Royal Gorge Route, through the famous gorge of the same name - and the only way to visit the area due to the recent fire, unless you want to get wet in a raft on the Arkansas River.

The famous "hanging bridge" was an early rail tourism highlight when regularly scheduled passenger trains paused at the site for a view. The open air car is a visitor favorite.

www.RoyalGorgeRoute.com

There are other operating tourist railroads, such as the Georgetown Loop and the Pikes Peak Cog train. And there are rail museums of all sorts, some offering train rides. Our local, yet world-famous Colorado Railroad Museum being the most prominent. We also have the Platte Valley Trolley in Denver and the Pikes Peak Historical Streetcar Railway Foundation in Colorado Springs.

I thoroughly enjoyed every aspect of my rail tourism adventure. Without exception, I found the staff at these facilities friendly and most helpful. Likewise with the surrounding merchants. And NO, I'm not being paid by the Chambers of Commerce! This is what I found and I encourage all of ColoRail's members and friends to visit these rail gems we have in our virtual backyard. Use it or lose it!

Our fellow Coloradans deserve our enthusiasm and support for preserving these historical icons that enable us to enjoy and appreciate our state in our favorite fashion - rail!

I would be remiss if I didn't mention a great visit with ColoRail's "president emeritus," Jon Esty, nestled in the hillside above Ridgway without-the-e.

And the sacred ground of the Rio Grande Southern. Jon and Rosemary gaze out their windows at a row of rock that blocks their view of New Mexico. I think he said the row of rock was called the San Juan Mountains.......
When your editor was a boy, he and his siblings wore out a picture book titled *Great Trains of the World*. It featured a striking illustration of the Rio Grande’s Silverton narrow-gauge, and, of course, the Santa Fe Super Chief through Colorado. It also featured trains that we never had the opportunity to ride, as governments around the world poured money into other modes and rail managers grew defensive.

As Bob Brewster found on his expedition, the heirs to the passenger marketing savvy of the old-time railroads are today’s tourist lines. They have made themselves into conveyor belts for money coming into struggling rural economies, often doing so with limited funds of their own.

That this bootstrap industry had potential was first recognized -- negatively -- by the top dogs of the transportation field, highway officials. In the 1960’s, when funding for roads seemed unlimited, Oregon’s tourism program (run by the Highway Department) refused to show the Glenwood, Oregon Trolley Park operating museum on state highway maps of attractions. The reason? Rail vehicles did not pay gas taxes. In the 1970’s, Oregon’s new DOT refused to show Amtrak lines on the “Transportation Map” because the tracks were privately owned. But privately-owned commercial aviation was identified, because the airports were publicly owned. A look at vintage Colorado state material suggests the same logic was going on here. Today’s tourist lines still have to work hard, but are recognized more widely for their contributions.
Chief issue summarized

At the request of new readers, we are republishing the map which helps to understand the difference between potential alignments for Amtrak’s Southwest Chief. The current route through Colorado has the potential of tapping Front Range cities, as Amtrak’s predecessor Santa Fe did. Pueblo is the junction point shown on the map northwest of the La Junta - Trinidad line. But the Colorado line is being downgraded as a freight route in favor of the easier grades on the line through Amarillo. The Texas line, which like the Front Range cities was served by Santa Fe until 1971, features access to Wichita and Amarillo. It passes through Belen, New Mexico, an Albuquerque suburb. Based on several precedents, including Cheyenne and Phoenix, Amtrak would consider Belen satisfactory for Albuquerque if the train is rerouted.

Sept. 14th Excursion

P.O. Box 9613
Denver, CO 80209

Please enclose check or money order.

$30 per person
Round-trip to Pueblo
ColoRail and NARP meeting
Less likely to default if close to transit

Researchers find homes near transit less risky than others

A study published by mortgage giant Fannie Mae has found that where a 30% or more share of commuting is done by transit, there is a 58.4% less chance of mortgage defaults.

University of Arizona professor Gary Pivo led the study, which also found that every additional minute of commute time raises the risk of default by 3.7%. And, the research into massive FMA data files showed that for property within 1000 feet of a freeway, the risk of default went up by 59%.

The study adds to earlier research that was used to develop the Housing + Transportation Affordability Index. It’s online calculator reports on 180,000 U.S. neighborhoods: http://htaindex.cnt.org/

From Pueblo to Eugene by Talgo

Little noted in Colorado, the first of two 286-seat Talgo train-sets was tested in Pueblo this summer and then sent on its way to Oregon. Scenes along the Oregon segment of the trip - available on YouTube -- show it whipping through snow. On July 26th, it was greeted in Eugene by a celebration, and then sent into the Seattle equipment pool which covers the Cascades between Eugene and Vancouver, BC.

Addition of this and a second Oregon train-set will allow more experimentation with schedules and reduce the need to use conventional rolling stock for back-ups.

Talgos currently make the curvy 186 mile Portland - Seattle trip in 210 minutes.

Photographs in this issue by Bob Brewster are in color for readers who request e-mail PDF delivery of the ColoRail Passenger. Drop a note to join the e-mail list to rw.rynerson@att.net.