ColoRail member played important part in rural access

by R. W. Rynerson

ColoRail member John Valerio who died on June 28th following a lengthy illness will be especially missed during this Year of Transportation Choices. Even before joining Colorado Department of Transportation, John was active through ColoRail in working to develop alternatives to our addiction to automobiles.

As his obituary noted, John’s education “included the realms of political, cultural and moral thought, as well as the intricacies and doctrines that make up the legal system.” His academic training included a law degree and a master’s in International Studies from the University of Denver.

This was to serve him well in his role developing the rural and intercity bus program in CDOT, which came at a time of radical change in how those bus services are provided. These changes are driven by national programs that are not well understood, even by some of the people around the country who are responsible for them. John was able to understand the old rules as well as the new. And, as this was a new field for CDOT, he worked out some of the new rules with input from interested parties and colleagues.

John’s visits to 15 countries and countless U.S. cities paid off in an understanding of the relationship between major cities and their hinterlands, as well as in realizing the role that the State of Colorado should play.

He left more ideas for his colleagues and an inspiration for all to contribute as he did.

John makes a point in 2005.
Their future depends on our transportation choices....

In 1989, ColoRail began by saving some of the last, best work of the 20th Century. Now, in 2016, a new generation is growing up in a world shaped by our participation with government entities and private firms in preparing a 21st Century transportation network that completes the reach of all transportation modes.
Track crews replace old jointed rail and smooth the roadbed on the *Southwest Chief* line west of Holcomb, KS. On this segment between the stops at Garden City, KS and Lamar, CO, passenger trains were required to take 20% longer than they did in the 1960’s.

*Photo by Brad Nading/Garden City Telegram*

### 2016

- Year of the Train
- Year of the Bus
- Year of the Bike

### Southwest Chief Route gets 2nd TIGER Grant, Media Tour Ensues

*by Jim Souby*

Spearheaded by the City of La Junta, a 15.2 million dollar US Transportation Infrastructure Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant has been won to continue improving the BNSF Railway line between Newton, Kansas and Lamy, New Mexico. Matching funds of 9.4 million dollars have been raised from Amtrak ($4 million), BNSF ($2 million), the States of Colorado, Kansas and New Mexico ($1 million, each), as well as communities and counties along the route. ColoRail signaled its support with a $1,000 pledge.

The 2015 award follows last year’s 12.5 million dollar grant and brings the total raised for the line to over 46 million dollars over the past two years! Together, the two grants will replace over 80 miles of worn out, 50 to 60 year old track, restoring train speed to 79 mph for the *Southwest Chief* over the (Continued on page 3)

“A Voice for Colorado’s Rail Passengers”
2015 was a momentous 26th year for ColoRail, and for our partners too! We delivered welcome assistance to Amtrak travelers at Denver Union Station on each major holiday, earning thanks and learning from them about the importance of long distance train service and how to make it better.

In March, 20 of our volunteers chaperoned 900 skiers and snowboarders from Denver Union Station to Winter Park and back in cooperation with Winter Park Resort and Amtrak. It was a glorious weekend during the Resort’s 75th anniversary. Winter Park Resort executives are strong supporters of ColoRail and we recognize them as key leaders in the new generation of passenger railroading that serves recreationists, disabled Americans including many veterans, millennials and boomers.

Our fingers are still crossed that Winter Park Express service will resume on a regular basis next year. We submitted our match to fund the major 2014 TIGER grant Garden City, KS, secured to save the Southwest Chief. ColoRail worked with community leaders and advocates to help secure the grant and match funding.

In the fall, we supported Amtrak’s wonderful exhibit train on its stop at DUS. Thousands toured the train! The evening it arrived, we joined Amtrak and the Southwest Chief Commission in hosting a leadership reception for 46 legislators, state and city officials and their staff. It was a huge success.

That same weekend, Amtrak CEO Joe Boardman talked to us at our fall meeting about Amtrak’s strategic agenda and the need for our grass roots support. We told him we were onboard!

In November, we joined Pueblo County and Amtrak to support a media tour of the Southwest Chief track repair efforts under the TIGER grant. A great, two-part article in the Denver Post resulted. In early 2016, USA Today published another wonderful article. Both were graced with great photos and commentary about the need for the train and service to Pueblo.

Late in the fall we learned La Junta had won a second, even larger TIGER grant which we supported. In all, the ColoRail shoe leather campaign we started years ago has resulted in $47 million dollars for track repairs.

In the coming year, many rail events are scheduled for Colorado. RTD will launch three electric commuter rail lines, first being the Airport line April 22nd. They will also inaugurate a new light rail line along I-225 and Bus Rapid Transit on U.S. Highway 36. So far, three rail-related national conventions are scheduled for Colorado, as well. April 14-16 the Association of Tourist Railroads and Railway Museums will meet hosted by the Colorado Railroad Museum in Golden. July 19 – 24, the National Railway Historical Society will meet and October 14-16, the National Association of Railroad Passengers will meet, both in Denver.

Over the year, the Colorado Department of Transportation will be developing the State Passenger and Freight Rail Plan. Even Trains magazine is getting in the act with a special Colorado edition this spring!

It is important we seize the momentum these events create! Therefore, we are counting on you to join us as we push for passenger rail and transit in and through Colorado!

--Jim Souby
repaired segments (FRA Class 4 Standards). Equally important, the BNSF has agreed to maintain the repaired segments to Class 4 at its expense, considerably reducing the future burden on Amtrak. The repairs will yield more than an hour in time savings for the train, freeing schedule time to permit considering a new stop in Pueblo.

“This grant was made possible by big time support from communities up and down the line,” said Rick Klein, La Junta City Manager and Vice Chair of the Colorado southwest Chief Commission. Klein oversaw the grant process.

“We also got all three state DOT’s to pitch in, which really must have caught the attention of the grant reviewers in Washington, DC. Support from our Congressional delegation helped, too,” he added. Seneca, a transportation consulting firm in Washington, DC, developed the proposal. They also did the successful 2014 proposal for Garden City, Kansas [see Page One photo]. The firm earned high marks from the Commission for both their technical expertise and their grantmanship.

Eager to celebrate the grant and use the opportunity to educate the public, Pueblo County Communications Director Paris Carmichael worked with Amtrak’s Marc Magliari and ColoRail’s Jim Souby to carry out a two day media tour focusing on the track repair, the Southwest Chief and the cities it serves.

Media reps from the Denver Post and USA Today visited community leaders in Colorado and Kansas, checked out construction work on the rail line, rode the train and got a tour of the Evraz rail manufacturing plant in Pueblo.

“Our dream is to have the Southwest Chief stop at this magnificent depot,” said, Pueblo County Commissioner Sal Pace, who kicked off the tour at the Pueblo Union Station. Constructed in 1887, the beautiful depot was featured on the cover of ColoRail’s September/October 2013 Passenger newsletter (http://gator4247.hostgator.com/~colorailweb/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/cr73.pdf). Pace, who chairs the Southwest Chief Commission, used ColoRail’s Proposed Colorado Rail map (http://colorail.org/resources/) to outline a vision for not only a Pueblo stop, but Front Range passenger rail.

Amtrak and ColoRail chaperoned the tour, which included stops in Lamar, Garden City and La Junta as well as Pueblo. City and County officials turned out to express support for the train. Representatives from Dodge City joined the travel team for dinner in Garden City.

The following morning, the Southwest Chief whisked the team to La Junta for breakfast. The reporters interviewed the train crew and passengers before alighting on the La Junta platform where they joined city and business leaders for coffee.

The tour concluded with an extensive visit to the Evraz Rail Manufacturing Plant in Pueblo. General Manager Ben Lutze led the group through the entire rail making process.

First, a massive slowly rocking electric furnace vat creates molten, specially formulated steel from used cars and other sources. Each batch melts about 110 crushed cars!

A carefully controlled, multi-step rolling process follows, producing quarter mile rails to individual railroad specifications of hardness, weight and contour. What a remarkable contrast: on the plant floor you see roaring white hot, molten metal moving through the manufacturing stages, while in the various control rooms you see highly skilled technicians using computers to control the process precisely in a quiet, darkened atmosphere.

The media tour led to a major two part news article with photos in the Denver Post:

Glowing with heat, fully rolled rail gets the EVRAZ stamp on its way to inspection.  


USA Today coverage:

Colorado Needs Front Range Passenger Rail

by Jim Souby and Gary Sprung, Colorado Rail Passenger Association

COLORAIL’S VISION STATEMENT FOR FRONT RANGE PASSENGER RAIL

Fast, frequent and safe passenger rail services
Connect Front Range communities
Promote economic development and
Enable single day round-trips for business and pleasure

Colorado needs to supplement its road network with passenger railroad trains running between Ft. Collins, Denver, Colorado Springs, and Pueblo. A Front Range passenger rail system, with connecting transit services, would provide much needed capacity growth, while significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing the mobility of Coloradans, and providing major economic stimulus to the cities and communities served. It could significantly relieve congestion on highways, making them work better for automobile and bus drivers and future smart vehicles.

Colorado is one of the fastest growing states in terms of population and economic opportunity. The Colorado Department of Local Affairs predicts that the state's population will increase from 5 million in 2015 to about 8 million people in 2040. 6.2 million of these people will live along the Front Range. Today, only Interstate 25 links the cities. It is often gets severely congested, and therefore slow. I-25 will be insufficient to meet the projected population growth in the decades to come.

We need to plan to meet this transportation challenge. In order to help launch this urgent planning effort for Colorado, ColoRail has developed a vision and strategy for a rail component. Given the extensive lead times for projects of this magnitude, history tells us the outreach and planning must begin now!

Why Passenger Rail?

Most other industrialized countries have come to understand these principles:

Steel wheels on steel rails have enormous capacity. A dedicated two-track rail service has the same capacity as 14 lanes of highway.

Passenger rail is less subject to disruption by weather compared to highways and air travel.

Passenger rail is potentially much faster than rubber tires on pavement.

Trains move more people and more goods using much less energy than cars and trucks, and far less than airplanes.

Passenger rail is safer than automobile travel.

Trains create immense economic benefits in nearby communities.

Trains “leave the driving to us”, which means passengers can watch the scenery instead of the road, accomplish job tasks, read a good book, play a video or game, socialize, and eat and drink.

A beautiful history and a critical economic and mobility choice for the future

America, including Colorado, once had an excellent passenger rail system. It took you where you
wanted to go, at reasonable speed, with good reliability, at competitive prices. Those trains were run by private railroad companies who competed with each other for travelers’ dollars. In then much less populous Colorado, you could catch several trains a day from Denver to Ft. Collins and Cheyenne, to Colorado Springs and Pueblo.

In the mid-20th century, America’s federal, state, and local governments decided to spend vast amounts of public money on highways and airports. This created severe competition with the private railroads and killed the profitability of passenger trains. The private railroads got out of the business and Congress created Amtrak in 1970 to maintain what was left of the passenger rail system. Unfortunately, Congress has never funded Amtrak at a level high enough to create an efficient, quality nationwide service.

While everyone today appreciates the convenience and comfort of our modern automobiles, and we expect to be able to fly across the continent in mere hours, these benefits have come with significant economic, social, and environmental costs. Other nations who invested in highways, airports, AND railroads have gained significant benefits from the better balance.

In recent years, many U.S. states and cities have implemented new commuter and intercity rail systems and are upgrading their existing services with higher speeds and expansion. Some have been able to leverage funding for the services by tapping into the increased property values from development surrounding stations. Their leaders have recognized the twin values of rail to citizen mobility and economic development.

Colorado faces a critical choice: Will we try to meet the challenge of our growth through expansion of I-25 to six, eight, or twelve lanes? Or will we invest in a more diverse transportation system?

The Market

Beyond the simple fact of our rapidly increasing population, other factors point to a need for Front Range travel options. The number of individuals in Colorado who are 65 and over will increase from 555,000 in 2010 to 1,243,000 in 2030. Many of them cannot or will not drive cars.

The cost of a car, its fuel, and maintenance is a significant burden to lower income people. Public transit can serve them better. For college students and military personnel the equation is often similar. Furthermore, the transit option is safer for all concerned.

Business people who use the good train system of the Northeast Corridor appreciate the opportunity to work while moving. Many people who daily ride RTD busses and trains do the same.

Another trend favoring rail is changing choices by young adults. The “millenials” generation is much less interested in driving than were “baby boomers”. It’s possible that America’s love affair with the car is waning just a bit.

These factors indicate that there will be a large population in need of more diverse mobility options.

What About Money?

In a recent study, the Colorado Department of Transportation has estimated that building a feasible passenger rail corridor from Fort Collins to Denver would cost about $1.2 billion dollars. This is a huge amount but it is not out of order when you think of the $1 billion dollar upgrade that is planned for a short stretch of Interstate 70 in eastern Denver.

CDOT’s assessment of transportation options from Denver north to Ft. Collins estimates that passenger rail costs are about $25 million dollars a mile. That’s a lot, but it is not more than highway expan-
A new campaign launched in December by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging aims to help older adults realize when giving up driving may be the safest choice and make the transition to public transportation or other ways of getting around. As it stands, seniors often see driving as synonymous with independence. And those who do decide to stop are unaware of their options, so they visit family, friends and church 65% less and take 15% fewer trips to the doctor just when they need medical care the most.

USA Today December 15, 2015

‘Multiplier effect’ when modes linked

(Continued from page 8)

offer reduced energy consumption and resultant pollution. Economies of scale prevail in moving large volumes of product and people, requiring a much smaller real estate footprint. Safety is paramount. Rail service is usually impervious to severe weather occurrences. Rail terminals for freight and passengers generate development opportunities in order to take advantage of the rail mode’s benefits. Passengers on trains are safer and more productive with their time, in a less stressful environment. And they save money while enjoying the reliability of rail.

All of these attributes deserve celebration. And it is hoped that “2016: Year of the Train - Connecting Colorado” will advance Colorado’s rail network to better serve the state’s growth and prosperity. Could Front Range Rail become a reality? Can rail offer optimal mobility choices for our citizens, visitors, and businesses? Let’s launch “Year of the Train” for 2016!

[YEAR OF THE TRAIN is the first of Three TRANSPORTATION CHOICES heralded by ColoRail for 2016. Our next ColoRail Passenger will feature YEAR OF THE BUS - RAIL’S PARTNER, bringing attention to the expanding role of buses as a modal choice for Colorado’s residents and visitors. Bustang and Flatiron Flyer services exemplify great potential for this mode. Finally, YEAR OF THE BIKE - PEDAL POWER will focus on the explosive popularity of this healthy transportation option. Whether for recreation, commuting, or accessing mass transit for the “first/last mile,” bicycles function for all ages and are the ultimate door-to-door transportation component. Train, Bus, and Bike exhibit the multiplier effect when used in combination as an attractive mobility alternative.

So let us celebrate ColoRail’s launching of 2016: YEAR OF TRANSPORTATION CHOICES! We’ll have much to honor. Our record level of membership indicates we’re on track!
YEAR OF THE TRAIN --

CONNECTING COLORADO

by Robert Brewster

Were it not for early Denver and Colorado visionaries bringing the rails to Denver and our state, the Colorado we now know might have developed quite differently. The rails followed commerce and established communities along the way, complementing early wagon roads and trails.

Today, Colorado’s railroads carry goods and commodities to, through, and from our state on steel rails that excel in expediting the flow of products safely, economically, and efficiently. The big Class I railroads, along with their short line partners, are a vital transportation link for the state and the nation. They deserve to be honored and celebrated.

Another Colorado rail asset consists of the numerous world class tourist railroads and museums that many consider synonymous with our state. Mostly the remnants of the state’s earlier rail endeavors, they demonstrate the daring and resolve of Colorado’s rail pioneers, placing rails in unimaginable places, including mountaintops, ledges, and canyons.

Today they draw tourists and rail aficionados from around the globe, enhancing the local economies of rural communities. They, too, deserve honor and celebration.

But the justification for honoring and celebrating 2016 as the "Year of the Train" rests prominently with the Grand Openings of FIVE new rail and transit corridors throughout the Denver metro area, several paralleling historic rail corridors.

Transportation eyes around the nation will be watching these events unfold throughout the year. Is it not appropriate to take advantage of this unusual series of events in order to promote our communities, our new mobility options, and all of our rail assets as we look forward to the role of rail in our daily lives?

The benefits of rail cannot be overstated. Steel wheels on steel rails

(Continued on page 7)