

ColoRail Passenger

April-May-June 2016

Issue #80



As our community celebrates completion of the **first electric commuter rail line west of Chicago**, ColoRail President Jim Souby points out that a building block approach to rail developments gets best results. Had ColoRail not stepped in more than once and had developer doctrine in the 1980's been financed, imagine a great parking lot in this location, serving office park styled buildings, with Amtrak stopping near the refinery in Commerce City. And, we would still be waiting for construction of the billion-dollar mile of 15th Street Subway (see *Denver Downtown Plan* 1986). For more on the building block way of **getting things done**, see pages 4-5.

Photo by Robert Brewster.

Ready to roll

ColoRail's April 23rd meeting meshes beautifully with the launch of RTD's commuter rail net! We will hear examples of passenger rail progress from **Ed Ellis**, Iowa Pacific Rail Holdings Chief, **Jack Tone**, former Parsons Brinkerhoff Senior Engineer for the Chicago to St. Louis high speed rail project, and **John Engs**, from the Toltec & Cumbres Scenic Line.

(Continued on page 2)

Inside stories:

Year of the Bus -- on 3

Highway tolls good for trains -- on 8

"For Colorado's future -- ensuring mobility!"

Ready
To Roll

President's CAB RIDE

(Continued from page 1)

Plus, Denver will be hopping all weekend with the Airport Line opening, "The Door's Open" celebration including the Paramount Wurlitzer organ, free RTD rail, and much more. Plan to join us Saturday morning and stay for the fun all day! Use RTD if you can. While there is public parking across the street from our meeting, public transit will be much more convenient for you and RTD rail (not buses) will be free.

Please let your friends know of the meeting. It will be one of our best, and that follows a string of great ones already!

Because of the RTD Airport line opening, we could not meet at Denver Union Station (DUS). Therefore, we have booked the historic Oxford Hotel for the meeting, just a block away. We were standing-room-only at DUS in January, but will have more space at the Oxford's historic Theater Room, 1637 Wazee St. We will also have higher costs, so please consider a donation of \$5, \$10, or more when you come to help offset some of the expenses for the meeting. Expect fine breakfast pastries, good coffee, and an excellent meeting room.

Southwest Chief for Pueblo

Colorail presented a briefing on efforts to rebuild the Amtrak *Southwest Chief* rail line and extend its service to Pueblo. The purpose of the March 4 meeting was to advise Pueblo area residents on the project and enlist their support for the effort. Pueblo County Commissioner **Sal Pace** convened the meeting and Colorail President **Jim Souby** pre-

sented the detailed briefing. 50 people attended the session which included an extensive question and answer period. Colorail members **Bob Brewster**, **Gary Carter** and **John Bishop** supported the meeting.

At the meeting, Commissioner Pace announced that Amtrak is evaluating the possibility of running "through cars" to and from Chicago as a less expensive way of getting service to Pueblo started. These cars would be switched off the train at La Junta and proceed to Pueblo. The schedule, forecasted ridership and economics have to be estimated to see if the so called "stub train" will make sense. If so, it will be the first building block toward passenger rail up and down the Front Range. Next stop: Colorado Springs?!

Advantages of the through car concept include the fact that the Southwest Chief would not have to extend its route by 85 miles and Amtrak has an existing crew base in La Junta. This would avoid the expensive improvements that would immediately be necessary on the Pueblo to Trinidad leg of the proposed re-route of the train. The disadvantage is that Pueblo and Walsenburg would still have to rely on Thruway bus service to catch the westbound train. CDOT has indicated that it would investigate improved bus service to connect with the train from Front Range communities if the train is initiated.

-- Jim Souby

MEETING DETAILS

Location: Oxford Hotel, 1637 Wazee Street, Denver, Colorado 80202

Room: Theater Room

Date: Saturday, April 23, 2016

Registration: 8:00 a.m.

Meeting Time: 8:30 a.m.



Above = Jim Souby by Gary Sprung. Page 4 photo by Patti Dennison. Page 5 photo by Woo Jin Electric Co. Page 7 photo by Robert Brewster.

Colorail Board and Colorado NARP Council Members:

(with telephone numbers and <e-mail addresses>

Jim Souby, President,
NARP Council Member
(303-355-7985).
<jsouby@comcast.net>

Sylvia Brady, Secretary,
Denver University
<sarriaga@gmail.com>

Jay Jones, NARP Council Member,
Denver.
<sunjones.railguy@gmail.com>

Robert Rynerson, Newsletter Editor,
Denver. (720-570-0647)
<rw.rynerson@att.net>

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 NOTES WITH SYMPATHY FOR HIS FAMILY
AND REGRET FOR THE PASSING ON MARCH 19TH
OF A HISTORIC FIGURE IN COLORADO TRANSPORTATION:

CLARENCE "CAL" W. MARSELLA

(1950 – 2016)

WHO ARRIVED AT RTD WHEN IT WAS READY TO DO GREAT
THINGS, RECOGNIZED THAT AND LEAD IT FORWARD.

Year of the bus

2016

by Robert Brewster

In Issue #79 of the ColoRail Passenger ColoRail launched its celebration of year 2016 as the Year of Transportation Choices, highlighting trains, buses, and bikes. After honoring Colorado's rich rail legacy and promising future in YEAR OF THE TRAIN, it is only fitting that the legacy and future of the bus mode be so honored in YEAR OF THE BUS.

Not unlike the rail mode, buses (or "motor coaches," if you will) have a long and rich legacy in Colorado.* Previously, the mighty horse served as the ubiquitous external, non-human form of land transportation through the ages. Indeed, even rail transportation had some equine influence in the formative years, piles of "used" horsepower notwithstanding. But change came in the form of the horseless carriage over 100 years ago and human-kind hasn't been the same since.

Rider alert for SkyRide...

RTD's popular Rte AB SkyRide bus service between the Boulder area and Denver International Airport will get even better on April 24, when the route will leave US 36 near the Flatiron Crossing Mall and proceed non-stop on E-470 to DIA after a brief stop at Flatiron Station.

The change will make the service more reliable and attractive by avoiding some of the worst traffic bottlenecks in the metro area. Unfortunately, DIA passengers at the Broomfield and Westminster stops will need to seek alternate routes with loss of the AB, until RTD reevaluates its SkyRide network. Westminster area patrons will have a more frequent all-rail routing in months, when the B-Line commences service.

Another big change involves the bus stop location at DIA, which will move near the train platform, keeping all RTD services in close proximity under the new airport hotel. Due to the new airport train service, other SkyRide routes will see major changes or be discontinued, available at www.rtd-denver.com.

The private motored-vehicle introduced awesome mobility independence, as it still does, but larger vehicles offered an opportunity to make money transporting those who didn't or couldn't own their own vehicles. The "masses" of mass transit.

In Denver, the Denver Omnibus and Cab Company kicked things off while our ever-attractive mountains provided the impetus for mountain touring cars that offered a means to reach places that the early rails couldn't. And that is one reason why the bus mode can be called "rail's partner."

In fact, railroads developed their own bus divisions to complement their rail operations. Part of Burlington Transportation Company, an ancestral corollary to today's BNSF Railway, rolled into the Denver Boulder Bus Company in 1947, which rolled into RTD on May 1, 1975, which has now morphed into the Flatiron Flyer as of January 3, 2016 - the first celebrated event in the Year of Transportation Choices.

One must be mindful that this very bus operation owned by the Colorado & Southern Railroad supplanted the Denver & Interurban Railroad Co. as the Denver & Interurban Motor Co. It is hoped that the Flatiron Flyer bus will not similarly supplant RTD's Northwest Rail corridor, over the same trackage as the D&IR, before it even inaugurates service! Our nation has a long history of replacing rail lines with bus service, sometimes well-

intentioned, sometimes as a clever way of bowing out of a market.

This prompts certain levels of competitive hostility, along with irony. The irony can be costly when former rail rights-of-way must be reassembled in order to reestablish rail service where it once operated only two generations earlier. (See Los Angeles.)

In the earlier years, buses often called at train stations to collect and distribute the rail passengers, connecting them with the more distant reaches of the growing cities. Imagine that. Check out Denver Union Station today. That which is old is new again, bringing us to YEAR OF THE BUS.

As RTD reestablishes rail service throughout the Denver metro area, the role of the bus distribution network will become increasingly important. Rather than viewing buses as antithetical to rail, they will be seen as complementing the reach of rail, creating a system.

As transportation observers have long known, the bus and train modes each have distinct attributes and disadvantages. In addition to buses extending the reach of rail, they can also help develop a strong ridership market that can eventually qualify it for the rail mode, with rail's advantage of carrying larger numbers of passengers more efficiently. Perhaps the Front Range

(Continued on page 7)

ColoRail volunteers helped out passengers

We want to thank the following volunteers who helped out passengers at Denver Union Station over the Thanksgiving weekend:

John Bishop = 11/24 and 11/27, Michael Cronin = 11/26, Ron Kaminen = 11/27 and 11/29, Tom Peyton = 11/25, Frank Smucker = 11/28, 11/29 a.m. and 11/29 p.m., Vince Szafranko = 11/26, Betty Vander Kooi = 11/24, Ron Vander Kooi = 11/24, Don Zielesch = 11/25.

And we would like to thank the following for their help at DUS over the Christmas-New Year's weekend 2015-2016:

Michael Cronin, Ron Kaminen, Tom Peyton, Rob Rynerson (2 times), Vince Szafranko (2 times), Don Zielesch.

If any names were missed, please let me know so I can correct the record. Thanks again for your help.

-- DwZ

Big, but in
affordable steps

ColoRail building blocks:

When you talk to ColoRail members now days you often will hear them use the term “building blocks”. The *ColoRail Building Blocks* are an incremental approach to achieving our goals for passenger rail. Although they return tremendous economic benefits, rail projects are very expensive and can take a long time to complete. When we define such projects simply with total estimated costs and project duration, we not only ignore the tremendous benefits that accrue to communities and the state which justify construction, but we also discourage public acceptance, allowing naysayers to claim, “we just can’t afford it” when, in fact, we can’t afford not to do it.

This is much more than verbal mumbo jumbo. We use the term because it is positive; building blocks demonstrate progress toward our vision and goals, while “increments” could be positive or negative. The term also causes us to think big enough to not only actually solve our transportation problems, but show how we can do so in affordable steps. Not all building blocks are rail construction projects. They may include policies concerning financial tools, right of way preservation and other matters related to a successful rail system.

Smaller building blocks stand alone or can combine into larger ones. For example, obtaining the recent TIGER

grants were building blocks for saving the *Southwest Chief*. A secure Chief becomes a building block for expanding Amtrak service to Pueblo, which becomes a building block for Front Range Passenger Rail by serving as a southern anchor for the system. Each building block can usually be defined and justified as a stand-alone project or objective, but also supports achievement of a larger goal. By identifying and defining building blocks we can also identify costs and benefits more accurately and determine potential and doable steps toward achieving our goals.

We also can determine what not to do in order to prevent impeding our goals. For example, in major rail and transportation corridors, building blocks could include policies that make sure the construction of flyovers and underpasses take into account future rail lines, or policies that preclude abandonment of rights of way. Some of the building blocks we have defined include:

Vision. Create a popular, well understood vision for Colorado Rail services, both freight and passenger

State Rail Plan. Publish the vision in the State Rail Plan. Designate corridors in and through Colorado for

(Continued on page 5)



While Simon works on the Visual Identity scheme for their snow fort, Max explains that it was easier and faster to build it one block at a time. That’s how highway and aviation projects have developed over the past century. But if their snow fort was a rail project, someone would demand that they wait for enough snow to pile it up in one giant mound. And wait...

results now **AND** future

Try good examples

(Continued from page 4)

passenger rail and lobby to get them federally accepted.

Connecting Services. Establish connecting bus services and potential stub train services within and linking to the corridors. This building block should yield a passenger system that makes it is easy to plan trips in and out of Colorado, access well connected services, purchase tickets for the entire trip on-line, and cooperate with Amtrak and other operators to establish the system. Linkages to airports (DIA), DUS and other transportation hubs are essential as well as accommodations for the "last mile" such as bikes, buses and shared automobiles must be created to the extent possible at each rail destination.

Capacity. Examine capacity issues and design remedies such as crucial right of way acquisition, route preservation within designated corridors, equipment acquisition, and operator interest.

Grass roots and community awareness. Educate the public and their leaders of the advantages of passenger rail, particularly economic development/Transit Oriented Development benefits.

Business awareness. Ensure businesses are aware of the productivity benefits of rail travel at certain distances and locations as well as the enormous economic development benefits.

Examples. Find examples of successful systems including cost and financing information and use them to educate the public.

Excursions and demonstrations. Work with partners to obtain special train service for Colorado such as the successful Winter Park Express demonstration. Examples might include:

- An annual train to the State Fair in Pueblo from Denver
- Amtrak's exhibition train
- A "bike train" to Winter Park to demonstrate Amtrak's new baggage car
- An inspection train over the Trinidad – Pueblo - La Junta proposed expansion route.

Scenic and recreational train services. Create a partnership among the scenic rail lines in Colorado to improve marketing. Connect Colorado's scenic lines with Amtrak Vacations for possible excursions. Look at rail service to Colorado's ski resorts as potential long term tourism attraction.

ColoRail Building Blocks are a useful way to frame our broad and diverse goals and develop specific objectives and projects people can understand and support. We have vetted the concept successfully with various audiences ranging from transportation groups to civic and political leaders. Several members have contributed to the approach and we welcome feedback on these ideas from all of our members.

-Jim Souby

President@ColoRail.org

A-Line to airport an example as other blocks put in place first

"The start of RTD's commuter rail service to DIA is a game changer for the airport," said Kim Day, CEO of Denver International Airport. "This will put us on par with the world's leading airports as many of our international passengers are used to access to the world's great cities via rail." -- RTD press release

As I looked over the Woo Jin Electric Company's display of RTD Commuter Rail components at the InnoTrans Berlin rail expo in 2014 I felt a bit overwhelmed thinking of how many blocks were placed to put us on the world stage. Some, like location of a bus park-n-Ride that will be a rail station, were placed years before the FasTracks plan. Some, like keeping tracks in Union Station, needed blocks placed by Denver Union Terminal Company, RTD, and -- over and over -- ColoRail. And, the new lines can be building blocks for a bright future,

-- R. W. Rynerson



April 23rd
meeting

Plan for Board election

By Jim Souby

The Spring membership meeting is also the corporate annual meeting for ColoRail. Last year we amended our by-laws to expand our board from 9 to 11 members. Our intent was to increase our outreach to millennials. As a result, we added two millennial members. We think this is one of the most important leadership decisions we have made. Therefore, as you think about joining our board or recommending candidates

please think about getting this new transit generation on board!

Elections are held for a portion of the Board each year. To facilitate the process, ColoRail proposes a slate of candidates for consideration. Nominations are also taken from the floor. This year five of the eleven board seats are up. The four incumbents running for re-election include: **Sylvia Brady, Jay Jones, Joan Shaffer, and Harry Safstrom** (who was appointed this year to

fill a vacancy). A vacancy exists and we are searching for a great candidate to fill out the slate.

All willing to serve on our board are welcome to run. However, they should be sure they can: attend monthly meetings, usually the second Monday evening of each month, occasionally using phone access; be willing to set an example for other members by volunteering at rail events and speaking opportunities, and organize and lead outreach activities.

Some assume that highway expansion without toll lanes is the answer

(Continued from page 8)

A common perception held by the public is that highway expansion without toll lanes is the answer for our future transportation needs. This was evident when groups from Fort Collins to Denver have come out publicly against CDOT's plan to build more toll lanes. The reality of this situation is that CDOT has no choice but to ask the public to help pay for expanded highways through toll fees from the express lanes. For years it was expected the federal

government or gas taxes would cover transportation projects, but that is no longer an option.

Interestingly and most importantly, toll lanes are creating a renaissance among Coloradans in regards to how they perceive transportation. Transportation is polling higher than education in terms of the most important issues facing the state today. With toll free highway expansion out of the question, the public is turning to rail and transit. A recent article in the *Coloradoan* (newspaper of Fort Collins)

newspaper of Fort Collins) detailed possible Amtrak service between Fort Collins, Boulder, and Denver. Comments on the piece were plentiful and very enthusiastic, and the article was shared far and wide on social media outlets. This is a genuine reflection on what transportation solutions are desired by Coloradans. Rail is poised to be a well received

and viable option, and toll lanes have greatly influenced this.

Combined synergy of new rail lines, the inability to expand highways, and the introduction of new tolled express lanes are providing lasting momentum for rail in the state of Colorado.

This new public understanding of transportation options will greatly assist the Colorado Rail Passenger Association in advancing plans to fund and implement front range passenger rail. The public will ultimately decide what kind of transportation solution Colorado receives, as a ballot initiative will be required in the future due to foreseeable funding gaps. Although toll lanes seem to be a nuisance, they are greatly assisting the development of public support for future Front Range rail services.

When time comes for the public to decide what transportation investments to make, rail will be perceived as an important solution to our future transportation demand. Toll lanes will provide needed funding for CDOT in the short term, and they will drive transportation system diversification in the long term (i.e., public support for new passenger rail services, higher ridership on current rail lanes, and more interregional bus services). Who knew that toll lanes would greatly benefit passenger rail in Colorado?

Shadowed highway sections highlight toll lanes that are currently operating or will begin construction within the next 2 years.



Not Drawn to Scale



Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Postal Code: _____

Telephone, with area code: _____

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

\$20 PER YEAR
pays for 2016 website,
newsletter,
communications.

Join ColoRail

P.O. Box 9613
Denver, CO 80209
www.colorail.org

Please enclose check or money order or enroll online.

(Continued from page 3)

Year of the Bus 2016

Bustang corridors will fill that role. Of course, bus routes can be excellent stand-alone services as well, with more pin-point origins and destinations too small for rail consideration.

Blending the bus and rail modes into a hybrid system offers "the best of both worlds." During peak commuting hours, trains carry passenger loads that are multiple times that of off-peak trips far more efficiently over the exclusive rail right-of-way, devoid of the highway jams, often exacerbated by weather, construction, and accidents. Conversely, during off-peak hours when highways flow more freely and passenger loads are lighter, a parallel bus route offers an efficient comple-

mentary service, tailored to actual need. Might this be the solution to the perplexing problem surrounding the proposed B-Line Northwest Rail corridor sharing the BNSF rails, where full-time rail makes the proposal unaffordable?

ColoRail hopes that expanded bus services will start closing the gaps in Colorado's mobility systems. Flatiron Flyer, Bustang, FLEX, MAX, and other local and regional services are needed more than ever to accommodate the state's rapidly growing population and associated mobility challenges.

* The Motor Bus Society's publication *Motor Coach Age* highlights the development of bus service in Colorado in its January-June 2012 issue. It is an excellent source of information on the development of the Colorado bus industry right up to the RTD era.



RTD's Flatiron Flyer on flyover.

ColoRail Passenger

P.O. Box 9613
Denver, CO 80209

Toll lanes the fast way to encourage rail

By Jack Wheeler

Denver and the Front Range population centers of Colorado are experiencing something quite radical. They are faced with a massive influx of individuals from across the country. **On average, 41 people a day move to Denver alone. Statewide, roughly 100,000 people a year move to Colorado.** According to the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, this trend will continue until 2050, making the state population 8.5 million (compared to 5.5 million today). Evidently, such a population increase brings great opportunities, as well as great challenges. Some of the benefits of include job security, real estate booms, and low unemployment. However, such an increase in population along the

front range could create high levels of pollution and severe congestion on the road ways. **Our current transportation system capacity is severely inadequate to meet this future demand.** CDOT is well aware of this, and they are doing all that they can to prepare Colorado for this continuous economic boom. Unfortunately, their budget is stagnant (gas tax has not increased since 1992 and a budget increase from the federal government is not expected).

CDOT has identified new innovative ways to fund projects, such as public-private partnerships, RAMP funds, and FASTER funding (FASTER funding provides operating capital for the first state owned and operated transit service,

Bustang). These sources provide funding for projects that range from 5 to 200 million. Although these investments are needed and welcome, they greatly fail to cover the costs of a transportation system that would provide sufficient capacity for Colorado's population come 2050. Because of these funding gaps, **CDOT has determined that toll lanes are the best way to add transportation capacity to Colorado's system.** In addition to the current toll lanes, CDOT plans to build express lanes on I-25 north to SH 7, I-70 east, and C-470 from I-25 to Wadsworth. Many people have been upset by this decision, as it means higher transportation costs or no solutions at all (for people who cannot afford toll fees).

(Continued on page 6)