

ColoRail Passenger

January-February 2007

Issue #53

Englewood Center Winter Meeting Features Amtrak

Jonathan Hutchison, Amtrak's Director of Government Affairs in Oakland, CA, will be the featured speaker at ColoRail's Winter Membership Meeting, Saturday, January 27, 10:00am to 12 noon. The meeting, which is co-sponsored by the City of Englewood, will take place at the Community Room, 2nd floor of the Englewood City Center, 1000 Englewood Parkway.

Prior to his employment with Amtrak beginning just last February, Mr. Hutchison was manager of the inter-city rail program at the Oregon DOT for two years where he cooperated with the Washington State DOT and Amtrak to coordinate the *Cascade Corridor* service.

Before that, he spent 8 years with Tri-Met in Portland where he worked in marketing, as an assistant in rail transportation, and as a manager of employee programs and development. He began his rail transportation career in 1990 when he served as a student intern with the National Association of Railroad Passengers in Washington, DC.

Mr. Hutchison has a great interest in Denver Union Station redevelopment and how it will impact Amtrak's presence at the station. He will be meeting with RTD and station redevelopment officials prior to the ColoRail meeting to discuss concerns

(Continued on page 3)



Photo by Eric Miller.

In case you were out of town:

Southeast Light Rail lines opened for service on Friday, November 17th.

Celebrations continued over that weekend, with ColoRail members participating as volunteers to assist Regional Transportation District staff in guiding the crowds of eager prospective commuters and

joyriders.

Three ColoRail members even rode the very first "real" train trip on the new line departing I-25 & Broadway Station to the southeast at the start of scheduled operations at 2:28 a.m. on Sunday, November 19th. (**E-Line** trains meet **D-Line** trains for a supervised cross-platform transfer for weekend nightowls at that time.) Most other passengers appeared to have been celebrating in LoDo.

Inside this issue:

***Look ahead, look south -- to New Mexico
Boulder-- Fall meet always interesting***

"A Voice for Colorado's Rail Passengers"

Chicago area plans
for long-term role
of rail transport

RailVolution rounds-up ideas

Revival of streetcar service was the leading topic of discussion at the 2007 RailVolution meeting held in Chicago in early November. Presenters pointed out numerous examples of how trolleys are stimulating new growth and revitalizing old neighborhoods.

Leading the way is the Portland streetcar but attendees also heard presenters from Little Rock, Tampa, Memphis, and Kenosha discuss how streetcars have impacted their communities.

A moving force in the development of streetcar systems is the Community Streetcar Coalition which was formed in 2004 to advocate for federal funding for streetcar projects. U.S. Representative Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), the founder of RailVolution, has proposed legislation which would enable streetcar projects to compete for Small Starts funding on an equal basis with other transit modes. The Small Starts program is part of the SAFETEA-LU national legislation for surface transportation.

Streetcar advocates are quick to point out that trolleys do not provide the same kind of service that light rail does. Trolleys typically operate in mixed traffic, make frequent stops, and rarely exceed 15 mph between stops. Construction of streetcar lines can be done much more rapidly than light rail thus having much less of an impact on businesses and traffic flow. Presenters mentioned how streetcars add to the attractiveness and activity of streets and how resulting commercial and residential development has multiplied in value far beyond the original cost of the trolley line. Private-public partnerships and other methods of financing streetcars were discussed.

As always, many of the presenters examined ways transit can affect development, particularly development around transit stations. Anyone who is familiar with the Chicago area knows of the numerous

communities located around commuter rail stations. Many of these attractive town centers were used as illustration of effective suburban planning during tours attendees were able to make by train.

Chicago is not only beset by traffic congestion but it is also hamstrung by rail congestion. The Illinois DOT, the city of Chicago, Federal Railroad Administration and 10 railroads (eight freight railroads and Metra and Amtrak) have combined efforts to improve the flow of freight and passenger train traffic to and through the region. Representatives involved in the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program (CREATE) presented their solutions at a very well attended RailVolution workshop.

CREATE was formed by the Chicago Transportation Coordination Office shortly after an early January 1999 blizzard dumped 21 inches in two days in Chicago paralyzing -- then delaying -- rail traffic for the next three months. Engineers designed a massive computer model of all the rail lines in the area on which some 500 freight and 700 passenger trains travel each weekday. When all the trains were put into motion, patterns of congestion emerged which helped define a dozen locations where some form of streamlining improvements were necessary. The study also predicted there would be an 80% increase in freight train activity by 2026 in the Chicago region which now handles a full one-third of the nation's rail freight.

Thus far the participating railroads and government agencies have contributed \$330 million of the estimated \$1.5 billion needed for the project. Projects consist of building road and railroad grade separations, adding main line track, and improving interchanges with connecting railroads. Funds that are currently

available will be used for improvements along two corridors as well as preliminary engineering for the remaining proposed projects. CREATE members plan to ask additional funding be made available in next national Transportation Efficiency Act legislation following expiration of SAFETEA-LU in 2011.

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Next stop... Englewood on January 27

City to co-host visit by Amtrak official

State and local rail service also on agenda for January

(Continued from page 1)

Amtrak has about the proposed plan. He is enthusiastic about coming to Colorado because he knows and appreciates groups like ColoRail who support intercity rail.

State and local passenger rail topics will also be reviewed including a special report from Bob Briggs, President of the Rocky Mountain Rail Authority, who will provide an update on the progress of the authority's high speed rail corridor study. Members will also have an opportunity to elect candidates to the ColoRail Board of Directors.

The Englewood City Center is located adjacent to the Englewood Light Rail Station, served on Saturdays by the Light Rail D-Line, plus buses on Rtes 0, 12, 27 and 51. Ample open or covered parking is available just to the south of the building. Meeting registration begins at 9:30AM.

Light refreshments will be served courtesy of First Transit, Inc. The public is cordially invited to attend.

(Please note the change in meeting place announced earlier from the Third Christian Church in Denver to the Englewood City Center in Englewood.)

ColoRail Board Election Slated for January Meeting

ColoRail will present a slate of candidates for member approval at the winter membership meeting scheduled for Saturday, January 27, 10AM to 12Noon at the Englewood City Center. The following candidates are nominated to serve two year terms:

John Ayer – Fredrick (representing northeast CO)

Keith Dameron – Denver

Jay Jones – Denver

Mark Reeve – Cedaredge (representing the Western Slope)

Sheila Sloan – Pueblo West (representing southeast CO)

David Terada - Westminster

Ron Vander Kooi – Arvada

The following Board members are completing their first term and are currently not up for re-election:

Jon Esty – Denver

Ira Schreiber – Aurora

John Valerio – Denver

Bob Wilson – Arvada

Other positions, such as committee chairs or *ColoRail Passenger* editor are appointed by the Board.

The ColoRail Board meets the second Monday of each month from 6-8PM at the offices of Bicycle Colorado, Room 236, at Denver Union Station. Members are invited to attend at any time.

Station Hosts Help Travelers

For a number of years, ColoRail volunteers have been assisting arriving and departing California Zephyr passengers during busy holiday times and 2006 was no exception. ColoRail's Station Hosts answer questions about train travel and train and station facilities for passengers many of whom have never taken a train ride.

ColoRail wishes to thank the following members who have generously volunteered their time as station hosts in 2006: Mike Cronin, Keith Dameron, Jay Jones, Sara McDowell, Eric Miller, Tom Peyton, Peter Richards, Rob Rynerson, Ira Schreiber, Dave Schumacher, Bob Shedd, Paul Steinhauer, Lori Sittner, Rebekka Struit, David Terada, Betty & Ron Vander Kooi, and Don Zielesch.

The work of these volunteers is greatly appreciated by Amtrak as well as the traveling public and helps promote support for intercity passenger rail.

Contacts with rail travelers also help ColoRail members learn about the needs of customers who come from different walks of life.

If you are interested in learning more about this rewarding activity, please contact ColoRail's Station Host Co-Chairs Jay Jones (303) 733-1519 or Don Zielesch (303) 934-4949.

Next stop Englewood?

As this clip from the current Amtrak Cascades timetable shows, regional rail service includes direct access to major suburbs that have local transit

focal points. Oregon City and Englewood were both "streetcar suburbs", restored to their heritage roles as rail or bus transit focal points. Some Front Range rail

proposals have included an Englewood station to tap Local bus and Southwest Light Rail markets. Englewood would gain through service to Front Range cities.

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|---|-----|-----------|----|--------|--------------------------------------|-------|---------|--------|
| Vancouver, WA | 176 | ● ● ● ● ● | Ar | 10 29A | 1 08P | 2 19P | 5 19P | 8 24P |
| Portland, OR ● ● ● ● ● Boise, Seaside, Astoria—see back | 186 | ● ● ● ● ● | Ar | 11 00A | 1 50P | 3 00P | 5 50P | 8 55P |
| Portland, OR | 186 | ● ● ● ● ● | Dp | 11 15A | 2 25P | 6 15P | 5 45P | 9 05P |
| Oregon City, OR | 202 | ● ● ● ● ● | | | | 6 36P | | 9 26P |
| Salem, OR | 239 | ● ● ● ● ● | | 12 15P | 3 37P | 7 22P | 6 45P | 10 12P |
| Albany, OR ● ● ● ● ● Corvallis, Newport—see back | 267 | ● ● ● ● ● | | 12 55P | 4 10P | 7 51P | D 7 20P | 10 41P |
| Eugene-Springfield, OR (PT) ● ● ● ● ● Florence, Coos Bay—see back | 310 | ● ● ● ● ● | Ar | 1 40P | 5 03P Coast Starlight to Los Angeles | 8 50P | 8 10P | 11 40P |

ColoRail Fall meet in
Boulder always
interesting

The wheels *are* turning,

“C-DOT is making a transition from a highway department to a transportation department,” stated Boulder County Commissioner and former Boulder Mayor Will Toor. “Colorado took an historic step with the allocation of Senate Bill 1 money for transit this year but the state must continue to play an active role in transit funding for years to come.”

Commissioner Toor made these remarks when asked to comment on transit plans proposed for Boulder County and the north Front Range at ColoRail’s Fall Meeting at the Boulder Public Library on September 30. Craig Gaskill, transit planner with Carter/Burgess, reported on passenger rail developments in the North I-25 Environmental Impact Statement study (EIS), and Tim Baldwin, URS, Project Director for RTD’s Northwest Rail Line, discussed the future Denver-Boulder-Longmont FasTracks route.

Commissioner Toor served on C-DOT’s Transit Task Force which recommended transit projects across the state paid for by Senate Bill 1 funds made possible by the passage of Referendum “C” in November, 2005. One of those proposals recommended by the panel and strongly supported by Commissioner Toor was funding for a Colorado passenger rail study.

Commissioner Toor said that there is a need to look at the overall transportation requirements of Colorado rather than just fund highway and transit projects piecemeal. “There is a huge deficit out there as to what is needed and what can be delivered. C-DOT can’t even maintain the highways it has,” he said. He went to say that what is needed is a reasonable transportation plan rather than to try

to just come up with dollars to fund highway plans as has always been done in Colorado.

A number of things should be taken into account when planning transportation systems such as gas prices, exhaustion of fossil fuels, competition from other nations such as China for scarce resources, and global warming. Transportation advocates have also got to realize that there is a great deal of competition for those transportation dollars particularly for education and health care.

Commissioner Toor believes C-DOT is gradually becoming a different state department of transportation, one which is beginning to accept its own polling information which tells it that people want their highways maintained as well as new transit. Requests for new roadway construction are way down on the list. He pointed out there is a total disconnect between transportation and land use planning and described the sprawling development along North I-25, development which is so spread out that it cannot be well served by transit.

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Following the example of a proposal by the San Francisco area governments, Commissioner Toor suggested transit investments only be made in those communities that make a commitment to use sound land use planning which stimulates transit use by its residents rather than superimpose a transit system on a spread out, car-oriented community. He asked that voters support the 0.2% Boulder County additional tax which would provide approxi-

mately \$8 million each year for more bicycle trails and enhanced bus service in the county.

Mr. Gaskill reviewed the two remaining transit alternatives for the North I-25 study, one containing commuter rail along the BNSF Railway route and the other being bus rapid transit (BRT) in express lanes on the highway south from Fort Collins to Denver. The commuter rail plan also included commuter bus service from Greeley to Denver.

Mr. Gaskill said the proposed commuter rail line would branch off from the BNSF at Longmont and follow Great Western Railway alignment east parallel to SH-119 and would then drop south and join Union Pacific’s Boulder (Valmont) Branch at Erie. The line would then cross I-25 and link up with RTD’s North Metro line serving Thornton and Northglenn before terminating at Denver Union Station.

Rather than having hourly service all day on the line, Mr. Gaskill said planners are looking at incremental service increases on the line beginning with limited weekday trips during peak hours. ColoRail has been arguing for this approach in the development of passenger rail alternatives in C-DOT studies for years and has pointed out

that in every instance, successful commuter rail development around the country has taken place on an incremental basis. Previous studies have summarily ruled out commuter rail as being too costly when full schedules have been modeled. Initial peak hour service on the BNSF route would only require improvements to the existing single track, signaling, and one or two additional

(Continued on page 5)

ColoRail members hear

Working out operating plans with BNSF

(Continued from page 4)

passing sidings.

Mr. Baldwin reviewed the US36 study from the time of its inception in 2003. In 2005, the development of an environmental assessment (EA) for the Longmont extension was added to the study and then in 2006, the decision was made to separate the highway study from the commuter

rail study because the rail portion was now funded by FasTracks. Except for \$66 million for BRT from the FasTracks budget, C-DOT has no other available source of funding for highway improvements on US36 at the present time.

In 2007, Mr. Baldwin and his staff will be completing station location and design for the Northwest Rail line,

selecting the technology (either diesel or electric multiple units), formulating freight/passenger operating plans with the BNSF, and documenting environmental issues. He explained that the Longmont extension EA study -- while not as demanding as an EIS -- still requires a "finding of no significant impact" by the US Corp of Army Engineers.

Rail Transit Expands in Mountain-Plains

In December, **New Mexico RailRunner** added service to Los Lunas, a town 20 miles south of Albuquerque bringing the total number of stations served by the commuter rail line to four. Service to Belen, the southern terminus of the line is expected in January. Possible routes from Bernalillo, the northern most station on the line to Santa Fe have been narrowed to two. One route is located in the median of I-25 while the other one parallels it. Both alternatives utilize existing Santa Fe Southern trackage into the city. Planners are still anticipating Santa Fe - Albuquerque service will begin in late 2008.

Albuquerque residents and city council members are also pushing for a **streetcar to serve Central Ave.**, the busy east-west thoroughfare and segment of storied US66 that intersects with the RailRunner at the Alvarado Transportation Center in downtown Albuquerque.

Results from the 2006 elections show strong continued support for public transit initiatives. Utah voters approved (64%-36%) an additional quarter cent sales tax most of which will go for expansion of light and commuter rail. The tax increase will fund four **Light Rail TRAX lines** to Draper, West Valley City, West/South Jordan, and the Salt Lake City International Airport. The money will also help extend the **Front-Runner commuter rail line** now under construction between Salt Lake City and Ogden which will begin operations in early 2008.

In a recent post election survey, *Deseret News* and KSL-TV found that 66% of those polled in Salt Lake County wanted tax money to be spent on light rail or commuter rail. Only 28% favored high-

way widening or other road improvement projects.

In **Tucson**, voters approved (58%-42%) a half-cent sales tax increase for expanded highway, safety, and transit improvements. The \$2.1 billion package includes a **new streetcar line** between the University Medical Center and downtown Tucson.

Voters in mid-route Grapevine, TX approved a one-half percent sales tax to fund a **commuter rail line connection to Fort Worth and DFW Airport**. The tax will generate \$9 million annually.

Voters in the Mountain-Plains region appear to be supporting rail-oriented development to discourage what Oregon Gov. Tom McCall once called "sagebrush subdivisions" that result from exclusive reliance on highways. *This photo on US64 by R.W. Rynerson in New Mexico, Summer 2006.*



Rocky Mountain
Rail Authority

Clear Creek and Roaring Fork link-up

Clear Creek County and the Roaring Fork Transit Authority have signed agreements forming the Rocky Mountain Rail Authority (RMRA) succeeding Front Range Commuter Rail. The new authority was created under Colorado's Regional Transportation Authority Law which allows two or more governmental entities to form transit districts within the state. Former State Representative Bob Briggs, Presi-

dent of the Rocky Mountain Rail Authority, plans to invite other local and county governments along both the I-70 Mountain and I-25 Corridors to join.

Formation of the authority was made necessary by a requirement from the Colorado DOT that state funds awarded to Front Range Commuter Rail for a study of high speed rail in the state had to be administered by a formal government entity rather than a private organization. C-DOT has allocated \$1.2 million to fund a study provided the authority comes up with matching funds from local communities and the federal government.

Clear Creek County could become the type of area that *Denver Post* columnist Ed Quillen refers to as a "sacrifice zone" if plans to widen Interstate 70 through Idaho Springs take out substantial portions of that city. On the other hand, until formation of the RMRA, there has been no entity capable of taking on the establishment of alternatives to highway widening.

Geographic constraints also make Roaring Fork leaders aware of the need for alternative travel modes.



Former State Representative Bob Briggs never misses an opportunity to remind Coloradans that it is time to plan for Regional Rail service.

Successful California service operated by multi-region authority-- a model for us?



Travelers between Sacramento and the San Francisco Bay Area now have an alternative on days like the one shown above, when fog blankets dangerous I-80, thanks to the creation of the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority. The service was started by the State of California's transportation department, but it became an orphan when the agency tried to revert to its highways-only interests. The Joint Powers Authority has "grown the business."

A lot can happen in thirty years, says ColoRail Passenger editor

As ColoRail members prepare to welcome Jonathan Hutchinson, who worked on Oregon's part of the successful *Cascades* regional rail service, I recall that thirty years ago the project was "killed" by an inexperienced new governor. Rather than mark time shuffling papers, I left Oregon Department of Transportation in Dec 76. The Oregon counterpart of ColoRail (today known as AORTA) was only just being formed and was already deep into the battle that led to the start of Light Rail in Portland.

This experience taught Oregonians the importance of organizing rail passengers' voice in the process, lest only the negatives be heard. -- rwr --

Capital Journal
(Cir. D. 25,574)

DEC 3 1976

Allen's P.C.B. Est. 1883

Vintage editorial rips backward step

Transit policy or not?

Does the Straub administration have a policy to provide intercity transportation in Oregon? Or is that service being quietly scuttled, program by program?

The state's only railroad planner, Robert Ryneron, says "no" and "yes." And in frustration he resigned his job last week.

In a memorandum to the director of the Oregon Department of Transportation, Robert Burco, Ryneron charges that Straub has failed to establish consistent policies for the development of transit between cities in Oregon.

In an interview Ryneron pointed to the fate of the Mid-Willamette Valley's Emerald Empire Express train as one example of his case against the Straub administration.

The transit service, designed to link Portland and Eugene with daily service for commuters, received rave reviews, advance notices and significant funding from the McCall administration. Initially, Ryneron said, the Straub administration supported the run, too.

Then, he said, for no apparent reason, a spokesman for the administration told Portland's Willamette Week newspaper that the proposal

initial two-year experimental period.

In addition to his complaints about transportation policy, Ryneron also charged that Straub's appointment of Peter Brix, an officer in the American Waterway Operators, to the Transportation Commission, puts Brix into "a very direct conflict of interest in the towboat industry."

This appointment, Ryneron says, has created problems for him in planning for railroad programs which compete with towboats.

The towboat industry, Ryneron says, has played a role in the declining financial status of the railroads. And he says that Brix has joined the commission right at a time when the towboat industry will be affected by state legislation.

Programs being considered that would affect the industry now include: expansion of the locks at Bonneville Dam, a series of state responses to the federal Railroad Revitalization and Regulatory Reform Act of 1976 and a possible state position on federal legislation expanding user fees to waterways, now used without charge to the towboat industry.

Nov. 17th - were you there?

Lincoln Station suddenly the center of activity



Lincoln Station photo by Eric Miller.

The Regional Transportation District's Light Rail Operations personnel took advantage of several late additions to the T-REX project in order to handle crowds on the Southeast Lines' opening days.

These measures included the enhanced turnback track layout shown in the background of this photo and the design of platforms to handle four-car trains. Original plans and car purchases were drawn up before opening of the popular Southwest Lines. More cars have also been ordered.

Omaha next? Information about potential streetcar service for Omaha is available at:

www.omahastreetcar.com/



ColoRail Membership

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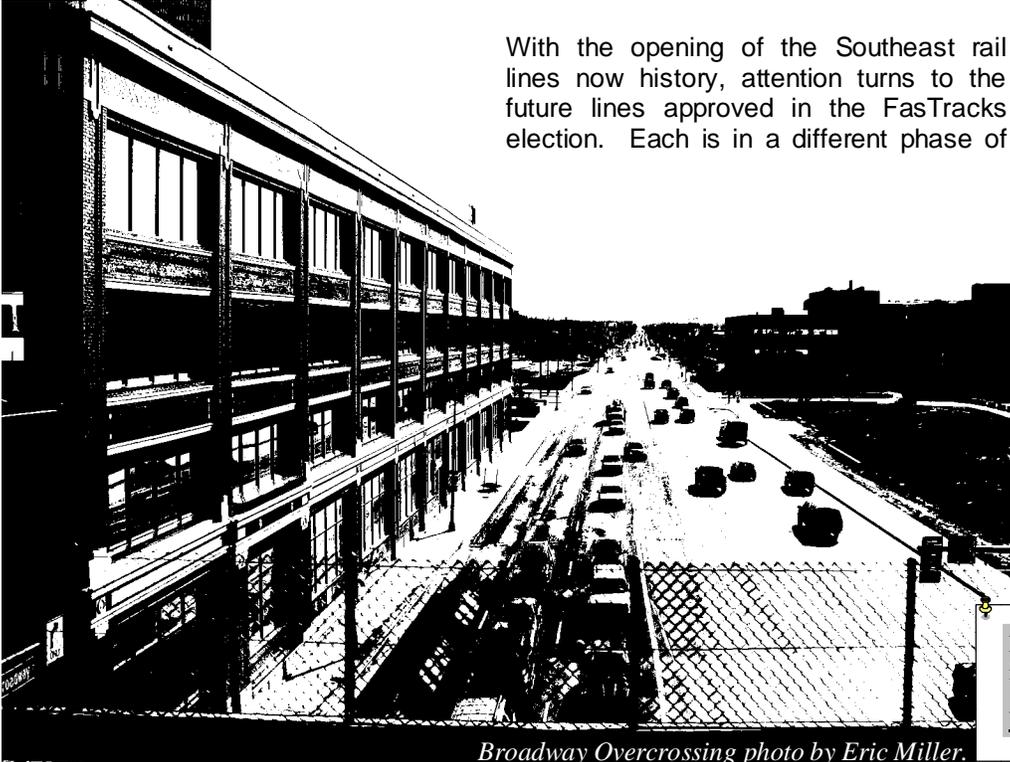
Telephone, with area code: _____

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

\$10 PER YEAR
pays for mailings,
printing, publicity

Broadway
Overcrossing a
"high" light on LRT

Up, up and away!



Broadway Overcrossing photo by Eric Miller.

With the opening of the Southeast rail lines now history, attention turns to the future lines approved in the FasTracks election. Each is in a different phase of

the legally circumscribed planning processes.

Coming up soon after the ColoRail winter general meeting will be sessions on the Gold Line linking Arvada, North Denver and Union Station. It also will serve corners of Wheat Ridge and unincorporated Adams County.

Meetings will be held 6-8 p.m. on Monday, February 5th at the Highlands Masonic Center at 35th & Federal Blvd., and on Wednesday, February 7th at the Arvada Center at 68th & Wadsworth Blvd.

Follow the development of FREX on its own website:

www.frontrangeexpress.com

ColoRail Passenger

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