

ColoRail Passenger

September-October 2007

Issue #55

Rep. Salazar boosts Denver-Pueblo link

“We hope to make it an annual event”

Passenger rail service along Colorado's Front Range got a big boost on Saturday, August 25 with the running of the first *Colorado State Fair Express* which made a round trip from Denver Union Station to Pueblo Union Depot. "We hope to make it an annual event. This train is really neat," declared **Rep. John Salazar (D)** who helped lead the

monumental effort to get the train started and was greeting passengers along with his wife in the Dance Car (a converted baggage car) where a country and western band was playing.

The eleven car train of Union Pacific heritage equipment was pulled by steam locomotive 844 with assistance from UP diesel #1989 painted in Denver & Rio

Grande colors. Some 320 politicians, fair goers, and rail enthusiasts rode the train including about a dozen ColoRail members.

The train backed out of Denver Union Station at 8:00am into UP's Denver North Yards and then forward to the Consolidated Main Line for a fast trip through south

Denver, Englewood, and Littleton paralleling RTD's Southwest Light Rail Line. The train traveled on the BNSF Railway portion of the Joint Line south to Pueblo where it arrived at 11:45am, 15 minutes ahead of schedule, at the handsomely restored Pueblo Union Depot. A large flag waving crowd and the Pride City Marching Band greeted the train and a delegation of city and state fair dignitaries led by **Sen. Ken Salazar (D)** shook hands with passengers.

Passengers transferred to shuttle buses for the ten minute ride to the state fair for lunch and to attend fair activities. Tours were also offered of the Pueblo depot and the Pueblo Railroad Museum next door to the station which has a large collection of



ColoRail member Gary Carter from Pueblo talks to U.S. Rep. John Salazar (D) about the need for daily Front Range rail service while aboard the *Colorado State Fair Express*.

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“A Voice for Colorado’s Rail Passengers”

Route of the
California Zephyr
examined

Amtrak supports push

For years, Amtrak has been talking about how the conditions of railroad stations across the country influences the perceptions of the traveling public, but the railroad has never been actively involved in doing something about it. That has dramatically changed with the initiation of Amtrak's Great American Stations, a program that provides the information and tools to local community groups who may wish to transform their train station into an attractive and vibrant community asset.

Amtrak officials have begun meeting with elected officials and other community leaders along Amtrak corridor and national network routes for what are billed as "civic conversations." Interest in improving station facilities along the route of the *California Zephyr* brought a bevy of Amtrak officials led by President and CEO, **Alexander Kummant** for a half day workshop at Denver Union Station (DUS) on July 24.

In his introduction of Mr. Kummant, **Joe McHugh**, Vice President for Government Affairs and Communications at Amtrak, reminded the audience of about 60 people who attended that even though Amtrak serves 46 states,

many people think that the passenger railroad is only interested in the busy Northeast Corridor. In his prepared remarks Mr. Kummant echoed this national interest adding that Amtrak serves 525 stations nationwide and all of them are potential gateways to their communities.

Mr. Kummant pointed out that an active working railroad station is a benefit and an asset to the surrounding community. He illustrated his point by describing the development around the Old Orchard Beach and Socco stations along the *Downeaster* route which connects Boston and Portland, ME. He said Amtrak is now establishing guidelines for stations which include ticket windows, waiting areas, and ADA requirements.

Cal Marsella, RTD General Manager, outlined the six new light and commuter rail corridors, five of which will be terminating at DUS. Frank Cannon, Union Station Neighborhood Company, developers of DUS, reviewed the latest transportation plans for the station that he said was no longer a "terminal" but a "district" - "an integration of the neighborhood into transit activities." He said it was the

intention of the developers to "brand" the station "so that when Monday Night Football takes place (in Denver), TV crews will take pictures of DUS as a symbol of the city."

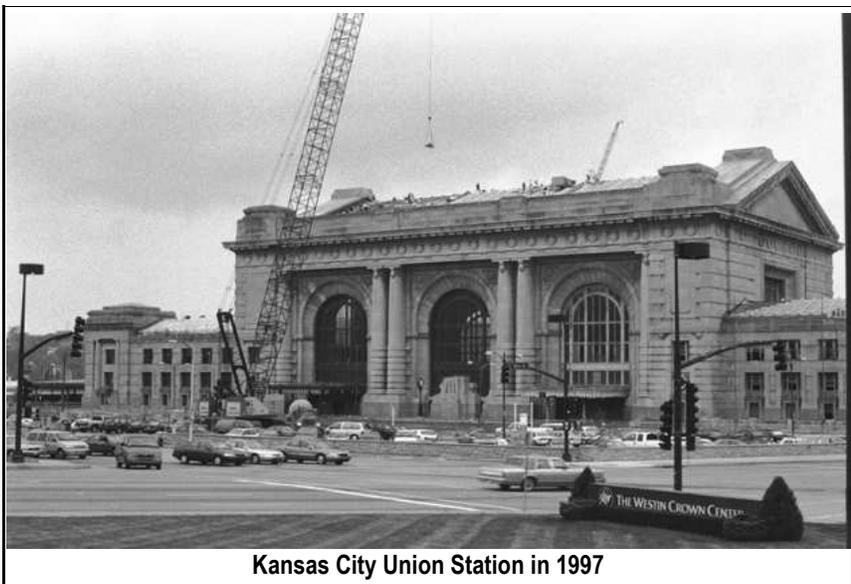
Next up was **John Robert Smith**, Mayor of Meridian, MS and a former Board Chair of Amtrak. Mr. Smith described train stations as being "the front door of a community." Redevelopment of his station several years ago helped to stimulate \$135 million in private investment in the form of downtown hotels and businesses as well as educational and cultural centers.

The station not only hosts Amtrak's daily *Crescent* train but also intercity

Train stations are
"the front door
of a community."

buses and the local transit and taxi company. The station is also a central meeting point where 285 events took place in meeting rooms and the waiting room areas just last year. Of a town with a population of 40,000, a total of 350,000 people utilized the station facility in 2006.

Andi Udris, President & CEO of Union Station Kansas City, Inc, gave an example of large city redevelopment. Mr. Udris described that sad state of affairs at the station which was left unused and unmaintained in the '80s except for Amtrak which erected a plastic bubble over its ticket window and waiting area to protect passengers from falling plaster. The 800,000 square foot station with 95-foot high ceilings, was constructed in 1914. It was reopened in 1999 as a science museum with Amtrak using a small portion of it. The station, which also hosts weddings and various cultural events, has become the focal point of downtown development and will



Kansas City Union Station in 1997

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for station redevelopment

Union Station: "a gem or a boondoggle?"

become a transportation hub for the area once light rail is built in Kansas City.

Architect **Michelle Robinson** and **Joseph Rago**, Senior Director Stations and Facilities, Engineering Structures for Amtrak, rounded out the presentations. Ms. Robinson immediately cautioned audience members that only consultation and technical assistance, not money, was

available from Amtrak for station redevelopment. She added that initially community organizers should not be focused on locating money for the project, but should first find out who owns the station and right-of-way and who the station neighbors are. "Just think of your needs, start the conversation. Everyone you talk to can be helpful. Develop drawings and 'visualizing materials,'" she said.

Mr. Rago reviewed ADA considerations and described how to do a "building assessment" which includes a design, construction estimates and schedule, and future operating costs. Both speakers recommended that those who are interested in redeveloping their town's railroad station visit the web site: www.greatamericanstations.com

Fall meeting in Boulder features Denver Union Station concerns

"Trains have to be fast, clean, and comfortable. The experience has to appeal to a variety of people in all demographic ranges - from executives to students, computer programmers to food industry workers. Clearly this is the case in Europe and many of our systems in America already meet that description. But in my observations, we often miss one key element that Europeans have not: The issue is connectivity."

Tom Norton, former C-DOT Executive Director, *Observations of European Transit, Surface Transportation Policy Project, December, 1999.*

Though most would agree that Tom Norton was no friend of passenger rail, he did understand the importance of connectivity in offering the traveling public an effective alternative to the automobile. Unfortunately this principle along with many ideas that simply make good transportation sense are being ignored in the redevelopment of Denver Union Station. The plans for the "crowning jewel" of FasTracks, as Denver Metro transportation leaders describe the station, are seriously flawed.

ColoRail President, **Jon Esty**, will share some of his experiences and

pictures of train stations he visited during a recent two and a half month trip to Europe to illustrate what is right and what is wrong with the current Union Station design. His presentation, Denver Union Station, A Transportation Gem or Boondoggle?, will focus on what makes sense in planning an intermodal facility, one that emphasizes the needs of transit patrons vs. conventional real estate developers. Audience members will be encouraged to share their experiences of sound intermodal transportation facility planning both here and abroad.

The meeting will take place Saturday, October 6 at the Boulder Public Library from 10:30AM to 12:30PM. The library is located at Arapahoe and 11th Streets in Boulder. Parking next to the library is available. The library is also easily reached from Denver's Market Street Station on RTD's **Rte B** highway coaches. Call 303-299-6000 or visit: www.rtd-denver.com for information.

Information regarding passenger rail activities nationally, regionally, and locally will also be presented. All ColoRail members and members of the general public are cordially invited to attend.

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Light Rail to be moved
two blocks away from
Union Station

An Open Letter to the Honorable John Hickenlooper, Mayor, City and County of Denver, challenges drift of Union Station plan. "The project should provide incentives to reduce auto activity-- not increase it."

Editors note: After several months of study, the ColoRail Board agreed at its March meeting to formally oppose the plan for Denver Union Station as presented by East-West Continuum Partners, the real estate development firm selected to redevelop the station and its environs. After careful review, it appears to the Board that much of what ColoRail believes is problematical stems from the position of the City and County of Denver.

Denver's push to make 18th Street a through street is the force that is driving the idea to put Amtrak, Ski Train and commuter rail tracks/platforms next to the station below grade. Denver's insistence that no rail transit operate at grade around the station has resulted in the placement of the light rail station serving the West, Southwest, and Southeast light rail corridors along the Consolidated Main Line, two blocks away from the station.

A meeting with the mayor has been requested but no response has been received by press time.

First, we strongly object to the placement of commuter rail in a trench at the station. We believe that the push for the underground tracks and platforms stems from Denver's desire to make 18th Street a through street into the Platte River Valley. The developer who hopes to achieve greater profits from the resulting automobile access to the area is also pushing the idea and of course, Denver would see greater tax receipts as a result.

ColoRail has several problems with this proposal as described in our March position paper on the subject but let me review some of them here. The whole point of the development of Union Station as Denver's major transit center is to reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled in and to downtown. The project should provide incentives to reduce automobile activity not increase it.

We believe the tracks should remain on the surface in their current stub-end configuration with access from the existing pedestrian subway and at the ends of the platforms, a practice commonly seen in most stub-ended stations around the world. Burying the tracks also prevents the expansion of tracks and platform space as local, regional, and national passenger rail service grows in future years. Reuse of the present tracks and platforms as well as the pedestrian subway below would provide a large construction cost saving.



COLORADO RAIL PASSENGER ASSOCIATION

August 1, 2007

The Honorable John Hickenlooper
Mayor,
City & County of Denver
1437 Bannock Street
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Mayor Hickenlooper:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Colorado Rail Passenger Association (ColoRail) to express our concerns with the plans for Denver Union Station re-development as they appear to be unfolding. We have two major problems with the plans and believe that the positions taken by the City & County of Denver are central to those problems.

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“...Expensive and environmentally risky...”

(Continued from page 4)

Construction of an underground space for tracks and platforms is an expensive undertaking and is environmentally risky. It also adds to the operational costs as well because it takes energy to run trains up grade out of the station.

Though the developers have promised not to influence technology choices, the bridging of 18th Street and subsequent grade into the station area has already limited the possible use of more efficient double deck electric multiple unit trains (EMUs) on FasTracks corridors serving Union Station. Clearance for a double deck train and its catenary are too high to pass under 18th Street according to project engineers.

Secondly, we strongly object to what is becoming a separation or non-inclusion of transportation modes which serve the station. The Denver Union Station Master Plan firmly stated that the station was to serve as the region's multimodal transportation facility. The concept began to erode when the station's owners selected the East-West/Continuum plan part of which was to place a light rail station on the Consolidated Mainline. In the time since the development plan has been proposed, the developers have discouraged participation by both the Ski Train and Greyhound and other intercity bus companies. Ski Train operators have been invited to look elsewhere because there may not be enough room to house the train in an underground station. Intercity bus operators have been put off by the excessive costs proposed by the de-

velopers to build a bus facility at the station.

We also know attempts have been made to move Amtrak out of the station and even though these attempts will probably not be successful, there is a refusal on the part of the developers to look at the very real possibility of expansion of Amtrak trains serving Union Station in the near future.

We recommend that all modes of transportation be located as closely as possible to each other and that the existing station infrastructure be used as much as possible. Adoption of such a plan would provide better service to the public while keeping the construction costs well within the FasTracks budget for the station.

Nineteen years ago we both worked for the retention of Union Station as an active train station when others would have destroyed that function. We now appear to be at that point again with a proposed plan that seriously compromises what we thought the station could be.

I would like to have an opportunity to talk with you personally about these issues and will call your scheduler to set up a time.

Thank you for your continuing enthusiastic support for transit and passenger rail.

Sincerely,

Jon Esty, President
ColoRail

First and last impressions of Coloradoans

Station hosts provide unique service

The following members have recently volunteered for the ColoRail Station Host Program at Denver Union Station. Volunteers meet the *California Zephyr* and provide information about the train and about station facilities to departing and arriving passengers many of who have never ridden a passenger train.

The passengers, in turn, provide information about the needs of travelers and their families. Thanks to:

- Mike Cronin
- Sarah Mc Dowell
- Eric Miller
- Tom Peyton

- Rob Rynerson
- Dave Terada
- Don Zielesch

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact ColoRail Station Host Program Co-Chairs **Don Zielesch** (303) 934-4949 or **Jay Jones** (303) 733-1519.

Crowds head down to their station... or at least where it should be

(Continued from page 1)

vintage freight and passenger equipment.

Denver City Auditor and founding ColoRail member, **Dennis Gallagher** gave an impromptu history lesson about the statue of Diana the Huntress which stands in front of the depot to an appreciative group of listeners who were waiting to board the train for the return trip to Denver.

The Fair Express left on time at 6:00pm and followed the UP side of the Joint Line back to Denver. The train was delayed about an hour on the return trip by a slow freight on the south side of Monument Hill and by the lengthy backup move into Union Station, arriving at 11:10PM.

While spectacularly successful, the train pinpointed a few things that need to change if fast reliable daily service along the Front Range is to become a reality. Though the BNSF and UP did a superior job of getting most freight trains out of the way on this very busy railroad, many freight trains will need to bypass the route in the future in order for passenger trains to maintain reasonable schedules. Track will need to be upgraded for higher passenger train speeds. Entering and exiting Denver Union Station needs to be more rapid and direct to the south without a time consuming back up move to access the Consolidated Main Line.

Even though there was only limited publicity about the trip, the train was greeted by crowds of people who lined overpasses, grade crossings, and former station sites to

see it pass. There is no question the Colorado State Fair Express has sparked enthusiasm and popular support for Front Range passenger rail.



U.S. Senator **Ken Salazar (D)** greets ColoRail member and former board member **Keith Dameron** with a hearty Western handshake at Pueblo's handsome Union Depot.

NARP Launches 'Grow Rail Campaign'

Denver slated to be Rockies hub in NARP system plan

In June, the National Association of Railroad Passengers released its "Grow Rail Campaign" which is an effort directed at developing national awareness of the advantages of passenger rail service in the United States.

The announcement of the plan coincides with NARP's 40th anniversary and features a national system-wide map outlining a vision of passenger rail growth over the next 40 years. NARP has introduced this concept to change the direction of conversation in this country from "What trains can we cut to save money?" to "What trains should we be adding?"

In a press release, NARP President **George Chilson** said, "In the near future, road and air congestion, worldwide competition for oil, and growing environmental concerns will make \$4 a gallon gas seem cheap,

today's traffic jams modest, and affordable flights a distance memory."

The plan proposes a "Grid & Gateway" network that will make train travel a convenient option for the traveling public. It increases the scope of America's passenger train network from its current 22,000 route miles to 45,000 miles and connects with 237 of the country's 292 metropolitan areas and state capitols making it roughly the same size as the Interstate Highway System. (Motor coach service would connect the remaining 55 cities.)

NARP officials declare the project as being "practical" in that it utilizes existing rail lines for all but 208 miles. Columbus, OH, Las Vegas, NV, and Nashville, TN are metropolitan areas that would be added to a national network.

The *California Zephyr* and *Southwest*

Chief routes through Colorado would remain and Front Range intercity rail serving Fort Collins, Denver, Colorado Springs, and Pueblo would be added. The plan also includes extensions north to Cheyenne, Casper, and Billings and south to Albuquerque and El Paso. Trains from Denver to Houston via Amarillo and Lubbock and to Dallas/Fort Worth via Wichita and Oklahoma City would branch off the Front Range route at Pueblo.

The plan calls for an expansion of rail capacity not only for passenger trains but for reliable fast freight service and recommends that incremental upgrades be made on track used by passenger trains to FRA Class 4 (79 mph) standards throughout the country.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.narprail.org/cms/index.php/resources/list/C50/>



ColoRail Membership

New members joining on this newsletter form are credited for 2008 membership.

**P.O. Box 480452
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Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Postal Code: _____

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

Use of existing rights-of-way to result in savings

Studies point toward future

Mason St. Corridor:

The City of Fort Collins is asking the Federal Transit Administration for \$57 million to help finance the redevelopment of the Mason St. Corridor into a "transit corridor." The city would like to build a bus rapid transit system that would connect the existing Fort Collins transit station in Old Town south to Harmony Road near Loveland. The route would parallel BNSF track which many believe should also host passenger trains between the two locations and beyond.

So far the city has allocated \$3.4 million and has received \$8.5 million from C-DOT for about 20% of the total cost of the project which is estimated to be \$72 million. C-DOT's contribution comes from the Strategic Transit Fund made possible by the passage of Referendum C in 2005.

Not only is Fort Collins interested in providing more frequent transit but city officials also hope there is infill development along the corridor. Infill projects would include housing, retail, and office space clustered around transit stations coupled with an elimination of parking lots. From *The Coloradoan*, August 8, 2007.

Colorado Rail Relocation Study:

C-DOT has selected the engineering consulting firm, PB Americas, Inc. to initiate phase two of the effort to facilitate the movement of rail freight along Colorado's Front Range. Phase one, the Colorado Front Range Railroad Public Benefits and Cost Analysis Study, found that by linking existing freight rail rights-of-way in eastern Colorado with approximately 80 miles of new track, substantial savings could be generated. (You may view a full report of this study by visiting: <http://www.dot.state.co.us/RailroadStudy/default.asp>)

The study found that there were considerable energy, equipment, and labor efficiencies resulting from unit coal and grain trains traveling a shorter and more level route north to south through the state as well as savings in time for motorists at grade crossings in metropolitan areas. The Front Range rail corridors were also largely freed up for future passenger rail service and intermodal freight trains.

The current study which is expected to be completed in December, 2008, will better define the project scope and costs and develop a financing plan. The \$2 million study is part of a federal transportation grant to Colorado approved by Congress in 2005.

ColoRail Passenger

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