

ColoRail Passenger

January-February 2008

Issue #56

Denver - Raton *Thruway* Bus Cut

Service reductions take intercity bus network to brink



With the November 15 timetable change, Amtrak ended the Denver-Raton *Thruway* Bus

connection to and from the *Southwest Chief*. It was replaced by a longer run in a regular Denver - Albuquerque schedule.

This dedicated bus connection was established in April, 1997 mainly in response to the termination of the *Desert Wind* which provided Denver with a daily train via Salt Lake City to Los Angeles and other popular southern California points. The connection is now made at Albuquerque which adds another four hours to the four hour Denver - Raton bus ride. ColoRail has received word that a number of people have cancelled their travel plans on the *Southwest Chief* because they don't wish to make the eight hour trip by bus.

ColoRail was in large part responsible for getting the service started. **Hugh Wilson**, ColoRail's Treasurer at the time, provided a detailed ridership study to Amtrak

Inside:

ColoRail meets in Englewood
Jon Esty to move on
NM Rail Runner growth urged

along with suggestions as to what bus companies might be considered to operate the service. This study also served as Hugh's thesis for his masters in public administration from Colorado University-Denver.

It was originally proposed that the service connect Denver, Colorado Springs, and Pueblo with the *SW Chief* at either Trinidad or La Junta. However, Amtrak preferred Raton because the bus could depart Denver Union Station at a later and more convenient morning time and during the summer, a large number of Boy Scouts detrained for camp in Raton, thus freeing up space for connecting passengers.

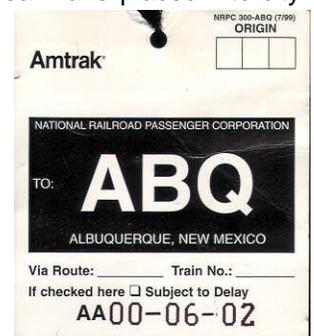
In his study, Hugh projected that an average of 21 people would take the bus each day during the summer and holiday periods and an average of five would ride at other times during the year. He also calculated that the bus and train ticket fares paid by five riders on each bus would actually provide a small annual profit for Amtrak. Actual ridership counts taken during the past decade have been very close to Hugh's projections.

Jonathan Hutchison, Director of Government Affairs for Amtrak West, explained the change was made to provide passengers a more comfortable waiting location with a good variety of nearby restaurants and hotels in the event the *Southwest Chief* was delayed.

Amtrak is also trying to strengthen ridership on TNM&O, the current operator of the service. He is aware of the potential problems posed by this change and has promised Amtrak will evaluate its effects.

The change in the Denver-Raton service was part of an overall reduction in service south of Denver by Greyhound subsidiary Texas, New Mexico and Oklahoma Coaches, Inc. Less than a month later "the other shoe dropped" as Powder River Transportation, a subsidiary of Coach USA, withdrew entirely from its Denver - Cheyenne - Billings route plus related Wyoming and South Dakota connections. It had taken over these routes after the collapse of the Continental Trailways system in the late 1980's.

A single trip a day was quickly launched by Arrow Stage Lines on the route north from Denver. It connects at Denver Union Station from Train 5 and to Train 6. However, these and other cutbacks in the last year have placed intercity scheduled bus service in much the same dire situation as intercity rail service in the mid-1960's.



"A Voice for Colorado's Rail Passengers"

Commuter rail terminal reaches a new level

New station plan sees daylight

Sometime in late October, plans to design a below grade commuter rail facility at Denver Union Station came to a screeching halt.

A letter from Federal Railroad Administrator **Joe Boardman** released in November by RTD stated in part, "We do not consider the proposed design to provide the level of safety that is necessary for the daily, heavy density rail passenger operations that are being proposed for DUS. FRA would like to advise you that we have the authority to address unsafe conditions or practices, when they create an emergency situation involving a hazard of death or injury to person. While FRA exercises its emergency order authority sparingly, we believe we would have sufficient grounds to consider issuing such an order prohibiting trains from using the station should the station design go forward as proposed."

Attempting to make lemonade out of lemons, Union Station project officials trumpeted the resulting design as being "superior" to all others previously considered. They seemed relieved that the design no longer called for burying the commuter rail tracks for the sole purpose of making 18th Street a through street. This modification also saves considerable money and avoids some storm drainage and environmental clean-up issues. During a major storm, water from Downtown Denver rushes into the station area through Lower Downtown.

As it stands now, eight passenger rail tracks will be located at grade adjacent to the historic station. Six tracks will serve commuter rail corridors, one track is reserved for Amtrak and one track is available for the Ski Train. The station will not accommodate special trains such as the Frontier Days Train or be available to private rail cars other than to load or discharge passengers arriving with Amtrak trains. A pedestrian bridge over the tracks will be constructed between 17th & 18th Streets.

The relocated light rail station remains at the Consolidated Mainline some 2 1/2 blocks from the main station complex, with two or three station tracks. An underground RTD regional bus station below 17th Street connects the light rail station with the historic station. The bus station which also passes under the commuter rail tracks will have 22 bays, two of which will be reserved for buses which connect with Amtrak trains. The bus station will contain a moving walkway for its entire length with stairs, elevators, and escalators to the surface at regular intervals. The bus station will also serve the 18th/19th Streets Circulator bus which will enter the below grade station at 18th and Wynkoop Streets and circle out and back to the light rail station.

Planners state that transit patrons will have four options when transferring from light rail to commuter trains. In addition to the below grade moving walkway and the below grade bus circulator, passengers may walk the 2 1/2 blocks passing by shops and cafes or take the 16th Street Mall shuttle which will be extended past the commuter rail platforms and on to the light rail station.

Planning officials have announced that Greyhound will not relocate to Union Station because they could not afford the \$53 million cost of a new facility. Unlike many other cities that have helped finance facilities for intercity buses at their central train stations, Denver has decided to not offer monetary support. Greyhound would remain at their present location at 19th and Arapahoe Streets nearly a mile from the station complex, although discussions with Greyhound are continuing. A future Front Range passenger rail station could be located on the Consolidated Mainline next to the light rail station.

Commercial and residential development that will encircle the station will help pay the cost of constructing the transportation facilities. A parking garage will be erected over the tracks between 18th and 20th Streets. In turn, City and County of Denver Tax Increment Financing is a necessary part of the proposed package.



Late rail activist and private car enthusiast **David Schumacher** hustled to prepare for departure of **Governor Bill Ritter's** 2007 inaugural special.

“trains not lanes” for January 26th

Englewood
a convenient
meeting site

ColoRail will present a slate of candidates for membership approval at the Winter Membership Meeting scheduled for January 26 from 10:00 am to noon at the Englewood City Center.

The following four candidates are nominated to serve two year terms:

Eric Miller - Denver

Ira Schreiber Aurora

John Valerio Denver

Bob Wilson Arvada

The following Board members are completing their first year of their two years terms:

John Ayer Fredrick
(representing NE Colorado)

Avery Grimes Denver

Mark Reeve Cedaredge
(representing the Western Slope)

David Ruble Aurora

Mike Rowe Boulder

Sheila Sloan Pueblo West
(representing SE Colorado)

David Terada - Denver

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Moving toward a passenger rail system for Colorado

Harry Dale, Chairman of the Board, Rocky Mountain Rail Authority, will be the featured speaker at ColoRail's Winter Membership Meeting. Saturday, January 26, 10:00 am to noon. The meeting will be held in the 2nd floor Community Room at the Englewood City Center, 1000 Englewood Parkway in Englewood, CO.

Harry is a Clear Creek County Commissioner and long time supporter and vocal advocate for passenger rail. His web site, trainsnotlanes.com, is a comprehensive resource for information regarding trains, highway congestion, and the negative impact of highways on the environment.

He will be discussing the High-Speed Passenger Rail Study and what he hopes the study will accomplish as plans move forward toward the development of a passenger rail system for Colorado. He will also be commenting on national and state transportation policy and how these policies need to be changed to fit the new realities of peak oil consumption and

environmental degradation.

John Valerio, who is C-DOT's Project Director for the Colorado Rail Governance Study, will be discussing this study which is examining various models of governing structures that may be employed in the development and operation of a state passenger rail system. John works in the transit section of C-DOT and currently serves as ColoRail's treasurer.

Current national, state, and local passenger rail topics and issues will be reviewed. Members will also have an opportunity to approve a slate of candidates for 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** and RTD bus **Routes 0, 12, 27, and 51**. Ample covered or open 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.

Stations give priority to rail travel rather than shopping centers

Ease and convenience for travelers

Keeping Denver Union Station redevelopment plans in mind, ColoRail President **Jon Esty** presented a slide show to ColoRail members attending the group's October 6 Fall Meeting about his visits to railroad stations during his recent 2-month long rail tour of southern Europe. Jon focused on the aspects of those stations which contributed to their ease of use and convenience to the traveling public.

Jon and his wife visited a total of 19 large and small city railroad stations located in Greece (1) Turkey (1), Bulgaria (2), Croatia (2), Slovenia (1), Italy (9), and France (3). Ten stations were stub-ended, eight were through stations, and one was both. Station tracks and platforms were at grade at 15 locations and two were above grade. None were below grade. All tracks and platforms were either immediately adjacent to the station or enclosed within it.

(At the time Jon made his presentation, Union Station developers had planned to place the passenger rail track below grade and separate the below grade area and the historic station with a service access road thus removing the relevance of the station to rail transportation activities. This problem has since been corrected in the most

recent revision of the plan. Please see page 2.)

All stations accommodated bikes, taxis, local buses and tour buses. If they were available, all stations were closely connected to subways (Metros), trams, and light rail systems. Six intercity bus stations were located at the rail stations, four were within a 1/4 mile, three were within 1/2 mile, four were connected by rail (Metro or light rail), and two were connected by city bus. All stations provided a variety of services to passengers such as restaurants, coffee shops, newsstands, convenience/grocery stores, Internet services, ATMs, post offices, tourist information, etc. Though most were located centrally in each city, no commercial or residential development encroached on the station space.

Except for intercity buses in some instances, all stations provided connections to other transportation modes. All stations were at or above grade and all provided excellent sightlines in and through the facility (i.e., easy to see locations of trains, station services, and connecting modes.) Travel relevant services such as ticketing, information, baggage handling/storage, waiting areas, etc. were all in close proximity to the trains.

Jon said that Union Station planners should be sure all transportation elements are given priority in any design for the station. "With this presentation, I wanted to point out that there are plenty of examples of good station design available in the US and around the world which planners should keep in mind for our own station's redevelopment," he concluded.



Deutsche Bundesbahn multi-purpose steam engine waits for departure signal on a cold and wet day in Braunschweig of 1970. Four decades ago, North American trains were as fast or faster than most in Europe -- and more comfortable. Across the Atlantic, modern or well-renovated stations were often a result of war damage, as in the city above. But in 1967, the graph lines had crossed. North Americans went from benign neglect to full-blown dismantling of their rail system, while Europeans went from replacing wartime damage to developing new or renovating the old.

Notable Quote:

"The tide has turned with the public about how the railroad is perceived. People are voting with their wallets for intercity rail transportation. The question now is whether that will finally translate into additional political will and support in Congress for the proper funding of the railroad." **Thomas Downs**, a former Amtrak president and now head of the nonprofit Eno Transportation Foundation commenting on record Amtrak ridership levels this year. *New Orleans Times Picayune*, December 18, 2007

Book review: Transit maps at your leisure

Colorful reading for
gray winter days

By Jon Esty

Transit Maps of the World, by Mark Overden, Penguin Books

First published in 2003 under the title: *Metro Maps of the World*, a revised and expanded edition published in 2005.

This second revised and expanded edition published by Penguin Books in 2007

\$25.00 - 144 pages.

Have you ever wondered how people get around in Berlin, Kharkov, Sao Paulo, Sendai or St. Petersburg? What kind of rail transit do they have and where are these cities in the first place? Now with *Transit Maps of the World*, a book by **Mark Overden**, you can leisurely read descriptions of transit activity and peruse colorful transit maps of cities big and small around the globe.

Overden has been collecting maps and timetables since he was a kid when his mother gave him schedules to distract him from fidgeting while they rode together on the

Jon Esty moving on - Ridgway to gain activist

ColoRail President **Jon Esty** has announced that he is moving to Ridgway, CO in the spring and will not be a candidate for re-election to the ColoRail Board of Directors. In February of each year, ColoRail Board members select a president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer following election of new directors in ColoRail's January Membership Meeting.

Jon has served as ColoRail's president since 1993. He helped initiate the association in 1989 and was a member of ColoRail's predecessor organization, Save Our Station. He was also a National Association of Railroad Passengers director-at-large at the request of former NARP President Jack Martin from 2000 to 2004.

Jon is a psychologist who retired from the Colorado Mental Health Institute at Fort Logan in 1999 after 32 years of work with severely emotionally disturbed children and adolescents and their families. He earned his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at Purdue University in 1967 and began his employment at Fort Logan that same year.

Jon attributes his interest in rail to late afternoon visits to the Westfield, NJ, railroad station where he would meet his father who commuted to and from New York City on the Jersey Central. When he was nine, a ride in the cab of B&O's *Capitol Limited* from Jersey City to Wayne Junction, PA, cemented his love for passenger trains. He has always been interested in how transit and rail systems work and interact and how people can travel to their chosen destinations without use of the automobile.

London Tubes. Shortly thereafter he began collecting maps of all kinds and spent a good portion of his school age years riding the Tubes, visiting stations, and designing imaginary mass-transit systems. His fascination with transit maps eventually led him to enroll in art school where he studied graphic design.

Transit Maps of the World is a wonderful and diverse collection of maps, route and equipment descriptions of every city on earth which has any kind of a fixed guideway system. The author does not try to limit the book to "Metros" or subways but recognizes all those cities which have chosen to market themselves as "urban-transit networks." The book contains numerous pictures of transit brochures and colorful maps of transit systems themselves.

The book is organized into "Zones" which the author is quick to say is not to be taken as a means of evaluation or rating but simply to classify the vast amount of information he has to present. The first section or "Zone" deals with older transit systems such Berlin, London, Moscow, and New York. Overden reviews the history of these systems along with maps that show their progression over the years.

Zone 2 contains older less complex systems such as Boston, Hamburg, and Budapest with more recently built and expanding systems such as Seoul, Mexico City, and Washington, DC.

Zones 3 through 6 describe the remaining numerous systems in less and less detail to the point where Denver, for example, which appears in Zone 6 gets a short one sentence description accompanied by a map. Even though readers would want more, the author has to make brevity a necessity if, indeed, all of the rail systems in the world are to be included.

This is a book for the rail advocate or enthusiast who enjoys seeing and learning how cities have planned and developed their transit systems. The colorful map diagrams are copies of the maps given out to the traveling public by each transit agency. Whether you are planning a trip or just want to imagine what getting around in most metropolitan areas in the world is like, this book is for you.



COLORADO RAIL PASSENGER ASSOCIATION

Claims that rates are 'unfair, unreasonable,' as demand booms

Big shippers push hard to restore some

The railroad industry latest challenge may not be increased congestion or fuel prices but rather the US Congress. Big shippers (utilities, agri-businesses, mining interests) have teamed up together to form

Consumers United for Rail Equity (CURE). CURE is pushing for adoption of HR-2125, a bill that would return to many aspects of railroad regulation which existed prior to the adoption of the Staggers Rail

Act of 1980. The bill's sponsor **Rep. James Oberstar**, chairman of the House Transportation Committee, believes railroads have a public responsibility not to charge "unfair,

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Back to the "good old days?"



Desperate state officials from around the country worked late into a cold December 1975 night in Madison, Wisconsin, trying to prevent the collapse of the country's heavily-regulated railway network. As if they were dominoes falling, rail carrier after carrier slid into bankruptcy or abruptly shut down lines.

Enthusiasm grows for extension of New Mexico Rail Runner

Writing in Socorro, NM's *Mountain Mail*, former *Albuquerque Business Journal* transportation reporter, **Paul Krza**, presents a strong case for a future extension of the Rail Runner from its current southern terminus at Belen to Socorro, located some 40 miles south along I-25 toward El Paso.

"There aren't any formal plans, but I've heard lots of discussion," said **Chris Blewett**, Director of Transportation and Planning Services at the Middle Region Council of Government, the agency that runs the railroad when asked by Mr. Krza to comment. Mr. Blewett said it could be a fairly expensive proposition but that the project was doable.

Arrangements must be made with the BNSF Railway to get access to their right-of-way and the line which is "dark" would have to be signaled. Rail and ties for sidings would have to be purchased and the line itself would have to be upgraded to passenger train speeds. An overpass or underpass would need to be constructed to cross BNSF's busy east-west mainline at Belen. Stations including one at Socorro would have to be built.

Mr. Blewett estimates it might cost approximately \$30 million and could take a year to build once all the agreements and

finances were lined up. Mr. Krza believes the current Rail Runner connections via Albuquerque city bus to the airport and to other destinations from their downtown transit station would encourage Socorro residents and visitors to use the train.

Light rail projects win acclaim:

(Continued from page 8)

operation. The 9.6-mile line did even better during the weekend, logging roughly 36,000 trips on both Saturday, Dec. 1, and Sunday, Dec. 2. CATS said the average daily ridership in the first seven days of service while charging fares was 12,300. The agency had projected an average ridership of 9,100 weekday trips in the first year of operation. *Railway Age*, December 10, 2007

Denver RTD wins Award for Light Rail Facility

Denver Regional Transportation District has been selected as a Phoenix Award™ winner for the Elati Light Rail Facility. The facility opened in January of 2005 to serve as the main operations and maintenance center.

regulations - rail expansion plans at risk

Colorado delegation split on proposed regulation

unreasonable, and confiscatory rates" particularly when a shipper is served by only one railroad.

The railroads counter by saying that since deregulation, rates to large shippers have actually decreased as railroads competed for their business. It is only recently, as the railroads have reached near capacity, that rail rates have gone up. They see this as something that occurs in any business when demand exceeds supply and demand has, in many situations, exceeded existing rail capacity.

Railroads spent \$8 billion in 2006 and are on a path to spend \$10 billion this year on infrastructure improvements to increase their capacity. They claim that if these profits are eliminated, then the railroad physical plant will deteriorate and not be able to handle the increased traffic, returning much of it

to the nation's overburdened highways. Eventually, the taxpayer will pick up the tab because highways will require money for expansion and maintenance.

Railroads have also reminded Congress members that the rails not only construct and maintain their own infrastructure, they also pay taxes on it. Undermining the industry at this point would seriously cripple efforts the freight rails are making to increase capacity.

The bill has been passed out of Rep. Oberstar's committee but it may be some time before it is debated on the floor of the House of Representatives. In the meantime, CURE and railroad industry officials are discussing ways to work out their differences through the Surface Transportation Board and existing laws. One of the most bothersome issues is that a shipper must pay a

\$178,000 fee to file a rail-rate challenge with the STB, an amount that is sure to be reduced whether or not HR-2125 becomes law.

HR-2125 has a companion bill in the senate, however, it has not been heard in committee. **Colorado representatives Mark Udall and Ed Perlmutter** are bill co-sponsors. The remaining five members of Colorado's congressional delegation either oppose it or are neutral.

One of the neutral congressmen is **Representative John Salazar** who has a background in farming and can appreciate the argument that railroads have often charged unreasonable rates. He acknowledges, however, that the freight railroads are a very necessary part of getting produce to market and require a decent rate of return on their investment in order to maintain and improve their infrastructure.



ColoRail Membership

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Denver, CO 80248

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\$10 PER YEAR
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"We'd be crazy not to accept your recommendation."

ColoRail joins state panel

Panel Sets Out to Resolve I-70 Stalemate:

The Federal Highway Administration and Colorado Department of Transportation have invited 25 stakeholder groups to help them resolve differences over the decade old I-70 Mountain Corridor Environmental Impact Statement study. Though the C-DOT with the help of their consultants, J.F. Sato & Associates, selected the highway lane expansion alternative for the corridor between Golden and Eagle County Airport a couple of years ago, this choice did not sit well with many environmental groups, as well as residents and local government officials along the corridor.

Governor Bill Ritter and **C-DOT Executive Director Russ George** realized this discontent and resolved to do something to bring the study to a conclusion with an

alternative that all stakeholders in the corridor can support. Thus was born the Collaborative Effort group, a panel of local officials, businesses, federal representatives, and highway, trucking, transit, and environmental interests. The group includes representatives from ColoRail and the Rocky Mountain Rail Authority.

Mr. George and **FWHA Regional Director David Nicol** have pledged in writing that any decision, no matter what it is, that arises from the group as a whole will be the alternative that is chosen. "We'd be crazy not to accept your recommendation," declared Mr. George, who fears that a possible lawsuit from one group or another could tie up the project indefinitely.

The panel, which will be meeting monthly, is expected to make their recommendations in May.

Notable Quote:

"They did not want our buses. They did not want 'those kinds of people.'" RTD Director Daryl Kinton (Englewood, Littleton, Highlands Ranch) referring to objections by Park Meadows Mall in southeast Denver to direct bus service to the Mall and refusal to participate in initial plans for a connection to the SE Corridor Light Rail Line. *Denver Post*, September 7, 2007

Ridership Strong on new Charlotte "Lynx"

Charlotte Areas Transit System's newly opened light rail line recorded 13,000 rider trips on Friday, Nov. 30, the end of its first week of revenue

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