2014—What a year! And now its time to celebrate! ColoRail is 25 years old! Founded by the leaders of Save Our Station in 1989, what could be more fitting than to meet in Denver Union Station. An anniversary reception will be held in the newly refurbished great hall followed by the meeting in the new rooms downstairs. Many community leaders are expected including ColoRail founders, Members of the Southwest Chief Rail Line Commission, Amtrak, and representatives of the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP). RTD General Manager Phil Washington will keynote the event which will start at 9 a.m. and conclude at 12:30 p.m.

Please take advantage of the new RTD facilities to come to the meeting. We need to practice what we preach!

“All Aboard for ColoRail’s 25th Anniversary September 27th at Denver Union Station!”
A Brief History of ColoRail

Jon Esty

It wasn’t the lack of trains at Denver Union Terminal that bothered Denver city leaders in the late 1980s. It was the potential cost of replacing the aging viaducts across the Platte Valley that led officials to consider closing DUT. Real estate investors also began to eye the unused coach and freight yards between the Platte River and the station for potential development. City planners thought that it might be wiser to move the tracks and trains out of DUT and open the area for re-development including the historic station.

Wynkoop Brewery owner, John Hickenlooper, disagreed with this plan and formed Save Our Station (SOS) in 1987 to keep DUT an active train station. Numerous business and community leaders joined this group that met regularly at the restaurant. The group was co-chaired by Hugh Wilson who would eventually become ColoRail’s treasurer.

A year later, Peter Barkman invited a small group of local passenger rail supporters to form the Colorado Rail Passenger Association. The group supported the efforts of SOS but had a wider vision for passenger rail in Colorado. Mr. Barkman was aware of the fact that previous Colorado passenger rail associations did not have much staying power so he initiated the idea with a certain amount of tentativeness. In the group’s first newsletter (August 22, 1988) he wrote,

“Rail passenger advocates have created an ad hoc group to be known as ‘ColoRail’ in order to take part in Colorado issues which effect that mode of travel. Based on previous experiences in Colorado, there is no interest in a formal organization.”

The most pressing problem facing SOS and ColoRail was the proposal from Denver city leaders under the direction of Mayor Federico Pena to move Amtrak out of DUT to a location at 38th Avenue and Fox St. near Prospect Junction. A small station would be constructed with one platform to serve the California Zephyr. Although placement of a station at this location eliminated the Zephyr’s time consuming back up move into DUT, Amtrak officials preferred continued use of the existing station explaining that the 38th Ave. and Fox St. site would not easily accommodate future Front Range regional service or local commuter trains.

Both SOS and ColoRail lobbied Denver city officials with letters to editors, interviews, petitions, and personal contacts. The two organizations touted the benefits of what future passenger rail service to downtown Denver would mean to the overall growth of the city. By the summer of 1989, the Pena administration finally relented and assured station advocates that any development in the area would include trains at DUT. Having achieved its goal, SOS elected go out of business and donate funds raised to ColoRail. By late 1989, ColoRail adopted a set of organizational by-laws and applied for registration as a non-profit corporation with the Colorado Secretary of State’s office. The group invited SOS members and Colorado members of the National Association of Railroad Passengers to join the organization.

Ever since it’s founding, ColoRail has been actively involved in three general areas in its quest to promote passenger rail travel in Colorado: Development of rail transit in the Denver Metro area, maintenance and expansion of Amtrak service in and through Colorado, and creation of a statewide passenger rail network. Though ColoRail has had mixed success in achieving these goals, the organization has formed numerous valuable partnerships and relationships with government, community, transportation and environmental leaders over the past 25 years.

Early in 1990, RTD began looking at the track side of the DUT property as an access route for its bus only lanes under construction on I-25 north of the downtown area. ColoRail became an early supporter of this idea particularly when RTD agreed to have a “whistle stop” for the buses at the station. This initial effort began an ongoing working relationship with RTD during which ColoRail members supported numerous RTD bus and rail initiatives. When Guide the Ride failed to pass in 1997, ColoRail joined the Transit Alliance to elect a pro-rail RTD Board of Directors and actively campaigned for the successful passage of FasTracks in 2004.

ColoRail members embarked on a series of efforts to improve intercity rail service. A DUT station host program was initiated to assist arriving and departing Amtrak passengers at busy holiday times throughout the year. Funds were donated to DUT for an electronic “crawler sign” and for a new arrival and departure board which included connecting intercity bus services at the station. ColoRail worked with the National Park Service to provide interpretive guides on scenic sections of the California Zephyr route. Though no trains were ever added (except for the Pioneer for a couple of years), ColoRail was responsible for the initiation of a daily Amtrak Thruway bus in 1997, which connected Denver, Colorado Springs, and Pueblo with Amtrak’s Southwest Chief at Raton, NM. This service continues to this day.

In 1991, the Colorado legislature replaced the state’s department of highways with a department of transportation, a move strongly supported by ColoRail, in order to provide more of a multi-modal approach to the state’s transportation needs. Since that time, ColoRail has participated in numerous C-DOT advisory committees and studies where supporters have advocated the development of regional passenger rail service. ColoRail members have worked successfully with legislators to preserve rail lines of possible future significance that are threatened with abandonment and have through legislative action and direct persuasion helped C-DOT broaden its mission to include freight and passenger rail as...
History (continued)

viable parts of the state’s transportation system. This effort continues to the present time with the passage of HB-1161 earlier this year which creates a commission to preserve the present route of the Southwest Chief through south-eastern Colorado.

Over the past quarter century, ColoRail has become a widely known and respected member of Colorado’s transportation community and most certainly will continue its strong and responsible advocacy for passenger rail and intermodal transportation solutions in years to come.

**Jon Esty was ColoRail President from 1993 until 2008. He lives in Ridgway, Colorado**

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Selected photographs in this issue are in color for readers who request e-mail PDF delivery of the *ColoRail Passenger*. Drop a note to join the e-mail list to info@colorail.org.

The Great Hall will host the ColoRail Reception

The above photos by Bob Brewster show the Denver Union Station Great Hall today and two years ago!

**JOIN COLORAIL!**

**GO TO:**

**WWW.COLORAIL.ORG**
Commentary from Colorado Transportation Leader Bert Melcher

Colorado Rail Passenger Association’s 25th Anniversary provides an excellent occasion to speak to the enormous importance and excellent achievements that the organization has had in this quarter century. I was a founding father of RTD and was a State Highway Commissioner and a rail/transit proponent in the 1960s. I have been a representative of several non-profit organizations working for the improvement of rail and transit. It’s been a real privilege for the past 15 years in to work with ColoRail in these endeavors. I have been continually impressed and inspired by ColoRail’s competence and dedication.

The most auspicious and critical activity was that of the 1987 saving of Union Station from destruction. At the time, RTD was trying to cooperate with the City until it became obvious that the City was trying to use RTD funding to pay for redevelopment of the Central Platte Valley and also wanted to "detrain" DUS. The founders of ColoRail had the name and simple mission of “Save Our Station” (SOS), and with well-organized citizen activity, the City was persuaded to save the station. Without this success, RTD’s present glory of DUS renovated and as the hub of the Nation’s best mid-sized city transit system would not exist. Fortunately the SOS committee had the wisdom and perspicacity to see that the issues ran well beyond the one building; there needed to be revisions to the entire planning process. On-going citizen input and monitoring was essential. The merit of that wisdom had been proven by ColoRail many times over since then.

Less conspicuous to everyone except travelers has been ColoRail’s welcoming assistance to Amtrak passengers at the station. This volunteer hospitality “user-friendly” service and the countless hours of dedicated unpaid volunteers helped the travelers and also to the image of Denver and RTD.

ColoRail as an organization worked with enthusiasm in the "Grassroots" sector of the 2004 "FasTracks" campaign. Its President served on the "Grassroots" Steering Committee and its members did door-to-door campaigning, spoke at meetings and distributed flyers. The ColoRail work was admittedly probably not the crucial factor in obtaining the pro-FasTracks vote in 2004, but ColoRail’s intent and contribution deserve recognition and appreciation.

Also obscure to the public has been the ColoRail participation on State, Federal and local transportation committees and its active, effective and well-respected continuous involvement with RTD Directors and CDOT Commissioners. This has involved State legislation and state participation in the formation of Federal legislation and policy. Of great assistance to the cause of rail and transit has been ColoRail’s continual involvement with CDOT on a range of issues: track preservation, the State Transportation Advisory Committee’s inclusion of rail and transit in its deliberations, CDOT input into federal transportation reauthorization via CDOT’s special committee, etc. Also beneficial for public education was ColoRail volunteers in general promotion of rail and transit in booths, letters to editors, and in various forums.

To obtain improved transit for mobility of ADA and senior citizens, ColoRail was instrumental in joining with a number of organizations in achieving success in the Colorado Mobility Coalition.

Environmental Impact Statements required by the National Environmental Policy Act have been another very important matter for ColoRail’s attention. Two of the most conspicuous were the I-70 Mountain Corridor and the Denver Union Station. In the former, after several years of planning in which transit and environmental advocates would not give up on getting rail into the plans, CDOT created a 27-member conflict resolution panel. ColoRail President Jon Esty was appointed to the Panel. The outcome was that CDOT’s highway-plan was totally revered such that rail were the top priority with limited highway improvements. This was a major victory for rail proponents. The Union Station situation in the past decade was less happy in the outcome, but the continual ColoRail activity was highly commendable and worthwhile.

And last but not least, the ColoRail effort to save the Amtrak service in southwestern Colorado warrants our admiration and high compliments.

In summary, ColoRail, as the only Colorado citizen voice for rail and transit quality, can be very proud of this 25-year array of accomplishments, and those of us who have dealt with ColoRail owe it a debt of gratitude, as does the general public of this state. Colorado would be much the poorer without ColoRail.

Bert Melcher is a former RTD Board Member and Colorado Transportation Commissioner. He is a retired Captain in the U.S. Navy Reserve Civil Engineer Corps.
The "Grand Opening of Union Station" was good day for ColoRail. We talked with many people. During the afternoon we could easily have used at least two or three times as many volunteers as we had! In short we need many members willing to be volunteers for ColoRail.

We were lucky enough to be positioned along the line waiting to tour the Crawford Hotel. People were really eager to talk with us about Amtrak, ColoRail and railroad travel in general.

Those who volunteered had a good time boosting Amtrak and ColoRail. Some of us were able to act as hosts for both the west and east-bound trains that day.

Thanks to the volunteers, who showed up on Saturday, July 26:

Edie Bryan
Mike Cronin
Ron Kamarin,
Gwen Elleyn Nordquist,
Jim Souby
Vince Szafrrnko,
Betty Vander Kooi
Ron Vander Kooi

ready volunteers on days like this, as well on its "Holiday Host" program (contact: volunteer@colorail.org)

These are good times to spread the news about ColoRail and Amtrak and they can be fun times for those members who chose to be more active in their ColoRail memberships.

Amtrak staff provided a table and timetables for our program. Several Amtrak people thanked us for our efforts. All this adds to ColoRail's effectiveness and the fun for volunteers.

ColoRail needs more ready volunteers on days like this, as well on its "Holiday Host" program (contact Don Zeilesch, dwz1@juno.com) These are good times to spread the news about ColoRail and Amtrak and they can be fun.

Photo of Van der Kooi and Kamarin by Jim Souby

CDOT to Update Front Range Commuter Rail Study

CDOT continues to develop components of the North I-25 EIS commitments. These include express lanes and interregional express bus service. Segments of express lanes are under construction from US 36 to SH 7. The interregional express bus service will start 1st quarter of 2015.

The purpose of the North I-25 Commuter Rail Update is to bring circa 2009 level information and assumptions to current context. It will explore three main areas: (1) right of way, (2) operating plan, and (3) costs. Various entities have built infrastructure in the right-of-way (homes & BRT) and the freight railroads are no longer expected to move to the eastern plains. Station areas may have experienced new development.

From an operating standpoint, it will be important to check in on slight changes to travel times from Fort Collins to Denver Union Station based on changes to the existing track and RTD’s design changes to the North Metro track (near 60% design now). Costs will be updated with the information above, be updated from 2009 dollars to 2014 dollars, and also put into "standard cost category" (SCC) format. SCC is the format used by FTA and FRA as potential future funding partners.

The study overall continues the recommendation of the State Freight & Passenger Rail Plan to support Colorado’s economy and be prepared for funding opportunities that may come along in the future.

Report from David Krutsinger, Rail Program Manager, CDOT

Thanks David, the study is due in January, 2015. Ed.
As ColoRail advocates for statewide rail expansion, several bus projects are "paving the way" for better transit alternatives and, perhaps, future conversion to rail as the market develops.

Already operating is the new Ft. Collins BRT service, MAX, connecting South Ft. Collins with the downtown area, serviced by several attractive station facilities in between. Oddly, it nicely parallels the BNSF Railway Front Range Subdivision leading to Longmont, Boulder, and Denver. There is also a bike rental booth inside the downtown terminus building called the Bicycle Library. Check it out....

Under construction is the new pavement for US 36 BRT, a component of RTD’s FasTracks transit expansion. While not true BRT with exclusive right-of-way, the shared lanes will hopefully ease the travel for RTD's buses between Denver Union Station and Boulder. We all hope to see trains servicing this route but the cost is daunting. Perhaps the future rail service would be better addressed as a component of a Front Range Rail corridor as advocated by ColoRail.

Coming early next year is CDOT’s entry into the bus business with express service from Ft. Collins and Colorado Springs to Denver Union Station. A mountain route from Glenwood Springs is also in the mix. The last serious commuter service between Ft. Collins and Denver was operated until April 30, 1975 by Colorado Motorway, which would have been an excellent name for the new service, paying homage to early Colorado highway transportation. Why this endeavor required 40 years is a mystery, given the traffic onslaught on I-25, but better late than never. Hopefully a market will be created for conversion to rail. This service should be an immediate winner and ColoRail wishes it great success.

Lastly is a proposal for Arterial BRT, in lieu of Northwest Rail, as a series of road enhancements for expedited bus travel along the Longmont Diagonal to Boulder, State Highway 7, and 120th Ave., which would feed into the US 36 BRT network. This scheme came about as a result of the Northwest Area Mobility Study (NAMS, viewable at rtd-denver.com), when the long-sought rail option became too pricey. Arterial BRT needs very close scrutiny by ColoRail, as millions of dollars are at stake.

Of course, we cannot forget the suggestion of a La Junta bus connection for the SW Chief, to and from the east. The Raton Thruway Bus works best for points west, so an eastern component would complement the existing service. Some ColoRail members can recall when the La Junta connection was accomplished by an actual train, albeit a short one.

Southwest Chief Commission has Organizational Meeting—Jim Souby

The Southwest Chief Commission met Friday, September 5, for its organizational meeting. Pueblo County Commissioner Sal Pace was elected Chair and La Junta City Manager Rick Klein as Vice Chair. Veteran senior freight rail exec and consultant Pete Rickershauser; CASTA Executive Director Elena Wilken; Amtrak Chief of State and Local Government Affairs Ray Lang; CDOT Transit and Rail Director Mark Imhoff, and ColoRail President Jim Souby also serve on the Commission. The first meeting included reports on the status of the effort, and the TIGER grant submitted to help with improving the route.

THE BUSES ARE COMING! Bob Brewster

As ColoRail advocates for statewide rail expansion, several bus projects are "paving the way" for better transit alternatives and, perhaps, future conversion to rail as the market develops.

One of RTD’s newest—photo by Bob Brewster
COLORAIL OPINION: GIVE US OUR SKI TRAIN BACK! Bob Brewster

Maybe we didn't holler enough? Our venerable Winter Park Ski Train made its last run on March 29, 2009 and it is dearly missed by many. It is still a highly requested commodity, over 5 years later, by young and old alike.

Of all the items on ColoRail's "Wish List," the Ski Train could be the easiest, fastest, and least expensive service to inaugurate. The market appears to be there, there's a brand new station for it, and winter traffic is worse than ever. Could this be the year to launch the campaign? There are many reasons to do so. Amtrak would be a logical operator since it has access rights and proper insurance. And, most likely, appropriate equipment. There is a track at Denver Union Station along with bus and light rail connections. Also, a hotel that just might have winter guests wanting to ski or just take the scenic round trip and venues in Winter Park looking for customers. It is also an election year with many tight races. Might this be a worthy campaign pledge?

Plus, all the new businesses at DUS would be delighted to serve departing and returning Ski Train passengers. How about all those new residential units surrounding DUS? Might there be a skier or two in the crowd? In other words, the situation is much improved since the last trip - and the previous trains were already full, so there should be ample interest, with fares covering most of the operating costs.

Interested parties should include the City and County of Denver, Winter Park Ski Area, Visit Denver tourism, Sage Hospital-ity, and CDOT, which has been able to allocate hundreds of millions of dollars on the highway mode for skier traffic - an often failed mode during snow storms.

Our recently re-activated Union Station could be energized even more with a return of the Ski Train. Let's do it!
BLAST FROM THE PAST—1994!

This photo was taken at the conclusion of a joint ColoRail NARP meeting on March 12, 1994. The group was given a tour of the light rail maintenance facility at 8th Ave. and Mariposa before the initiation of LRT service in Denver. We were surprised when RTD management graciously offered to give us a ride from the maintenance facility to Colfax Ave. and return. This picture was taken in front of RTD's LRV #103. The meeting took place at the Oxford Hotel and included a walking tour of Denver Union Terminal where Jerry Nery described the progress made on renovation and construction of the bus lanes for regional bus service on the train side of the station.

On the extreme left we have John Claflin (RTD Assistant General Manager) and on the extreme right we have David Johnson (NARP's Associate Director). Standing next to Mr. Claflin is Brant Liebmann who was serving ColoRail V.P. In the first row from the left we have Peter Barkman (ColoRail's first president), Hugh Wilson (Co-founder of Save Our Station, Don Zielesch (longtime ColoRail Treasurer and Volunteer Leader), and Dan Lutz, who was president of Pro-Rail Nebraska and a NARP Director. Above Hugh Wilson is Jo Campbell who served for many years as a ColoRail Board member and legislative chair. Just to Jo's left is Rob Rynerson, ColoRail’s newsletter editor. Just to the right of Dave Johnson is Jon Esty, ColoRail President and to his right is Reg Holmes a ColoRail Board member. Some of these folks were from NE and IA. Jon Esty