Restoring ski link could be big lift -- if okayed

by Jim Souby and R.W. Rynerson

Spearheaded by Amtrak Conductor and ColoRail Member Brad Swarzwelter, Amtrak has agreed to consider operating a special train from Denver to the Seven Villages of Winter Park Resort in late March. This would be a full scale demonstration run of the newly minted “Winter Park Express” to accommodate skiers desiring comfortable and hassle free travel day for a day at the resort.

The demo would allow Amtrak to work out any kinks in the service. However, the train requires approval of the host railroad, the Un-
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ColoRail general meeting on February 28th gearing up for 2016 “Year of the Train” See Page 2.

Restoring ski link could be big lift -- if okayed

by Sylvia Brady

ColoRail’s mission is to develop passenger rail and transit services in Colorado. This ranges from advocacy for public transit projects, such as the light rail and commuter rail lines that are a part of RTD’s FasTracks program, to the national system of Amtrak passenger rail and scenic train tourism throughout Colorado. Rail is one part of an integrated transportation network in Colorado.

Today’s young adults are especially interested in travel without a car, and passenger rail can provide travel choices for those who cannot or do not wish to drive. If our organization wishes to grow and attract a more diverse group of rail advocates, we must understand what the current generation’s travel trends and mobility needs are.

Millennials, a term used to describe today’s young adults between the ages of 16 and 34, have adopted new travel behaviors that differ from previous generations. Millennials desire urban living in walkable, vibrant communities, and they do not want to spend their lives in their cars or stuck in traffic. Younger people are also interested in the sustainability of

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Building rail’s future

ColoRail’s Winter Meeting will give members a look into the future. With four FasTracks lines opening and proposals for Winter Park service and the Southwest Chief in the agenda, 2016 will be the year of the train. Prospects will be presented.

Planned activities include the latest on FasTracks rail line construction from Richard Clarke, Assistant General Manager, Capital Projects, RTD. Sylvia Brady and Jack Wheeler will show how the Millennial generation are revitalizing our transportation system. ColoRail’s nominating committee will report.

President’s Cab Ride

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

This is much more than just verbal mumbo jumbo. We use the term because it is positive: building blocks demonstrate progress toward our vision and goals, while “increments” could be positive or negative. The term also encourages us to think big enough to actually solve our transportation problems, but show how we can accomplish our goals in affordable steps.

Smaller building blocks stand alone or can combine into larger ones. For example, obtaining the recent TIGER grant was a building block for saving the Southwest Chief. A secure Chief becomes a building block for expanding Amtrak service to Pueblo, which becomes a building block for Front Range Passenger Rail by serving as a southern anchor for the system.

Each building block can usually be defined and justified as a standalone project, but also supports achievement of a larger goal. By identifying and defining building blocks we can also identify costs and benefits more accurately and determine potential and doable steps toward achieving our goals.

We can determine what not to do, as well, in order to prevent impeding our goals. For example, in major rail and transportation corridors, building blocks could include policies that make sure the construction of flyovers and underpasses take into account future rail lines, or policies that preclude abandonment of rights of way. Freight transportation may benefit now from projects that take future rail lines into account.

So far, the ColoRail Building Blocks have been a valuable way to frame our broad and diverse goals into concepts and projects people can understand. We have tried them out with various audiences ranging from Amtrak senior management to civic and political leaders. Several members have contributed to the approach and we welcome feedback on these ideas from all of our members. -- JMS

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ColoRail, the Colorado Rail Passenger Association, is in correspondence and coordinates with NARP, the National Association of Railroad Passengers. Membership in both organizations is encouraged.
Winter Park rail link try-out?

As proposed, the Winter Park Express would depart from and return to Denver Union Station. The demonstration in March of 2015 would herald the return of weekly ski train service to Winter Park in 2016. The service would run from January through March with three or four trips a week. Amtrak would charge a competitive price for roundtrip tickets designed to fill the six plus Superliner car train and attract skiers who want to avoid the drive up I-70 over the pass and back.

This is a momentous opportunity! Restoring ski train service is one of ColoRail’s top three goals.

A team of volunteers headed by Brad deserve a great deal of credit. The team included: Jason Hanson, Gary DeFrange, Bob Brewster, Ira Schreiber, Harry Safstrom, Rich Luckin, Jody Sylva and Jim Souby.

As part of the business plan development a task force of Amtrak operations executives were brought to Winter Park to check out the plan. Winter Park did a grand job hosting the visit and selling the train’s merits.

ColoRail members Bob Brewster, Ira Schreiber and Jim Souby accompanied the team and ColoRail chartered a return bus to demonstrate the advantages of the train over driving. A return ride plagued by bad weather, icy roads and I-70 congestion contributed to our cause! It’s the first time ColoRail ever saluted terrifying service.

Looking back at the Rio Grande Ski Train.

In a 1949 timetable, the weekend Ski Train was coexisting on the Moffat Tunnel route with five passenger trains in each direction:

- **California Zephyr** transcontinental.
- **Prospector** overnight Denver <> Salt Lake City.
- **Mountaineer** overnight Denver <> Montrose.
- **#9/10 daylight Denver <> Craig via Steamboat Springs.**
- **#23/24 overnight Denver <> Craig via Steamboat Springs.**

Day trip ski trains were operated in the eastern United States and Canada, but were rare in the longer distances of the West. Closest equivalent to the Winter Park “ski from the train” convenience was Milwaukee Road’s Snoqualmie Pass trains from Seattle. Winter Park photos at right courtesy of Steve Hurlbert show easy access.
ColoRail wishes to congratulate its partners at Colorado Department of Transportation's Rail and Transit Division for their spring launch of the BUSTANG interregional bus services along the I-25 and I-70 corridors.

And it's not a minute too soon! These services have been desperately needed for years as Colorado's growing traffic volume has caused extreme frustration for motorists trying to get from Point A to Point B in our busiest corridors of commerce.

Denver's Union Station will be the anchor for highway coach service from Ft. Collins and Loveland in the north, Colorado Springs in the south, and Glenwood Springs in the west. The Denver Union Station terminus will permit easy transfers to RTD's extensive rail and bus network throughout the metro area. And, of course, Amtrak's California Zephyr, enhancing access to our famed train.

“A big piece of the state transit network that is missing are the ‘city to city’ and/or ‘local transit system to local transit system’ connections,” according to CDOT's Mark Imhoff. Bustang is CDOT's initial attempt to connect the six largest transit systems in the state along the I-25 Front Range Corridor and the I-70 Mountain Corridor.

“It's a start that hopefully will enjoy enough success to justify expansion, and who knows, it might lead to passenger rail linkages.” adds Imhoff.

Services will be operated under contract by Horizon Coach Lines, a well-respected charter bus operator in the Denver area and elsewhere. The buses will be more upscale versions of RTD's newest regional buses, but sporting more legroom, WiFi, TV monitors, and restrooms. A serious step up from the former FREX service that connected Colorado Springs with Denver. Passengers will be relieved of their driving duties to read, work, or nap during their daily commutes, not unlike the thousands who already commute on RTD's buses and trains every day.

Riders will also save money, if they consider the actual cost of driving their personal vehicles. AAA publishes a handy brochure that reveals the true operating cost of an automobile, ranging from 50 to 80 cents per mile, depending on vehicle type. Motorists often fail to realize that every mile driven has a cost that far exceeds the cost of gasoline, even at today's lower prices.

The last serious attempt to serve the Ft. Collins/Loveland/Denver commuter market ended on April 30, 1975. Colorado Motorway was the operator, a sister company to the Denver Boulder Bus Company, this writer's first employer. The buses from both companies passed into the hands of RTD's Intercity Division, based in Boulder, on May 1, 1975.

Operating rights on the Colorado Motorway (CMW) route north of Longmont were purchased by Continental Trailways, which was more interested in the interstate opportunities of the Laramie terminus of CMW, so the commuter service gradually evaporated. Trailways also once operated an extensive schedule between Denver and Colorado Springs, but service declined as did much of the intercity bus industry.

So, thanks to our friends at CDOT, what was old is new again! ColoRail is certain that BUSTANG will be an instant success. It is not difficult to believe that there will be frequency increases, extensions, such as to Pueblo, and expansion from 5 to 7 days per week operation. And there could be other route opportunities, bringing service to Coloradans who have no other mobility options. ColoRail salutes CDOT for entering

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ColoRail has its day

ColoRail’s 25th year celebrated

ColoRail celebrated its 25th Anniversary at Denver Union Station. The September 27th meeting brought together all of ColoRail’s past presidents and many members from 1989 on to commemorate our success as the citizens who “Saved Our Station”. The meeting convened a moment of silence for several founders who have departed, followed by a champagne toast in the great hall to all of ColoRail’s founders. Simon Tafoya from the Governor’s Office then delivered a proclamation from Governor John Hickenlooper declaring September 27th, 2014 ColoRail Day in the State of Colorado.

RTD General Manager Phil Washington keynoted the event with a call for Congressional action to fund the nation’s transportation infrastructure. He asked for ColoRail’s support, especially for Stand Up For Transportation Day April 9, 2015. This is his primary objective as this year’s Chair of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). The day will be celebrated in Washington, DC, and across the nation, including Denver. He emphasized that transportation infrastructure is a key economic contributor and requires sufficient and predictable funding. The nature of transportation systems makes federal funding a must.

Two panels followed, the first included ColoRail’s past presidents and longtime transit advocate Bert Melcher in a review of the history of the organization. Jon Esty moderated the panel, while Peter Barkmann and Ira Schreiber participated. Mobilize the public was the panel’s key message, in order to secure political action. Key events such as creating RTD, saving DUS, passing the FasTracks ballot measure all depended on public support. The organization needs to remain goal oriented and high minded, occasionally taking on the powers that be when they lose sight of key transit and rail objectives such as DUS and system connectivity.

The second panel considered the future of rail and transit services. Pueblo County Commissioner and Southwest Chief Commission Chair Sal Pace joined freight railroad expert Pete Rickershauser, Amtrak Senior Government Affairs Manager Derrick James and CDOT transit and rail Director Mark Imhoff on the panel.

Panelists described the challenges facing rail and transit development, principally the failure of our state and national leaders to secure sufficient and reliable funding. On the other hand, the inexorable growth along Colorado’s Front Range and the changing values of the millennial generation is likely to change the political equation in favor of transit and rail.

“Because of their permanency and increasing ridership, trains create community wealth; they are economic engines. CDOT will help spur public support when it launches its interregional bus service in the I-25 and I-70 corridors. “What’s a realistic, actionable vision for passenger rail in Colorado, said panelist Pete Rickershauser.

ColoRail president Jim Souby closed the meeting with a review of ColoRail’s top three goals: Restore ski train service to Winter Park; Save the Southwest Chief and add a stop in Pueblo; and, develop Front Range passenger rail. He explained these goals could be achieved if we approach them incrementally, the ColoRail Building Block strategy. ColoRail will keep its oar in the water on RTD’s completion of FasTracks and reducing congestion on I-70, but as the panels pointed out, with limited resources focus is essential, he said.

In the year of the train, 2016!
The National Railway Historical Society is considering Denver for its 2016 national convention, its first here since 1982. The Society is drawn to Denver because of all the new rail services being activated by 2016, as well as our rich rail legacy.
Offer connectivity without a car

their travel modes and reducing their carbon footprint. Biking, walking, and public transit are increasing as modes of transport for all people, led by Millennials. Colorado Public Interest Research Group’s (CoPIRG) 2014 report on transportation in Denver found that the number of vehicle miles traveled per capita decreased by 10.6% from 2006-2011, one of the largest decreases across large U.S. cities. This is not just because people are not going as many places. Transit miles traveled increased by 13.5% from 2005-2010. Miles traveled by car decreased while miles travel on transit increase. Millennials in particular are leading this mode switch, driving 23% fewer miles in 2009 than 2001. Millennials are more likely than other generations to not own a car because they do not see a need for it. Or they may own one but use it less. Young people have been able to achieve fewer miles in the car by taking advantage of new and innovative modes of transport. Cycling has always been popular in the Denver/Boulder region, but new cycling infrastructure such as improved bike lanes and bike-sharing programs have made biking an important commuting alternative. B-cycle is a successful bike-sharing program in Denver that allows users to pick up a bike in one location and return it to another. Ride sharing and car sharing programs such as car2go, Uber, and Lyft have increased the travel options for people without cars or who need the flexibility and mobility of a car every once in a while. Denver’s system of light rail and commuter rail has also increased the mobility options for people going carless.

So where does rail fit in? Rail advocates must recognize the needs of current and future generations who want to drive less and do more. Rail operations must adapt to the intermodal lives of Millennials and offer connectivity to rail stations without a car. Bike racks at stations and allowing bikes on board trains and rail is just one place to start. Providing car share parking is also another way to achieve connectivity to rail stations. State and local transit agencies as well as ColoRail should recognize that fixed route transport systems like bus and rail are not as flexible as the car and can affect people’s mobility if they cannot access these networks. Intermodal planning is key to allow as many people as possible to access the rail network that ColoRail is fighting for. Emphasizing the sustainability of rail can also draw more interest in rail as a viable travel mode. If ColoRail is able to reach a new generation of rail passengers, we can achieve our goals of expanding passenger rail service in Colorado and continue the legacy of the first 25 years of our organization.

Thanks to ColoRail Volunteer hosts

✓ Don Zielesch 1/1/15.
If I have left off anyone’s name, please let me know.
And thanks much for your help. Not only does Colorado appreciate our help, but the DUS Amtrak staff has expressed their appreciation to many of the volunteers.
The next opportunity to volunteer will be the Easter weekend which will be April 3 through April 6, 2015.
Coach service to connect regions

Work continues in three state governments to retain the current routing of Amtrak’s Southwest Chief. Colorado’s efforts are focused on General Assembly Bill 15-176, introduced on a bipartisan basis by Senators Leroy Garcia (D) and Larry Crowder (R).

Other sponsors as of press time include Senators Aguilar, Guzman, Heath, Jones, and Kerr. House sponsorship is led by Joe Salazar.

In the photo at right, ColoRail President Jim Souby discusses the bill’s prospects with Senator Garcia.

In related news, Amarillo and Lubbock, Texas newspapers reported disappointment that the Chief might not be rerouted.

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by Don Zielesch

Jay Jones and I would like to thank the following volunteers who helped out at DUS over the Labor Day holiday weekend. We appreciate the effort you made to help. There was a low turn out of volunteers but lots of passengers according to Ron Kaminen.

Hopefully with Amtrak back on a regular schedule we can be of more help. It was good to be back at DUS after a 3 year hiatus. Things are still a little unsettled but that should also settle down.

Many thanks to the following volunteers who helped over Labor Day weekend:

✓ John Bishop 8/30/14.
✓ Mike Cronin 8/30/14.
✓ Ron Kaminen 8/29/, 8/30, and 9/1/14.

The next scheduled holiday was Thanksgiving November 26 -December 1, 2014. Jay and I would like to thank the following volunteers who helped over the Thanksgiving weekend:

✓ Mike Cronin 11/27/14.
✓ Tom Peyton 11/26/14.
✓ Don Zielesch 11/26/14.

At year-end, things were a bit crowded at times, but many of the passengers used the sofas and other seating areas while waiting for the train. Unfortunately some trains were late—as is usual, but that is to be expected during the Christmas season. The following volunteers helped over this period:

✓ John Bishop 12/27/14 and 1/2/15.
✓ Mike Cronin 1/3/15.
✓ Ron Kaminen 12/27 and 12/28/14.
✓ Tom Peyton 1/1/15.
✓ David Rasmussen 12/28/14 and 1/2/15.
✓ Ron Vander Kooi 12/31/14.

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