Surface Transportation Act Reauthorization

Over this year and next, Congress will reauthorize the Surface Transportation Act. This Act will help set national transportation policy until 2025 including authorizing funding levels for Amtrak and important rail grant programs. The most recent version, the Fix America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, enacted in 2015, expires in 2020. On June 26th, I testified at the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee hearing Amtrak: Next Steps for Passenger Rail, which began the reauthorization process for that key committee.

Over the past year, I have worked with the national Rail Passengers Association (RPA) and ColoRail to identify key issues that should be addressed in the reauthorization. I believe resolving these issues will have a major bearing on the success of future passenger rail projects in Colorado. The following is a brief summary of the issues.

Of principle interest is the continued support for sustaining the operation of the Amtrak national network including Southwest Chief and other long distance trains in the West, such as the California Zephyr. In the Amtrak appropriation act for FY 2019 Congress included language requiring Amtrak to continue operation of the Southwest Chief. We will ask Congress to include similar language in the reauthorization which would provide a five year window to work out changes to the national network.

RPA has identified a number of issues as important to continued and improved passenger rail operations. The following items have particularly high importance to Colorado and the Commission:

• Stable and predictable funding for passenger rail, perhaps through a Passenger Rail Trust Fund. Authorization of sufficient funding for rail grant programs and equipment acquisition will also be extremely important.
• More enforceable On Time Performance Standards for passenger trains traveling on privately owned freight lines. This is important for passenger satisfaction on the Southwest Chief and California Zephyr. Currently, only Department of Justice may act to enforce the law which grants passenger trains priority over freight trains. Amtrak should be provided with “private right of action” power.
• Creation of a grant program for states and local governments to purchase abandoned and under utilized corridors from freight railroads. Creation of tax credits for private sector donation of rights of way to states for passenger rail networks.

Other important issues have been identified and will emerge as the reauthorization process continues. Please watch ColoRail.org and RailPassengers.org as this issue unfolds.
Front Range Passenger Rail

The Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission is moving forward. Spencer Dodge has joined the Commission staff to support Randy Grauberger, the Project Director. Randy briefed us at our annual meeting in April (see http://colorail.org/colorail-annual-meeting-presentations-from-sierra-club-and-front-range-rail-commission). The Commission has selected Colorado Engineering Firm HDR to develop the crucial next steps including engaging the public and preparing a service development plan and environmental impact statements. ColoRail’s outreach can help with this effort.

ColoRail Board Meetings and Leadership

ColoRail’s board now meets at the Denver Press Club monthly. The Club is located at 1330 Glenarm Place in Denver. The meetings are scheduled for the second Thursday of each month from 6 pm until 8 pm. ColoRail members are welcome to attend the meetings but please check beforehand if you plan to join us as conflicts can arise. Paid parking is available on Glenarm Place in front and at a lot next door.

At the ColoRail annual meeting, six members were elected to the eleven member Board of Directors. Returning to the Board are Alec Hagen, Nancy McCaffrey, Jim Souby, Jack Tone, Danny Zimny-Schmitt. Dan Bilka became the newest Board Member. Board members in their mid-term include Alex Funderburg, Phyllis Kane, Harry Safstrom, George Skidmore and Jack Wheeler. The Board then elected officers: Jim Souby as President, Harry Safstrom as Vice President, Alec Hagen as Treasurer and Jack Wheeler as Secretary.

The Board is developing a strategic plan for the next three to five years and will be forming committees of interested members to meet our goals and objectives over the next two months. We’ll have more to report at the Fall meeting.

ColoRail Wants to Speak to Your Group

Passenger rail development in Colorado will require strong public support in order to obtain political approval and funding. To that end, ColoRail members are pleased to brief citizen’s groups and business associations about the Colorado effort and similar projects in other states. Contact President@ ColoRail.org if you would like a presentation.

Take the Passenger Rail Survey!

The Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission is exploring the level of interest for passenger rail service along the 173-mile I-25 corridor between Fort Collins and Pueblo. In addition to asking what benefits such a service would bring, it is also examining how a passenger rail system could support the state’s future growth and economy and benefit all Coloradans with a sustainable and reliable travel choice.

“As we begin our new planning effort, it’s vital that we hear from the state’s residents on what’s important to them regarding possible, future passenger rail service,” said Passenger Rail Commission Chair Jill Gaebler. “The survey is designed to help shape the conversation about passenger rail service along a corridor where nearly 85 percent of the state’s residents live.” In the next 25 years, the Front Range is forecast to grow from 4.9 million people in 2020 to 6.6 million in 2045, a 35% increase.

The survey is using innovative technology to gather input on the origin and destination of Front Range travelers and their purpose for travel. Survey results will be used to focus the study on areas of importance, in terms of geography and the benefits to Front Range communities.

“We're going to utilize this survey over the next few months in order to shape the conversation around Front Range passenger rail,” added Gaebler. “It'll likely be reiterated in another version sometime down the line, where we’ll be seeking different answers to different questions. With everyone’s help, passenger rail along the Front Range can help meet the demands of our growing state.”

The survey is available at: https://frontrangerail.metroquest.com/

ColoRail Board

| Jim Souby, President and Chair | Alex Funderburg |
| RPA at-large Council Member | Dan Bilka |
| (303-355-7985) president@colorail.org | Danny Zimny-Schmitt |
| Harry Safstrom, Vice President | George Skidmore |
| Alec Hagen, Corp. Treasurer | Jack Tone |
| Jack Wheeler, Corp. Secretary | Nancy McCaffrey |
| Phyllis Kane, Newsletter Editor, Fort Collins |
| Phyllis Kane, Newsletter Editor, Fort Collins |

ColoRail, the Colorado Rail Passenger Association, is in correspondence and coordinates with RPA: The Rail Passenger Association [national]. Membership in both organizations is encouraged.
Stress on rural areas amped up by poor transport

By R.W. Rynerson

Colorado’s Department of Transportation has been tackling issues involved with bus and rail access for small cities and rural areas, but it is starting from behind. Demands for urban commuting and recreation have overshadowed a century of rail reductions and five decades of bus service reductions for the small cities and rural communities. Responding to environmental threats by converting to electric cars still leaves out the 36% of intercity bus riders that were found to be non-drivers in a 1974 Oregon survey. Walk into one of the few remaining intercity bus stations and one will quickly realize that non-drivers and those drivers who do not have access to a car are the majority of passengers. The feeling of being caught in a squeezing vice has political and social consequences. Environmental propositions that ignore this issue will face opponents who have become resigned to ever-shrinking travel options. Social consequences turn into dissatisfaction with communities and then to health issues. The 1974 Oregon survey found that 48% of intercity bus rides were made for social purposes.

New look hatcheck aims to smooth boarding

by R.W. Rynerson

Amtrak has produced a new format for the hatcheck cards that are placed over coach seats to indicate seat occupancy and the passenger’s destination. New cards include the seat number – information that some Amtrak personnel scribbled on the old cards – to guide passengers to their assigned place. The change partially addresses long-standing criticism of Amtrak’s boarding procedures from older customers who can remember more organized practices of the past or have experienced the brief halts and rapid boarding of reserved seat European trains. Old habits die hard, however. On an August 2019 trip on the Southwest Chief the staff were flipping the cards over to the blank side in order to get more writing room. [The illustration shows that the passenger’s destination is Raton, and that the passenger is to take a seat in the Lower Level of the Superliner coach. The card did have the correct car number on the official front side.]

ColoRail Fall meeting on September 27th

ColoRail will hold its Fall membership meeting in Fort Collins, September 27th, 9 am to noon, Morgan Library, CSU. We try to meet at least one time per year away from Denver and are pleased to partner with Colorado State University. Look for additional information on our Facebook page and Colorail.org.
On December 18th, 1904, city leaders in Denver came together to present a "Loving Cup of Admiration" to David Halliday Moffat. After decades of delay and half-starts, someone was finally trying to build a mainline railway from Denver west. These men of power and wealth wanted to show Mr. Moffat that they recognized the enormity of the task he had undertaken. They knew that the creation of the Moffat’s Denver and Northwestern Railway Company would likely bankrupt him—the wealthiest man in the State. They also knew the creation of a standard gauge steam road straight west would put Denver on the transcontinental map and solidify the city’s place among the great Capitals of the nation.

As the 42-inch-tall Cup was being sculpted from over 200 pounds of pure silver in the Fall of 1904, Moffat’s rails had climbed to the crest of the Great Divide. Within a few months the line would descend into the rich forests and pastures of Middle Park. But on that cold December day when the finished Cup was placed upon its green marble base in the State Capitol building’s rotunda for presentation, signs of imminent hardship on the “Moffat Road” were as deep as the snow drifts on Rollins Pass.

As years passed, Moffat’s wealth evaporated like the luster of an alpine columbine in a dry August breeze. And yet, against all odds Moffat pressed on towards the coal and oil rich northwest corner of the State, and Salt Lake City with its established rail connections to the Pacific. Until his death in 1909, Moffat never gave up on his dream of connecting Denver to the Western Slope.

Perhaps Moffat fought on in part because his friends had shown him their admiration through the magnificent Cup. Perhaps they stayed by his side as fortunes faded because they had committed to his effort, as the great Cup implied. In the end, years after Moffat died, the people of Colorado joined together to finally connect the Moffat Road to western rail lines. As appropriate, they named the Road’s central tunnel after the man who gave all he had to build what many believed could not be built.

The greatest testimony to the value of Moffat’s self-sacrifice, represented by the Loving Cup of Admiration, is the fact that the Moffat Road still delights hundreds of travelers daily and isa vital connection of modern commerce “through the Rockies, not around them”. The scenic splendor of the line that was chiseled out of solid stone through the most daunting escarpment in the land is unparalleled in the railroading world. Many of the scenes that travelers encounter along the first 50 miles of the Moffat Road are intricately etched into the dazzling shine of the Cup’s silver edifice. Finally, there is the likeness of the man himself:stately, humble and determined, with a hint of courage that seems to say, “Let’s do this”.

David Moffat was by no means a perfect person. None of us are. But his life is worthy of honor today as it was in 1904. It is worthy simply because he gave all of himself—his wealth, his wisdom and his skills—for the benefit of others. In his case, those others number in the millions. In my role as a conductor along this spectacular line, I witness how these vistas take people’s breath away on a daily basis. Awe inspired train passengers from around the globe have been inspired by Moffat’s Road for more than a century.

Cont. on Next Page
For untold years, the Loving Cup of Admiration given to David Moffat had been virtually forgotten. After his death, Moffat’s Cup somehow ended up in the archives of History Colorado. To this day, no one has been found with living memory of seeing the Cup in person. However, thanks to the meticulous records and impeccable preservation techniques of History Colorado, THE CUP HAS BEEN FOUND!

In December 2018, a small group representing ColoRail, the Crawford Hotel, and History Colorado was able to view the pallet containing the Cup, which had been opened for inspection. I had the privilege of being among those in attendance. The Cup is pristine in every way. It is truly a priceless gem of Colorado history that must be seen by those who love this State.

Finding the most appropriate place to publicly display this wonderful artifact was easy. It should be located among the people that benefit most from Moffat’s grand endeavor - people who ride trains over his Road. All those passengers go through beautiful Denver Union Station. Thanks to the gracious cooperation of the Crawford Hotel, a prominent location in the Great Hall has been set aside as the new home for Moffat’s monumental Cup.

History Colorado, the Crawford Hotel and members of ColoRail joined forces to create the perfect display case for the Cup. Naturally, every precaution is being taken to ensure that the Cup is protected in perpetuity. This has not been an inexpensive proposition. It has required skilled craftsmen, state of the art materials and technological protections. On top of this, round the clock armed security vigilance must be maintained.

Fortunately, security officers are already a part of on-going Denver Union Station operations 24 hours a day. The case that will house the Moffat Cup is a different story. This customized piece of functional furniture will be costly. Hence the successful funding campaign has ensued! Thanks to all our donors!

Winter Park Express by Harry T. Safstrom
Ski season is approaching and we look forward to another year of the very successful Winter Park Express. At this time, negotiations are occurring between Amtrak, the Union Pacific & Winter Park Resort for a 4th year of WPE.

While details have not been finalized and it would be inappropriate to speculate, we at ColoRail are optimistic and will be gearing up for another season of providing volunteer hosts / docents. As details are finalized Sean Flannery and I will start connecting with last year’s hosts to determine interest in returning for the 2019 season. After that we can start to work through the list of applicants. Stay tuned! Think Positive! Think snow!
Moffat Cup Display Case Donor Plaque

On loan from History Colorado, the Moffat Cup Display Case was made possible by the generous contributions from the following supporters:

In Loving Memory of:
Dr. Jay E. Swartzwelter
Amtrak RFE Kevin Farlow
Dan and Juanita Straight
John Melby

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A full view of the Moffat Cup with base
Rural Stress - cont. from page 3

“It’s also true that the price impact [of a carbon tax] would fall heaviest on rural residents. That’s because they travel longer distances, drive vehicles that are less fuel efficient and have fewer public transit options. They also have lower incomes, on average.” - by Laura Gunderson, Oregon Live / The Oregonian updated 22 June 2019.

The recent uproar in Oregon portrayed as opposition to a carbon tax brings up this issue. Programmed to focus on high tech auto debates, self-driving cars and super high-speed concepts, American media covering the French “yellow vest” demonstrations little noticed poor rural transportation service as one of the issues over there, but it was on the tip of the tongue of a demonstrator interviewed by the BBC. European news media have reported that the Macron government is now grappling with the issue. France has poured great energy into its high-speed rail system, but the national government has tried to withdraw from supporting a rail and bus branch line network that was almost as comprehensive as the U.S. once enjoyed, dumping the burden on regional governments if they wish to retain service.

Combined with other causes, the stress on rural and small city residents shows up bluntly in the suicide rate. The Suicide Prevention Coalition of Colorado in a report headlined “Rural and Frontier Counties Tend to Have High Rates of Suicide” notes that suicide is the 7th leading cause of death in the state. For youths aged 10-19 it is the #1 cause. In 2015, the suicide rate among adolescents aged 15-19 living in rural counties was nearly twice that among the same age group in large central metro counties, according to the non-profit coalition.

Of particular interest from a transport point of view: the coalition identifies three major factors that reduce youth suicide:

+ Relationships to Trusted Adults, + Feeling Safe at School, and + Extracurricular Activities. Good public transportation can play a role in this, as anyone who has observed Scouting groups and youth sports teams traveling on Colorado trains knows. Rail transport, properly run, links families and friends, and provides a sociable venue for group travel. Intercity bus transport carrying a grandmother to visit her grandchild may help keep a trusted adult in a youth’s life.

This is just one aspect of rural transportation’s role. However, it is not hard for this city-dweller to understand why a century of steady cutbacks in service has led to frustration. The following list shows places where passenger trains called on in the October 1965 Official Guide, but that no longer have intercity rail service.

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