The Winter Park Express (WPE) “ski train” returned to the rails on Friday January 10, 2020 for its 4th season.

This year features additional trips by running EVERY Friday, Saturday and Sunday from January 10 through March 29, 2020. The train is capable of carrying over 400+ passengers in 6 Superliner coaches. The train also features the very successful Superliner Lounge, which serves a wide range of beverages and packaged rolls, food and snacks.

The WPE leaves Denver Union Station (DUS) promptly at 7 AM and typically takes a little less than 2 hours to reach the heated platform at Winter Park Resort, just outside the west portal of the Moffat Tunnel. The train is scheduled to depart Winter Park for Denver at 4:30 PM.

Lowest one-way fares are $29 with discounted rates available for children. Seating is first come / first served in coaches.

The glass enclosed superliner lounge provides open seating for coach passengers. Passengers may choose to ride to and from WP on different days, which allows multiple overnight stay options.

ColoRail again schedules, trains and provides approximately 60 volunteer train host/docents (7 per train) for safety, ski handling, on board route narrative. We also provide additional informational materials and supportive social media.

The train runs through some areas only accessible by train. About 1/3 of WPE passengers are non-skiers who avail themselves of a wide range of activities at or near the ski area.

WPE is a joint effort of Amtrak, Winter Park Resort, Union Pacific, ColoRail and the sponsor American Express.

Please spread the word and ride the train – it is the only train in North America that goes directly to a ski resort within walking distance of a ski lift . . . . not to mention by-passing I-70 weather and gridlock.

photos by Harry Safstrom and Jim Souby
**President’s Cab Ride**

Happy New Year! 2020 is upon us but it is useful to reflect on 2019 before we move on. It was another big year for passenger rail in Colorado. Our three goals remain the same: 1) sustain and improve the Southwest Chief passenger train which runs through Southeastern Colorado 2) help the State of Colorado develop a badly needed Front Range passenger rail system, and 3) continue and support the operations of the Winter Park Express ski train service. There is progress to report.

Our efforts to sustain and improve the Amtrak Southwest Chief yielded success as the U.S. Senate Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Committee weighed in in support of the Train. At a hearing of the full committee June 26th, Senators from both parties spoke in favor of maintaining the train as part of an essential national network. They were led by our own Senator Cory Gardner (R-CO) who graciously introduced me to the full Committee. Senators Jerry Moran (R-KS), Jon Tester (D-MT) and Tom Udall (D-NM) all strongly supported our efforts while the Committee Chair, Roger Wicker (R-MS) and Ranking Minority Maria Cantwell (D-WA) both spoke in favor of a vital national passenger rail system in their opening remarks. You can watch the hearing at [https://www.c-span.org/video/?462105-1/amtrak-services-operations](https://www.c-span.org/video/?462105-1/amtrak-services-operations)

Later, at a Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission meeting, Amtrak reported the railroad has “throttled back” efforts to break up or discontinue the Train. Congress has also directed Amtrak to continue the service. The battle is far from over, but the pause provides time to build more support for the Chief and the other threatened interstate trains targeted by Amtrak’s management.

Concerning the Southwest Chief, Pueblo ColoRail member Gary Carter arranged for me to speak to the Railroad Passenger Car Alliance (RPCA) in Albuquerque, January 18th. The audience was loaded with questions as well as praise for our efforts to save the Chief. You can find the outline of my presentation at [www.ColoRail.org](http://www.ColoRail.org). I am delighted to speak to any group about passenger rail issues!

**Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission**

The Commission has begun its comprehensive outreach and service development planning. Project Director Randy Grauberger and Public Liaison Spencer Dodge have been campaigning tirelessly to build public support while overseeing the complex planning required to justify funding the rail system compared to alternatives. A consultant team led by HDR Inc. (HDRinc.com) is now fully engaged.

They are assisting with stakeholder outreach and developing the technical basis for meeting Federal Railroad Administration Service Development Plan and National Environmental Policy Act requirements. ColoRail is supporting the Commission in our usual manner – outreach to civic organizations and the public. The dramatic difference this time around is we don’t have to end with “wait til next year”. Instead, we can tell everyone how to engage and support the Commission and advance Front Range passenger rail. Check out the project at its website: [https://www.frontrangepassengerrail.com](https://www.frontrangepassengerrail.com) The Commission’s main website remains [https://www.codot.gov/about/southwest-chief-commission-front-range-passenger-rail](https://www.codot.gov/about/southwest-chief-commission-front-range-passenger-rail) Be sure and attend Commission meetings if you can! (Pres. Cab Ride cont’d p 4)

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Phyllis Kane, Newsletter Editor, Fort Collins
**BURNHAM RAIL YARD**

*by Jack Tone*

The CDOT Planning & Environment Linkages (PEL) study of Central I-25 includes the section of road between 20th Street and Santa Fe Drive (US 85), adjacent to the BNSF/UP Consolidated Main Line (CML) for much of the segment. It is the most congested highway in Colorado with some 300,000 average trips per day, and has a very high crash rate. CDOT has been evaluating alternatives to address the safety and congestion issues. The Central I-25 PEL study started in 2018 and is scheduled to be completed in Spring 2020.

A meeting of the Stakeholder Focus Group was held on November 14th. In evaluating a series of alternatives, the study has narrowed down the feasible alternatives to the following three;

1. bringing the highway up to standard with improved alignment, full shoulders, and standard interchange spacing (eliminating ramps both 8th Ave and 17th Ave)
2. providing braided ramps and collector-distributor roads to reduce weaving conflicts for through traffic
3. adding managed lanes in the median with connections at Speer, Colfax and 6th Ave.

All of the alternatives would require relocation of a portion of the CML tracks north of Alameda Avenue to avoid impacts to the South Platte River.

The recent news about the possible availability of the former Burnham rail yard (UP/ex D&RGW) presents a new potential opportunity outside the PEL process.

CDOT is looking to acquire the property which could then permit relocation of the highway away from the Platte River and which also could provide for added tracks for Front Range Passenger Rail as well as added tracks for RTD light rail to eliminate a bottleneck and permit added transit service in the corridor. CDOT is currently in negotiations with UP.

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**ColoRail Annual Meeting on March 21st**

ColoRail will hold its annual spring membership meeting on March 21st at The **GUILD** in Englewood.

Registration will begin at 8:00 AM and meeting to convene at 8:45 AM. Coffee and light refreshments will be served.

Speakers: Randy Grauberger, Project Director, SW Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission, and Carlos D. Lopez, Corridor Planning Group Manager for the Phoenix to Tucson Passenger Rail System.

The **GUILD** is located at the 85/285 interchange, also known as Santa Fe and Hampden Ave.

**RTD Light Rail Station nearby.**

3435 S. Inca St, Suite C, Englewood, Colorado 80110

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*photo courtesy of CDOT*
President’s Cab Ride (cont’d from p 2)

Winter Park Express

Our hosting services on Amtrak’s Winter Park Express continued with 56 volunteers providing 7 hosts on 32 runs in 2019. Amtrak experimented with several Friday runs as well and the train will run on each Friday from January 10 through March 29th in 2020.

A Superliner Sightseer Lounge Car was added to the consist which included snack and beverage service. The car was a welcome addition and it will be continued in 2020. The consist will remain 6 Superliner coaches and the Lounge car. Overall, the year was successful with more than 19,200 tickets sold, up 7% from 2018.

Surface Transportation Act Reauthorization and Funding

The hearing I testified at in June kicked off the Senate’s FAST Act reauthorization. Of course, the impeachment process has stalled most Senate business for the time being. The House Rail & Infrastructure Subcommittee on Rail began its reauthorization effort with a hearing November 13th. Rail Passenger Association (RPA) President Jim Mathews testified on behalf of passengers. See: https://narprail.org/happening-now/news/blog/rail-passengers-defends-pax-rights-in-house-testimony/

Among other things, Mathews raised the deplorable condition of Amtrak’s equipment, particularly the aged Superliners. He noted that veteran passengers carry masking tape and shims to eliminate the rattling so they can get some sleep. Well done Jim!

Another highlight of the House Hearing was Memphis (D-TN) Representative Steve Cohen who chimed in on the controversial Amtrak efforts to curtail dining car service: “I’ve been a fan of train transportation since I was a child, and a supporter of Amtrak. It’s important for America. One of the parts of passenger service that’s made it so wonderful to Americans over the centuries has been a fine dining service. Now, Amtrak is cutting out dining service. This is short sighted and foolish. It’s like Delta Airlines taking away amenities to passengers on their airplanes and making air traffic more like traveling on a bus”.

It was a welcome point of view on an irksome Amtrak plan!

Congress completed its transportation funding package for Fiscal Year 2020 in December. The fiscal year began in October. Amtrak came out ahead with $2 billion appropriated, $1.3 billion for state and interstate service and $700 million for the Northeast Corridor. The programs Colorado seeks grants from were pared back however, from $665 million to $527 million. However, the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI) grant program fared well, getting an increase over FY 2019. The Colorado Commission has an application pending with that program to research through car service from La Junta to Pueblo and Colorado Springs on the Southwest Chief. Congress also noted in a rider to the Act that the Amtrak’s National Interstate Network should be sustained.

Join ColoRail!

As always, we urge members and friends to join or renew their memberships. Membership is the strength of our organization. We are totally volunteer and rely on your support to carry us forward.

We are still wrapping up our year end / Holiday fundraising campaign. A dues increase to $30 will take effect at the end of March!

Also join us for our upcoming meeting March 21st at the Guild in Englewood. We are crafting the agenda, but you can rest assured Front Range Passenger Rail and the Southwest Chief will be discussed!

ColoRail, the Colorado Rail Passenger Association, is in correspondence and coordinates with RPA; The Rail Passenger Association [national]. Membership in both organizations is encouraged.
Front Range Passenger Rail

Based on a 2019 survey by the Rail Commission, 95% of respondents believe that passenger rail service could help address transportation needs along the Front Range. Learn more at www.frontrangepassengerrail.com

- 85% total support for passenger rail service as a mode of transportation for residents and communities along the Front Range.
- 81% total support for a Front Range Passenger Rail service project that would have regularly scheduled train service to major populations centers from Fort Collins to Pueblo.
- 61% supported a sales tax increase to fund a $5 billion passenger rail project, with only 27% opposed. 56% supported a project estimated at $15 billion.

Pueblo Station Plan Survey
submitted by Lisa Saldin

To begin planning for the potential service of Amtrak's Southwest Chief, traveling roundtrip daily to Pueblo from La Junta using BNSF and/or UPRR rails, the County is preparing a Station Area Plan. The Station Area Plan will help identify potential station locations and amenities that will enhance the passenger experience through an analysis of community input and technical design criteria. The analysis will include an investigation of a variety of sites in the area identified in collaboration with Pueblo County. Participate in survey at: http://county.pueblo.org/1a-projects/southwest-chief-pueblo

Cumbres and Toltec Turns 50!
by Peter Barkmann

Undoubtedly a gem of Colorado, the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad winds its way from Antonito, Colorado to Chama, New Mexico. For 64 miles the rails cross back and forth from Colorado to New Mexico 11 times as it tackles the rugged southern arm of the mighty San Juan Mountains. It is one of the last remaining segments of a once vast network of narrow gauge railroads that once knitted together the fabric of the Southern Rocky Mountains of Colorado and New Mexico. Contrasting with the valley-bound Durango and Silverton Railroad, the Cumbres and Toltec traverses high mesas, ponderosa clad ridgelines, and vast, open alpine mountain-scapes.

As recently as 1965 the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad continued to haul drilling supplies to the booming oil and gas fields of the San Juan Basin. Improvements to the highway system spurred increased competition from over-the-road trucks and eventually the cumbersome railroad became uneconomic. In September 1967 the D&RGW filed with the Interstate Commerce Commission to abandon the San Juan Extension. The entire route ran from Alamosa, Colorado to Farmington, New Mexico with the spur extending north from Durango to Silverton. The D&RGW intended to still operate the Silverton extension as an isolated outlier.

Rail enthusiasts in New Mexico and Colorado recognized the historic and scenic value of the San Juan Extension and rallied to save the line. As testament (Cumbres cont’d p 6)
Cumbres and Toltec (cont’d from p 5)

to the power of grassroots advocacy, the enthusiasts were eventually able to convince both Colorado and New Mexico to act, and act they did. The two states through which the current line volleys back and forth 11 times, agreed to purchase the most scenic segment across the high South San Juan Mountains. Unfortunately the segment from Chama to Farmington was scrapped. People driving on Highway 74 west of Chama can still glimpse stretches of embankments and cuts in hillsides from the old line.

In 1970 Governors David Cargo of New Mexico and John Love of Colorado signed an agreement for the two states to jointly purchase the 74 miles of track from Antonito to Colorado.

Congress authorized the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad Commission to manage the railroad and the railroad is currently operated by the non-profit Cumbres Toltec Operating LLC. The line is managed as a living museum with every effort focused on conforming with the historic operation of the line. Friends of Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad is a very motivated and enthusiastic team of volunteers that continue to restore rolling stock, buildings, and other parts of the railroad physical plant. “Friends” also runs a docent program staffing each train with knowledgeable people to add to the experience of the ride.

Fifty years later, against all odds, the steam engines still ply the rails of this National Historic Landmark between the two states. CATSRR has invested considerable time and money improving the track and rolling stock; and now they are ready to celebrate. During the 2020 season the CATS railroad, Friends of CATSRR, and the states of New Mexico and Colorado plan to put on a great show. Details are still being worked out, but there will be a special ceremony in Osier on July 1, exactly 50 years after the historic signing of the agreement by Governors Cargo and Love. There will be a “gaggle of geese” from July 18 to 26. Yes, that is multiple excursions on several of the still operational Galloping Geese! Also look for a roundup of historic steam locomotives, or those built before 1900. Other festivities no doubt will make their way onto the calendar. [https://cumbrestoltec.com/50th-anniversary](https://cumbrestoltec.com/50th-anniversary)

ARVADANS -- by R. W. Rynerson

Recently children were born who may grow up thinking that their Arvada has always been linked with Denver and the larger world by smooth and fast electric commuter rail trains. They may not realize that it took determined efforts to overcome cynics, paid flacks and the under-informed. Two Arvada members of Colorail who took on that challenge and lived to see the G-Line in service passed away in their homes in 2019.

Robert “Bob” Wilson was an electrical engineer who was not content to confine his knowledge and talents to the office. In the best traditions of his profession, he participated in community activities and pushed to advance technology within reaching distance of our times. Born in Omaha in 1946, his career took him to several western cities before “landing” in Arvada over two decades ago.

His obituary, online in [www.coloradocrematory.com](http://www.coloradocrematory.com) observed: Bob was noted in Arvada and the metro area as a tireless, passionate transit advocate. He served from its beginning on the City of Arvada Gold Line Advisory Committee and was proud to ride on the first run of the G-Line last spring. As a member of RTD’s FasTracks Sustainability Committee, he pushed for planning ahead for electric vehicle charging stations in parking garages.

George “Georg” Ek retired in 1987 from a career in conservation education, but he did not slow down. As his obituary at [www.monarchssociety.com](http://www.monarchssociety.com) reports: he and [his wife] Sonja traveled extensively, especially by train to visit family in California and Washington state, but also to Europe and Australia. Service in the U.S. Air Force had taken him to Japan. In his travels he expanded his knowledge of rail transport and put that into use in participation in ColoRail and in lobbying for both intercity and commuter rail development.

His approach to letter-writing to elected officials was methodical. Born and raised in the rail-centric Chicago of 1930, he could have leaned on that. Instead, he drew on all his experiences. And, importantly, he checked with ColoRail sources to make sure that he was “on the right track” with contemporary issues.
ColoRail Meeting Fall 2019, Recap

by Phyllis Kane

The fall membership meeting of ColoRail was held on September 27, 2019 at Colorado State University, Fort Collins, in the Morgan Library building. Thank you to David Ramsay, Director of Strategic Relationships and Aaron Fodge, Parking & Transportation Services, Alternative Transportation Manager at CSU for hosting our group and providing meeting space and food for the day.

Mayor of Fort Collins, Wade Troxell, offered our welcoming remarks. Dean Klingner, Interim Executive Director of Planning, Development and Transportation in Fort Collins spoke to the community, social and economic impacts of passenger rail. He stated that in Fort Collins, 1/3 of the work population lives and stays in the city but 2/3 come in or leave Fort Collins daily.

Updates regarding passenger rail in Colorado:

• Spencer Dodge, Public Liaison for the Front Range Passenger Rail Commission described the next steps in engaging stakeholders in the process up and down the Front Range.

• CDOT representatives Steve Sherman, Resident Engineer/Project Manager and Chris Enright, Project Engineer spoke about potential in the Burnham Yard location in Denver where 50,000 automobile trips occur daily.

• Harry Safstrom, Vice Pres. ColoRail, spoke about the success of the Winter Park Express ski train in 2019 and hopes for 2020.

• Jim Souby, Commissioner Front Range Passenger Rail updated the group regarding current status of Southwest Chief and Amtrak long distance travel.

Attendees stated they appreciated updates on current transportation issues and the conversation regarding opportunities and solutions for future needs.

Research Paper High Speed Rail

By Nancy McCaffrey

Matt Bone is a student of UCCS and Univ of CO Boulder Graduate Program MENV (Masters of the Environment). When he was a student and intern at UCCS, he wrote a 45+ page research paper on the “Benefits of High Speed Rail for Colorado Springs.” It was posted on the UCCS website for a year. He also presented his research to the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments in 2018 as well as at a forum of colleges at Colorado College. In an effort to reach millennials, Professor Daphne Greenwood, UCCS Economic Professor, and ColoRail Board Member Nancy McCaffrey thought of creating an intern position at UCCS to research ‘passenger rail’. Prof. Greenwood is a former CO legislator. Involving students and colleges in the effort to promote Front Range Passenger Rail is a positive step for future CO transportation.
Colorado Passenger Rail Association
P.O. Box 9613
Denver, CO 80209

Join ColoRail!

Please Enclose check/money order
or enroll online

Name: ________________________________
Address: ____________________________________________________________
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