



Arizona Rail Passenger Review

June 2009

Our 25th Anniversary – See page 3

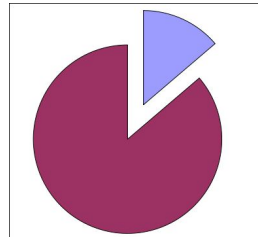
An Official Publication of the
ARIZONA RAIL PASSENGER ASSOCIATION

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METRO ridership report

April 2009	Passengers	Revenue Miles	Psgs/ Revenue Mile
METRO light rail ridership	37,386 14.6%	9,646 8.15%	3.88
All Bus Ridership	216,325 85.3%	102,881 91.43%	2.10
Total Weekday Valley Metro Ridership	253,711	112,527	

As the pie chart to the right amply illustrates, the **single METRO train route carries nearly one-seventh of all transit trips**, compared to the sixty-three local bus routes plus all the circulator buses and express bus routes. Light rail attracts twice as many passengers per mile as buses do overall. The only bus with higher per-mile ridership is #29, Thomas Road. In a few months, METRO will be conducting onboard surveys to ask how many rail riders are new to transit, but ARPA members who are frequent riders say the percentage is high.



The one LRT line, 41% above ridership projections, carries 1/7 of all Valley Metro riders, compared to dozens of bus routes.

Daily Service on Sunset Corridor?

A long-standing ARPA position, that long-distance trains should be run daily, took a step closer to realization at the May 2 annual meeting of the Rail Passenger Association of California and Nevada (RailPAC) in Los Angeles. Amtrak Interim President and CEO Joseph Boardman and longtime and well-respected Vice President Brian Rosenwald laid out the company's new direction.



Mr. Boardman spoke of Amtrak as momentarily feeling like "the dog that caught the car" with the recent stimulus funds – "What do you do now?" Yet, plans are moving quickly, with the \$1.3 billion already 70% obligated. He said "a healthier Amtrak includes a better relationship with



Union Pacific RR "Sunset Corridor" Legislative-Public Relations Train at Harrison St. Yard, Phoenix, Ariz., March 5, 2009

Union Pacific officials have lately increased their public involvement profile in Arizona. This executive train made a trip to both Phoenix and Tucson in order to foster meetings between UPRR officials and Arizona's Governor Jan Brewer, as well as other high profile mayors, legislators and business leaders in Central and Southern Arizona. *Photo, Marc Pearsall*

Trains to Ride in Arizona

- 
 ✓ The Grand Canyon Railway offers daily roundtrips from Williams to the Grand Canyon. **1-800-THE-TRAIN** or www.thetrain.com
- 
 ✓ Verde Canyon Railroad travels not just to, but *through* Arizona's "other" scenic canyon, with special trains including the "Grape Train Escape" wine tasting excursion and Tequila Starlight rides. Generally daily except Tuesdays (and some Mondays) **1-800-320-0718** or www.verdecanyonrr.com
- 
 ✓ Arizona's newest passenger train, the Copper Spike, makes multiple daily trips from Globe. On hiatus for the summer, to resume in November. **1-866-979-7245** or <http://www.copperspike.com/>
- ✓ Old Pueblo Trolley, Tucson. www.oldpueblotrolley.org
- ✓ METRO Rail, Phoenix. www.valleymetro.org

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employees" and the May 1st employee appreciation day included due back pay.

Touching on the Obama Administration's high speed rail plans, Boardman explained systems like the French TGV only occurred after the existing networks were at capacity. America does not yet have a "high speed rail culture ... we are not ready for orphan systems" that do not have appropriate feeder networks including bus, streetcar, subway, and commuter trains. Boardman described a high speed network emerging through incremental improvements, using improved track such as "Class 6 at 110 MPH," and even using (relatively common) Class 5 mainline freight tracks at 90 MPH. And, "I don't buy the argument you can't mix passenger trains and freight at 110 MPH." This from the man whose immediate previous job as Amtrak's interim president and CEO was the administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration, whose primary role is that of the safety of America's railroads.

Concluding his remarks, Boardman characterized the following discussion of revising Sunset route services as a "new way of thinking, not an announcement... we recognize the need to reconnect Florida (to the West)."

Replying to questions from the audience, Mr. Boardman indicated there would be a Viewliner (single-level, as used on eastern trains) equipment order, of all types (Coach, Sleeper, and Diner); that "Diner Lite" never worked, and it would be eliminated this year; and that "we will have a long distance fleet plan." He said Amtrak had begun to study new options for serving Phoenix, but that Las Vegas service would be further in the future.

Later, VP Brian Rosenwald spoke of several issues; of particular interest was the Sunset Route realignment proposal which is "within range of demonstrating that added revenue from daily service will offset the additional costs. Our only bias in developing this proposal is that there be daily service" with a primary factor being the highest projected revenue segment via Dallas to Chicago. He was clear this is all still a proposal, subject to further input, not an announcement.

As the proposal stands now, there would be a daily train operating from Los Angeles via San Antonio and Dallas to Chicago, with a cross-platform transfer to a daily train operating from San Antonio via Houston to New Orleans. Running time between Los Angeles and Chicago may be up to eight hours less than today's Sunset Limited/Texas Eagle schedule. There would be daily through-car service with sleepers and full diner between Los Angeles and Chicago by extending the daily service between Chicago and San Antonio and tri-weekly service west of San Antonio of the Texas Eagle on the Sunset Limited route to a single train on the full Los Angeles-Chicago route, and dropping the two existing names of the Texas Eagle and Sunset Limited.

Departure from Los Angeles under this scenario would be closer to the Sunset Limited's traditional one, perhaps 10:30 P.M., in order to offer better times at Maricopa (for Phoenix) and San Antonio. The desert Maricopa station "will do for the moment" until a better plan for serving Phoenix can be devised. Estimate a 9:30 P.M. arrival at New Orleans from the west. Also, by moving to the traditional departure time of the Sunset Limited in Los Angeles eastbound, this re-establishes the connection with the Coast Starlight with its "strong revenue potential" because of the matrix effect. Further, a single onboard services crew could operate between LA and Chicago, thus simplifying operations.

To describe this new service, the "Sunset Limited" name might be shelved in favor of, potentially, the "Golden State." When equipment permits, Mr. Rosenwald was hopeful through cars between New Orleans and Los Angeles could be added. -- *Bill Lindley reporting*

Ponderings on Arizona Service

Thoughts by ARPA's John Gale

Could daily Amtrak service on the Sunset Route (be it a new "Golden State" or whatever) be the catalyst for the beginning of Phoenix – Tucson service?

NOTE: **Times shown are ONLY for illustrative purposes** at this point. No calculations have been made.

John Gale's Suggestion: Eastbound (read down)			Station	John Gale's Suggestion: Westbound (read up)		
Daily Connecting Service	Daily <i>Golden State</i>	Daily Connecting Service		Daily Connecting Service	Daily <i>Golden State</i>	Daily Connecting Service
	From L.A.				To L.A.	
	Dp 4:00am		Yuma		Dp 2:00am	
Dp 7:00am	↓	Dp 5:30pm	Phoenix	Ar 1:00pm	↑	Ar 10:30pm
↓	Dp 7:00am	↓	Maricopa	↑	Dp 10:00pm	↑
Ar 9:30am →	Dp 10:00am →	Ar 7:00pm →	Tucson	→ Dp 10:30am	→ Dp 7:30pm →	Dp 8:00pm
	To CHI (NOL)				From CHI (NOL)	

A single push-pull consist, based in Phoenix, would make two round-trips daily, permitting connections in all directions at Tucson. There would be 3 cars plus baggage, with provision for 4th car (additional coach); checked baggage service at Phoenix and Tucson for connecting long distance passengers. Perhaps a full baggage car could be partitioned in half, the portion next to the coaches being turned into bike rack space, with access to the adjacent coach; bicyclists could load and unload their own bikes.

Emphasis here is on getting something started as quickly as possible. Improvements continue after service started.

Initial stations on the Arizona Rail Service would include:

- Phoenix Union Station
- Sky Harbor Airport (44th St.)
Transfer to METRO, shuttle to airport terminals
- Tempe (former Amtrak platform) (Mill Ave. METRO)
- Coolidge (former Amtrak platform location)
- Tucson (existing Amtrak station)
(NOTE: Second platform track needs to be restored)

Possible additional stations to be added after service begins (within 1 year):

- Eloy/Picacho (Milligan Road)
- Gilbert (existing Park-N-Ride location)
- A Northwest Tucson/Marana stop (Orange Grove, Cortaro, Tangerine, and Marana are all possible locations).

This service would work well with Phoenix area commuter rail service. Notice how the schedule times create the need for "windows" for a passenger train(s) around the peak commute time in Phoenix – East Valley corridor.

Connecting service to Wickenburg and Buckeye, with a paralleling service Phoenix – Queen Creek, or possibly Florence, with additional stops would mesh with this service, expanding the matrix. Initially the service is somewhat slow and more than one transfer may be needed, but it's a good start. A fairly good connection to METRO is available at Tempe.

(ARPA members are encouraged to email azrail@azrail.org with their thoughts and suggestions – your involvement will help us finalize a full proposal.)

City of Surprise Buys Land for Commuter Rail Station

According to the *Arizona Republic* (29 May 2009), the City of Surprise has purchased over 3 acres on the southwest corner of Grand Avenue and Bell Road, adjacent to the BNSF tracks, for a park-and-ride and future commuter train station. At first, express buses to Phoenix and Scottsdale will use the facility. The *Republic* quotes Randy Overmyer, city senior transportation planner: "city officials also see securing the property as a 'good positioning exercise' if a commuter railway does come in within the next 5 to 10 years." The Town of Gilbert and the City of Chandler a few

years ago both built new park-and-ride lots similarly along the (UPRR) railroad tracks.

Tucson Orders Streetcars

The City of Tucson in late May ordered seven modern streetcars from Oregon Iron Works (www.oriron.com), the first American company in sixty years to manufacture one. The company, in Clackamas, Oregon, has received orders both from Portland and now Tucson. The company, founded in 1944, builds bridges and military patrol craft; and especially because of "Buy American" requirements, could capture a fair percentage of orders from the dozens of cities across the country considering streetcar service.

ARPA at 25

ARPA President Rob Bohannon

I remember as if it were yesterday receiving a phone call from George Loulan asking me if I would be interested in joining the "Rail Passenger Association of the Southwest." It was the fall of 1977 and I was living in Tucson at the time. RPAS, as we called it, included the territory of what was then NARP Region XI--the states of Arizona and New Mexico, and the El Paso area of Texas.

The regional composition of the organization gave Arizona members an opportunity to meet rail advocates from New Mexico and West Texas--not to mention a convenient excuse to make weekend Amtrak trips to Albuquerque or Deming. However, the sheer distances and expense involved eventually made it appear more sensible to split the organization into state associations and the Arizona Rail Passenger Association was formed in 1984.

Meanwhile, I had moved back to Phoenix in January of 1980, just in time to experience the "two weeks of Glory" of the Hattie B.--the emergency commuter train service that was implemented in response to Salt River flooding having closed nearly all of the roadway bridges between Phoenix and the East Valley. The Hattie B. was a resounding success--scientific surveys conducted at the time indicated that riders would like to see the service continue after the bridges were reopened. Moreover, a majority of Hattie B. riders would be willing to pay as much as double the \$1.00 fare charged each way. In response, ARPA President George Loulan was the first to propose a light rail line connecting downtown Phoenix to Tempe and Mesa, along an alignment closely paralleling that currently operated by METRO.

In 1990, ARPA hosted a display of commuter rail equipment from GO Transit (Toronto) that had been arranged by Bombardier predecessor UTDC and Electro-Motive Division. In 1991 and 1993, ARPA hosted "Phoenix Union Station Days" events that drew thousands of visitors to tour Amtrak and historic equipment displays and learn about our vision for future passenger rail service.

Throughout the 80s and 90s Amtrak--and NARP--both assured us that daily Sunset Limited service was "just around the corner." Then, in September 1995, Number One

derailed at Hyder west of Phoenix, killing an Amtrak employee and injuring dozens of others in what remains Arizona's most notable unsolved act of terrorism. Southern Pacific and Amtrak announced that the Sunset would be re-routed through Maricopa, and Phoenix's last Sunset was June 2, 1996--13 years ago.

I have often compared ARPA to the theme of the Barbara Mandrell hit "I Was Country When Country Wasn't Cool." Well, we were "Rail" when "Rail wasn't cool." All these years, we have "kept the faith" and now our patience is beginning to be rewarded. METRO light rail is the huge success we told people it would be; Tucson has ordered streetcars for its system; and ARPA members are active participants in citizens' stakeholder groups advising area commuter rail studies. Once again, the possibility of daily Amtrak service through Southern Arizona has arisen. This time, somehow, Amtrak's interest--as expressed by senior members of Amtrak management themselves--seems more convincing.

A significant ARPA milestone this year was-at long last-the approval of our 501(c)3 application by the IRS. As the economy improves and corporate giving returns to normal levels, this designation should help us raise funds. We would like to develop collateral for educational use-to explain the similarities and differences of light rail and commuter rail, for example, or to teach the importance of developing a regional rail network in Arizona. I want to take this opportunity to thank the many members who have stuck with us, our faithful Executive Director, Judy Eisenhower, and our loyal board members! The next twenty-five years should prove to be exciting times for Passenger Rail in Arizona!

New Mexico Rail Runner Strong

According to an April 26 article in *New Mexican* by Julie Ann Grimm, ridership on the RailRunner in March was "115,812 and that is up from 99,511 in December when it was free for Santa Fe County folks. On-time service has steadily increased from 85% in December to 98%... While daily commuters are the bread and butter, many folks are going from Santa Fe to Albuquerque for an outing and vice versa from Albuquerque. Shop owners in both cities are reporting increased business. Schools are taking field trips both ways. There are midday scheduling gaps, and officials are now worried that trains will be overcrowded this summer. It is very clear that this venture is a huge success and that more service is needed, especially midday and on Sunday..."

BNSF: Passenger Rail Principles

Matthew K. Rose, Chairman, President and CEO, BNSF Railway Company, this April testified before the House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, for a hearing on the future of High Speed Rail, Intercity Passenger Rail, and Amtrak. Selected quotes:

"As a freight railroad CEO, a member of the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission, and an early supporter of the One Rail coalition, I've had a lot of opportunity to think about what our country's vision for passenger rail ought to be.

"I, too, have traveled to Europe and Asia and appreciate the perspective of those in the United States who ask why Americans can't have what they have -- 200 mph corridor service connecting dense population centers which, themselves, have efficient regional transit distribution. However, as I discovered in my work on the Commission, while many passenger rail advocates and policy makers at all levels of government are intercity passenger rail advocates, they are somewhat skeptical of this vision. Their appetite is for a more incremental approach of improving existing intercity passenger rail service...

"The Commission clearly called for the kind of investment needed to support passenger trains operating at the highest speeds in sealed, passenger-only, separated right of way... this is a trillion-dollar funding proposition. Such a system may be beyond our current means...

"Importantly, the Commission report also specifically recognizes the contribution that less-than-highest speed passenger trains in corridors of fewer than 500 miles can make to the Nation's transportation system. Existing Amtrak service outside the Northeast Corridor generally achieves 79 mph on freight rail tracks. Public investments made to enhance reliability of this service can yield tremendous on-time performance reliability benefits, which is often all that is needed to successfully satisfy demand for passenger service in certain markets...

"Speaking as a freight railroad CEO, it is possible to increase speeds from 79 mph to 90 mph on tracks that both freight and passenger trains use. Upgrades would include the implementation of Positive Train Control (PTC), which I'll touch on again shortly. Track would need to be upgraded from Class IV to Class V track... At sustained speeds in excess of 90 mph, passenger train operations will need to be segregated from freight operations on separate track...

"In sum, the Commission's model for intercity passenger rail in this country is to develop the highest speed rail where feasible and economically viable, coupled with more reliability for 79-90 mph passenger service in other key corridors where it will continue to make sense from a density, utilization and cost perspective. We believe that this vision could finally generate the public support and political will necessary for a successful passenger rail system in this country...

"In closing, my recommendations to you are two-fold:

1. Observe the principles for passenger/freight joint use of rail right of way that the Commission recognized, and be realistic about the kind of passenger service that can be achieved, given the limitations of joint use. Generally, those limitations are based on nothing less

than the laws of physics and the consequences that flow from them.

2. Develop a realistic vision for passenger service that works for all stakeholders – including freight railroads and the nation’s shippers – and fully fund it.

“It took \$4-a-gallon gas to show us that passenger train options are important to providing a fuel efficient alternative to the highway for millions of Americans. In addition, though, a comprehensive passenger rail program may shift a portion of the congested short-medium haul air traffic to rail, expand employment in the passenger rail industry and engender vibrant economic development around these networks. The choice to fund passenger rail over the next 20 years can have as significant an impact on this country as funding Air Traffic Control and runways have had in the last 20 years...” [end quote]

Here in Arizona, BNSF gave a brief presentation to ADOT at a recent meeting of the Stakeholders for Commuter Rail, including these points:

- BNSF is willing to cooperate on passenger rail studies and provide state and local officials with information
- Any passenger operation or service change must not negatively affect freight customers or our ability to serve them
- BNSF must retain operating control of rail facilities used for passenger service. All dispatching, maintenance and construction must be done under the control of BNSF
- Studies must reflect actual operating conditions and cost structures
- BNSF will not incur any liability for passenger operations that it would not have but for those operations

High Speed Rail Projects Update

By Noel T. Braymer, RailPAC

There is a fascination by most people with speed, but it is a mistake to believe ridership is driven only by speed. If speed was the principal factor, airlines would all be flying supersonic planes non-stop to every destination. Of course, this isn’t true. Airlines are flying slower today than they did 40 years ago with fewer direct flights. Costs are important to carriers, speed and direct service is very expensive for all transportation modes. The most important factor in ridership is service to as many markets as possible using the least amount of equipment. That is why most airlines have hubs for connections and anything shipped on Fed Ex goes through their hub in Memphis.

To increase the size of a train’s travel market, one can add more stations, extend the route of a service, or improve connections to other trains. Expanding the market of corridor trains will do more for ridership than raising speeds. On the Northeast Corridor, there are several ways to

expand the existing market; extending corridor services to Virginia is one way to start. Improving connections at Philadelphia to Harrisburg and Pittsburg to NEC trains is another. Running some NEC trains past New York to Albany, Buffalo even Toronto would create whole new markets. Also untapped is Long Island: even though Amtrak has a major yard on Long Island, it has no stations there. Amtrak could share a commuter station to make easier connections on Long Island than now made at Penn Station. Amtrak could also extend Empire Corridor trains to Long Island and use those for the connections. The same ideas hold true elsewhere. Chicago is a natural for connections to other corridor trains. But trains could also be extended from Detroit-Chicago to St. Louis-Kansas City, to Minneapolis-Milwaukee-Chicago-Indianapolis-Cincinnati, ...

Since the 2009 Stimulus Bill with its \$8 billion for High Speed Rail, there have been several developments:

California

The California High Speed Rail Authority is talking about starting construction by 2011, with the first segment from Bakersfield to Merced operational by 2015. Between 2018 and 2020, the CHSRA plans to have service running between Anaheim and San Francisco. Running times of 2 hour 38 minutes from San Francisco to Los Angeles are planned. The next route would be service to San Diego via Riverside with the last route to Sacramento by 2030.

Virgin Airlines is also a major passenger rail carrier in Britain and has expressed interest in getting the operating contract for the California High Speed Rail service.

Controversy has arisen over complaints by the CHSRA that current plans for Caltrain’s extension to the San Francisco Transbay Terminal will not be able to also to handle CHSRA’s expected 12 trains an hour service into San Francisco. These last minute objections have upset years of planning for the Transbay Terminal extension. Union Pacific Railroad is objecting to any High Speed Passenger service on rights of ways used by its freight trains. And some local neighborhoods are starting protest against HSR service in their back yard.

New York

On March 9th, New York Governor Patterson with Senator Schumer of New York announced a \$10 Billion project to develop High Speed Rail for New York State. Most of this will be on the “Empire Corridor” from New York City to Albany and Buffalo (the old New York Central mainline following the Erie Canal). Governor Patterson talked about raising speed in 3 to 5 years to 110 miles an hour and up to 150 mph within three years after that.

Planning for intercity rail upgrades has been ongoing for years in New York State. Over 10 years ago, the state paid to rebuild 1970’s-era Turbo trains for running speeds of 125 mph on the Empire Corridor. Amtrak canceled that project. There has been no announcement what 150-mph capable equipment New York plans to use now.

Chicagoland

Also on March 9th, Senator Durbin of Illinois and Illinois Governor Paige at Chicago Union Station made a pitch for stimulus funding to upgrade the Chicago-St. Louis corridor to 110 mile per hour operations. Chicago will be at the center for several Mid-West rail corridors eligible for High Speed Rail upgrade funding.

Northeast Corridor

Amtrak is working on plans to upgrade the Northeast Corridor and the cutting the running time of the Acela trains from New York to Washington from the current 2 hours 45 minutes to 2 hours 15 minutes with track and catenary upgrades. Amtrak is also looking to extend the electrification of the Northeast south to Richmond and beyond. Amtrak is also planning to overhaul the Acela equipment. It is ironic that ridership and revenue for the Acela are down, while ridership and revenues for the Long Distance trains continue to grow.

Washington State

One item in the bad news department: the State of Washington recently eliminated its entire 6 person Passenger Rail branch to "save money". This small group oversaw state supported Amtrak corridor trains between Eugene-Portland-Seattle-Vancouver. This action could jeopardize the future of these trains and prevent the Pacific Northwest from qualifying for federal funds to upgrade trackage for these trains.

Simple Ways to Improve Amtrak

J. Bruce Richardson, United Rail Passenger Alliance

Amtrak, finally, after three and a half decades, seems to be getting serious about the Sunset Limited. Word is coming the Sunset will become a daily train between Los Angeles and New Orleans. Still no word, however, about much needed service east of New Orleans. Amtrak still has not made a decision about this service; a congressionally mandated study is underway concerning restoring the Sunset Limited or a replacement service for it. We expect to hear about a completed study sometime soon. In the mean time, Amtrak is still sticking to its story that no one is interested in riding this train east of *New Orleans even though a full 46% of the Sunset's revenue used to originate east of New Orleans.*

There is some good news. Amtrak has restored sleeping car service on the Lake Shore Limited between Boston and Albany, New York. This restores a sleeping car service, which was missing several years. Miraculously, Amtrak says it can make money from this on-again sleeping car. Wow; Amtrak has figured that out. **Does that mean Amtrak also acknowledges what the rest of us have known for decades: that most sleeping car service on Amtrak everywhere in the country makes money, too?**

Just a quick note **about Amtrak's \$1.3 billion in stimulus money.** Amtrak has a plethora of documents on www.amtrak.com detailing how this money is being spent all over the country (That translates to how the money left over from not being spent on the Northeast Corridor is being divided up by the rest of the country.). Lots of good projects included in here, mostly for ADA compliance, and lots of new signage around the country which will help solidify Amtrak's image. A lot of projects which have desperately needed to be done, such as the restoration and painting of the canopies over the train platforms at Tampa Union Station are included here. Most of this stuff would have never come out of Amtrak's normal operating or free federal monies capital budgets, so it's good to have the stimulus money to get these things done.

However, probably the most important expenditure of the money is for the restoration and rehabilitation of out-of-service passenger cars. On Amtrak's web site, we are told there are 1,519 passenger cars owned by Amtrak, plus 469 locomotives, 80 Auto Train vehicle carriers and 101 baggage cars. Amtrak operated state-owned equipment includes 136 railroad passenger cars and 20 locomotives.

So, if Amtrak says it owns 1,519 passenger cars, less the 1,346 cars it says it has on its active daily roster, **then there are 173 pieces of equipment sitting around in the weeds somewhere on a wreck line.** In the stimulus package, Amtrak says it will return 21 long distance cars from wreck status to operating status, and a mixture of 60 Amfleet low-level cars (a very few long distance cars, but the vast majority are NEC cars) back to service. **This totals 81 cars, which still leaves 92 cars sitting in the weeds. Yes, some of those cars are most likely beyond repair, but not all 92 of them.**

When will we see these other cars returned to service? How much of a priority will this be for Amtrak?

Of the current 1,346 active cars on the daily roster, there is a daily requirement of 1,072 cars for use (Yes, trainlines and consists have been cut that much.). In late February, there were 1,120 cars ready for service, which is a good improvement for Amtrak. **That leaves 274 cars (a high percentage) either as spares, or in the shops being worked on.**

So, let us say Amtrak is improving its shop performance, and will have a lower amount of cars in the back shop at any one time, and more cars available for service, plus the new Viewliner series sleepers, diners, and baggage cars it is ordering.

What could be done with all of this equipment, right now? Well, the Sunset could easily go daily between Los Angeles and New Orleans, as could the Cardinal between New York and Chicago.

Either the Pioneer, Desert Wind, or North Coast Limited between Chicago and the West Coast could be restored. (Only one, not all three.)

Some type of short daily train between New Orleans and Florida could be added to replace the east end of the Sunset Limited, and this train could include a full consist of cars, including sleepers. Other consists could be beefed back up.

All it takes is for Amtrak management to have willpower.

Remember, with the current inventory of cars (prior to several wrecks, from which equipment is still awaiting rebuilds), all the existing Amtrak network was operated, plus the Desert Wind, Pioneer, and Sunset Limited east of New Orleans, and most trains had longer consists.

It's not about the money. It's about Amtrak management wanting to be clever enough and work hard enough to make this happen, and the Amtrak Board of Directors to be asking questions as to why this isn't happening.

Passenger Trains make money, but Railroads need Freight to be Profitable.

Editorial by Noel T. Braymer

The construction of the Interstate Highway System, starting in the 1950's, caused dramatic changes in where we Americans lived, worked, and shopped. During this time the new highways almost put the railroads out of business; their construction created "Suburbia" and with it urban sprawl. Urban rail transit declined, even disappeared in many cities during this time. Not only was the new housing far from train stations, but the new shopping centers and work places were impossible to reach by rail, on outlying land.

An example is Orange County, California. In 1950, this mostly rural county near Los Angeles had a population of about 200,000. When Disneyland was built in Orange County in the mid-1950's, the site was on cheap farm land near ramps for the brand new Santa Ana Freeway. When this highway first opened it had 4 lanes total -- 2 in each direction. Almost immediately, a third lane each way was needed to handle the traffic. The population of Orange County today is almost 3 million.

From the beginning, freight has always been the main business of American Railroads. Passenger Trains generally are profitable, but not as much as freight. In many cases, passenger service was mostly used to develop land owned by the railroads. The railroads up until the 1940's had enough freight business to justify high capacity rail lines to handle large numbers of passenger and freight trains. As the highways were built, the railroads quickly lost time sensitive, high value freight to trucks. New factories were not built near railheads. Furthermore, new natural gas and oil pipelines meant factories no longer needed the railroad for coal deliveries. By the 1950's, the railroads were fighting to stay in business, and had to cut costs. Railroad employment dropped from a million and a half in the 1940's to just over 200,000 today. Thousand of miles of unprofitable branch and secondary lines were abandoned.

The easiest way the railroads had of cutting costs was cutting back on its infrastructure. This meant in many cases deferred maintenance, pulling out tracks, switches, sidings, signaling, buildings or anything else they felt they could live without. The major obstacle to doing this was the Passenger Train for many railroads, for there was often public opposition to passenger service cutbacks. Freight trains often are not on a tight schedule and long trains didn't have to be run frequently. ***Good passenger service, on the other hand, requires a well maintained railroad -- which is expensive.*** This is particularly true of commuter and corridor rail service, which often are in areas without much freight business.

By the early 1970's, things for the railroads hit bottom with the bankruptcy of the PennCentral, which led to the formation of Amtrak. Even then, some railroads with long distance passenger trains refused to join Amtrak or joined reluctantly. Their reluctance wasn't because they loved their passenger trains, but because they questioned whether Amtrak would be greater evil than running their own passenger trains. ***The point is, railroads were not going out of business at this time because of passenger trains, but for lack of profitable freight to pay for the railroad infrastructure.***

The highways which were brand new 50 years are now literally falling apart. They are often jammed with traffic, and it isn't practical to build more lanes. There isn't enough money now to keep up with the repairs for the highways we have let alone to build new ones, especially in already-built-up areas.

Meanwhile, a double tracked railroad can carry more passengers and freight than a typical 10 lane urban highway. Many railroads have rights of way wide enough for up to 4 tracks. Upgrading and grade separating existing railroads is vastly more productive than trying to build more roads. California has started paying to upgrade the railroads to improve passenger service, which has also improved the railroads' freight service; and this process should continue to accelerate as more Federal rail upgrade funds become available. A faster railroad is a better railroad. This improves the productivity of the railroad by increasing capacity. Railroads will be able to run more time sensitive, high value freight at passenger train speeds, opening new markets for the railroads. There is plenty of land available for redevelopment near railroads which can supply new passengers and freight business.

Infrastructure is a major cost for society. In America, railroads are unique in having been expected to pay for their entire infrastructure. Trucks, airlines, ships and barges don't own and maintain roads, airports, harbors or canals. While passenger trains may never make enough money to pay for *all* their infrastructure costs, freight and passenger trains can operate together on a well maintained railroad; particularly when there is government support.

* * *

ARPA wishes to thank Paul Smith and Susan Bitter Smith for their assistance in providing office space for the Association and publishing this newsletter.



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