

To: The Honorable California High Speed Rail Authority  
February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016

**A New Plan Which Insures the Successful Completion of California's High Speed Rail.**

**Benefits of the Plan Will Result In:**

- \* Decreasing the construction cost by tens of billions of dollars
- \* Reducing the construction time by multiple number of years
- \* Increasing ridership & revenue receivables
- \* Minimizing safety concerns & liabilities

Last week I was impressed while reading a newspaper article about possible changes in construction plans for California High Speed Rail (HSR). It mentioned the possibility that upon completion of the initial segment in the San Joaquin Valley, the second segment will connect to the northern terminus of San Francisco, not south to Los Angeles. The reason being the major endeavor to construct the southern segment through the Tehachapi & San Gabriel Mountains. I feel that the California High Speed Rail Authority is wise to consider this idea of going north first.

While reading the EIR of the HSR project, I have learned of the countless challenges presented to engineers, geologists, planners, et al. to design an alignment through these treacherous mountains. The present design calls for boring of at least 16 miles of tunnels and 12 viaducts in the Tehachapi Mountains and up to 20 miles of tunnels in the San Gabriel Mountains. This represents a total of 36 miles of tunnels per track. Because this will be a double track system, the total tunnel mileage is doubled to a total of 72 miles. These two mountain ranges are part of the transverse ranges, which are unique in that they extend west to east. All other mountain ranges in North America extend north to south. This latitudinal range exists because of the numerous earthquake faults within these mountains. Unlike most mountain ranges, these ranges have both Vertical Strike Slip Faults that move the earth laterally, and Thrust Faults that move the earth vertically. The resulting geologic makeup is composed of Fractured Mixed Rock.

Tunnel Boring Machines (TBM) are the tool used to grind out the tunnels. Under ideal geologic conditions with good rock, limestone or chalk, these machines can bore 100'-200'/day. In fractured mixed rock the boring rate is closer to 10'-20'/day. It is also a possibility that the rock in these mountains is so hard that the only way through is blasting with dynamite. Based on preliminary estimates, to bore all of these tunnels will take 10-12 years (7 years alone to bore out a proposed 13.8 mile tunnel).

So, this Tehachapi-San Gabriel alignment will take a great deal of time to construct. Not only this, but depending on the percent grade of the tracks (tunnels), either 3.5% (shallower tunnels, slower trains) or 2.5% grade (deeper tunnels, faster trains), there is a question of constructing and using emergency escape routes, especially in the deeper tunnels. With earthquakes a real possibility in these mountains, this is a major factor that needs to be considered. Thus, the Tehachapi-San Gabriel alignment presents real safety issues, as well.

The cost of tunneling is very expensive. Depending on the type of rock and fracturing encountered, the tunneling cost could very well exceed 10-15 Billion dollars alone.

The final factor that must be considered is the final product delivered. Meaning, that because of the grade changes, the curves, the viaducts, and the whole topographic challenge, the resulting average of train speed will be affected to the point where the average speed will be 110 mph (220 mph for other segments).

The EIR for the HSR segment spells out the reasons that the California High Speed Rail Authority is wise to consider initially completing the northern segment to the Bay Area, before the southern route to Los Angeles. These transverse mountain ranges present many reasons related to geology, safety, construction time, economics, and decreased train speed, as to why a different alignment must be considered.

Charles R. Follette  
2103 Idaho Avenue  
Santa Monica, Calif.  
90403  
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Charles R. Follette

February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016

To: The Honorable California High Speed Rail Authority

A New Plan Which Insures the Successful Completion of California's High Speed Rail.

Benefits of the Plan will Result in:

- \* Decreasing the construction cost by tens of billions of dollars
- \* Reducing the construction time by multiple number of years
- \* Increasing Ridership & Revenue Receivables
- \* Minimizing safety concerns & liabilities

With the understanding that the statewide route must continue to connect Bakersfield to Los Angeles, I will now describe an alternative alignment that fulfills all four of the aforementioned benefits.

As I appraised the geographic situation, I now feel there is a realistic alignment that eliminates many of the difficulties presented by the Tehachapi-San Gabriel route. This alternative will allow HSR to expedite the completion of the system by many years.

Upon surveying a map of California I recommend that the Authority seriously look at a new alignment that takes the train west out of Bakersfield, not east

Yes, depart Bakersfield travelling Southwest to SR166, run parallel with SR166 through Maricopa, then past SR66, west through the Cuyama Valley. Now in the Los Padres National Forest we follow the Cuyama River past the Twitchell Reservoir into Santa Maria. With a station stop here, open up HSR to a whole new legion of passengers. People who will take HSR to Santa Maria with final destinations of Morrow Bay, Pismo Beach, San Luis Obispo, and San Simeon. As the train now heads south past tourist spots Buellton, Solvang, and Gaviota. From here the alignment is adjacent to the Pacific Ocean all the way to Oxnard. With station stops in Santa Barbara and either Ventura or Oxnard. Travelling through farmland to Simi Valley, the San Fernando Valley on to Los Angeles Union Station.

The only area along the whole of this alignment that will require topographic engineering, where none has been performed before, is the pass through the Los Padres National Forest along the Cuyama River. According to my map measurements area will have roughly 15 lineal miles of mountainous terrain. A lot of this can be navigated with cuts in the hillsides. I am sure that some tunneling will be required, but nothing compared to the Tehachapi-San Gabriel route. There is an existing, fully established alignment from Santa Maria all the way south to Union Station. There are two other areas along this alignment where elevation gain exists. The Gaviota Pass and the Santa Susanna Mountains. Both of these passes currently have developed railroad alignments running through them.

On the matter of lineal roadbed miles vs. time of travel, please note: When we compare the roadbed miles from Bakersfield to Los Angeles via Palmdale & Santa Clarita to the roadbed miles from Bakersfield to Los Angeles via Santa Maria, the Santa Maria route is about 95 more lineal miles. When we consider the travel time through the Transverse Ranges is 110 mph, vs. 220 mph. via Santa Maria—the difference in actual travel time is perhaps 15 minutes. (please note: I am arriving at my figures by measuring miles using the legend on my travel maps, it is not scientific, rather used for rough comparative purposes only. I'll leave the science up to you.)

As I mentioned, this new Bakersfield-Santa Maria-Los Angeles alignment will fulfill all four of the benefits pointed out at the beginning of this proposal.

\* In having an existing alignment running from Los Angeles to Santa Maria, even if a new pair of roadbeds needs to accommodate HSR requirements, there are no right of way or topographic mysteries. Negotiations with BNSF or UP are a lot easier than boring through Fractured Mixed Rock. The geologic challenge of the Los Padres should be child's play compared to the Tehachapi-San Gabriels. The bottom line of this is the savings of literally tens of billions of dollars.

\* Because of the features & advantages described above, the resulting construction time for the entire segment from Bakersfield to Union Station will be reduced by a multitude of years, if not at least a decade

\* Ridership & Revenues will increase significantly on this alignment. This opens up a whole new clientele of travelers. Tourists, residents, businesspeople, and day travelling sightseers will board this train. This route will make a journey to the Central Coast so pleasant. It will take students to the University of California at Santa Barbara, Cal State Channel Islands, and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and even Cal State Bakersfield. It will take vacationers to Pismo Beach, Morrow Bay, San Simeon, and Big Sur. It will take many families from the Central Valley to the coast on hot summer days.

When we consider the population of Ventura County, Santa Barbara County, and San Luis Obispo Counties to total around 1.5 million people, this outweighs the population of Tehachapi, Lancaster, Palmdale, and Santa Clarita by manyfold. Yes, needless to say this alignment will significantly increase revenues for HSR.

\* Of course with the greatly reduced tunneling and the decreased threat of earthquakes, this route is immensely safer.

I conclude my presentation in hoping that you, the California High Speed Rail Authority will take to heart and recommend that a full EIR be implemented to study this new alternative for HSR travels from Bakersfield to Union Station.

--Oh, and by the way, while this EIR is being conducted, you may have decided to construct the second segment from Merced to the north.

Charles R. Follette  
2103 Idaho Avenue  
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Telephone: 310-395-8245



**Kern4HMF**

**Ready to go today...**

# Kern County Heavy Maintenance Facility Ready to go today...

California High Speed Rail Authority asked for...<sup>†</sup>

TODAY, Kern County offers...

A large area for a Heavy Maintenance Facility

1

Two locations, each at least three times larger than necessary, strategically located along the proposed HSR mainline.

Land that won't cost a lot of money

2

One site that is being offered for free  
A second site with only five land owners willing to sell.

A location that is ready to be developed

3

Two locations that are ready to go.\* (see below)

A site in the correct location along the HSR route for both the IOS and the final system

4

Two sites near the southerly terminus of the IOS and central to the ultimate system.

A community with people who know how to work on machines

5

Kern County's two major industries, oil and agriculture, provide a work force experienced in machinery. Our institutions of higher learning and public schools are preparing students for HMF employment needs.

A place that falls well within Environmental Considerations

6

Both Kern County sites fit well within all of the desired Environmental Considerations: no right-of-way relocation; no historic, biological or contamination issues; industrial adjacent land use.

A community that supports the Heavy Maintenance Facility

7

Kern County welcomes the HMF through a broad reaching coalition, Kern4HMF, which includes associations, organizations, businesses and leaders from every industry in the region.

## \* Sites Ready to go -

New interchange and roadway improvements along 7th Standard Road  
New Shafter Rail terminal adjacent to the site  
New heavy industrial center at the Paramount Logistics Park  
New high speed fiber optic network, with trunk line connection  
New solar power facility  
New airport terminal at Meadows Field  
Planned growth area with jobs to housing balance

## † Documents:

Terminal and Heavy Maintenance Facility Guidelines (August 2009)  
Summary of Requirements for O&M Facilities (March 2013)



February 5, 2016

Dan Richard, Chair  
California High-Speed Rail Authority  
770 L Street, Suite 1160  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Richard:

Kern4HMF is a coalition of local individuals, businesses, schools, and governments who strongly support the location of the high-speed train Heavy Maintenance Facility in Kern County.

The facility holds enormous potential to bring jobs and economic opportunity to our region and to the rest of California, and we believe Kern County offers the greatest advantages in cost, time, and logistics for the location of a high-speed train Heavy Maintenance Facility and associated operations. Kern County sites approved for consideration by the High-Speed Rail Authority offer many benefits:

- Located midway in high-speed rail system with closer proximity to major ports.
- Pre-zoned industrial with all transportation and utility infrastructure in place .
- Can be swiftly acquired at minimal or no cost; the Shafter site is a single-owner land donation, and the Wasco site has minimal and willing landowners.
- No costly and time-consuming environmental remediation in both Kern County sites.
- Included in CARB-approved Sustainable Community Strategy meeting state climate change goals.
- Streamlined local permitting process means construction can begin immediately.
- Experienced industrial trades workforce coupled with specialized apprenticeship programs.

Kern4HMF invites the members of the Authority to carefully review the considerable advantages that Kern County offers in siting a Heavy Maintenance Facility. We are committed to being strong allies and partners in this exciting and historic project.

Sincerely,

Kern4HMF Coalition



Continued on page 2



CSU Bakersfield

**BAKERSFIELD  
COLLEGE**



Mr. Jeff Morales  
Chief Executive Officer, CA High-Speed Rail Authority  
770 L Street, Suite 1160  
Sacramento, CA 95814

January 28, 2016

Dear Mr. Morales:

As the leading providers of quality education and advanced job training in Kern County, the institutions of California State University-Bakersfield, Bakersfield College and the Kern High School District collectively are committed to building a qualified workforce helping Kern County support a growing economy.

Kern County's commitment to molding job-ready candidates begins with the exemplary work of KHSD's Career and Technical Education (CTE) initiatives. Following a recent expansion of their industry-specific programs, KHSD currently features coursework preparing Kern residents for a variety of jobs.

In KHSD's Agricultural & Diesel Mechanics program, students learn how to repair mechanical and electrical equipment, read and interpret diagnostic test results and create proper inspection procedures. Students in KHSD's Metal Fabrication and Welding courses receive specialized training in cutting, grinding, and welding various metals using ARC, MIG, and TIG welding processes, all with a heavy emphasis on shop discipline and safety practices. In the district's Introduction to Skilled Trades course, students are introduced to numerous skills necessary for a variety of industrial trades.

Because the district's trailblazing CTE programs were assembled through close collaboration with local industry, they address the labor needs specific to each of Kern County's largest industry sectors. This strong partnership between education, industry and labor has driven KHSD decisions in program implementation and focus.

KHSD's CTE programs are also constructed to serve students preparing to immediately join the workforce following high school graduation as well as students pursuing post-secondary education. For job-ready students, CTE coursework not only provides essential skill sets, but industry-recognized certifications in everything from forklift operation and small engine repair to specialized fields like Mobile Air Conditioning Society (MACS) and Structural Welding Code certifications.

Meanwhile, many of the CTE courses held on KHSD campuses, as well as those through their Regional Occupational Center (ROC), offer Dual Enrollment or Articulated Credit, allowing students to easily transfer college credits from KHSD courses into post-secondary programs.

This commitment to top-flight career planning and technical training continues for students enrolled in one of California's oldest and most-recognized community college institutions, Bakersfield College. For more than 100 years, BC has fostered a reputation of strong academic infrastructure for industrial technical education, featuring exemplary facilities and current technologies.

The college's Engineering and Industrial Technology Department offers programs in machining, welding, electronics, and automotive, comprising a full course suite in fields commonly connected to Industrial Maintenance programs.

In 2015, Bakersfield College was selected to participate in a highly prestigious pilot program allowing 15 California Community Colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees in specialized career and technical fields feeding into regional high-demand, high-wage occupations. BC's Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Automation focuses on the application of electronics and computer technology to industrial automation systems, including instrumentation and control, industrial robotics, and process control systems. Also crafted with the incisive input of key regional business leaders, coursework focuses on local industries and teaches the design, operation and management of industrial automation system technologies such as petroleum production, food production, fabrication, and logistics.

Upper division curriculum in this program, slated to begin this fall, also includes cross-disciplinary coursework in industrial safety, project management, budgeting, leadership, entrepreneurship, facilities planning, and operations; as well as general education in technical writing, organizational psychology, and industrial ethics.

Bakersfield College and California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB), are in the last year of a \$6.2M U.S. Department of Education



Dr. Horace Mitchell  
President,  
CSU Bakersfield



Dr. Sonya Christian  
President,  
Bakersfield College



Dr. Bryon Schaefer  
Superintendent,  
Kern High School District

(ED) grant focused on rectifying Hispanic and low-income student underrepresentation in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) courses. The development of CSUB's engineering program in concert with initiatives funded by this grant has resulted in an astounding 86% increase in the number of BC STEM students transferring to CSUB, with most in the engineering majors.

Since introducing its engineering majors in 2011 and 2012, California State University, Bakersfield now boasts Electrical Engineering, Computer Engineering, and Engineering Sciences programs with a combined enrollment of over 650 students and growing. A new \$3.25M ED grant will not only increase CSUB's available engineering pathways to include Energy and Power Systems Engineering, but also create state-of-the-art facilities to support added instruction as well as faculty and student research. Funds have also been used to build infrastructure, including laboratories in Materials Science, Fluid Mechanics, Analog, Digital, and Power Electronics, Petroleum Engineering, Automation, Robotics, Digital Communication, Image Processing, and Digital Signal Processing.

CSUB also fosters cooperative opportunities with industry partners to enhance the educational opportunities of its students. CSUB, with generous support from Chevron, has the only fabrication lab (Fab Lab) in a California public institution. Additionally, CSR Corporation Ltd. is donating a High Speed Rail simulator to train students on the control of a high-speed rail train.

CSUB's Engineering Sciences curriculum consists of a Mechanical Engineering core of courses plus electives in fields such as Industrial, Petroleum, and Biosystems and Agriculture. The Electrical and Computer Engineering majors prepare students for fields ranging from Control Systems and Robotics, to Power Systems and Electronics. Additionally, CSUB has developed a course on High-Speed Rail Systems that covers a wide range of engineering topics related to high-speed rail and CSUB's Extended University Division provides high speed rail skills upgrade training to the trades. In its commitment to its service area, CSUB keeps a close eye on the changing needs of the community as it strives to serve local students as well as industry.

As potential future community partners of the California High-Speed Rail Authority, our three institutions stand ready to help serve your unique employment needs. We look forward to working with your agency to create the stellar workforce that would make any high-speed rail facility in Kern County a world-class example of California's pioneering spirit.

Dr. Horace Mitchell  
President, CSU Bakersfield

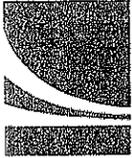
  
Signature

Dr. Sonya Christian  
President, Bakersfield College

  
Signature

Dr. Bryon Schaefer  
Superintendent, Kern High School District

  
Signature



**Kern Council  
of Governments**

January 21, 2016

Mr. Dan Richard, Chair  
California High-Speed Rail Authority  
770 L Street, Suite 1160  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support for Kern HMF Sites

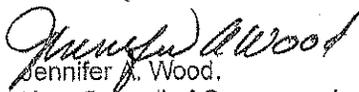
Dear Mr. Richard:

The Heavy Maintenance Facility (HMF) holds enormous potential to bring jobs and economic opportunity to our Valley, and we believe Kern County offers the greatest advantages in cost, time, and logistics for the location of a high-speed train Heavy Maintenance Facility and associated operations.

Our location midway in the high-speed rail system and close to major ports provides natural advantages, and the sites at Shafter and Wasco are pre-zoned industrial with all transportation and utility infrastructure in place. Both sites can be swiftly acquired at minimal or no cost, and no delays or costs will be incurred to remediate or mitigate environmental problems. Both sites are included in Kern County's Sustainable Community Strategy that has been confirmed by the California Air Resources Board to meet state climate change goals, and Kern County's streamlined permitting process means construction can begin the day that engineered plans are ready.

Kern COG invites the members of the Authority to carefully review the considerable advantages that Kern County offers in siting a Heavy Maintenance Facility. As the Regional Transportation Planning Agency, we are committed to partnering with the High-Speed Rail Authority in this exciting and historic project.

Sincerely,

  
Jennifer A. Wood,

Kern Council of Governments Chair

# STEEL WHEELS

PASSENGER RAIL IN CALIFORNIA AND THE WEST

ISSN 2325-629X

1ST QUARTER 2016

## IN THIS ISSUE:

President's Commentary

Don Phillips on new boss for Amtrak

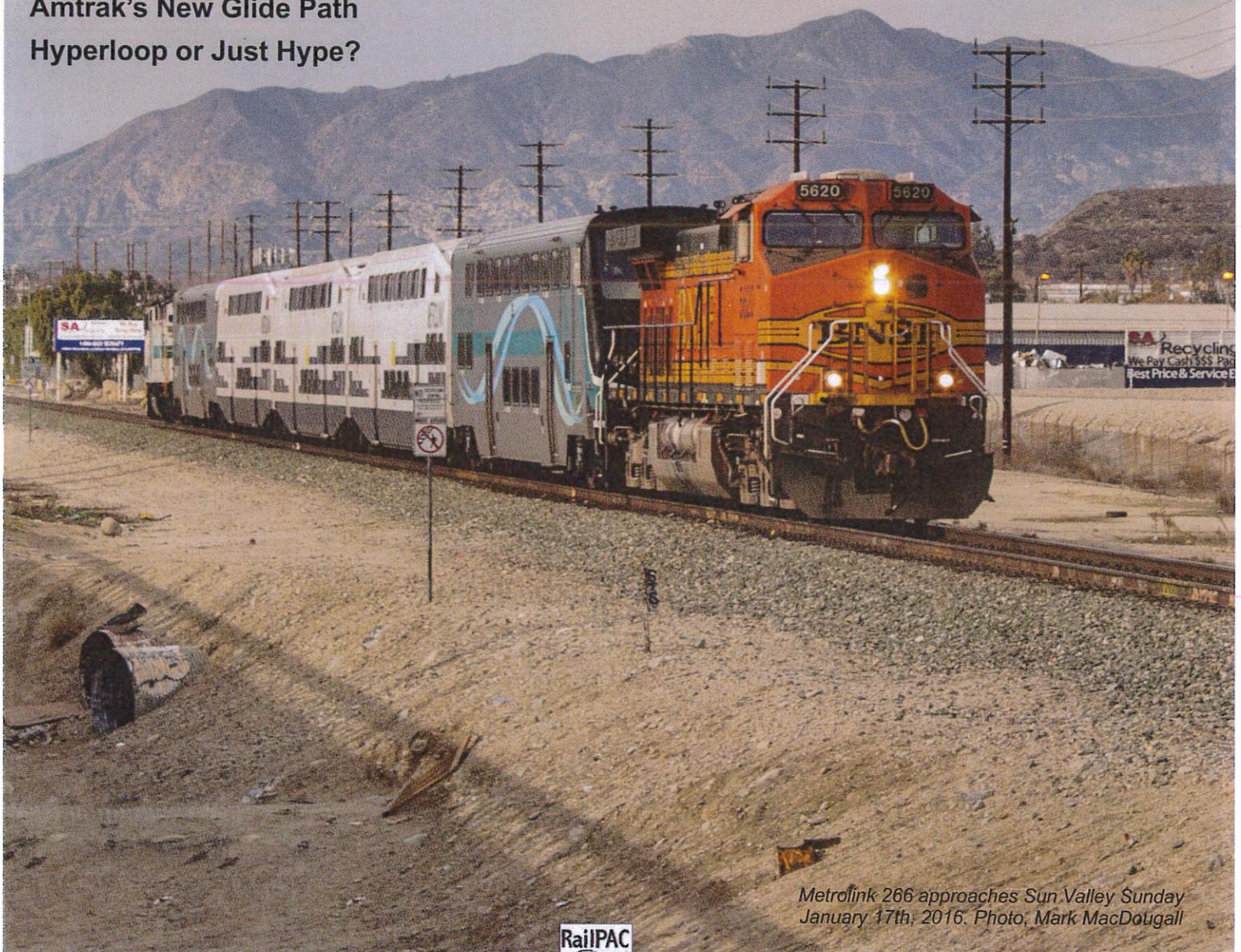
Amtrak Western Long Distance Trains

Nevada High Speed Rail in Las Vegas

S.F. City Hall Undermines DTX

Amtrak's New Glide Path

Hyperloop or Just Hype?



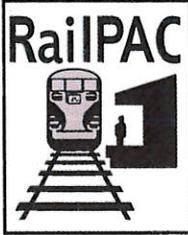
*Metrolink 266 approaches Sun Valley Sunday  
January 17th, 2016. Photo, Mark MacDougall*

PUBLICATION OF THE



RAIL PASSENGER ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA & NEVADA

# JOIN TODAY!



*YOU can make a difference!*

## Rail Passenger Association of California and Nevada

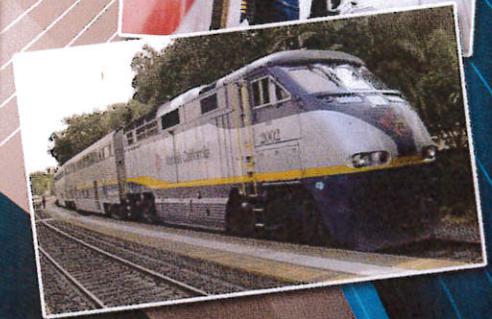
*A statewide membership organization working for the improvement and expansion of passenger rail service.*

Organized in 1977 by a group of passenger rail supporters, RailPAC has been working for over 30 years to establish a network of rail services that will provide service to and throughout California and Nevada.

**We need your support to improve and expand passenger rail service in the west!**

### Your Membership includes...

- **STEEL WHEELS:** Passenger Rail in California and the West
- Weekly newsletter and periodic email alerts
- Eligibility to attend our annual and regional meetings



### Representation and Advocacy

RailPAC presents a strong case to federal, state and local governments for reliable rail services from long-distance trains to commuter operations. Your organization gains strength with a growing membership base and members are invited to review and reflect on proposed changes in budgets, routes and service frequencies.

### Cooperative Alliances

RailPAC works closely with other rail organizations and transit advocacy groups.

### Volunteer Efforts

Members work with local rail passenger groups including Station Hosts at several Amtrak stations, attend and report on meetings of regional and transit boards and write letters to editors of newspapers. Members also submit personal reports of on-board service levels for distribution in Steel Wheels and the weekly e newsletter.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

about RailPAC and how you can help expand and improve passenger rail, visit our website [RailPAC.org](http://RailPAC.org) or fill out and return the form on the back page of this newsletter.

### RailPAC.org

Our website includes a complete listing of our current positions, as well as frequent articles and reports from around the state. Visit [RailPAC.org](http://RailPAC.org) to learn more about these and other regional passenger rail projects we support.

### Social Media

To receive the latest rail news from around the state:

- Follow us on Twitter:  
[www.twitter.com/RailPAC](http://www.twitter.com/RailPAC)
- Become a fan on Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/RailPAC](http://www.facebook.com/RailPAC)

### RAILPAC'S WORK AT-A-GLANCE

RailPAC is working with Amtrak, Caltrans and all agencies involved in achieving the following goals for expanding and extending safe and reliable rail passenger service. We support adequate funding for these services and vigorously promote them.

#### High Speed Rail

Build the High Speed Rail system together with electrification for Caltrain and Metrolink.

#### Coast Corridor

Reduce travel times. Continue to enhance onboard amenities. Restore connections to Long-Distance trains at Los Angeles Union Station. Reestablish the Coast Daylight between Los Angeles and San Francisco. New stations at Gilroy, Watsonville, Soledad and King City.

#### Pacific Surfliner Corridor

Campaign for run through tracks at Los Angeles Union Station to improve punctuality and travel times for Amtrak and Metrolink. Extend service to the Coachella and Imperial valleys.

#### Sunset Corridor

Introduce daily service and reestablish service to Florida.

#### San Joaquin Corridor

Increase service to and from Sacramento, as well as a new station in Elk Grove. Extend daytime and overnight service to Los Angeles.

#### Capitol Corridor

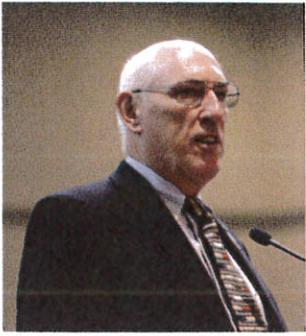
Increase frequency to hourly service between Sacramento and Oakland. Increase frequency of service to San Jose. Extend service to Reno and Redding and Salinas.

#### Las Vegas

Reestablish service between Los Angeles and Las Vegas.

RailPAC is a 501c3 Organization therefore all donations are tax deductible.





## President's Commentary

### About Our Cover

Metrolink continues to struggle to provide

on time service with its fleet of, by their own admission, under maintained locomotives. While the NTSB investigation continues into the implications of the derailment following the grade crossing collision last February in Oxnard, Metrolink has leased in BNSF locomotives to provide both additional horsepower and a safety zone in front of the suspect cab cars. Except that, as we go to press in late January, only two of the BNSF diesels are known to be in service. The rest of the trains still use the Rotem cab cars.

### RailPAC 2015 Finances

Thanks to member generosity and our continued frugality RailPAC's finances are stable and we have a modest reserve in the bank. (Any dues paid RailPAC member who would like a copy of our 2015 P and L and balance sheet should write to [info@railpac.org](mailto:info@railpac.org).) Our budget for 2016 includes more frequent visits to the State Capitol and to Washington DC, and upgrades to our electronic communications, as well as continued publication of a 16 page Steel Wheels magazine each quarter. Given the right candidates we are also considering paying stipends to local organizers, especially students, to help grow the organization and reach out to more people.

### The NIMBY Threat.

Key projects in the San Fernando Valley, double tracking of the mixed use Antelope Valley and Coast Main lines are

under threat from well organized groups of NIMBYs. I have written to the LACMTA Board and numerous state and local officials asking for their support. Most of the objections raised are not fact based, or raise issues such as oil trains which are outside the control of the passenger rail operators and LACMTA, the right of way owner.

### Letter to the Mayor

25th January, 2016

Hon. Mayor Eric Garcetti, Board Member  
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority  
One Gateway Plaza, Los Angeles, CA

### Essential Expansion of Capacity on Existing Railroad Rights of Way

Dear Mayor Garcetti:

*Los Angeles aspires to be a world class city. In the last 35 years we have seen major investments in public transportation infrastructure and we are slowly moving towards a transit system that has great utility for many residents. But there has been a serious omission regarding the northern San Fernando Valley where, other than minimal bus service and sporadic commuter and intercity trains the residents are forced to rely on private cars on congested highways.*

*There is one relatively low cost and easy to implement option that should have been instigated 25 years ago. Metrolink should progress from the archaic commuter pattern of service to being an all-day regional railroad, the equivalent of the light rail transit lines, but with a level of service commensurate with the needs of the community. Schedules and tickets should be integrated with local bus routes at key hubs such as Chatsworth, Northridge, Van Nuys and Sylmar/San Fernando, and stations should be upgraded with passenger amenities and mixed use development.*

*To do this will require some capital investment, but this is modest in comparison with a new light rail or subway. Two key projects stand out, i.e. the essential double track between Van Nuys and Chatsworth (Raymer – Bernson) and Burbank and San Fernando. It is embarrassing that these vital projects were not completed years ago.*

*The issue at stake is the quality of life for the two million residents of the Valley and adjoining communities. There are already 16 lanes of freeway on interstate 5 in Mission Hills and the 118 has had 4 lanes added since it was opened, yet congestion continues. The alternative, a modern passenger railroad, with improved grade crossings and quiet zones, will reduce noise pollution, especially at night, and provide for safer rail journeys and pedestrian and automobile trips.*

*Unfortunately the public communication has been mishandled by LACMTA staff. Local residents believe that double tracking will be unsafe when the opposite is true. And while residents have a right to have their concerns addressed, and where possible mitigated, it is unrealistic and unreasonable for a small group to have veto power over a public asset such as a railroad right of way, especially as the railroad predates the houses by more than fifty years. Passenger traffic on the Ventura County route has gradually increased since the early 90s. This is not a recent or unannounced development.*

*In the interest of public safety, efficiency, punctuality and air quality we hope that the LACMTA Board will show leadership and deliver to the wider community the safe, reliable transportation system that they deserve.*

Yours sincerely,

Paul Dyson, President

(Continued on next page)

(PRESIDENT'S COMMENTARY from previous page)



Caption: Fresno River Viaduct Construction, High Speed Rail Initial Construction Segment. Photo courtesy CHSRA

## High Speed Rail

Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> January saw the publication in the LA Times of a story by Ralph Vartabedian about the possible change of priorities in the High Speed Rail project. CHSRA Jeff Morales had been quoted on Sacramento television as saying that the possibility of building north to San Jose rather than south to Burbank was being studied.

Well, here we are at the beginning of 2016 and by any measure the HSR project has made little physical progress. There are plenty of reasons for this which have been

discussed elsewhere, but regardless of why, we are where we are. If I were CEO I would be determined to get trains running at the earliest possible date to demonstrate that progress is being made, and to show a sample of the end product. There is no doubt in my mind that crossing the mountains between Bakersfield and the Los Angeles basin will be difficult, slow, and expensive. This is true whether the Tehachapi - Palmdale route is used or the Tejon pass. Near sea level to 4,000 feet and back down, or a base tunnel, or any combination of engineering feats will be required in either case.

So perhaps the Authority will make a pragmatic decision and opt to cross the lower and narrower coastal range towards San Jose first, linking the initial construction from Bakersfield to Silicon Valley. The populations of the cities served are smaller, but if Caltrain electrification were to proceed apace the route could serve both San Francisco and San Francisco airport, both major traffic magnets from the central valley.

Let's be clear. The new railroad will not be commercially successful until complete between the bay and the basin. Any Initial Operating segment will attract some business but it will struggle until Los Angeles and San Francisco are linked. So I am willing to support construction north as first priority. Yes, I'll still have to take a bus to Bakersfield, but with faster and more frequent schedules I won't have to get up at 3.30am for the 0440hrs departure from the Burbank Airport stop!

Paul Dyson  
[pdyson@railpac.org](mailto:pdyson@railpac.org)  
818 371 9516]

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e-mail: [design@dengate.com](mailto:design@dengate.com)

## WANTED: Photographers for Steel Wheels

If you have a collection of hi-res jpeg photos, especially of passenger trains in California, or enjoy taking them, contact the Editor,

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## Xpress West –

# Signs Of Life in the Ongoing Saga of Trains to Las Vegas

Like all major projects Xpress West has had a difficult time finding that happy time when public support, government assistance and private investment come together to create the the essential climate for success. The following story from the Las Vegas Sun News tells of the latest developments with Xpress West. I contacted their office prior to my annual trip to Las Vegas in December and requested a meeting, but received no response. I also asked for a speaker for our December meeting with similar results. I hope that the new investors and managers understand the need for public support. We want to see High Speed Rail to Las Vegas and would be glad to support the project if only they were to communicate.

## Nevada High-Speed Rail Panel Moving Forward With Xpresswest

By Daniel Rothberg

During a three-hour meeting Wednesday, the five-member Nevada High-Speed Rail Authority unanimously selected XpressWest as the state's franchisee for constructing a high-speed rail system that connects Las Vegas with Southern California.

Four applicants competed with XpressWest's bid but authority officials were in agreement that the proposal was the only one that met their evaluation criteria.

XpressWest officials said they could start construction as early as fall 2016. The project aims to link Las Vegas to Los Angeles.

The board, created in May by Senate Bill 457, was charged with selecting a private developer to operate the rail system and was required to evaluate the applications based on the completion of environmental studies, level of private investment, pending regulatory permits, and how far the applicant is from the start of construction. XpressWest is now required to provide the board with progress reports twice a year. The board, in addition to reviewing the progress, can also help facilitate intergovernmental partnerships.

The initial phase of the XpressWest project, which will link Las Vegas to Victorville, Calif., will cost \$8 billion.

"In high-speed rail terms, most projects are a lot more expensive than this," said Nick Hann, an executive at the Macquarie Group working with XpressWest.

The line will mostly run adjacent to Interstate 15, offering roundtrip service for under \$100. The project's second phase will link Las Vegas with Palmdale, via the Victorville station. Riders will then be able to connect with Metrolink to take the train to Los Angeles. In its last phase, XpressWest plans to link its system to California's high-speed rail. Its technology is interoperable with California's.

Earlier this month, the Las Vegas-based XpressWest project, formerly named DesertXpress, announced a \$100 million investment from a consortium of state-owned

Chinese companies. XpressWest officials said they do not plan to seek public funding from the state.

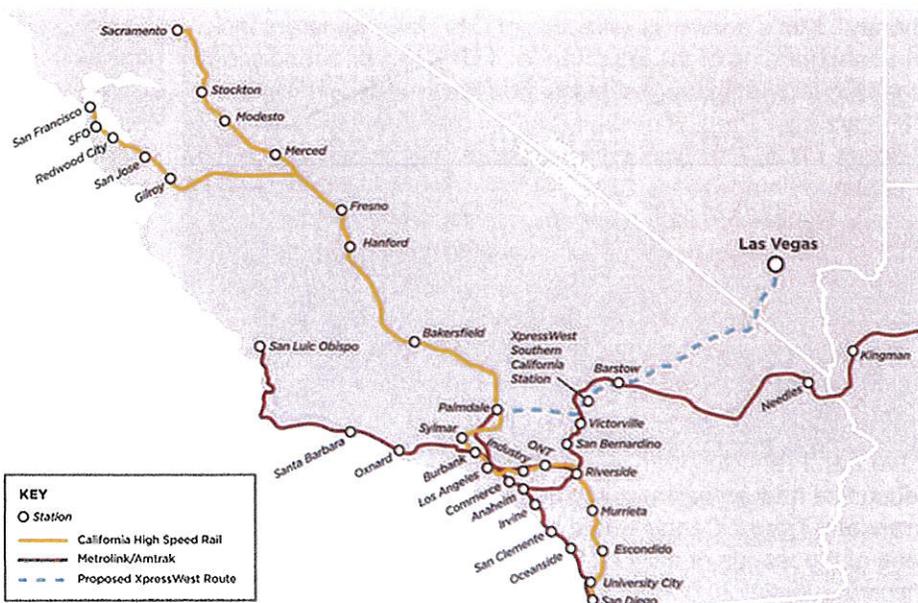
At Wednesday's meeting, XpressWest's Chief Operating Officer Andrew Mack said China Railway International, the firm that has committed the \$100 million, has a "deep and proven track record in building and operating and financing high-speed rail."

Construction and implementation of the project is expected to take about five years, with both the Las Vegas to Victorville line and the Victorville to Palmdale line finished at the same time.

Five applicants bid on serving as the state's high-speed rail franchisee. The authority heard presentations from four of the applicants. One applicant, Nevada Intercity Passenger Railroad Co., did not present. Members of the authority said the other applicants had interesting ideas but were in agreement that the proposals did not meet their criteria. XpressWest has been seeking permits for years.

SOURCE: DESERTXPRESS ENTERPRISES LLC

*Three train lines could meet in Palmdale, allowing passengers access to mass transit up and down California.*



## S.F. City Hall Undermines DTX, SF'S Most Significant Transportation Improvement In 50 Years

*Transbay Transit Center....  
Destined to be San Francisco's  
Big Empty??*



Under the Edwin Lee Administration, transportation in San Francisco is heading toward a cliff. For starters, City Hall is neglecting, if not actively impeding, the downtown extension of Caltrain (DTX), a project that would connect Caltrain to 6 Muni rail lines, 4 BART lines and over 40 bus lines at the new Transbay Transit Center in the middle of San Francisco's 340,000 person employment center.

In November 1999 the SF voters recognized the value of DTX by approving Prop H by 69.3%. Prop H specifically calls for Caltrain to be extended to the new Transbay Transit Center (TTC) at First and Mission Streets and directed City government to place a high priority on finding the funding needed to complete the project. In November 2003 the SF voters approved Prop K by 75%, which provided \$270 million for the extension. In June 2010 the SF Voters approved Prop G, calling for high-speed trains to also terminate at the TTC. This measure was approved by an overwhelming 83.8%. Yet it appears that the public policy implicit in these three Propositions was lost on City Hall.

At a recent meeting SF Supervisor Jane Kim was asked why City Hall was so "ambivalent" toward the long-awaited DTX project. Her answer was "we all support DTX but it's very expensive and we don't know where we can find the money". Kim's answer is reflective of City Hall's apparent lack of understanding of the importance of DTX to San Francisco and the Region. In the first place it doesn't explain why in the 16 years after Prop. H passed the City has contributed only 2.8% of TTC/DTX's cost, compared to the 34.8% allocation it has already made to the SFMTA's low ridership Third Street/Central Subway project. Nor does it explain why even today City officials talk of finding additional funds to extend the Central Subway, build Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) on Van Ness and Geary, bring the Warriors to town, "beautify our streets" and build a subway into the privately-owned Park Merced development, all while seldom if ever even mentioning DTX.

Is City Hall hoping that some outside entity will swoop in and save San Francisco from its own passivity? Is it failing to recognize how embarrassingly empty and lifeless its huge new Transbay Transit Center would be without the trains and their tens of thousands of daily riders, especially given AC Transit's inconsequential 20,000 transbay bus riders a day?

Or has it forgotten about the tens of thousands of additional Peninsula motorists who would be driving into San Francisco by 2030 if the Caltrain/San Francisco interface doesn't get a whole lot better than it is today? The fact that more street congestion would inevitably further slow down Muni buses is apparently of no concern to City Hall. On the contrary it appears that San Francisco's politicians are currently much more focused on build-out and helping developers than on the plight of their constituents and others who are trying to access and move about in San Francisco.

It's not always been that way. A few years ago the City and County of San Francisco appropriately identified DTX as its No. 1 candidate for federal New Starts funding. MTC ratified the selection and the Federal Transit Administration subsequently approved it. Moreover the DTX project has long enjoyed the strong support of both California Senators and SF Congressperson Nancy Pelosi. In Sacramento, DTX is also recognized as a project of high importance to the Bay Area and the rest of Northern California. In addition, as indicated above, it has long been supported by the San Francisco electorate. About the only place where DTX seems to have fallen out of favor is with the relatively small number of politicians who currently occupy City Hall.

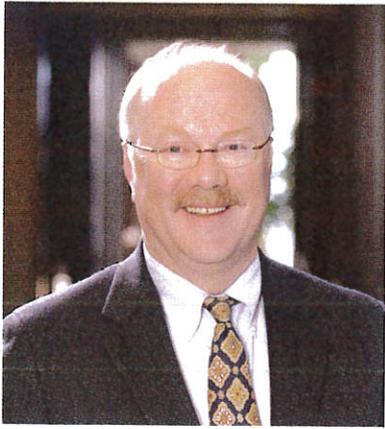
The financing needed to complete the DTX project will come from a variety of potential sources, including the City and County of San Francisco, the Transbay Mello Roos District, San Mateo County, Bridge Tolls, Caltrain surcharges, California Cap and Trade funds, California's high speed rail program, the federal New Starts Program and private investors. San Francisco has the savvy and political heft needed to pull the DTX program together. But it will take effort and it will take leadership. If San Francisco gets going on this, DTX construction could begin in the next 18 to 24 months and the Caltrain trains could be up and running in the TTC by 2023.

Gerald Cauthen, PE

Former: Mgr, Muni Transit Improvement Program  
Senior Engineering Mgr, Parsons Brinckerhoff

Co-founder: San Francisco Tomorrow  
SaveMuni

Bay Area Transportation Working Group (BATWG)



# A NEW GLIDE PATH: 2015 RESULTS

By Andrew C. Selden

Amtrak's fiscal year end is September 30, to coincide with the fiscal year end of the federal government. Thus, its FY 2015 ended on Sept. 30, 2015. Amtrak still has not issued its Annual Report for FY 2014, so it will be some time before we can expect to see a formal Annual Report

for 2015. But we do have preliminary results for FY 2015, including unaudited financial results. This is a summary of the key elements of FY 15's operational and financial results.

2015 was not a good year for Amtrak, continuing a long trend of year-over-year worsening of results. Amtrak always tries to put a positive spin on its performance - who wouldn't? - but emphasizing fragmentary and highly selective data, or relying on meaningless metrics, cannot long hide the fact that the company is doing slightly worse each year. We will argue later that Amtrak's results occur *because* of its strategies, not *despite* them, but first let's examine the results.

Drawn from Amtrak's Table A 1.3 in its 2015 Preliminary Performance Report, Amtrak's revenues for the year were \$3.2 billion, and its total costs were \$4.4 billion. (All of these



figures are rounded off for ease of understanding.) Its net loss, therefore was \$1.2 billion. (The actual loss as reported was \$1.1675 billion.) This corresponds closely to Amtrak's subsidy of \$1.4 billion in cash, because if the reported net loss is adjusted on a pro forma basis to remove non-cash (mostly depreciation) costs, and the subsidy is adjusted to allow for non-Amtrak items (e.g., excess contributions to railroad retirement accounts washed through Amtrak's budget), the amounts closely match up.

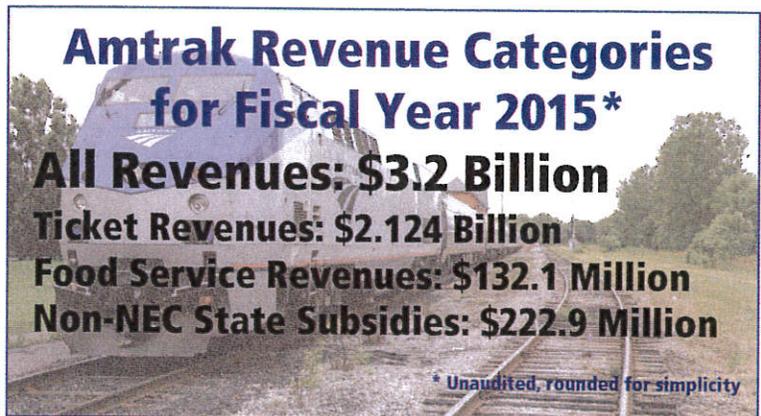
The FY '15 net loss is \$85 million worse than FY '14, and would have been much worse than that had not Amtrak played the oldest game in railroad accounting—as it did last year, and in earlier periods—by deferring maintenance on its NEC properties, to the tune of several hundred million dollars. Those

outlays are not avoided, just deferred into FY '16 or subsequent years. Some smaller capital goods spending can be avoided by deferring or not making the purchases, and some items can be manipulated by adjusting the timing of payments, which Amtrak seems to have done with contract payments for its fleet of new Siemens ACS-64 electric locomotives for the NEC. What Amtrak calls "capital spending" (usually, that phrase is code for "NEC costs") was \$1.31 billion in 2015, but that was \$922 million (41%) less than budgeted and authorized, reflecting the scale of the management manipulation of spending and deferrals that was needed just to keep the net financial results from being far worse than they actually were.

In the revenue categories, passenger ticket revenues were \$2.124 billion, down \$23 million from last year. Food service revenue rose \$6.3 million to \$132.1 million. State subsidies for non-NEC corridors fell \$12.3 million to \$222.9 million. Notable in the expense categories were the total labor costs, \$2.138 billion, down \$31.9 million but still exceeding total ticket revenue.

These results are consistent with a pattern that has prevailed ever since the regime of Graham Claytor as Amtrak's CEO. Last year, Amtrak identified more than \$200 million in deferred NEC spending that was used to keep the year's reported results from being much worse than expected. Indeed, during Mr. Boardman's eight-year tenure at Amtrak, results have worsened steadily, strongly suggesting some fundamental failures in his investment strategies or administrative performance. In any real business, steady failure on this scale and over this length of time would have long since resulted in the company's Board stepping in to change direction and leadership.

All of the key operational performance indicators also were worse in 2015 than 2014.



Amtrak's favorite metric—which is almost completely meaningless for any useful management purposes—is "ridership," which reflects only transaction volume, regardless of the dollar value of the tickets sold, the costs to earn that

## Amtrak Segment Categories: Load Factors for Fiscal Year 2015\*

LONG DISTANCE TRAINS LOAD FACTOR: 58.8%

NORTHEAST CORRIDOR TRAINS LOAD FACTOR: 54.4%

REGIONAL CORRIDOR TRAINS LOAD FACTOR: 41.5%

\* Unaudited, rounded for simplicity

## Amtrak Segment Categories: RPMs for Fiscal Year 2015\*

LONG DISTANCE TRAINS REVENUE PASSENGER MILES: 2.714 BILLION

NORTHEAST CORRIDOR TRAINS REVENUE PASSENGER MILES: 1.949 BILLION

REGIONAL CORRIDOR TRAINS REVENUE PASSENGER MILES: 1.938 BILLION

\* Unaudited, rounded for simplicity

revenue, or the transportation output resulting from the sales of tickets. Ridership in FY'15 was 30.9 million, down very slightly from FY'14. Far more important, Amtrak's production of transportation, its core business purpose, measured by passenger miles, also fell 54 million to 6.6 billion. As an aside, this is the result of investing billions of dollars into Amtrak's failed business strategies—falling ridership, output and revenue. Mr. Boardman has achieved the rare result of a negative rate of return on billions in invested taxpayer capital.

On time performance fell 1.2 points to 71.2%. The customer satisfaction index fell five points to 77%.

Inventory offered for sale—measured by available seat-miles—grew in the face of slack demand and sales by 125 million to 12.9 billion, while the diminished sales resulted in a reduced load factor of just 51.3%. That simply tells us that Amtrak failed to sell nearly half of its available inventory.

### The system aggregates mask some interesting segment results.

Long distance trains produced 2.714 billion passenger miles; the regional corridors produced 1.938 billion PMs; and the NEC produced 1.949 billion, edging out the regional corridors for second place. Last year (as for several previous years) the NEC produced fewer PMs than the regional corridors, placing the NEC as Amtrak's smallest division. Clearly, the long distance trains are Amtrak's largest division, measured by transportation produced.

The load factor for the long distance trains was 58.8%; regional corridors, 41.5%; and the NEC was 54.4%. The long distance trains, sold out for many peak months, were down slightly on the year. On these trains, a load factor of about 65% is a full train due to the many intermediate stations on their long routes. A seat or berth that is unoccupied at a given point has been sold to a passenger boarding down line. On most of these routes, every seat and every berth turns over two to three times each trip. On the NEC, by contrast, the 54.4% LF masks structural weakness, because these trains often are full over the short commuter distances between Philadelphia, New York and New Haven. If they are nearly 100% full over these short

distances, for the aggregate to be as low as 54.4%, it is arithmetically impossible for load factors elsewhere on the NEC—between Boston and New Haven, and Philadelphia and Washington, DC to be much over 25-28%.

The weakness in the state corridors reflects several states' efforts to provide slow, infrequent, utility transport by rail in 200-300 mile distances where the go anywhere any time convenience of private automobile predominates with market shares in the mid-90% range. One way to illustrate this is to compare a growing state corridor widely viewed as a success for rail with a long distance route. California's Capitol Corridor with a LF of

25.8% produced 98.9 million passenger miles in FY'15. All long distance trains but three produced more PMs, in a few cases far more (only the Cardinal, Palmetto and Sunset Limited produced fewer PMs). The weakest long distance train's load factor was the Palmetto at 43.9%, nearly double the Capitols'.

The strongest-performing long distance train, the best of the best, was the Empire Builder (despite sharp reduction in sales and PMs resulting from years of truly awful timekeeping and reduced on board services). It produced 317 million PMs and \$50.55 million in revenue. Next closest was the Southwest Chief, with 324 million PMs but only \$44.9 million in revenue (due to shorter average trips). The California Zephyr was next, with 298.4 million PMs and \$49.7 million in revenue. The Coast Starlight had 219.6 million PMs and \$41.2 million in revenue. The Starlight's single train a day offers an interesting comparison to the Surfliner corridor and its dozens of daily trains, which produced 246.5 million PMs and \$70.6 million in revenue.

On the production side, the NEC continues to generate impressive, if slightly reduced, numbers. Acela had 656.9 million PMs and \$584.9 million in revenue; NEC conventional trains had 1.289 billion PMs and \$611.8 million in revenue. That is all well and good, except that it cost Amtrak nearly \$2 billion in expenses to generate that revenue and output, clearly a losing proposition sustainable only with heavy annual subsidy.

Which brings us back to an evaluation of the results that Amtrak produces. It spends four dollars to earn three and survives

## A NEW GLIDE PATH: 2015 RESULTS (Continued from previous page)



*Acela rushes southbound through Elizabeth NY  
3rd January 2016. Photo by Christopher Gore. Amtrak claims an  
operating profit, but the capital costs are enormous.*

only on taxpayer subsidy. Many will say that is fine, and fair, for what is essentially a public utility. We do not mean to debate philosophy here beyond observing that even public utilities (and even utilities that are truly indispensable) must strive to do what they do at the lowest possible public cost. Amtrak fails that test on several scores.

Amtrak's financial results have worsened steadily ever since Graham Claytor left. They have worsened steadily under Mr. Boardman's leadership. The consistency of these results—year over year worsening of financial performance and growing subsidies as against a sharply declining share of a growing travel market in the U.S.—suggests quite strongly that Amtrak's strategy is faulty. This is underscored by data that Amtrak never reports, which is market share of intercity passenger transport in the corridors it serves. ("Intercity passenger transport" is defined by the US Bureau of Transportation Statistics as "non-recurring travel over 100 miles" to distinguish "intercity" from "commuter" categories.) In the NEC, that market share is less than 2%. The effect of a sub-2% share is social irrelevance, illustrated powerfully by the utter absence of dislocation last summer when the NEC was shut down cold at its busiest point for a week after the crash of train 188. It is also reflected in the complete absence of mention of Amtrak in mainstream media coverage of the late-January blizzard that paralyzed much of the upper Atlantic seaboard.

At the same time, post-Claytor Amtrak has not invested in its largest and most capacity-constrained division. All or nearly all of the billions in capital provided free of cost by taxpayers has instead been invested in Amtrak's smallest and second-least capacity constrained division. It seems obvious that an investment strategy that puts all of the available capital into underperforming business segments is what drives the bad-

and-worsening financial results that Amtrak achieves. The results occur because of the strategy, not despite it.

If the results included a service with very high usage—load factors more like the airlines achieve, in the 80s and 90s—and social relevance reflected in a much higher market share, then it might be reasonable to argue that the free public capital was being used to a positive purpose. But when management invests so much capital to so little effect, producing a negative rate of return on the investment along with the trivial market share and paltry load factors, and those results have been consistent for decades, then it is past time to reconsider the investment strategy, the leadership and the overall direction of the company. Intercity transport is growing steadily in the U.S., despite the lingering effects of the 2008 recession, but Amtrak's share of that market is actually declining.

The lesson in the fiscal 2015 results as reported by Amtrak is that Amtrak is in hot pursuit of a hopelessly losing strategy. The results are awful and consistent and steadily worsening. Supporters of intercity rail passenger service need to demand that capital be redeployed to uses that return growth in usage, relevance and market share, in improving financial results, and support for those services where high load factors show latent unmet public demand for the service. Amtrak cannot and should not survive as a federal make-work scheme for the northeast. The 2015 financial and operational results, and the trend they continue, reflect the greatest possible threat to the survival of the American passenger train.



*The Empire Builder heads east at Browning Montana,  
16th November 2015, photo by Tim Stevens. The "Builder" is Amtrak's  
most productive train measured in revenue passenger miles.*



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# Amtrak Western Long Distance Trains at the end of 2015; A Positive Report

Report and Commentary by Russ Jackson

Here we are, Christmastime 2015, and lo and behold the Amtrak long distance trains continue to roll and to some extent thrive despite the negative publicity that they are “money losers.” In recent posts this writer has talked about the positives that are being accomplished on the Coast Starlight, and the opposite effects that are creating heartburn on other trains like the east coast Silver Star which has lost its dining car. In this article we will look at the other western routes that operate in and out of Los Angeles headed east, and what the imminent retirement of CEO Joe Boardman can bring to the future.

On December 5 RailPAC hosted its annual meeting in Los Angeles, with an all-star cast of speakers starting with Amtrak Board member Yvonne Burke, the sole representative from the west. Although this writer was unable to attend in person, reading Noel Braymer’s report and viewing the video he made of the session made clear that the west is in good hands, including the long distance route managers for the Starlight, Chief, Sunset Limited, and Texas Eagle. Mrs. Burke made clear that she is “dedicated to a national rail passenger system,” and to the long distance trains. That brought a loud round of applause from the attendees. She is also grateful to RailPAC’s VP Long Distance Services, James Smith, for his communications with her that reflect the opinions of the group. One thing she is convinced must happen is reflected in the new Transportation bill that has recently been signed by President Obama, that Amtrak accounting will have to be changed. RailPAC and URPA have been thundering that for many years, and it looks like the Congress agrees. Now we will see if Amtrak will do meaningful changes that reflect exactly what the real costs of the Northeast Corridor are, or will they shuffle the deck and say they were right all along just as they have when this subject has been previously brought up. Frankly, can we trust Amtrak to really do what will reflect what is obvious, in the words of Andrew Selden, that costs of the NEC do not reflect the true costs because capital expenditures are routinely charged to all Amtrak trains in the country as part of the “overhead” whether they apply to the national system or not. They’ve got a lot of “convincing” to do, and we trust Yvonne Burke will stay on top of it.

The other big news at Amtrak is that CEO Boardman has said he will retire in September, 2016, even though he was recently given an extension on his contract and had said he would be staying another 5 years. Whatever his reason, the immediate conjecture started over who would replace him. All of us want someone who knows what (1) Amtrak and (2) railroading is all about, and preferably does not come from an NEC transit agency. One thing we learned from Mrs. Burke is the Amtrak

CEO and the FRA director no longer have votes on the board of directors. Recently Senator Carper (D-DE) announced he “is a candidate” for the CEO job, something “he has wanted for a long time.” That would keep the corporation firmly in the hands of the NEC. All bets are off as to a permanent replacement, but there could be another temporary head until the new Congress and Administration get around to it sometime in the future. We do know that technically the President does not appoint the Amtrak CEO, and that person must be a citizen of the U.S. However, if someone is chosen that the new Administration does not want, it will be unlikely that person will get the job.

Now what’s going on with the western long distance trains? Another highlight of the RailPAC December 5 meeting was the presentation by Amtrak’s Route Managers, Erik Smith who has the Starlight and the Southwest Chief, and Jay Fountain who has the Sunset Limited, Texas Eagle, and Heartland Flyer. Both of these very competent officers have extensive passenger rail on board experience in the west and are highly qualified for their positions. Their presentations were unique in that instead of a laundry list of problems and “reasons” why something isn’t happening, they gave positive presentations of what IS happening for long distance trains and what they ARE DOING to make improvements. No canned presentations or long-winded power point slide reading from them.

How about this for a partial list. One of the complaints about on board food service has been the lack of «regional choices.» In an effort to do something about that, and at the suggestion of the employees, the Sunset Limited and Texas Eagle will soon offer «red beans and rice» on their Dining Car menu, and it will be offered to Coach passengers for delivery to their seat. The experiment with at-seat food service has been a big success on the Coast Starlight and will continue (as will an expanded Business Coach). The BLT will be replaced by turkey club and chicken sandwiches as variety. This at-seat experiment has increased revenue for the Starlight food service by 16%, and at very little cost as no additional personnel were required. Other long distance trains will get in on this idea as soon as details are worked out. Another change, a temporary one for the Sunset Limited, will see the departure time for the eastbound train from LAUS changed to 4 PM (from 10 PM) for three months starting in January. No change will take place for the westbound train. The Union Pacific had declared there would be “bus bridges” from LAUS all the way to Tucson for train #2 due to winter-time major track work windows, but extensive negotiation brought the agreement for the earlier start time which, of course, will make the layover in San Antonio longer

*(continued on next page)*

(Continued from previous page)

but is better than putting passengers on an overnight bus and suffering the consequent drop in ridership and revenues.

As Route Manager Jay Fountain said, "a daily Sunset Limited is a good idea," but was not seen as being something possible at this time, and the stated reason was lack of Superliner equipment (which we know is the company line), but we know reality means that the Union Pacific is still not receptive and Amtrak does not want to push it at this time. If the UP's winter track work results in finishing the double tracking between Coachella, CA and Maricopa, AZ the UP will have much less of an argument about carrying the daily train. We note that the so-called Phoenix stop at Maricopa does well, but far from what it could do. Arizona has received a \$15 million grant to put a state highway bridge over the railroad at the Maricopa station location so the Sunset Limited will no longer block the crossing to make two or three traffic blocking spot stops, and will eliminate multiple crossing stoppages due to UP freight trains.

As for other questions, Noel Braymer asked if the Southwest Chief would be extended to Pueblo, Colorado, as the state there wants it. Erik Smith was "optimistic" that it would happen but gave no details, and in response to the question of extending the Heartland Flyer to Wichita and Newton, Kansas, to connect with the Chief, Mr. Smith said there are already plans to create a bus connection with the Flyer to Wichita. The Flyer is now a major connector to the Texas Eagle at Ft. Worth, and this bus connector even if it goes to Newton can be the forerunner of train extension...if, (of course) the states will pay for it. Returning to Phoenix seems like something that will not happen...ever, as the state of Arizona is not receptive to paying for the return to service of the line from Wellton to Buckeye

We can say that from all we've heard about the RailPAC meeting it was refreshing to hear what is being DONE, not just what ought to be done to improve service for the western long distance trains. This writer reiterates that these items of on board service improvements, to the Starlight as detailed in our previous article, and what is happening now are largely things that can be done with progressive thinking by dedicated Amtrak officials who just do them particularly when revenue can be enhanced without significant increases in costs. There are so many other promotional possibilities, and these Route Managers are working on them too. One is event-specific promotions and here's another one that should be looked at for next winter. Tucson, Arizona has one of the world's largest gem and mineral shows every year. We have been on board the Sunset Limited when folks got off the train to attend it, and when others boarded with bags of "rocks" after attending the show. Where better to carry "rocks" than on a train or in the new baggage cars?

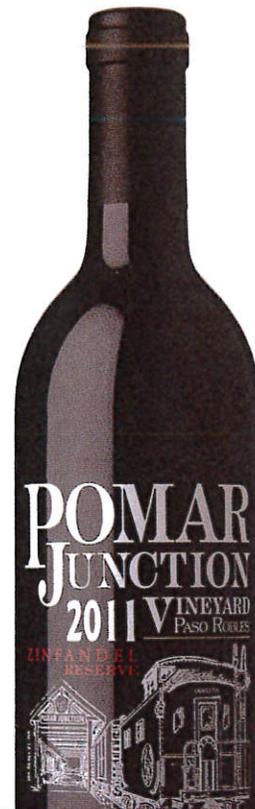
We must end with the saddest news for the long distance trains, however, that Amtrak did extend the "experiment" of removing the dining car from the east coast Silver Star to April 30. We have said all along that the "experiment" was really in permanent concrete, and unless the arrival of the new Viewliner Dining Cars to replace the ancient Heritage diners makes possible its return, two years from now no one will remember what first class service on that long distance train was...or should be. We should all be diligent to see that the work of the western Route Managers is successful in keeping that "experiment" from happening out here. Meanwhile, we know they, as well as Board member Yvonne Burke, will continue to listen to their employees AND to rail advocates about what improvements can be made.

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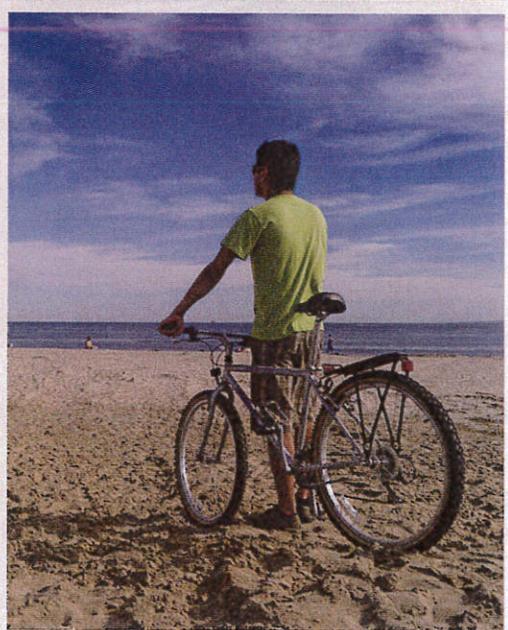
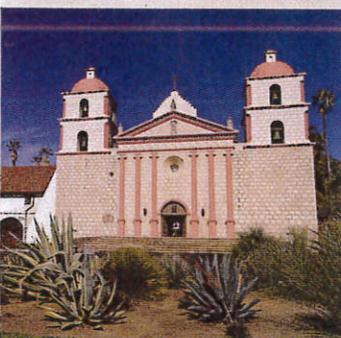
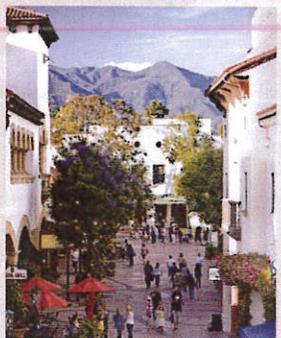
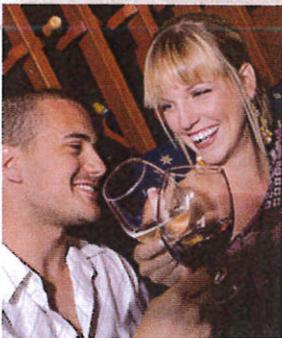
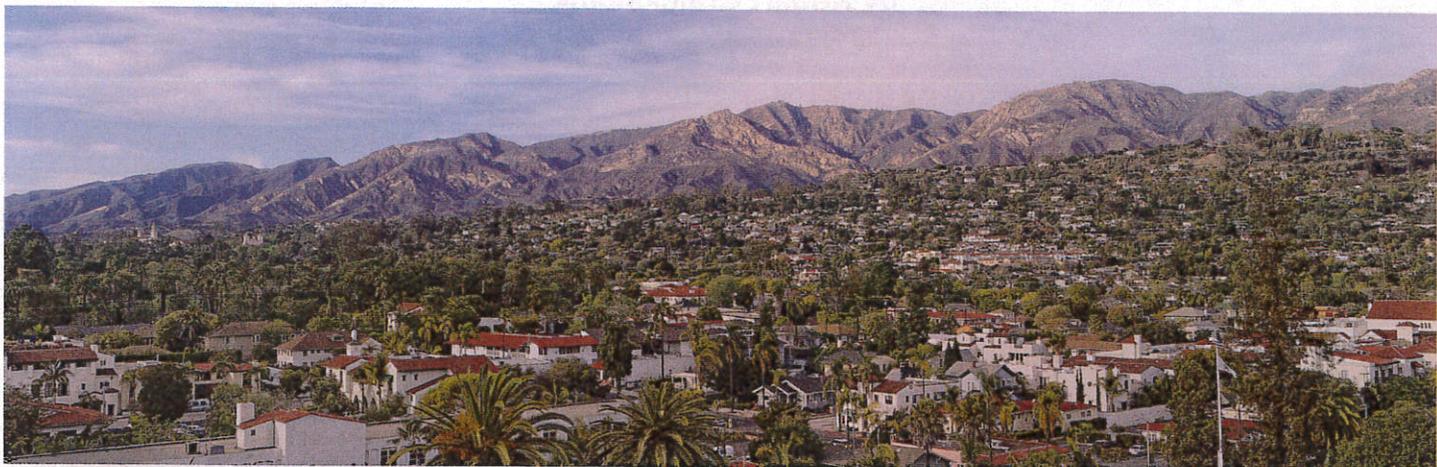
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# Hyperloop or just Hype?

by Robert Cruickshank

Josh Stephens has a really interesting take on the Hyperloop at the California Planning and Development Report. He points out that most of the hype comes from people who are comparing to other Elon Musk projects and neglecting to consider that, like any other terrestrial infrastructure project, it still needs a right of way:

“Hyperloop Technologies claims that “Hyperloop is changing the way we think about transportation.” That’s not quite right. It’s changing the way we think about propulsion. As transportation, Hyperloop runs into the same wearisome challenges that every other project since the Appian Way has faced.

“It would be one thing to launch a Falcon 9 from Sunset Junction and land it at Mothers Beach. Where the Falcon 9 goes, they don’t need roads. But Hyperloops still need rights of way. If we’re in urban Los Angeles, it has to run either on stilts or below ground, lest it plow through your living room.

“In fairness, Lloyd was mainly trying to illustrate Hyperloop’s speed. But his attempt to illustrate the limitless possibilities of technology still disingenuously elided the drab pragmatism issues that surround land use and transportation policy – the same issues that plague high-speed rail.

“Hyperloop seems more exciting than California’s halting high-speed rail project for two reasons. First, it has the swagger of Elon Musk rather than the stigma of a public bureaucracy. Second, it’s going to be, like, a billion times faster than HSR. That’s really fast. There’s a lot that we might be willing to sacrifice, financially and otherwise, for the travel times that Hyperloop’s backers are promising.

“And yet, this combination of enthusiasm and magnetism doesn’t buy farmland. It doesn’t ease eminent domain takings. It doesn’t blast through bedrock or relocate utilities. It doesn’t design station area plans. It doesn’t write EIRs or dismiss

CEQA suits.”

The issue with HSR isn’t its design. It’s that, like any other major infrastructure project, some people who live near its route don’t want it to be built and have been engaging in a Lilliputian strategy to try and kill it.

Central Valley farmers who have sued to stop HSR will not happily stand aside while Hyperloop piers are sunk into their farmland.

One also has to ask whether HSR opponents on the Peninsula between San Francisco and San Jose would be willing to support a Hyperloop that has to go in as straight a line as possible in order to achieve the desired speeds safely –

meaning lots of takings and no ability to go below-grade to suit Palo Alto homeowners.

Even if the specific individuals in the Central Valley and the Peninsula who are currently engaged in anti-HSR work decide they’re OK with the Hyperloop, we know that they

have neighbors who won’t share that view, and will launch their own lawsuits, lobbying campaigns, to stop it.

The lesson of HSR is that it’s incredibly difficult these days to quickly get green, sustainable transportation infrastructure built. The Hyperloop is a worthwhile concept. But it’s not appropriate to compare it to SpaceX. The most appropriate comparison is to high speed rail. Even if Hyperloop backers figure out how to make this vomit comet feasible, and find the hundreds of billions of dollars required to build it from SF to LA, they’ll still encounter all the same land use obstacles that HSR has.

*Robert Cruickshank is the founder and publisher of the California High Speed Rail Blog, which has been covering the state’s bullet train project since 2008. Read more about the project at <http://www.cahsrblog.com>.*

## HOW MUSK’S SUPERTRAIN COULD WORK

### Rail gun technology

1. Electric current flows up positive rail

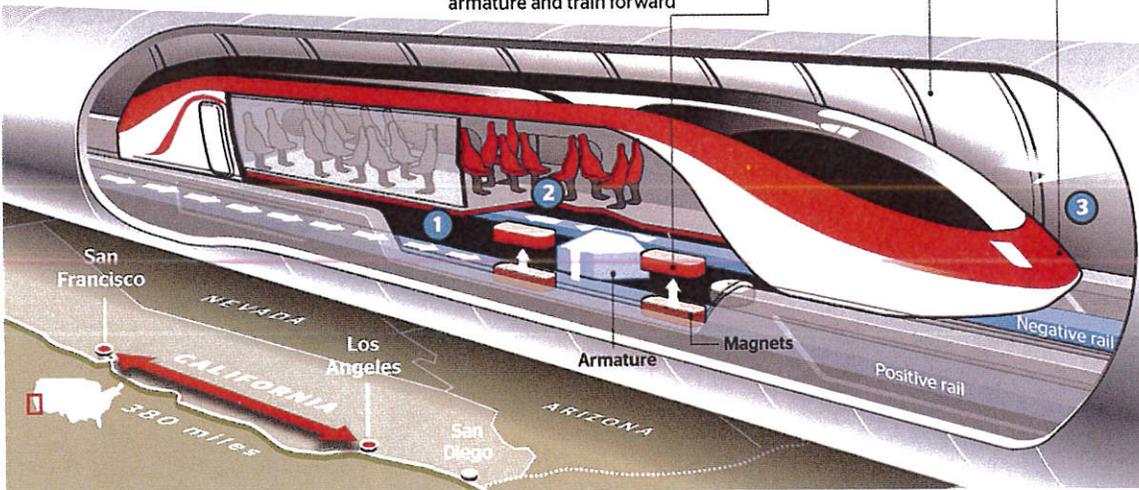
2. Current flows across armature and down negative rail

3. Magnetic force is directed towards end of rails which pushes armature and train forward

Maglev technology levitates the train eradicating rail friction

Reduced air pressure in tunnel cuts wind resistance

Top speed 750mph



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## Looking for Amtrak's new boss

After eight years of blunder, Boardman's replacement should be a real leader

**Joe Boardman is leaving** in September as Amtrak's chief executive officer. There are many things to say about his departure, but for now I will simply say thank goodness. In this column, I want to suggest people who would be excellent as a new CEO, and the only reason to mention Boardman is to point out major positive traits of these CEO candidates that leave Boardman in the dust.

My first suggestion will be the best possible new CEO — Wick Moorman, who has just retired as Chairman of Norfolk Southern at the young age of 63. Moorman has the best traits of a leader. He can bring out the best in his fellow officers by simply listening to what they say without interruption. Moorman gave a talk at a railroad group several years ago saying that the hardest thing he learned to do was to really listen when other officers gave opinions, and reserve judgement until he had heard everyone out. At the end of these meetings, he could do one of three things: 1. Approve the idea; 2. Say no, and the reasons why; or 3. Order more analysis if more was clearly needed. If he said no, his greatest task was to be sure no one took his decision personally — to say something positive and let everyone know that their ideas and contributions were always important and welcomed.

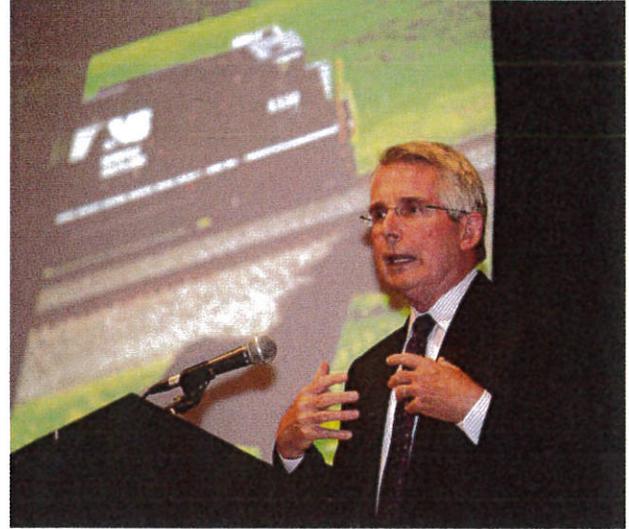
Unfortunately, I understand that Moorman is not interested in a full-time job. He has moved to a less urban area where he can spend time with his wife and grandchildren. His wife, who has spent years adjusting to his schedule, loves the idea. He may well take a non-executive position on several boards, and if I was on Amtrak's board I would be excited to have his advice.

Not far behind Moorman are two other men who are far ahead of Boardman. Both have decades of railroad executive experience, and one of them worked at Amtrak years ago. The other never worked at Amtrak, but has been in the passenger rail business most of his life.

First, there is Bob VanderClute, who retired several months ago from the Association of American Railroads. VanderClute's last job was senior vice president, safety and operations. Before joining the AAR in 2003, he was a vice president with consulting firm Parsons Brinckerhoff, and before that he was with Amtrak for 27 years until 1997, leaving as vice president of operations. VanderClute discourages talk of taking over at Amtrak, but probably could be convinced to do it.

An equally talented man is Gene Skoropowski, who is now the Senior Vice President of Passenger Rail Development at Florida East Coast Industries Inc. He has a long history with passenger rail, in private industry and in government. In California he was in charge of passenger service between Sacramento and San Jose. When I first met him, I was stunned by the confidence his employees and the state legislature had in him. He took me out for a ride on one of his trains, and he knew everyone by name. Skoropowski is such a straight shooter that the California legislature gave him everything he wanted, then started cutting other budgets. He kept adding trains until his budget started shrinking, and he showed Union Pacific how to run many more passenger and freight trains than they could have imagined.

These three men are far above Boardman in so many ways. For one thing, they are true leaders who can make decisions and stick with their decisions. Boardman can make a decision one day and a new decision the next day, forgetting he ever made the first one.



**If he were interested, recently retired Norfolk Southern chairman Wick Moorman would be the best possible candidate to lead Amtrak following Joe Boardman's retirement.** David C. Lester

The worst trick he ever pulled was to have a major study done of long-distance trains. Then, three years later, when the group of employees who had dedicated three years of their lives to the study gathered to give Boardman a detailed report, Boardman told them he wasn't interested. He had something else he wanted to talk about. It was devastating for the group.

At least once, Boardman cursed out a senior official for taking notes during a meeting. The brilliant employee, who took a cut in pay to come to work at Amtrak, suddenly found that all his group had been transferred to other jobs. He was ignored until he finally quit. Five different non-rail organizations went after him, and he decided on a job at five times his Amtrak pay. This was typical of Boardman, who has never dismissed anyone but knows how to make life so miserable that they quit. Talent means nothing.

Anyone who Boardman considers his equal or who knows a lot of Washington insiders is treated with courtesy.

Anyone who Boardman considers his equal or who knows a lot of Washington insiders is treated with courtesy.

I have written about one employee who received the full Boardman treatment. This employee, Brian Rosenwald, was brave enough to stand up to Boardman and to do so courteously. Rosenwald should have been the chief of all long-distance trains, but he first was made No. 2 to another man. That man was forced out, and Rosenwald was then pushed out. Rosenwald moved to Chicago and opened a high-end wine store. He may be happy where he is, but the day that Boardman leaves, he should be invited in for an interview. Chicago would be the logical location for the chief of long-distance trains. **I**

**Don Phillips**, a reporter for more than four decades, writes this exclusive column for *TRAINS*. Email him at: [d.phillips@trainsmag.com](mailto:d.phillips@trainsmag.com)



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