

*Special Interest
Articles:*

- ❖ **A can-do attitude for rail in the west.**
- ❖ **MTA funding crisis is different this time.**

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West Coast RUN Roundtable draws advocates and advisors



Lynda Bybee of the Los Angeles MTA

More than thirty rail advocates and customer advisory committee representatives participated in RUN's first round table discussion held on the West Coast in October.

While some essential RUN

business was addressed, the bulk of the meeting at the MTA headquarters in Los Angeles was devoted to a thorough and frank discussion of the issues facing travelers on the West Coast and how they can be

successfully resolved. Representatives from all of the major advocacy groups in the Los Angeles area were in attendance and the list included a number of key activists: Bart Reed, executive director of The Transit Coalition; Barry Christensen, Rail Advocates of Orange County; Neil Bjornsen, MTA Citizen's Advisory Council, Roger Christensen, vice president, Train Riders Association of California; Dana Gabbard, executive secretary, Southern California Transit Advocates; Kimberleigh Richards, METRO San Fernando Valley Sector Governance Council,

Cont. Page 5

A LIFETIME OF SERVICE TO PASSENGERS

Run salutes James W. Burcham

By Mike Weinman

We recently presented our first award for Lifetime Achievement in Customer Service to retired Metra Department Head James W. Burcham.

Jim, who has served customers on the Illinois Central, Santa Fe, Milwaukee Road, and Metra, helped develop the Chicago area commuter rail services of the Milwaukee Road, which are now Metra's Milwaukee District. He was influential in the transfer of intercity services from the

Milwaukee to Amtrak, and most recently, as Metra's chief contract officer, negotiating operating and real estate agreements, including that for Chicago Union Station.

Jim's attention to detail in support of the famous Milwaukee Road Hiawatha trains, and in establishing their commuter rail department kept the Milwaukee in the forefront of passenger railroads prior to the establishment of Amtrak. At Metra, Jim was on the executive team that

maintained its award winning passenger-friendly commuter service. It was nearly 100 percent on time. His legacy at Metra is a third of a million passengers on this premier service each day, operated with clockwork precision and the utmost cost effectiveness.

After retirement, Jim moved to Marina del Rey, near Los Angeles, and though he has recently been under hospital care, he expects to return to his regular routine as a keen observer of the railway industry.

New York State High Speed rail

By Gary Prophet

High-speed rail in the Empire State has become no speed rail — with lawsuits and counter lawsuits.

NY HIGH SPEED BACKGROUND

In 1998, with large fanfare, Amtrak and New York State signed a \$185 million contract. The costs would be split 50-50 and would pay for improved track, with some track permitting speeds of 125 mph, and the refurbishment of seven of the existing five-car 1970s era Turboliner sets. Also included in the plan were the double-tracking of the trackage between Albany and Schenectady and the elimination of all grade crossings between Albany and Schenectady.

The plan would reduce travel time between Albany and New York City's Penn Station to two hours, with 125 mph operation from Albany to Hudson and 90-125 mph speeds from Hudson to Poughkeepsie, which included curve elimination and bridge repair to eliminate portions of track that were below 90 mph.

In 1998, the scheduled travel time from Albany to New York was 2 hours 20 minutes and now it is 2 hours, 25 minutes, due to reduced speeds on portion of the Amtrak-owned track in upper Manhattan.

New York State contracted with SuperSteel of Glenville, NY to refurbish the Turboliners. Some contended this was a jobs program to keep the company alive and to add jobs to the Schenectady area, while others saw it as the beginning of a new market for the company, which had built interiors for buses. The refurbishment of the Turboliners quickly ran into difficulties. The original estimate of \$7.5 million to refurbish each set soon was obviously not going to be enough. With difficulties encountered, such as the presence of asbestos, the price gradually rose to \$12-13 million for each 5-car set, adding tens of millions of dollars to the project.

Meanwhile, Amtrak never seemed to receive as much money as it had expected from Congress and ran into large cash

difficulties a couple of years ago. After David Gunn became president of Amtrak, Amtrak then demanded that New York State fund the increased operational expense, since the Turboliners use fuel that is more expensive than diesel. Meanwhile, none of the track work was completed, so nobody in the Empire Corridor could take advantage of the 125 mph operation.

RECENT EVENTS

In August 2004, New York State sued Amtrak for \$477 million, claiming that Amtrak did not make the track upgrades as stated in the contract and that Amtrak refused to operate the Turboliners. Amtrak took the three finished Turboliners to Delaware for storage. A NYS Department of Transportation commissioner said, "Amtrak stole our trains and we want them back."

The actual ownership of the completed Turboliners also seemed to be in question, as New York State was to own them once it completed and accepted them for operation by Amtrak. Two of the Turboliners sets were in service, carrying passengers between Albany and New York City, but Amtrak claimed that title was not yet transferred to New York State, so Amtrak could move them where they wished. Amtrak had stopped using the Turboliners in June, due to air conditioning malfunctions, although several passengers have said that the A/C worked better than it does on many Amfleet cars.

Amtrak now contends that it had the right to end the contract because the contract was based on so many false assumptions that it was worthless. In court papers filed on Dec. 10, 2004, Amtrak stated that the contract was "too vague," "too dependent on future developments that did not occur," and "illusory." The State's court filing on Dec. 10 stated that Amtrak failed to complete the track work, did not do its portion in rebuilding the trains, and misled state officials about their intentions.

Amtrak states that one of the reasons for

the contract collapse is that sufficient government funds to improve tracks and signals were not provided. Amtrak also states that the state breached its obligations under the contract by failing to properly manage the train upgrades.

IMPACT ON SERVICE

Needless to say, a multi-year lawsuit and counter-suit for hundreds of millions of dollars does nothing to improve passenger rail service across New York State. During the past 6 years, scheduled travel time has actually increased and on-time reliability has decreased. Meanwhile, three completed Turboliner sets sit unused in Delaware, while Amtrak claims it is short of equipment. The other four sets are at SuperSteel, in various states of refurbishment. No track improvements have been made and the single track for 18 miles between Albany and Schenectady continues to be a bottleneck.

BETTER COMMUNICATION NEEDED

Both New York State and Amtrak need to sit down and develop a new passenger rail plan for the Empire Corridor, which includes both capital and operational improvements. Both sides spending time and money on attorneys is doing nothing to improve a single passenger's travel across New York State and serves to only strain the relations between the state and Amtrak.

COMING UP IN THE SPRING 2005 RUN NEWSLETTER

- **Rail Forum in New York - January 2005**
- **RUN delegates riding the rails in the U.K., A report of their meetings with British rail officials.**
- **An Update on Rail Passenger Advocacy out West**
- **To get a copy call (207) 642-5161 if you're not already on the mailing list.**

Empire State Passengers Association

By Gary Prophet

The Empire State Passengers Association (ESPA) has been working hard to improve travel across the State of New York.

This has been difficult with the State and Amtrak currently involved in lawsuits from the NYS/Amtrak High Speed Rail Program of 1998. We are still attempting to pursue funds for selected much needed track improvements

and station and station parking improvements. Also, new rail stations are planned in downtown Buffalo and in Niagara Falls, NY. With the October 2004 timetable change, reservations were removed from many west of Albany trains. For the April timetable change, we are pursuing the return of Train 284 to operate 2 hours earlier, which would allow for a same-day return from west of Albany to Albany and which would allow for passengers to connect from west of Albany to the

Crescent (to Atlanta and New Orleans) and to the Silver Meteor to Orlando and Miami. Since Albany is the state capital, there is much demand from Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse passengers to be able to arrive, conduct business for about 6 hours, then return home. Also, service and capacity of the Lake Shore Limited has been improved and recent reports indicate that the dining services on the Lake Shore Limited have been improving as well.

A can-do attitude for rail in the west

By Philip Copeland

In October, my wife and I took a trip to the West, including Denver for the NARP board meeting and Salt Lake City and Los Angeles for the RUN meeting.

In Denver, as part of the NARP meeting we took a tour to Colorado Rail Car and saw the production process for the Diesel Multiple Units being built there, as well as a car from the defunct Phillip Morris train, which may be used for a cross-country luxury train.

We then went to the National Test Center outside of Pueblo for a tour. In Denver, we were taken on a charter trip on Denver Light Rail and were very impressed with the equipment they use and even more so with the plans for expansion, which have been voted in since our visit.

We rode Amtrak's California Zephyr, Train 5, to Salt Lake City and arrived 40 minutes early. In Salt Lake City, we visited the Mormon complexes there, which afforded us a chance to ride briefly on Salt Lake City light rail. Again the equipment was excellent and service equally good.

In Los Angeles, following our RUN meeting with the day passes generously afforded by MTA, we rode the Gold Line to Pasadena — another excellent experience.

These experiences on the three city light rail systems convinced me that if an area takes a "can do" attitude toward having a light rail system, it can be done and done well. I recently read about Minneapolis' light rail system, which is very successful and creating extensive economic development on its route that goes to the Mall of America and Minneapolis International Airport. In my home state of Ohio, it is hard to get much

interest in a natural route — Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati — a project that has been discussed and advocated for more than 25 years. Cleveland has a light and heavy rail commuter system, but this seems to be stuck on its present routes and logical expansions never seem to occur. From my hometown, 30 miles from Cleveland, a commuter rail system is very much needed, but nothing ever gets beyond studies and talk, despite the efforts of OARP to promote such projects. This is an example of why RUN is necessary. Coming together with other advocacy groups can help us learn about successful tactics to get the job done. If you aren't already a member, join us and work toward better rail passenger, commuter and light rail service.

Philip Copeland belongs to RUN and NARP and is a regional coordinator for OARP.



MTA Funding Crisis/A New York Story

By *Andrew Albert*

While it may appear that New York's seven million daily subway and bus riders go through crises every few years, this time it's different.

NEW PROJECTS

What has changed is the way the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which runs New York's subways, buses, and commuter trains funds its Capital Program. There are several large expansion projects on the drawing boards. Those include: The Second Avenue Subway, a much-needed and long hoped-for line to relieve congestion on the crowded Lexington Avenue Subway and the East Side Access Project, which will bring Long Island Railroad trains into Grand Central Terminal. One project, the Fulton Transportation Center, will make sense out of a very busy, mind-boggling junction in Lower Manhattan, and will connect the 1/9, R/W, E, 4/5, A/C, J/Z, 2/3, as well as the future Second Avenue Subway at Water Street, with

the PATH trains and ferries to New Jersey - all in an easy to understand, attractive environment!

In addition, there is the expanded South Ferry station at the tip of Lower Manhattan, which will allow 1/9 trains to "platform" the entire train, saving a good deal of time for commuters, who now must exit or enter from the first five cars only, and ease a bottleneck in the existing South Ferry "loop." Finally, there is the extension of the 7 Train to the far West Side, where it will serve the Javits Convention Center, and a possible West Side Stadium.

FUNDING SOURCES?

So - where is all the money for these projects coming from?

At one time, the State of New York and the City of New York contributed a good deal to the MTA's Capital Programs, but that support has dwindled in the last few years - to the point where the MTA found it necessary to issue bonds to support both the maintenance of the system (more than 1 billion dollars a year), as well as system expansion. As you might expect, the debt service from those bonds has come due, and it is now approximately 12 percent of the MTA's total budget, and growing!

FARE HIKES IN 2005

To help fill the gap, the MTA is raising fares in March 2005, on weekly and monthly passes, while leaving the base fare of \$2 intact. Commuter rail fares, as well as bridge and tunnel tolls are also going up. The express bus fare, now \$4 a ride,

is going up by a dollar. The price of a weekly subway/bus pass is going from \$21 to \$24, while the monthly pass is going from \$70 to \$76. There were to have been service cuts as well, but the amount the MTA receives from the Mortgage Recording Tax was greater than expected, so service cuts are put off until 2006, unless the State and City come through with more aid.

THE FUTURE

While the 2005 picture is much less grim, 2006 remains a huge problem, with a more than 1 billion dollar deficit looming. The fact that New York, with the greatest mass transit system in the country, and two-thirds of the transit users in the United States, should have to resort to fare hikes and service cuts is a sad testament to the way the City of New York and the State of New York value this incredible asset.

LISTEN, LEADERS!

Let's face it: Our transit system, which moves as many people in three days as Amtrak moves in a year, is a priceless asset, upon which the economy of the entire tri-state region, if not the entire country, depends.

If allowed to deteriorate, or not expand as the need dictates — New York will cease to be an important place to locate a business or home. And that has repercussions far beyond what state and city aid to the MTA would cost. Mayor Bloomberg and Gov. Pataki - are you listening?

Andrew Albert is the chair of the NYC Transit Riders Council, and riders' representative on the MTA Board.

WEB SITE PROPOSALS WANTED

RUN hopes to establish a web site in the near future and is looking for proposals from web-savvy individuals interested in undertaking such a project. Interested parties should submit a letter/proposal, including a summary of experience, examples of similar work and desired terms to:

Richard Rudolph, Chair, 55 River Road, Steep Falls, ME 04085

West Coast RUN Roundtable (Cont. From page 1)

And Paul Dyso, Rail PAC.

RAIL TRANSPORT ISSUES

The meeting began with RUN Chair Richard Rudolph providing a brief history of the organization, which was born out of frustration with problems that carriers' customer advisory committees and existing advocate/user organizations were facing all across the nation. RUN Board members and guests who were introduced provided a brief summary of rail transport issues in various parts of the country. Andrew Albert, RUN's vice chair, and chair of the New York City Transit Rider's Council, reported that the New York City Metropolitan Transportation Authority is facing a huge deficit, possible service cuts and is considering closing some token booths, and raising the cost of the weekly and monthly passes.

SEPTA, Chicago Transit Authority, Amtrak and other rail carriers are facing similar financial difficulties and are contemplating service cuts and fare hikes.

LOS ANGELES MTA UPDATE

Lynda Bybee, deputy executive officer for Community Relations at the Los Angeles MTA, who deserves praise for hosting the meeting, provided an update regarding the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority as it plans to expand and improve the quality of service.

The first stages of both the EXPO and East Side Gold Lines have both been funded. The Expo light rail line will run from Downtown Los Angeles to Culver City with a future second segment running out to Santa Monica. The Gold Line, which opened in 2003, runs from Downtown Los Angeles to Pasadena. A 5-mile extension into densely populated East Los Angeles is underway. A 24-mile extension east to San Bernardino County will open rail access to tens of thousands of commuters in the San Gabriel foothills. Bybee also addressed the issue of "not-in-my-backyard" resistance and residents' fears regarding transit lines. While the LA MTA has faced NIMBY resistance before, it has found that once the lines are up and running people quickly change their tune, especially as property values soar

rather than decline and there is no noticeable increase in crime.

PACIFIC SURFLINER PLANS

Our second guest speaker, Lynn Berberian, the Southwest district superintendent for Amtrak Passenger Service, updated the group about its Pacific Surfliner service. Amtrak's goal is to reduce running time from about 3 hours to 2 hours between Los Angeles and San Diego. A third track is being added between Los Angeles and Fullerton, and grade separations are being built at some grade crossings, but conflicts at Union Station are blocking further improvements in speed. Five more trains per day will be added on the Los Angeles-San Luis Obispo section of the Pacific Surfliner. One of these Amtrak trains will make Metrolink stops as well as Amtrak stops to accommodate early morning commuters. Berberian also alluded to the equipment constraints that are affecting service on the route south of L.A. The Pacific Surfliner started with 50, new 90-passenger bi-level coaches. While four Superliner cars are being used to replace wreck-damaged equipment, there are still capacity constraints - on some weekend Pacific Surfliner runs, there are more than 300 standees. Equipment constraints are also affecting service on long-haul routes.

Interference from Freight Operations has been the primary factor in the long delays on the Sunset Limited route. The Sunset limited had been experiencing delays commonly as long as 20 hours, the record was 52 hours, the average is now down to 6-7 hours. Staff shortages are also constraining service on this route.

FIGHTING NIMBY RESISTANCE

The last half of the meeting was devoted to addressing NIMBY resistance, funding shortfalls and how rail advocates can be more effective on the West Coast. One of the best ideas belonged to Michael Milroy, the meeting's note taker.

Call their bluff when NIMBYs say they don't want new transit lines in their neighborhoods, he told the group. Tell them instead that a 10-lane freeway will be built



Lynn Berberian of Amtrak

through their front yards and neighborhoods. NIMBYs dislike new freeways in their neighborhoods more than they hate new transit lines, he said. Another option would be to "let the region slowly strangle to death on its own congestion," he said, not an attractive option when the transit lines could solve their transportation problems.

FARE HIKES AND SERVICE CUTS?

The pros and cons of several different strategies were discussed in response to MTA's ten year plan, which calls for fare hikes and or service cuts to address an expected \$850 million shortfall. A gasoline tax of 1 cent in selected counties was one option discussed, but the state legislature is the only one that can approve a gas tax and the legislature has no incentive to approve gas taxes on a county-by-county basis. Propositions A (1980) and C (1990), which empowered Los Angeles County to allocate 25 percent of local sales tax funding for transportation to cities, has provided some of the capital for startup projects, but it is a major cause of balkanization of transit services in Los Angeles County. Ridership could be increased by encouraging businesses to buy monthly passes and offering them to workers at low or no cost, in exchange for specified service improvements from transit providers. Some businesses are already subsidizing transit passes for their employees, but it is not tied to specific service improvements. The consensus was that fare hikes were inevitable, but they should be phased in over time.

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It was extremely gratifying to see so many folks in the automobile-loving Los Angeles area advocating for more and better rail transit!



Georgia rail planners hope to someday operate trains from Atlanta to Savannah via Macon

(Cont. From page 5) **West Coast RUN Roundtable**

MetroLink's ten year plan calls for a 4 percent fare increase every two years. The MTA would do well to have such graduated increases in fares, rather than rare, but steep increases.

RAIL ADVOCACY WORKS

Several success stories were briefly mentioned, including the 15-year campaign of Friends of the Expo Line, who have been at work promoting this line, which one speaker remarked would not have been built without the support group.

Despite these successes, California rail advocates urged caution when describing the results of advocacy - making cause- and-effect claims. Advocacy often is only one of several factors, which cause a provider to take a certain action, they said. Making concise, factual arguments is the key to success.

A BRIGHT FUTURE

In closing, it was extremely gratifying to see so many folks in the automobile-loving Los Angeles area advocating for more and better rail transit!

The exchange of ideas and information was invaluable and the contacts made certainly should help move us forward in promoting more effective advocacy to achieve our goal of better passenger rail service throughout the country.



Spotlight on New transit? Look South!

By David Peter Alan
 "Look Ahead - Look South" was the motto of the old Southern Railway Company. Today, the South is the place to look for new commuter rail starts and new light rail lines, especially heritage-style streetcars.

TRAINS SOUTH TO NORTH

From Charlotte, North Carolina, trains will someday head north, through such towns as Huntersville, Mooresville and Davidson (home of Davidson College). In Georgia, plans are underway to initiate service from Atlanta to Macon, with a temporary terminal at Lovejoy. Georgia rail planners hope someday to operate trains from Atlanta to Savannah via Macon, a service that ran until Amtrak began operations in 1971. Even though Amtrak does not go to Nashville, commuter trains are slated to run from that city east to Harriman, on the old

Tennessee Central Line. The service will be called "Music City Star" and will start with three peak-hour runs. Plans call for five lines to eventually be established. Nashville and Charlotte trains may run as soon as two years from now.

LIGHT RAIL EXPANDS

Light rail is also expanding in the South, mostly in the form of Heritage-style streetcars. For many years, the historic St. Charles Avenue Line in New Orleans was the only streetcar service in the South. The recent success of the Main Street Trolley in Memphis and the TECO Line in Tampa, Florida, have prompted other Southern cities to initiate new trolley lines or revive old ones. Streetcars now run on Canal Street in New Orleans, for the first time since 1964. The McKinney Avenue Line in Dallas has been extended, as has the Charlotte Trolley. Central Arkansas Transit recently initiated "River Rail" in downtown Little Rock, North

Little Rock and over the bridge between the two cities. This writer was on hand for the first day of revenue service, November 8, 2004. These lines join the Galveston Island Trolley and modern light rail lines in Dallas and Houston, Texas, to provide light rail service in the Southern states. Norfolk, Va. and Raleigh, N.C. also have plans for "modern" light rail.

SERVICE LEVEL BUILDS

It is unlikely that the level of transit service in the South will ever equal that offered in such cities as New York, Chicago, Philadelphia or Boston. Still, much of the new transit growth is in the South, as transit becomes more available in every region of the nation.

David Peter Alan belongs to RUN and is the chair of the Lackawanna Coalition in New Jersey. He has traveled extensively in the United States and has ridden all of the existing lines mentioned in this article.

Joining up the railway (again)

In January, the UK Government announced a review of the railway industry. It was to focus on three key issues:

- * The structural and organizational changes needed to improve rail performance for its customers
- * The progress being made by increased investment and the means which can better control costs
- The regulation of safety.

Interested parties were invited to submit thoughts to the Secretary of State for Transport, Alistair Darling, and many did so.

OUR RESPONSE

In our response, Putting Passengers at the heart of rail services, which was based on extensive first-hand research both with passengers and non-rail users, we identified a number of 'basic requirements that any new system must address if it to meet the needs of passengers.' These included a focus on outputs, the provision of greater certainty (especially in timetable planning); greater accountability, and better decision making, from the industry; certainty of funding to drive and protect long term investment; and the removal of Her Majesty's Railway Inspectorate (our safety regulator) from its present home at the national Health & Safety Executive. Whilst the focus of the review was primarily on the rail industry, it was also a good opportunity to take a long, hard look at the way passenger representation was performing.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

The Government published its

conclusions in July in a White Paper (policy statement and legislative proposal) *The Future of Rail*, and published a new Railways Bill in November. The Bill provides for the Strategic Rail Authority to be abolished and for its powers to pass to the Department for Transport and Network Rail (the infrastructure owner and operator).

Stewart Francis, chairman of the Rail Passengers Council, welcomed the publication of the Railways Bill, saying: "This Bill paves the way for the kind of change on the railways that passengers have been telling us they want to see. They will be pleased that the complex, fragmented structure of the industry is being streamlined." He also sounded a note of caution, however "Passengers will reserve their final judgment until it becomes clear if the new structure can deliver their main priorities — trains that run on time and provide value for money."

Whilst feelings for the abolished SRA will vary, the Council believes it has made a significant impact over the last four years, pushing ahead big developments in the franchise



THE VOICE OF
RAIL PASSENGERS

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process and taking tighter control on major projects like the West Coast mainline upgrade. What passengers will want to see from the new structure is that 'someone' is taking charge and controlling costs so that passengers are getting a better service that doesn't cost more.

Stewart Francis also added: "Passengers will want to see how Network Rail will become a more passenger-focused business. Given the potential for its responsibilities to increase, it will need to develop from a company that not only concentrates on track and signals to one with a real passenger focus - we'll wait and see how that that transition

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SAVE THE DATE

The Rail Users' Network next rail forum/ board meeting will be held at the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's headquarters in New York City (347 Madison Ave) Saturday, March 19 from 1 - 5 pm. Besides regular board business, representatives from the New York MTA and Amtrak will be on hand to provide updates regarding various service initiatives. Stay tuned for further announcements about the meeting.

Please become a member of RUN..

From the run
board of
directors

The Rail users' newsletter is published quarterly by the Rail Users' network, a 501 9c) (3) nonprofit corporation.

Rail users' network newsletter invites passengers to share ways to improve passenger rail service. Send your contribution to:
Rail users' Network,
p.o. box 9373, St. louis, MO 63117

Don't be left behind at the station - join us!

Rail Users' Network
P.O. Box 9373
St. Louis, MO 63117

We invite you to become a charter member of the rail users' network, a new organization to represent rail passengers' interests in North America. RUN is based on the successful British model, which has been serving passengers since 1948. Run networks passengers, their advocacy organizations and their advisory councils together for the first time. In addition, run is working to help secure an interconnected system of rail services that passengers will use with pride. Run forms a strong, unified voice for intercity, regional/commuter and transit rail passenger interests. By joining together, sharing information, best practices and resources through networking, passengers will have a better chance of a vocal and meaningful seat at the decision making table.

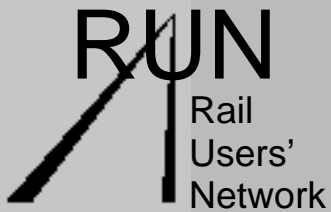
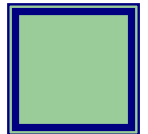
RUN members enjoy newsletters, an annual conference, a rail forum and other meetings to share information while working to improve and expand rail passenger service.

Membership is open to passengers, official advisory councils, advocacy groups, public agencies, tourist and convention bureaus, carriers and other profit-making organizations.

We certainly hope you will join this new organization - vital decisions and legislation affecting the nationwide rail transportation system are being made daily. Don't be left behind at the station!

Yearly dues

- \$35 for individual/family memberships
- \$100 for advisory committees and advocacy groups
- \$250 for government agencies and tourist/convention bureaus
- \$500 for carriers and profit making businesses



Uk rail (Cont. From page 7)

occurs. Similarly, with responsibility for safety transferring to the Office of Rail Regulation, we do not expect to see any dilution in the priority attached to ensuring a safe, reliable railway - passengers want to take safety as a given.

RPC TO BE ABOLISHED

The new Railways Bill also provides for the regional Rail Passenger Committees to be abolished, and for the Council to be reconstituted as a national, GB wide body. It will have up to 12 members appointed by the Secretary of State, plus one from each devolved government (Scotland, Wales and London) Stewart Francis, chairman of the Rail Passengers Council, was invited by the Secretary of State to develop proposals for the new organization. These were agreed in principle on 9th November, and made public on the day the Bill was published. The proposals clearly demonstrate the need for, and a commitment to ensuring, robust and effective consumer representation for all rail passengers.

NEW GROUP, NEW FUNCTION

It is proposed that the new body will have three main functions: to act as the rail passenger consumer organization, to help shape policies that affect passengers and to act as a national campaigning and lobbying organization. The new organization will focus resources on securing improvements in the quality of rail passengers' journeys, help thousands of passengers obtain better value for money, boost passenger involvement in its work, deal with complaints, and publish an annual national passenger survey and other research. A new role of Passenger Link Manager for each franchise/Network Rail route will ensure that resources are focused on securing real journey improvements for passengers. Stewart Francis said: "The new organization will reach out and engage with passengers in a variety of ways. Working with passengers at a

grass-roots level will ensure we have our finger on the pulse about the issues that matter to passengers - and it's a real opportunity for passengers to get more involved with our work."

Senior Council and Committee staff is now involved in the transition to the new Rail Passenger Council. It will be a smaller organization and will have to 'do more with less' so the change may not be without pain for our staff. We shall also have to work hard to find an alternative bank of experience, knowledge and enthusiasm as we say goodbye to our regional committee chairmen and members.

THE FUTURE

It's a busy time over here, but we hope this will be the last major upheaval for some time.

Despite the problems the railway faces, there is cause for optimism, as the Association of Train Operating Companies reminds us:

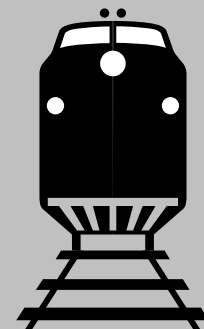
- * Britain has the fastest-growing railway in Europe. Over the past 10 years there has been a rise of more than 36 percent in the number of passenger kilometers traveled on Britain's railways.
- * Over a billion passenger journeys were made in 2003 - more than in any year since 1961 - on a network of 16,652 km compared with 28,100 km in the early 1960s.
- * 4,000 trains, serving 2500 stations, operate over 19,000 passenger services a day.
- * An average of 2.75 million passengers are carried daily.

We send our very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year to our Amtrak Rail Users' Network friends.

For more information about The Rail Passengers Council and Committees check out their web site at

www.railpassengers.org.uk

“We send our very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year to our Amtrak Rail Users' Network friends.”



Most rail companies now have schedules on the Internet. Check the following sites:

www.amtrak.com

www.rail.co.com

www.viarail.ca

The next time you're in Oregon, check out the new Lewis & Clark Explorer train excursion. The four-hour train trip follows the Columbia River through many scenic valleys. The train runs four days a week from Portland to Astoria, Oregon during the summer.

For up-to-date information call Amtrak at 1-800-USA-RAIL. You can also find information about this unique trip at www.amtrak.com, www.oregon.com/attractions/astoria_train/index.cfm



Volunteers Needed:

Our work is highly collaborative. We need volunteers to achieve our goals. Several committees are being established and will meet on a regular basis and need members' input: They include:

Legislative Outreach Committee

Newsletter/ Communications Committee

Conference Planning Committee

Fundraising Committee

Please join us. Thanks in advance for supporting our mission and helping us achieve it.

The Rail Users' Newsletter is published quarterly by the Rail Users' Network, a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit corporation. Current board members include:

Name	Location	Affiliation
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