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JOIN THE RAIL SUMMIT, TAKING PLACE ON SATURDAY, MAY 6, 2017, SPONSORED BY RUN, AAWA & AORTA, AND HELP FIGHT FOR BETTER RAIL SERVICE IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST!

By Richard Rudolph, Ph.D. Chair, Rail Users' Network

This exciting meeting is taking place Saturday, May 6, 2017 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Columbia City Theater, 4916 Rainer Ave. S. Seattle, WA. The conference, which is sponsored by the Rail Users' Network, All Aboard Washington, and the Association of Oregon Rail & Transit Advocates (AORTA), will examine what's happening in the Pacific Northwest regarding passenger rail and rail transit issues.

The focus will be on recent success stories, which projects are moving forward and which are standing still and could use some help. We will also examine what rail advocates are doing in other parts of the country to promote and expand passenger rail.

The day will begin with opening remarks given by Dr. Richard Rudolph, Chair of the Rail Users' Network and Lloyd Flem, the Executive Director of All Aboard Washington. The chairs

of the state House / Senate Transportation Committees, who are members of the Legislature's Rail Caucus, will also be on hand to greet and talk with attendees.

We are planning to invite a number of speakers, including Charles W. (Wick) Moorman, President and CEO of Amtrak, who will provide an overview of the progress that Amtrak is making to improve and expand
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MEASURE M PASSAGE BOOSTS L.A. RAIL PROJECTS

By Dana Gabbard

Four years ago, an effort to pass a local sales tax in Los Angeles County—Measure J, whose principal focus was to accelerate urban rail construction—narrowly failed to reach the two-thirds threshold that such local measures must meet in California to pass. Advocates regrouped after this disappointment and through the leadership of MoveLA, a broad coalition was assembled and a project list negotiated among diverse stakeholders. The result on Nov. 8 was a stunning success as the new sales tax effort, Measure M, passed with a nearly 70% “yes” vote.

The most immediate impact will be to enhance/accelerate two rail projects already underway. Measure M will enable the under-construction Crenshaw light rail line's 96th Street station to be a transfer station/hub between the rail line and Los Angeles International Airport via a people mover. This is due to be ready as early as 2021 and no later than 2023. And whereas section 3 of the Purple Line subway extension project (linking Beverly Hills and Westwood via Century City) with existing revenues was not slated for completion until 2036, with the passage of Measure M it will open in 2024. This means the entire nine-mile extension between Koreatown and Westwood will open simultaneously, instead of

a delay of 12 years after Sections 1-2 (Koreatown to Beverly Hills) open before section 3 would be constructed.

Many other rail projects through the county will be getting a boost from the measure, and the years ahead promise numerous rail line openings, as Los Angeles County boldly continues the urban rail revolution heralded at our Annual Conference last year. To learn more about what Measure M will do, see theplan.metro.net/

Dana Gabbard is a RUN Board member and executive secretary of Southern California Transit Advocates.

CINCINNATI STREETCAR LOOP OPENS



A Flyer promoting the opening of Cincinnati's new downtown loop streetcar line.

By **Bill Engel**

The long-awaited day arrived Friday, Sept. 9, 2016. The 3.6-mile long downtown loop streetcar line in Cincinnati opened! To introduce the public to the new way to get around, rides were free thru Sunday, Sept. 10. And ride the public did! The line's website reported more than 50,000 trips were taken during the first weekend of service.

A last minute development was the rebranding of the line as the Cincinnati Bell Connector. Cincinnati Bell Connector graphics will appear on the streetcars and at the stations. The \$340,000 per year for 10 years that the naming rights deal brings in will go toward funding operations of the streetcar. A new paint scheme was applied to the cars in time for the opening.

There are 18 stops on the Connector, which runs from the Ohio River, through the Central Business District, and on

to the Over-the Rhine neighborhood. Stop one is The Banks, located on Second Street near Great American Ball Park, home of the National League's Cincinnati Reds baseball team. The line then turns away from the Ohio River to run approximately north on Main Street. Stops two through six are on Main. The line then turns left (west) on Twelfth Street. Stop seven is at Twelfth and Vine. At Elm Street the line turns north again to follow Elm.

After four stops on Elm, which include ones near Music Hall and Findlay Market, the line heads east on Henry Street a short distance to reach Race Street, where it turns south to head back downtown. There are four more stops along Race, including one at Washington Park. When the tracks reach Central Parkway they turn east again a short distance to Walnut. At Walnut a right turn is made to follow that street south to Second. There are three stops on Walnut to serve the Public Library, Aronoff Center, and Fountain Square. Where Walnut reaches Second the line turns left (east) to restart the loop.

The sleek, modern streetcars used on the Cincinnati Bell Connector were assembled by CAF-USA in their Elmira, NY facility. They are a 100% low floor design. CAF-USA was one of five vendors to submit proposals. The first car arrived in Cincinnati late in 2015. All cars underwent extensive testing prior to entering revenue service. Testing included running more than one car on the line at a time to insure the power system could handle the load. When not out on the line, the streetcars are based at a maintenance facility located at the corner of Henry and Race Streets.

Shelters at the passenger stops along the line were designed by a Cincinnati-based firm, DNK Architects. They are intended to be easily recognized by riders and to protect them from the elements while they wait for the streetcar.

The fare system has a \$1 ticket valid for two hours and a \$2 all-day pass. A transfer from a connecting bus route gets you on for free. The Cincinnati bus system has an option called Metro Fare Deal. Pass holders of that pay 1/2 fare on the streetcar. Paper tickets are available at vending machines at the stops. Tickets must be validated and are subject to inspection by fare inspectors. There is a smartphone app for purchasing passes as well.

The streetcar is owned by the City of Cincinnati. The local transportation authority, Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (SORTA) manages it, while Transdev handles the day-to-day operations.

So far the streetcar appears to have been received well by the riders. Transdev reports ridership is 24% above projections. For some reason weekend ridership is higher than on weekdays. Cars begin running at 6:30 AM Monday thru Friday. Monday thru Thursday operations end at Midnight. They continue until 1:00 AM Friday (Sat AM). Cars don't start until 8:00 a.m. Saturday but continue until 1:00 a.m. Sunday. Sundays and holidays have the least service with cars operating only between 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m.

What does the future hold for the Cincinnati Bell Connector? One idea is to extend it to the University of Cincinnati (UC). Both the UC President and the Student Government of UC support the plan. UC has in the neighborhood of 44,000 students. That is a lot of potential riders.

For more about the Cincinnati Bell Connector go to their website at www.cincinnati-bellconnector.com. Another source of info are the monthly E-Newsletters of All Aboard Ohio. Their archive is at www.allaboardohio.org. Both sources were invaluable to this writer in preparing this article.

Bill Engel is a RUN Board Member based in Clinton, OH.

MTA SETS FARE PROPOSALS FOR 2017

By *Andrew Albert*

As has been the pattern since 2009, when the every-other-year fare hikes began, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority has proposed the lowest fare increases in some time beginning in March, 2017, for New York's subways, buses, commuter rails, and the bridges & tunnels operated by the MTA. The fare increases would take place on March 19, 2017. A series of public hearings will take place in the first two weeks of December, in each of New York City's boroughs, as well as in most of the suburban counties served by the MTA.

When the biennial fare increases first began, they achieved a 7.5% yield, which of course meant somewhat higher than that in actual fare increases. After a few years of that pattern, and because of public outcry over what this would mean for fares & tolls over the long term—possibly pricing the New York City area out of reach for many—the fare increases were trimmed to a 4% yield, or 2% per year, roughly the rate of inflation. This time, the MTA is proposing a 4% fare increase—not yield—which makes for the lowest rate of increase in quite some

time. Of course, for those who will find a fare hike onerous, this is of little consolation. And—unlike in some other years (and in some neighboring transit properties across the Hudson River)—this fare hike comes with service improvements, not service cutbacks. Indeed, the 2nd Avenue subway is due to start soon, possibly by year's end, and the re-introduction of the W train has already taken place. In addition, there are service increases on the Long Island Rail Road (year-round weekend service on the Greenport Branch, continuation of some Montauk branch summer services) and Metro-North Commuter Railroad, and for motorists, a somewhat speedy conversion to open-road tolling, which will allow vehicles to speed through toll gates without stopping. So while fare increases are never pleasant, this time they do come with improved services.

This time, the MTA is offering two fare options for subways and buses—but both come with a small increase in the 7- and 30 day unlimited passes. The 7-day pass will rise from \$31 per week to \$32 per week, a 3.2% increase. The 30-day pass will rise from \$116.50 to \$121, a 3.9% increase. The two options are for all the other types of MetroCards. On option

one, the base fare of \$2.75 would not rise, but the discounts on the bonus Metrocards (those purchased with at least a round-trip) would drop from an 11% bonus to a 5% bonus. On option two, the base fare would rise to \$3.00, but the bonuses would rise from the current 11% to 16%. On the commuter railroads, there would be a maximum increase of 3.75% for those who purchase monthly or weekly tickets, while those who purchase peak or off-peak tickets would see a 4% increase. No monthly increases would be higher than \$15, which would be much higher for the farther-out stations if not for this cap. Tolls would rise by a higher amount for those who use cash, vs. those who use EZ Pass.

So which is the better deal for transit riders? It really depends on how you use the system, and how frequently you ride. Fifty-three percent of NYC Transit trips are made with unlimited ride passes on either the weekly or monthly MetroCard. More than 40% of trips are made utilizing the bonus MetroCard. Very few trips, in the area of 1.4%, are made with the single-ride card, so it is quite possible that the best deal for the majority of the system's frequent riders may

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NJ TRANSIT RIDERS GET A ROUGH RIDE, AS POLITICS TIGHTENS ITS GRIP ON TRANSIT

By *David Peter Alan*

The past few months have been rough for transit riders in the Garden State, as political dramas continue to play out in Trenton and advocates push for favorable resolutions for the riders.

A fatal train crash at the historic Hoboken Terminal on Sept. 29 disrupted service for eleven days. The terminal building was cordoned off during that time and New Jersey Transit (NJT) ran no trains into or out of the terminal. Other nearby services—ferries, NJT light rail, PATH (Port Authority Trans-Hudson) trains to New York and nearby New Jersey points, and local buses—were restored later that day, or the next day. NJT ran shuttle buses from the Secaucus Junction Station to Jersey City, where riders could take the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail to Hoboken, a trip which took this writer 72 minutes. Some trains which normally originated at Hoboken instead ran from Secaucus, and some trains on other lines were converted to shuttles that ran from an outlying terminal. The station reopened on Monday, Oct. 7 with half of its tracks in service and most, but not all, of the “regular” schedule operating. Full service returned the following Monday, with all except two tracks in service.

Advocates praised NJT rail managers and employees for bringing service back to the station so quickly. They had been concerned about the possibility of an extended outage. They criticized NJT for its failures to communicate with the riding public about the actual train schedules: video monitors, the NJT website, the “next departure” phone system and the mobile phone app all gave information about the “regular” schedule that normally ran, which was misleading. They also gave the agency low marks for general preparedness, citing NJT’s difficulties recovering after Hurricane Sandy four years ago.

In a surprise move, the New Jersey legislature enacted a measure, which Gov. Chris Christie signed, that allows NJT to cut service by up to two hours, without prior notice to the public. The measure began as a reaction to the agency’s decision last year to eliminate the last trains of the evening on several lines, which reduced the span of service by 45 minutes on the Morris & Essex Line and up to one hour and 42 minutes on the southern portion of the North Jersey Coast Line. The original intent of the legislation was to require NJT to notify the public about any planned service reductions, but the law was amended to allow reductions of up to two hours whenever management chooses to implement them, which makes the riders’ position worse than it had been previously. Advocates in the state are now working on forming alliances with other organizations, in the hope of getting the offending provision repealed after Christie leaves office at the beginning of 2019.

As national politics dominated the news during the election campaign, New Jersey’s political battles continued to rage, and they affected transit riders. There were no state offices on the ballot this year; but New Jersey will elect a new governor and the State Assembly next year. In all likelihood, the next governor will be a Democrat, since Christie’s approval rating has sunk as low as 21%, and his lieutenant governor, Kim Guadagno, has publicly disagreed with him about the disposition of the newly-refinanced Transportation Trust Fund (TTF). It is financed by the user fee on gasoline and diesel fuel, and is used for highway projects and for transit-related capital projects. Democrats control both houses of the legislature, but not by a two-thirds majority. Christie negotiated a compromise that allowed a 23-cent increase in the user fee on gasoline and diesel fuel, which took

effect on Nov. 1. In return, Christie, who has always campaigned on an anti-tax platform, got a reduction in the state’s sales tax, and the estate tax will also be eliminated. The legislation could not dedicate the money from the increase in the user fee on motor fuels solely to transportation projects; a move which required approval by the voters. Guadagno came out against that proposal, which angered Christie and caused him to speculate that her opposition was due to a “misunderstanding.” The voters approved the measure by a seven-point margin, but it will provide significant day-to-day relief for transit riders.

The TTF does not earmark any money for the operating side of NJT, whose state-aid from the legislature fell by 90% between 2008 and 2016 (\$32.7 million from the 2008 level of \$330 million). The 2017 budget brings it up to \$109 million; 42% of the 2008 level, but advocates still express their concern that the newly-increased amount falls far short of the cost of meeting the demand for transit around the state, plus trains and buses to New York and buses from South Jersey to Philadelphia. The Lackawanna Coalition has called for secure, stable and sufficient funding for transit operations and community transportation, mainly operated by the counties. Other advocates also continue to call for improved operating support for transit. Advocates have also criticized the NJT capital budget, because it does not earmark any funding for new tunnels under the Hudson River and into New York’s Penn Station. Amtrak plans to build these tunnels as part of its Gateway Project, but advocates want tunnels to be constructed sooner than on Amtrak’s planned schedule. Advocates also objected to some of the projects on the agency’s list, saying that the money should be spent on new tunnels, instead. (Continued on page 19)

CANADA REPORT, NOVEMBER 2016

By Ken Westcar

Promises, promises...

There have been few material passenger rail developments in Canada since the last report. VIA continues to make seemingly impossible promises on a completely new route between Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto using a long-abandoned Canadian Pacific track bed but has steadfastly refused to release any engineering, financial and regulatory details. The press has retained a healthy skepticism but many, who don't understand the complexities of building new rail infrastructure, continue to listen for the re-emergence of long-silent train whistles and the screeching of brakes at their local station. The saga continues...

Metrolinx, private capital and votes

Metrolinx, the provincially owned, Greater Toronto/Hamilton Area (GTHA) operator of GO Trains and buses is touting its Regional Express Rail (RER) and electrification program as opportunities

for public/private partnerships. According to a contact who attended the provincially sponsored conference in Toronto on Nov. 14 and 15, the pitch from Metrolinx and the province was unconvincing. That's because Metrolinx is a political tool, albeit operationally successful, that currently prioritizes projects as part of the incumbent government re-election campaign. Private capital will have extreme difficulty seeing any potential return under such priorities unless it's absolutely guaranteed by the provincial government.

Political priorities are also driving GO Train service improvements between Toronto Union station and Kitchener, a burgeoning tech community west of Toronto. GO had originally kicked this can down the road for 2021 or thereabouts but, with a provincial election in 2018, the Liberal government sees votes, in line-side communities, at risk. So, they are prioritizing this with infrastructure improvements to free up track slots and raise speeds with the intent of providing all-day service including late evening trains to move people to and from cultural and sports events in downtown Toronto.

To some extent it's also being driven by seemingly entrenched highway congestion south of Kitchener that no amount of lane additions seems able to mitigate (heard that before?).

Visiting an alternative universe

Changing tack, I spent a week in Austria in early November riding main line and preserved narrow-gauge railways with a tour group from the UK. It seemed like an alternative universe in terms of mobility and was both uplifting and depressing. Uplifting because the Vienna area transit system is superb, trust-based and easy to use and the federal government has seen fit to invest heavily in fast regional and international trains. For long-distance trains, the design norm is 125 mph. Regional services connect many communities of 20,000 or more with Vienna and other major cities on a maximum two-hour interval. Ticket pricing is simple and excellent value.

We rode from Vienna to Graz and back on Siemens "Railjet" stock pooled by the Austrians and Czechs and it was the epitome of best practice in intercity train travel. This is how you treat fare paying passengers with respect, so little wonder the trains are frequently sold out. Depression took over as I realized just how far behind North America is on public transportation and how it detracts from our quality of life and ultimately our global competitiveness. Further salt was rubbed into my mental wounds when we arrived back at Toronto Pearson airport to find escalators and moving walkways out of service and the immigration hall like a termite nest that had been kicked over. Yes, we have a long, long way to go.

Ken Westcar is a Board Member of Transport Action Ontario.



OBB Railjet economy class seating and information system

REPORT FROM THE SOUTHWEST

By *J.W. Madison*

Albuquerque “Rapid Transit”

Construction of our new BRT line, known as “ART,” has begun along East and West Central Ave. Pretty medians have been torn out and replaced with smooth pavement, supposedly to prep for the right of way, although I don’t follow their process. No trenching or deep cuts so far. The thing may just run between two curbs.

There was a ballot question in the recent election as to whether the public approves of a future ballot question, namely, should the “ART” project continue. By which time, barring some unheard-of injunction or something, construction will be so far along that it’s hard to imagine erasing it. This pre-question question —non-binding, mind you—passed, for what that’s worth.

Businesses along Central are suffering due to this construction, including one of my favorite cafes, which in 50 years has never hurt for business. The recent morning that I ate breakfast there, it was damn near empty. Efforts have been under way to assist these endangered businesses, and a couple of websites have been set up (www.brtaqb.com , and www.sbrcabq.com), but I’m informed that funding has not come through for these efforts, and tonight’s newscast (Nov.16) informs us that city revenue in general has shriveled, and may not swell again for several years.

The construction of the Phoenix-Tempe-Mesa (AZ) LRT line a few years ago was

GOOD NEWS FROM STARK COUNTY, OH

By *Bill Engel*

Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 8 was an important day for the bus riders of the Stark Area Regional Transportation Authority (SARTA). On the ballot as Issue 51 was a 10-year, 0.25% sales tax renewal to support SARTA operations. Voters in the county

also a kick in the head for businesses along the right of way. But these cities set up various programs to help these businesses weather the construction period, and are doing the same to ease the pain being caused by the NW Extension of the same route. If you want to dig into this, start with www.valleymetro.org . Look for Business Outreach.

I believe things are probably pretty good now for the survivors of this construction, since the LRT line has pulled in ridership even beyond the rosy projections of the planners. Not only that, but farebox recovery is at about 45%.

Other differences between Phoenix and Albuquerque are that the former built LRT, not BRT, and the Phoenix line goes a lot of places people already wanted to go.

The Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex

On Nov. 1 and 2, I spent some time riding parts of the DART system. I’m here to declare that the Trinity Railway Express (TRE) commuter service between downtown Dallas and downtown Fort Worth is still clean, prompt, and well-staffed. Same for the DART Light Rail Vehicles.

I’m afraid I can’t say the same for the spanking new downtown Dallas Streetcar. The car I rode was clean and snazzy, but the ride was rough and shaky. I was reminded of driving a truck with a nail-studded piece of wood stuck in one tire. I also smelled the brakes and

handily passed the measure by about a 2-1 margin! There was a good chance that SARTA would not have been able to continue operating if the renewal had failed.

SARTA operates bus routes mainly in Stark County but does have limited service to Akron, OH and to a VA medical center in

the station-announcement “tv screen” in my car flashed a couple of wrong station stops (!). Hope they get after these problems soon; the rest of the DART system is still a model for cities of the West, and an indictment of those stuck in the Bus-Only rut.

The Southwest Chief

In Pueblo County, Colorado, ballot measure 1A passed. This is exciting because 1A allocates \$7 million for track and station improvements in anticipation of future Amtrak service from La Junta to Pueblo. I’m not sure if this money is in the bag, or just voted into the realm of possibility. Jim Souby of ColoRail will know the details.

Either way, this is big news. Although Rails Inc. would still prefer to see a La Junta / Pueblo / Trinidad re-route, the La Junta / Pueblo “stub-end” is sure as hell nothing to cry about either. And it could be extended to Trinidad someday.

The fixation of Rails Inc. on the first-mentioned of these two changes is based on the prospect of bringing Albuquerque-Denver passenger rail about 85 miles closer to reality, which might in turn offer a greater inducement for expansion of Denver RTD or other commuter service from Denver to Pueblo. I fantasize a sibling to the *Hoosier State* here.

J.W. Madison is a RUN Board Member and president of Rails Inc, based in Albuquerque, NM. for over four months, even though they

Cleveland. From time to time a proposal to connect Canton to Akron and Cleveland via rail surfaces but that plan is not active at this time. For more info about SARTA, go to www.sartaonline.com.

Bill Engel is a RUN Board Member based in Clinton, OH.

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A Sound Transit commuter train.

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passenger service in the nation as well as plans for the future. Washington State's Secretary of Transportation will talk about the state's plan to improve and expand passenger rail service. A spokesperson from Sound Transit will also be invited to talk about the agency's smashing success on election day and plans going forward. Proposition One, which Puget Sound voters passed, is a \$54-billion, 25-year program which will add 62 miles of additional light rail with stations serving 37 new areas, growing the existing system to 116 miles between Tacoma, Seattle, Everett and the Eastside.

The morning session will close with a Trains Infrastructure Panel moderated by Lloyd Flem, the Executive Director of All Aboard Washington. Representatives from Talgo, BNSF, Brotherhood of Locomotive and Engineers and Trainmen and Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers will be on hand to talk about their ideas for expanding and improving passenger rail service.

During lunch, participants will have an opportunity to share information and experiences regarding their efforts and those of their organizations to promote passenger rail and rail transit in their local areas.

The afternoon will be devoted to three different panel presentations. The first, which will be moderated by Harvey Bowen, Board Member of All Aboard Washington, will focus on the Status of Passenger Rail Advocacy in the Pacific Northwest and efforts underway to expand passenger rail, transit rail in Oregon and Washington State.

The second panel, which will be moderated by Dr. Rudolph, who is also a Director of the Maine Rail Group, will focus on what RUN members are doing in other parts of North America. The panelists will share their ideas, experiences and strategies for achieving short and long-term goals to improve and expand passenger rail/transit services in their respective bailiwicks.

The final panel of the day will be moderated by Andrew Albert, Chair, NYC Transit Riders Council, a legislatively-mandated group appointed by the Governor of the State of New York, with members chosen by the Mayor of New York City, the Public Advocate of NYC, and the five Borough Presidents. This panel will focus on the best ways to advocate for users of rail and transit systems in the Seattle area. The panel will examine both legislatively-mandated advocacy groups, as well as non-legislatively mandated. It will look at how working with transit columnists, community groups, business people and legislators can help make the rail experience better for consumers.

Participants attending the conference will also have an opportunity to sample public transportation in the Seattle area, with an optional tour on Friday, May 5. In the

morning, we will ride the popular and expanding streetcar line and light rail lines in the city. We will visit the two newly restored train stations and other points of interest in the city. In the afternoon, we will ride a Sounder Commuter train to Tacoma where we will see some of the highlights of the city and ride Tacoma Link, one of the nation's shortest light rail lines. If time permits, we will also ride the monorail to the Space Needle and take a ferry ride.

The registration fee of \$55 (until March 31; \$60 after that; and \$65 at the door) includes morning refreshments, lunch, an afternoon refreshment break, and all conference materials/handouts. If you wish to stay in Seattle before or after the conference, we suggest that you look at Seattle's official tourism website, www.visitseattle.org.

The Columbia City Theater can be reached from downtown Seattle using Sound Link's Light Rail line. Participants coming into the King Street station should walk over to the International District/Chinatown station stop and take a southbound train to Columbia Station. The theater is in walking distance of the station—it is four short blocks away.

Please join us at what promises to be a very exciting, worthwhile event. Participants can register and make payment on RUN's website, railusers.net, or via regular mail. Checks should be sent to RUN, Box 8015, Portland, Maine 04104. More details concerning the conference will be announced as arrangements are made on our website, and will also appear in the Spring issue of the *RUN Newsletter*.

RUN'S ANNUAL MEETING IN LAFAYETTE, IN

By Phil Strebby

On Saturday, Oct. 8, nearly 40 passenger rail advocates and interested private citizens met in the recently remodeled Riehle Depot in downtown Lafayette, IN. The primary organizer, Phil Strebby, Treasurer of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance, contacted the speakers, provided the physical arrangements for the meeting, and ample refreshments for all. (IPRA picked up the bill for the refreshments.)

One of the purposes of the meeting was to introduce the audience to the Rail Users' Network (RUN) headed by Dr. Richard Rudolph. Dr. Rudolph described the organization as one which represents the concerns of all rail passengers (long distance, commuter and rail transit riders) and encourages members to join citizens' advisory boards, and encourages "best practices" by our nation's railroads. RUN is outspoken about passenger rail safety and, using the Lac-Megantic oil train rail disaster to illustrate safety issues, supports the idea of two operating persons in each locomotive. RUN produces four newsletters a year, holds its annual meeting and regional conference each year in different locations across North America. RUN's next regional conference, which is being co-sponsored by All Aboard Washington, will be held in Seattle on May 6, 2017. There was a nominations committee report and Directors were selected for three-year terms.

Next, Marc Magliari, Public Relations and Communications Director for Amtrak, provided a summary of Amtrak's operations with particular attention to Indiana. He described this time for Amtrak as "pivot time" with the news of the incoming system president, Wick Moorman. Everyone has been encouraged that Moorman has consented to leaving retirement to lead Amtrak in the next few years. Magliari reported

that most of Amtrak's long-term debt is gone. But he also admitted that Amtrak's reservation system was "rather vintage" and needs major work.

Magliari then related why the Beech Grove repair facility was so important to Amtrak and to Indiana. There are over 500 employees at Beech Grove, which results in a \$54-million annual payroll. Most major repair, reconditioning, and equipment overhauls for the entire national system are done at Beech Grove.

He then listed a number of station improvements ranging from Waterloo, IN to major renovations at Chicago's Union Station. He indicated that there may be oncoming improvements at South Bend, as well.

Finally he turned to other Midwestern state issues: Illinois has increased frequency on the Chicago-St. Louis route, which has resulted in a 161% increase in ridership. "Increased frequency leads to much higher ridership." Magliari also stated that there was no agreement concerning shifting the route of the *Lake Shore Limited* to Michigan stations, thus by-passing several Indiana stops. He then opened the floor to questions: Springfield, IL rail realignment is under study at this time; freight railroads have benefited from improvements requested by Amtrak, such as raising of the rail-bed in North Dakota, which helped BNSF trains, as well as the *Empire Builder*. Multi-state cooperation (Kansas-Colorado-New Mexico) has helped save the original route of the *Southwest Chief*.

Win Wingfield, spokesman for the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), next presented information about the state's interest in supporting passenger rail in Indiana. Wingfield reported that there was considerable progress on the Indiana Gateway, which was designed to reduce freight and

passenger congestion in the northwest corner of the state. The federal government helped greatly with a \$71.4-million expenditure. Also, the State of Indiana through INDOT continues to support the South Shore Line known officially as the Northwest Indiana Commuter District with \$13 million annually for 20 trains each weekday.

Turning to the *Hoosier State*, Wingfield reviewed the history of that train and Indiana's official role since 2008. He noted the peril of nearly losing the train caused by passage of the Federal Passenger Rail Reform and Reinvestment Act (2008) which required states to take over financial support of short-distance trains. Indiana's reluctance to support the train was met by various local leaders (Lafayette, West Lafayette, Tippecanoe County, Rensselaer, and Crawfordsville) and passenger rail advocates. After 23 months of negotiations, INDOT was able to reach an agreement with Iowa-Pacific Holdings, Inc. to operate the *Hoosier State* four days a week.

Wingfield showed a slide indicating responsibilities of the co-operating entities. Indiana Department of Transportation is responsible for fixed payout, contract management, and mechanical inspection. Amtrak provides the operating crews, works with the host railroads, and handles ticketing and reservations. Iowa-Pacific provides the train equipment and maintenance, on-board service and marketing.

Wingfield also showed graphs indicating that *Hoosier State* ridership is increasing after a rough start in the earliest weeks. Revenue has also markedly increased. "On-time performance" of the *Hoosier State* has much improved and customer satisfaction was recently ranked as highest of all short-distance trains in the Amtrak system.

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RUN'S ANNUAL MEETING IN LAFAYETTE, IN

(Continued from page 8)

Wingfield closed with a few remarks about INDOT's continuing interest and support of the Hoosier State. The CSX switch east of Crawfordsville [Ames] is being upgraded; INDOT is cooperating with a Purdue University engineering class in conducting a rider survey to be done both at stations and on-board the *Hoosier State*.

Ed Ellis, President of Iowa-Pacific Holdings, was the last speaker of the morning session. His generally upbeat presentation covered the following topics:

- (a) Paying attention to detail to make riding experience more enjoyable because other factors such as faster and more trains cannot as readily be met.
- (b) Meeting or exceeding expectations of business class service.
- (c) Planning to add another coach for peak times, also as a relief coach when others need to be serviced.
- (d) Establishing a social media presence to increase ridership.

Then Ellis turned to the more long-term challenges concerning any attempts to increase frequency or operating speeds. This will be very expensive requiring many more miles of welded rather than bolted rail, improved signal systems, and additional sidings. He referred specifically to track sections between Indianapolis and Crawfordsville as well as the rest of the route to Chicago. As for a "daily" *Cardinal*, Ellis felt that would not be likely soon because of immense infrastructure needs, particularly in the New River Gorge area of West Virginia. A "daily" *Cardinal* would require improvements costing as much as half a billion dollars.

In the afternoon, there were short appearances by Mayor John Dennis of West Lafayette and Mayor Tony Roswarski of Lafayette. Both expressed support for the *Hoosier State* and were encouraged by the increased ridership, revenue, and on-time performance. Mayor Dennis particularly referred to the greater number of international students who do not have

cars and who do have a need and interest in public transportation. Mayor Roswarski congratulated those who had rallied to save the *Hoosier State*. He reported on ongoing improvements in the Depot and the pedestrian ramp being completed on the west side of the Amtrak platform. He also noted the \$26-million development of the Old National Bank and hinted that a promenade on the west side of that property will be developed in the coming months with the help of a \$2.3-million grant from an unnamed foundation. The mayors' remarks were warmly received, because audience members knew that without their support the *Hoosier State* would not be running today.

During the afternoon session of the RUN meeting in Lafayette, the assembled group heard from Arvid Olson, Dylan Hayward, and Steve Coxhead. Chairman of the Transportation Committee of the Greater Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, Olson made a full report of a meeting he attended in Cincinnati dealing with building a *Cardinal* coalition. Ninety persons attended that meeting. Then Olson turned to the historic efforts made in Indiana to save the *Hoosier State*. Amtrak needed to get locomotives and passenger cars to the Beech Grove shops, and so it created a "hospital train" to move equipment back and forth from those shops. A revenue passenger car was added so that CSX could not delay the Amtrak train because it hadn't been carrying passengers. But the trains often ran late with a minimum of on-board amenities. Just about the time that the Chamber of Commerce was getting reports from a study titled "From Good to Great," the community learned it might lose the *Hoosier State*—as feeble as it was.

At this point, the Chamber of Commerce, along with investigative journalism by the *Lafayette Journal-and-Courier*, helped develop a major Summit meeting drawing around 300 interested persons. Representatives from Amtrak, INDOT, several mayors, a Lafayette industrialist, a Purdue student all made presentations. That Summit held in August of 2014 alerted State Representative

Randy Truitt and State Senator Brandt Hershman that there could be sustained interest in the public for the state of Indiana to help rescue the *Hoosier State*.

The results of that meeting and additional behind-the-scenes work caused the legislators to raise the issues in the next General Assembly. INDOT, formerly mostly a state road and highways department, also took notice. Some change in leadership there helped.

Olson has continued to emphasize that our community cares most about economic development and growth. Millennials are not as in love with private automobiles as previous generations. Olson concluded with a PowerPoint program indicating several next steps that should be taken to increase public use and support for the train. On June 9, 2016, a "Hoosier Train Day" was held to celebrate how far we had come and how much further we needed to go.

Dylan Hayward of the Midwest High Speed Rail Association spoke about how the *Hoosier State* could funnel people into Chicago for connections onto the much improved Illinois passenger rail system. He reported on ongoing efforts in Illinois to develop a "higher speed" service between Chicago, Springfield and St. Louis.

Steve Coxhead, President of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA) closed the meeting outlining IPRA's objectives. Short-term objectives include pressing for infrastructure improvements, more frequencies and higher speeds, "incremental" not high speed. Longer-term objectives include the development of a seven-day a week *Cardinal*, expansion of daily service to Cincinnati and to Louisville, development of Chicago-Ft. Wayne-Lima-Columbus Ohio route and examine other prospects for public-private-partnerships in rail service. The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Phil Strey is Treasurer of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance.

THE WEST DOMINATES NEW STARTS IN 2016; NEW STREETCAR LINES OPEN IN OTHER PLACES, TOO

By David Peter Alan

Many of the new rail transit starts in 2016 occurred in the West, while new streetcar lines appeared in other places, as well. Los Angeles, Denver and Seattle expanded their rail transit networks significantly. New streetcar lines appeared in Seattle, Dallas, Kansas City, Cincinnati, New Orleans and Washington, DC. There were a few other extensions that began service in other cities, and it is still possible that the first segment of the Second Avenue Subway in New York City may start this year.

Modern-style streetcars made their debut in Cincinnati, Kansas City, Dallas and Washington, DC. The DC Streetcar began rolling on Saturday, Feb. 27 on H Street and Benning Road. It is 2.4 miles long and has eight stops, beginning within walking distance of Union Station and linked to the station by a walkway. The line did not run on Sundays at first, but Sunday service was added on Sept. 18. The line had been plagued by numerous delays, and pre-revenue testing lasted 15 months. Then-Mayor Vincent Gray had wanted the line to act as the start of an extensive streetcar system in the city, but current Mayor Muriel Bowser shelved the other streetcar projects.

An even more politically-charged streetcar began operation in Cincinnati on Sept. 9 (see article on page 2). It is now called the Cincinnati Bell Connector, because of a large donation from that company, and it operates in downtown Cincinnati and the Over-the-Rhine (OTR) neighborhood. The line is 3.6 miles long and is scheduled to take 32 minutes to complete the circuit. It can take as long as 45 minutes, because the line runs in mixed traffic. Still, the mere expectation of the streetcar's appearance has been a strong shot in the arm in OTR, which is filled with historic buildings from the mid-19th Century, but was one of the city's roughest neighborhoods a decade

ago. The streetcar project survived two ballot initiatives designed to kill it, and the current mayor opposed it strongly. He relented when he was advised that it would cost less to complete the line than to return the grant which the city had received to build it.

Kansas City has a new streetcar, too. It runs for 2.2 miles, from Union Station to the City Market, on the north side of the city's downtown area. The KC Streetcar started running on Friday, May 6 and boarded its one millionth rider on Sunday, Oct. 7. The following Saturday, the KC Streetcar Authority held a celebration, which it called "Thanks a Million, K.C.!" The KC Streetcar does not charge a fare.

Dallas also opened a modern-style streetcar line. It began service on April 13 and was extended to the Bishop Arts Center district on August 29. At that time, the Dallas Streetcar expanded from limited weekday service to full service. The line starts in back of Union Station, about one block from the platforms for Amtrak's *Texas Eagle*, Trinity Railway Express (TRE) trains to Fort Worth, and Dallas Area Regional Transit (DART) light rail. The cars were manufactured by the Brookville Equipment Company (mostly known for restoring vintage cars). They have no seats in the center section, which is reserved for standees and bicycles. The Dallas Streetcar does not charge a fare, but connecting DART shuttle buses do.

Seattle now has a second streetcar line. The First Hill Streetcar has joined the South Lake Union Streetcar on the city's streets with the start of service on Saturday, Jan. 23. The new line is 2.5 miles long, has 10 stops and connects with Central Link light rail. It does not connect with the other streetcar in town, the South Lake Union Streetcar, but there are plans to build the Center City Connector to bring them together. The lines are operated by King County Metro.

Not to be outdone, New Orleans has a new streetcar line, too. The North Rampart / St. Claude Streetcar Line opened for service on Sunday, Oct. 2. It uses the same red cars that run on Canal Street and Loyola Avenue, which gives the line a "heritage" look. The new line combines the existing Loyola Avenue segment from the Union Passenger Terminal (which Amtrak trains and long-distance buses use) to Canal Street with the new segment along the boundary of the French Quarter and the Tremé, the city's historically black neighborhood. The line runs downriver toward the Bywayer neighborhood, and there are plans for future expansion in that direction.

There are new light rail extensions in Dallas, Seattle, Phoenix and Los Angeles. The latter city has extended two lines as part of its ambitious program to build new rail transit. The Gold Line was extended eastward from its former terminal at Sierra Madre Station in Pasadena to Azusa, a distance of 11.5 miles. Service began on March 5. There are plans to extend the line an additional 12.3 miles to Montclair, which is now served by Metrolink commuter trains. On May 20, the Expo Line started service to Santa Monica, 6.6 miles beyond its original terminal in Culver City. There are more projects under way: the Crenshaw/LAX Project to bring light rail to the airport, the Regional Connector Transit Project to link light rail lines downtown, and the Purple Line Extension, which will bring subway service further west under Wilshire Boulevard.

The large light rail projects opened in Los Angeles, but there were small light rail expansions which opened in three cities this year. Seattle extended its Central Link light rail at both ends. The University Link project pushed it northward by 3.15 miles to the University of Washington campus, with the opening of two new

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THE WEST DOMINATES NEW STARTS IN 2016

(Continued from page 10)

stations on March 19. There is also a new 1.6-mile extension on the southern end of the line. The Angle Lake Station, a park-and-ride facility south of Sea-Tac International Airport, opened for service on Saturday, Sept. 24. In Phoenix, Valley Metro's light rail line was extended 3.2 miles. The Northwest Extension also opened on March 19. On Monday, Oct. 24, DART in Dallas extended its Blue Line light rail three miles to the south, with the addition of two new stops. The line now goes to the Dallas campus of the University of North Texas.

Regional rail (also known by the misnomer "commuter rail") has expanded this year, too. The 24-mile Perris Extension of the Metrolink system in Los Angeles opened on June 6. It runs between Riverside and South Perris, running through downtown Perris, on weekdays only. As with several other Metrolink lines, service is limited.

Denver has two new lines, as well. The A Line runs 23 miles, from Union Station to Denver International Airport. It is the first such line in the Mile High City, and the cars resemble the Silverliner V cars currently running in Philadelphia. Service is frequent: every 15 minutes from mid-morning to early evening, and half-hourly

the rest of the time, seven days a week, with an overnight service gap of less than three hours. The line opened for service on April 22. The B Line opened on July 25. It goes from Union Station, northwest to Westminster, on an hourly-service schedule every day. The ride takes 11 minutes. The G Line from Union Station to Wheat Ridge is scheduled to open by the end of this year but, as of this writing, no start date has been announced.

There was a new "commuter rail" extension in the East, too. The Fitchburg Line on Boston's Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA or the "T") expanded on Friday, Sept. 30. The new Wachusett Station is west of Fitchburg, which has been the line's terminus for many years. The new station will have an intermodal character, and replaces the Fitchburg station. Local buses on the Montachusett Area Transit Authority (MART) will go from there to Gardiner and downtown Fitchburg, while a brewer plans to run a privately-owned shuttle van from the station to his brewery. Service began with only a single peak-commuting-hour train in each direction on weekdays, but was expanded on Nov. 21 to full service.

There are two heavy-rail ("Metropolitan Rail") expansions which are slated to

begin service by the end of the year. At this writing, it is unclear whether or not they will. One is the BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) extension from Fremont to Warm Springs, a distance of five miles. The other is the long-awaited first segment of the Second Avenue Subway in New York City. It would run from 57th Street to 96th Street, with three new stops, part of a line that was originally planned nearly a century ago. Officials at New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) hope to open the new line by Dec. 31, but it's questionable whether they can, at least at this writing. Everyone hopes they can. When they do, our Vice-Chair, Andrew Albert, who covers New York City, will have the story.

All in all, it has been a good year for new starts, with several modes and all regions of the country represented. There were 15 new starts at this writing, and there may be three more before the end of the year. In addition, there will be more coming next year. They are expected in St. Louis, Detroit, El Paso, Oklahoma City, Denver and several other places. We hope you will join us in watching for them.

David Peter Alan is a RUN Board Member and Chair of the Lackawanna Coalition, based in Millburn, NJ.

MTA SETS FARE PROPOSALS FOR 2017

(Continued from page 3)

be the option where the base fare jumps to \$3.00, but the discounts on the bonus MetroCards jumps from 11% to 16%! Some MTA Board Members have proposed a "social fare," where the fares are based on the person's ability to pay—in other words, subsidies for lower-income riders. This proposal was discussed, but isn't likely to pass, as it would require many more discussions about the City's willingness to help subsidize lower-income riders, and the deadline for a decision on which fare option to select must be made by the Board's January meeting.

Our Transit Riders Council Freedom Ticket proposal was also discussed by the Board—and quite favorably I'm happy to report—but there are logistical issues that must be worked out, and again, those will not be worked out by the January Board Meeting. Fortunately, Freedom Ticket—a discounted fare for city residents on the commuter railroads serving NYC's boroughs—does not have to go through the biennial fare-hike scenarios, and could be enacted by the MTA Board at any time. It has also been proposed that the MTA make it quite clear—in a variety of ways—which would be the riders'

best option for purchasing a MetroCard depending on how the rider utilizes the system—i.e. whether a bonus card, a weekly, or a monthly pass would save the rider the most money on their commute. The public hearings will be interesting, and I plan to attend quite a few of them. While I don't have a vote on the Board, I do have a voice, and I will be speaking to which is likely to be the best option for the MTA's best customers. Stay tuned.

Andrew Albert is Vice-Chairman of RUN, the Chair of the NYC Transit Riders Council, and Riders' Representative on the MTA Board.

RIDING THE RAILS IN GERMANY, AUSTRIA AND HUNGARY: SOME LESSONS FOR NORTH AMERICA, PART 3

By F.K. Plous

(Editor's Note: Part 2 of this article appeared in the Fall 2016 edition of the RUN Newsletter.)

Our tickets did not say which platform position to occupy for boarding our train to Hungary, nor did we know what type of train we would be riding except we knew it would not be a Railjet, which is used only on the busiest trunk lines. In a few minutes our train was announced, and up to the platform slid a 4-car *Wiesel*, the standard double-deck, electrically powered trainset used by the ÖBB on its lesser-used regional and branch lines. The train was less than half-full, and we quickly found seats in the first car. At first the interior looked sparse and bus-like—lots of plastic and stainless steel, no real fabric anywhere, and certainly no carpeting, the seats near the double doors mounted against the sidewall and facing the aisle. Although everything sparkled with Teutonic cleanliness, the design was clearly motivated by crowd-control and capacity concerns rather than passenger comfort. After all, few people ride these trains for more than an hour or so. The *Wiesel* easily could serve as an American commuter train.

But a closer inspection revealed that the designers actually did have some concern for the passenger experience. The windows, for one thing, were huge, almost to the point of setting off agorophobia. And though they were not easy to see at first, there were window shades, and several passengers were using them, for the day was gloriously sunny, almost as if confectioned for the benefit of tourists and their cameras seeking rural charm.

The route to Sopron offered plenty. Drowsy rural hamlets, charming stucco farmhouses with carefully managed flower



A 4-car *Wiesel* trainset, which is standard on the ÖBB.

gardens surrounded by picket fences, all of it connected by a single track that wound through gentle reverse curves before resuming a tangent stretch that ended in another set of curves. In strict Austrian nomenclature we were not so much on a commuter route as on a regional line that wound its way gently out of Vienna and right into the countryside. Austrian cities draw a pretty distinct line between urban and rural without the vast transitional belt of suburbs familiar in most parts of the U.S., so the sudden emergence into a rural environment can come as something of a pleasant shock to a North American.

There were about six stops on the route, and at the tiny village of Müllendorf I decided to step briefly off the train and take a photo as it stood next to the wooden depot. Actually, I don't really know whether the village of Müllendorf is tiny, because a road and a deep forest separated the railroad from the village proper. In fact, there was forest on both sides of the tracks. As I learned later in the trip, it is quite common in Austria and Hungary for trains to stop at stations well outside a rural village. The reason, of course, is that when the railroads were built in the 19th century, most villages had already been in existence for hundreds of years and their centers

were tightly built up with houses and commercial buildings clustered along the lone road that connected the village to the outside world. To build a railroad into the center of such a village would have meant destroying it, so the line bypassed the location and often passed midway between two villages, resulting in station signs with two names connected by a hyphen.

As the train slid to a stop somewhere outside the village of Müllendorf, I grabbed my cell phone and briefly stepped off onto the platform to shoot a photo of the *Wiesel* in its natural habitat.

Not briefly enough, however, for as I was lining up my shot the train began to move, and as I stared at it in astonishment I saw Eliza and Bob staring out at me in even greater astonishment. Immediately I dialed Eliza on my mobile phone.

"Dad, what happened?"

"I missed the train, I guess. I stepped off to take a picture, but I didn't realize how small this village is. Only one other person got off, and nobody else got on, so the train started again immediately."

As the train disappeared around another one of those picturesque curves I strode toward the little station building, which was unmanned. But a timetable had been posted on a board outside the building, and it said that trains on this route ran hourly, so I reported to Eliza that I would catch up with her and Bob in Sopron in plenty of time to connect with our MAV train to Szombately. I sat down to wait in the pleasant sunshine.

The temperature was about 70 degrees. No cars went by on the little road bordering the forest. Birds twittered pleasantly as I began to contemplate my

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RIDING THE RAILS IN GERMANY, AUSTRIA AND HUNGARY: SOME LESSONS FOR NORTH AMERICA, PART 3

(Continued from page 8)

surroundings. Two ladies of a certain age came and sat to wait for their train, chattering in an Austrian dialect I could not quite catch. I quickly realized that I was in a scene that would be hard to find in America: a single-track railroad powered by electricity where passenger trains moved hourly in each direction on superbly maintained and ballasted track. As at every station on the route, however small, the single track broadened out to two tracks so trains—including freight trains—could meet, pass and overtake.

On the bench somebody had left a copy of *Österreich*, a lurid tabloid carrying the headline *Fluchtlings-Drama an unserer Grenze* (Refugee drama at our border). It told how authorities in Budapest had closed Keleti station, our destination, after it was overwhelmed with refugees trying to climb aboard trains bound for Germany. Eliza's contact in Hungary already had advised us to get off at a suburban station and take the subway into downtown Budapest if we could not get all the way to Keleti.

The hour passed quickly, and I boarded the next train without incident. Again we rolled effortlessly through the countryside, and I kept an eye out trying to determine when and where precisely we would cross the border into Hungary. The crossing occurred out in the country, and there is no station at the boarder proper and no border control, so I would have to be observant for any changes in the environment.

And I saw them—instantly. The comfortable Austrian houses of stucco with their neat gardens disappeared, replaced by wooden houses with peeling paint, unpainted fences, fewer flowers and a larger proportion of the property devoted to growing vegetables. In many of the back yards, women were out harvesting in preparation for “putting up” vegetables

for the winter, something the Austrian families do for sport but Hungarians must do for economy. The cars that stood in the driveways were older and more worn than the shiny late-models I had just seen in Austria. Quietly but certainly, I had entered Eastern Europe.

Given the rural character of the surroundings and the single track over which we had been traveling, I was unprepared for the little town of Sopron. The station was big, there were four tracks at platforms, and the whole scene was dominated by one of those five- or six-story interlocking towers that the Central Europeans seem to demand as a visible headquarters of the local railroad yard. Eliza and Bob greeted me with relief and we went down the stairs from the platform connecting the pedestrian tunnel into the station, a hulking, institutional building clearly left over from Hungary's long ordeal under Communist rule. The two-story waiting room measured about 2,000 square feet, and at the north end a corridor led to railroad offices. There was plenty of waiting space and plenty of timetables and other traveler information posted on the wall, but the walls had not seen a fresh coat of paint in many years, and the floor, the furniture, even the glass in the windows seemed tired. We wandered out into the street briefly to look around, but while Sopron no doubt had its charms, this clearly was not the same scene that had greeted us when we stepped out of the station into the streets of Salzburg. We returned quickly to the station, and Eliza shushed us and listened carefully as the P.A. system announced our connecting train to Szombately.

“C'mon, Dad,” she said, clearly impatient after my dereliction earlier in the afternoon.

“What track?” I said.

“I think he said 4. Let's go.”

Trailing our luggage, we headed back into the pedestrian tunnel and up to the platform. This was no easy job. The station had been built back in the Communist era, when people carried their luggage and suitcases had no wheels. The station had never been fitted with a pedestrian ramp, so the only way up to the platform was the stairs. In an effort to adapt the stairs to wheeled luggage, the railway had installed a stainless-steel ramp about 18 inches wide against one wall of the stairwell with a one-inch flange on the stairway side to keep the suitcase from twisting off the ramp and onto the stairs. This arrangement was less than satisfactory. Stairs are much steeper than ramps, making it harder to tow a suitcase than on a real ramp with a grade tailored to pedestrians. And because the ramp is off to one side of the stairs, it's impossible to tow your suitcase directly behind you, so your arms and shoulders are always struggling to keep a firm purchase on the case while propelling it forward.

Eventually we got to the top and sat down on a bench to rest before boarding our train. It was due to leave at 3 p.m., and it was only about three minutes until departure time but no train appeared. An announcement boomed out over the P.A. system, after which a train two tracks away pulled away from the platform headed south.

“Eliza, are you sure the announcement said track 4? Because what looks like our train just pulled out on track 1.”

She grinned sheepishly. “I guess I don't remember as much of my Hungarian as I thought.” We were even.

As in Germany, the Hungarian trains run hourly, so the delay was modest, and I got an hour to wander the platforms and check out the rolling stock. On the west side of the station stood a diesel switch engine that could have been the Chicago & North Western Alco RS-2 on which I rode

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ALASKA: 'THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME,' PART 2



The longest-lived of Alaska's railways, the Alaska Railroad was built by the federal government, and passed into state ownership in 1985.

By Richard Rudolph, Ph.D.
Chair, Rail Users' Network

(Editor's Note: Part I of this article appeared in the Summer 2016 edition of the RUN Newsletter.)

Upon returning to Juneau on an Alaska State Ferry from Skagway, we stayed overnight in the city to catch an early flight to Anchorage the next day to continue our journey via the Alaska Railroad to Seward and then on to Denali National Park and Fairbanks.

Anchorage first flourished as a railroad construction camp for workers building the Alaska railroad between 1915 and 1923. Today, it's the state's largest city with over 100,000 residents living within the city limits. Ship Creek Landing, where the camp was originally located, still serves as the railroad's headquarters. While we had no regrets about leaving Juneau and were excited to see what Anchorage had to offer, we forgot that the downtown business and financial district is pretty moribund on Sunday mornings. After leaving our suitcases off at the hotel we walked to the city center hoping to find a restaurant

open and to obtain day passes to utilize the local bus system. Much to our surprise, most of the restaurants were closed and the City Transportation Center's doors were locked tight. The building doesn't open until 11 a.m.

To make matters worse, there was no let-up on the sheets of cold rain that kept blowing down on us. We finally found a tiny restaurant that was not only open, but also customer friendly and willing to provide useful advice regarding what was worth seeing.

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HOW THE 2ND AVENUE SUBWAY WILL CHANGE TRAVEL IN NEW YORK



A rendering of the long-awaited new 2nd Avenue Subway serving the Upper East Side.

By Andrew Albert

The upcoming opening of the long-awaited 2nd Avenue subway is going to be a very big deal here in New York City. Originally planned in 1917, New Yorkers have been waiting a very long time for this subway line. When the original 2nd Avenue elevated railway was torn down in 1942, many expected a relatively short wait for the 2nd Avenue subway to be built. Were they ever wrong! The Great Depression and a host of other reasons meant that folks traveling on the east side of Manhattan were relegated to the very overcrowded Lexington Avenue subway lines, now known as the #4,5,6 lines. Where the West Side has two main trunk lines—the Broadway IRT line (1,2,3) and the A,B,C,D lines under Central Park West—the Upper East Side has long had just the overcrowded Lexington Line—but that's about to change!

Under construction since 2007, the 2nd Avenue Subway will be a continuation of the Q line, which, in anticipation of the opening of 2nd Avenue has been cut back to 57th St/7th Ave. New Yorkers are expecting great things from this new line. Admittedly, this is only phase 1 of the 2nd Avenue Subway, which will extend as far north as 96th Street, adding three new stations—72nd Street, 86th Street, and 96th Street, all under

(obviously) 2nd Avenue. This line will feature an across-the-platform transfer at Lexington Ave/63rd Street with the F line, bringing many transfer options to both Queens & Manhattan riders. To make up for the loss of the Q line to Astoria, the W line has been re-introduced, keeping the number of lines serving the Astoria branch in Queens to two lines: the N, W, as it was prior to the 2010 service cuts.

So how will this new line, which is set to (hopefully) open before the end of 2016, affect travel patterns? In a variety of ways, all very positive for our transit system. Firstly, it will relieve massive overcrowding on the already-saturated Lexington Avenue subway line, whose trains originate in the Bronx, and which travel south to Brooklyn, with the #6 line ending in Lower Manhattan at the Brooklyn Bridge/City Hall station. Not only are these trains crowded, but they are also frequently delayed, as passengers cram into already-crowded trains attempting to push their way in so as to not be late for work. Upper East Siders who live east of Third Avenue whose destinations are either on the West Side of Midtown, or Lower Manhattan, will likely switch to the new line, which will be far less crowded (trains will originate for now from 96th St) and will get them to their destination with great speed (fewer stops). In addition, people bound for

the West Side, who now avoid the Lexington Ave Line by taking crosstown buses to either Central Park West or Broadway for the West Side subway lines, will now have a one-seat ride to their West Side destinations, which could mean fewer riders on some bus lines. It remains to be seen how riders who begin trips north of 96th Street/2nd Avenue will travel. For instance, in order to be guaranteed a seat (beginning your trip at the first stop on the line), will riders opt to take a bus to 2nd Ave/96th Street, or continue to get on the Lexington Line at either 103rd or 110th Street stations, and possibly stand much of the way to Midtown or Lower Manhattan? What we DO know is that Phase 2 of the 2nd Avenue subway—which will bring the line to Harlem and the Metro-North 125th Street station—is already being planned and some work has already begun on this section of the line.

The bottom line is that transit expansion is good for everyone: riders of the system, merchants along the new routes, real-estate values, the city's tax base, etc. What is a real shame is how long these projects tend to take, how difficult it frequently is to obtain the necessary capital funds to build them—and how they sometimes become political footballs. To his credit, Gov. Andrew Cuomo has pushed to get this line up and running, and that message has been heard loud and clear by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. What will NOT happen is a premature opening, with any safety issues left unresolved. So whether it opens on schedule by the end of the year, or whether it takes a few weeks into January to get the job done right and with everyone's safety in mind, this line will be opening soon, and when it does it will change the lives of most New Yorkers—including those who never set foot on this brand new addition to the greatest transit system in the Western Hemisphere!

Andrew Albert is Vice-Chairman of RUN, the Chair of the NYC Transit Riders Council, and Riders' Representative on the MTA Board.

ALASKA: 'THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME,' PART 2

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After breakfast, we headed over to the city's tourist bureau to catch a bus to the Alaska's Native Cultural Center where visitors experience Alaskan Native cultures first-hand through engaging storytelling, Native song and dance, and artistic displays. Out back, visitors are able to stroll by six different authentic life-sized Native dwellings situated in a wooded area around Lake Tiulana and are introduced to the traditional life ways of the Athabascan, Inupiaq/St. Lawrence Island Yupik, Yup'ik/Cup'ik, Aleut, Alutiiq, and the Eyak, Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian peoples. We spent the entire afternoon at the center and took the last bus of the day back to the city's tourist bureau and then on to our hotel to rest up for the next part of our journey heading south via passenger rail to Seward.

The Alaska Railroad was originally constructed and owned by the U.S. government until 1985, when ownership was transferred to the State of Alaska. Despite this change, it continues its dual mission of providing passenger service

as well as freight service over its network in south central and interior Alaska. It has survived and thrived, while three other Alaskan railroads failed prior to the 1920s. The development of coal fields and the shipment of military and civilian supplies and material during WWII and receiving and hauling pipe for the construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline in the early 1970s no doubt contributed to its success.

Alaska Railroad's *Classic Train* travels 114 miles between Anchorage and the coastal town of Seward daily from mid-May through mid-September. Although we had made our reservations on the internet to travel to Seward, passengers are advised to arrive an hour earlier at 7 a.m. to store their luggage and to pick up tickets.

Knowing that we would be able to take photos from the open-air vestibules between coaches, we decided to purchase Adventure Class tickets to save travel funds for other planned activities in Alaska. The premium GoldStar Service tickets offer "passengers an exceptional

way to travel"—glass-dome ceilings allow for panoramic views as the scenery unfolds and an outdoor, upper-level viewing platform provides a vantage point for taking photos. GoldStar tickets also include meals served in a full-service dining room, soft drinks and two adult beverages are also included.

Much to our surprise, the first part of the journey, the train hugs the coastline along the Turnagain Arm next to the Seward highway. However, this isn't much of a distraction, for the views of the Cook Inlet and the surrounding Chugach Mountains are unbelievably breathtaking. South of Portage, the train leaves the highway and travels through a remote section of track through the Placer River Valley, past the ice wall of Spencer Glacier and over the 1,063-foot pass through the Kenai Mountains before arriving in Seward.

As it was showering off and on, we spent some time sitting in one of the coaches. The seats are comfortable and the windows are large and sparkling clean. The onboard crew was quite friendly,

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RIDING THE RAILS IN GERMANY, AUSTRIA AND HUNGARY: SOME LESSONS FOR NORTH AMERICA, PART 3

(Continued from page 13)

many miles while serving as a brakeman on the Milwaukee extra board during the summer of 1958. Several coaches of the standard barrel-roofed type seen all over Europe after World War II stood waiting to be coupled into trains. And there were two RDCs of a type unfamiliar to me. They looked new and appeared to have been built in Germany. Everything had been repainted in the new yellow-and-green scheme adopted by the Hungarian State Railways, although on closer inspection the new exterior paint could not hide the extremely simple and not-very-well-kept up interiors I found on inspection.

But it was not one of these trains we were to ride for the last 30 miles or so to Szombately. Just before 4 p.m., a sleek, 4-car electrified regional train—not a Wiesel but something similar of German manufacture, pulled up to the platform on track 1. This time we were in position and boarded immediately.

The train to Szombately ran through gently rolling prairie, stopping at more of those remote, two-village stations out in the country. Despite the seeming obscurity of the locales, however, at each station the track went double to

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permit passing, and another pair of tracks away from the platform enabled freight trains to get out of the way of

passenger trains—and each other.

Just north of Szombately, our little single-track rural line running east joined another coming in from the north, and then joined the main line coming in from Budapest, all at an interlocking presided over by another of those looming, six-story concrete-blockhouse towers so common in that part of the world. At the big, 6-track Szombately station we were met by Eliza's hosts from Koszeg with the warmest of Magyar welcomes and quickly bundled into their SUV for the 10-mile trip to our hotel on the town square. As we loaded our luggage into their car I turned around to get my first good look at the station from which we had just emerged. To my relief it was pre-Soviet, a gracious yellow baroque building opening onto the intersection of two main streets. But there was no time to linger. We had visiting to do.

F.K. Plous is director of communications for Corridor Capital LLC.

Your help is needed!

By now you should have received our annual appeal letter. While it is always difficult to ask for financial help, your generosity will help us to continue and deepen our work in the coming year. Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution before the end of this tax year. Rail advocacy is important to a balanced national transportation system. Each organization is stronger working together rather than individually; RUN can make a stronger case for increased funding for rail service with a geographically diverse, larger membership base. Your contribution will strengthen our impact and broaden our reach as we continue to represent all rail passengers, including long distance, commuter, and transit riders. You can donate online using your credit card or PayPal account on the Rail Users' Network website or make a check out to RUN and mail it to RUN, Box 8015, Portland, Maine 04104. We thank you in advance for your support and hope you have a great holiday season and new year.

*Many thanks,
Richard Rudolph, Ph.D.*

ALASKA: 'THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME,' PART 2



Picture-taking opportunities are plentiful as the railway winds through spectacular Alaskan scenery.

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attending to passenger needs and questions and checking bathrooms to make sure they were tidy. The signage inside probably helps: passengers are asked to think about the next person using the facility. My only complaint had to do with a high school student intern who served as our onboard narrator. She seemed well prepared but provided more information than necessary, such as pointing out seagulls and airplanes to photograph. I found it quite distracting and it certainly took away the excitement of discovering things on our own. But at times it was great to have a heads-up on a railroad related photo opportunity. She

was undoubtedly a graduate of the Alaska Rail Tour Guide Training Program, a school-business partnership between the ARR and the Anchorage school district. The 11-week program is open to high school juniors and seniors looking to earn college credits and fulfill the state's Alaska studies requirements and a chance for a summer job on the Alaska Railroad.

Upon arriving at the Seward train depot, we gathered our luggage, which was quickly unloaded, and hopped on a Seward city shuttle which drove past the harbor up the hill to the charming downtown area of the city. The rest of the afternoon and early evening was spent visiting the Alaskan Sea Life Center,

having lunch at a local eatery and dinner sampling beer produced at the local brewery. We also found time to walk the mile-and-a-half paved walking trail along scenic Resurrection Bay.

The next morning we headed out on a day cruise to see the Kenai Fjords National Park and Alaska's abundant wildlife, alpine and tidewater glaciers. We initially had some second thoughts about having spent a small fortune to be on board, for we were completely fogged in during the first half hour or so on the cruise down Resurrection Bay. Once the fog lifted, however, we were awed by the scenery and the wildlife, including whales breaching, otters and sea

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ALASKA: 'THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME,' PART 2

(Continued from page 18)

lions basking and sea birds' rookeries. We gently cruised up the Northwestern Fjord to get as close as possible to the Northwestern Glacier. We spent a half hour with the motor turned off watching and listening to the actively-calving tidewater glacier. Every eight to 10 minutes we heard a large rumble and resounding boom as large pieces of the glacier fractured and crashed down into the ice filled waters. The sea lions sleeping on nearby icebergs appeared to be unfazed and continued their midday bask. The glacier is rapidly receding; one can only wonder how long it will take before it completely disappears as a result of climate change.

Although we had some initial trepidations regarding whether we would arrive back in time to catch the Classic Train heading north to Anchorage at 6 p.m., there was nothing to worry about. The Charter company works with the Alaska Railroad to make it a seamless journey. They not only allow their guests to store their baggage at the company's facility at the dock, but also bring it to the railroad depot and provide a jitney service for passengers who are traveling to Anchorage via the train. Our time heading north was relaxing as we reflected on what we had seen and anticipated the adventure ahead traveling on the *Denali Star* to Denali National Park and Fairbanks.

The journey north into Alaska's interior to Denali takes almost eight hours and travels through some of the most spectacular scenery that one could imagine. The train rolls through the thick birch forests of Eagle River and Chugiak and through the vast Matanuska-Susitna Valley, the state's key agricultural growing area and then onto its first scheduled stop in Wasilla. (Unfortunately, we were unable to see Sarah Palin's home nor, for that matter, Russia which lies across the Bering Strait—1,037 miles away.)

The next stop, Talkeetna, serves as a base for expeditions to Mt. Denali and is home base for a squadron of bush pilots who take visitors on "flightseeing" tours around North America's highest peak. It is also the starting point for one of the last flag-stop trains in the U.S. Four days a week from late spring through early fall, the Hurricane Turn Train runs 60 miles from Talkeetna to Hurricane Gulch, dropping off and picking up homesteaders, trappers and backpackers..

The *Denali Star* offers services similar to those on the Classic trains. The on-board service crew was friendly and their handling of luggage and other baggage is superb. It occurred to us that it could serve as a model for Amtrak on its long-distance routes that take passengers to resort destinations. The baggage is tagged and sorted and picked up by the lodge or hotel and brought directly to the room where you are staying. The on-board narration was interesting and informative.

The highlight for us, as it is for the 400,000 other travelers who journey to Denali National Park each year, was the chance to see Denali, North America's highest peak. It stands over 20,000 feet high and is undoubtedly one of the most awe-inspiring sights in Alaska. Unfortunately, you cannot see the mountain from the park's entrance area or from nearby hotels. The road into Denali is 91 miles long and most private vehicles are not allowed past mile 15. We chose to take a day-long narrated bus tour which travels the entire distance and provides a hearty lunch at a lodge located near the end of the Denali Park road. The alternative was to travel on a school shuttle bus. The driver, a young woman who had opted out of a life in show business in New York, provided invaluable insights along the narrow, gravel roadway and successfully navigated hairpin turns barely wide enough to accommodate two vehicles. The tour bus stopped along the way whenever the driver or a passenger(s) spotted wildlife including bears, Dall sheep, moose, caribou and

other animals that call the park home. Denali does not show its face to every tourist; we were lucky and were able to see almost the entire mountain as we traveled to the end of the park road.

Our last two days in Alaska were spent traveling north by rail to Fairbanks, and flying to Seattle to travel by train on Amtrak's *Cascade* service to see my son in Oregon. We went on to Denver via the *Coast Starlight* and the *California Zephyr* to see my daughter and her family in Fort Collins. After a three-day stay, we got back on the *California Zephyr* from Denver to Chicago and changed to the *Lake Shore Limited* to continue on to Boston.

Part III will appear in the Spring issue of the RUN Newsletter.

NJ TRANSIT RIDERS GET A ROUGH RIDE *(Continued from page 4)*

Against this backdrop, the Board of Directors at NJT did not hold a meeting for over four months, even though they normally meet monthly. At an extra meeting on Oct. 26, they implemented the new budget and appointed Steven Santoro, head of Capital Planning, as the new Executive Director. They refused to make "interim" Executive Director Dennis Martin "permanent," a permanency that may only last until Christie leaves office and his successor appoints a new transit head early in 2019. Martin drew praise from advocates for improving the flow of buses into and out of New York's Port Authority Bus Terminal, and they believe that he was thrown under the bus. In the meantime, riders will continue to watch the political circus, as their transit continues to get worse.

David Peter Alan is a RUN Board Member and Chair of the Lackawanna Coalition, based in Millburn, NJ.

