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IT'S TIME TO REGISTER FOR THE RAIL SUMMIT!

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

Join us to learn about what's happening with passenger rail and rail transit in the Twin Cities and Upper Midwest. The MOVING FORWARD BY RAIL SUMMIT is taking place Friday, June 1, 2018 at the Minneapolis Central Library, 300 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis.

Sponsored by the Rail Users' Network and All Aboard Minnesota, the conference will focus on how passenger rail and rail transit already creates greater mobility choices, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and generates new economic development along rail corridors in the Midwest. We will

also examine plans for more rail service between the Twin Cities-Chicago, Duluth, Eau Claire, Des Moines and Kansas City, as well as plans for more commuter and light rail service around the Twin Cities metro area. The focus will be on projects which are moving forward, and those which are standing still and need support.

Morning speakers include Alice Hausman, the DFL's State Representative; Alene Tchorumoff, Chair, Metropolitan Council; Kevin Brubaker, Deputy Director, Environmental law & Policy Center; Dan Krom, Chief, Minn. Dept. of Transportation; Frank Loetterle, Northern Lights Express Project Mgr.; Kevin Roggenbuck, Senior

Transportation Planner, Ramsey County Regional Rail, David Christianson, Exec. Dir. -Organizing Council-W. Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition; and Brian Lamb, General Manager, Metro Transit.

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 session will be devoted to two advocacy panels with a Q & A Audience Forum which will include an open dialogue with the audience.

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ANDY BYFORD TAKES THE REINS AT NYC TRANSIT

By Andrew Albert

NYC Transit has a new President, and he is already making waves. Coming to New York from Toronto, where he was the CEO of the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), and formerly the General Manager of the Central, Bakerloo, & Victoria Lines of the London Underground, not to mention the Chief Operating Officer of the Sydney Transit System, Mr. Byford has a long and successful transit background. He will need this type of experience

to deal with the multitude of issues affecting NYC Transit, the operator of New York's subways and buses, as well as the Staten Island Railway. He is already quite deep into the Subway Action Plan, which is dealing with tracks, signals, rolling stock, and even trackbed cleaning.

NYC's subways have had a disinvestment, largely beginning around 1991, and continuing until a few years ago. The budget was cut, and two governors took money allocated to the MTA and put it into the State's general treasury,

resulting in layoffs of over 1,100 maintenance personnel. This resulted in general maintenance, and in particular signal & track maintenance, being deferred, and as we all know, when you ignore important infrastructure maintenance, performance suffers, which was the case with the poorest on-time performance in many years. The crisis grew so bad that Governor Andrew Cuomo declared a "state of emergency" and, along with transit leaders, put together a "subway action plan"—to the tune of \$839 million.

(Continued on page 5)

A SURVEY OF LONG-DISTANCE AND STATE-SUPPORTED PASSENGER TRAIN SERVICE IN THE WESTERN U.S.

Part Two: Existing (Continued)

By Dana Gabbard

To keep this survey at a manageable length, it is being divided into multiple parts. This part deals with existing state-supported passenger train services in Northern California. Part three in the Fall issue will be about state-supported and long-distance services in Southern California. Part four (and if necessary five) will be on proposals, efforts to revive discontinued Amtrak routes and projects under construction.

Please see the introduction to part one in the Spring issue regarding the purpose and certain other underlying aspects. One addenda: the section "State-supported Amtrak passenger rail service coordination" should have included the States for Passenger Rail Coalition (SPRC), an alliance of 20 state departments of transportation and four passenger rail authorities from across the United States who work together to support the development and growth of intercity passenger rail service for America. Its website is www.s4prc.org/

California State-supported Amtrak Intercity Passenger Rail Services Joint Issues--Annual Passenger Rail Summit, Discounts, California Rail Plan, Funding

The 6th Annual California Passenger Rail Summit was held April 18-19, 2018 at the L.A. Metro Board Room (adjacent to Union Station), bringing together key stakeholders from the public and private sectors. I attended representing RUN. Its website is www.californiapassengerrailsummit.com/

California Everyday Discounts was launched Jan. 7, 2018 by the three state-supported Amtrak routes in California, to preserve ongoing savings that were recently reduced or eliminated by Amtrak on a national level – 15% for students, seniors and the disabled, also keeping the eligibility requirement for senior discounts at 62 (nationally it is now 65).

On Feb. 15, 2018 the 10% discount offered to American Automobile Association members was eliminated by Amtrak, followed on March 24, 2018 by the elimination of the national Veterans Advantage Members discount. The three California state-supported routes are working to re-establish both (or something similar) for their services. The state of California has just released the draft 2018 State Rail Plan. This is being praised as bold and visionary.

At a briefing in Sept. 2017 to the San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR), Chad Edison, Deputy Secretary for Transportation with the California State Transportation Agency, summarized its philosophy and goal. "In Switzerland there are hundreds of operators and they all come together to give one product to the customers that are seamless. ... What we're recommending in the rail plan is a statewide network that integrates high-speed rail, blended rail, urban transit, and bus connections, focusing on the multi-modal nature of our hubs." ("SPUR Gets Preview of State Rail Plan," Streetsblog SF)

Andy Cook, Chief of the Rail Planning Branch at California Dept. of Transportation Division of Rail and Mass Transportation at the Nov. 17 San

Joaquin Joint Powers Authority Board meeting outlined the key elements of the passenger component of the plan:

- Statewide System – Passenger rail service will tie together urban, suburban, and rural areas of the state.
- Integrated System – Multimodal hubs will connect all levels of service with a common fare system, which allows trips to be made on a single ticket.
- Coordinated Schedules – Services will be coordinated in a "pulsed" schedule across the network to reduce wait times and allow direct transfers.
- Frequent Service – Service frequency will make rail a timely option for travelers, meeting trip demands throughout the day.
- Customer Focus – Enhanced ticketing, scheduling, and passenger information will be supported by coordinated services

The website for the plan is www.dot.ca.gov/californiarail/

A California Integrated Travel Conference was held May 1-2 at the University of California, Davis to "... facilitate a process to integrate travel across multiple modes throughout the state." Its website is www.californiaintegratedtravel.com

California has been a leader in funding capital acquisition and operations of intercity passenger rail services. This includes funds from the auction of carbon credits (cap & trade) and a recent increase in the sales tax on petroleum (Senate Bill 1 aka SB 1) that is already resulting in millions being awarded competitively for passenger rail service improvements. Over a 10-year period, this will include \$40 million

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RPA COUNCIL MEETS AHEAD OF DAY ON THE HILL

By Phil Streby

Members of the Rail Passenger Association (RPA) convened their annual council meeting in Washington, DC, Monday, April 16, 2018 with welcoming remarks by the Chairman of the Board, Peter LeCody of Texas, and President and CEO Jim Mathews. Also welcoming the membership was Alexandria, VA's Mayor, Allison Silberberg. The Hilton-Olde Town located across the street from the combined Amtrak/Virginia Railway Express and Metro stop in Alexandria was the host location for this year's gathering.

We heard very informative presentations from Amtrak's Chris Jagodzinski on Positive Train Control and its implementation across the country, and Grant Programs and Funding from the Federal Railroad Administration's representative Will Dyer. Our lunchtime keynote speaker, Kristopher Takacs, Director of the DC office of the firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, presented on the Florida East Coast's Brightline passenger rail development with their emphasis on urban planning and design as it applies to their real estate holdings.

Afternoon sessions concentrated on Amtrak's national network issues recently brought to light by public announcements, and what we must address to our congressional representatives during our "Day on the Hill" event scheduled for all day Tuesday. These issues (including our suspicions involving the collapse of the national network, and the possible takeover of the Northeast Corridor by an investment group) were solidified with four handouts we could refer to during discussion and leave at each office visited. Those nicely designed, colorful, double-sided handouts concisely portrayed information on critical passenger rail infrastructure and the need (and price tag) for proper investment to both rebuild as well as maintain that rail infrastructure in a state of good repair to meet the public demand for more and better service.

Said demand is needed to connect people with jobs and critical services nationwide every day, and current disinvestment is reaching critical mass with potential to shut down entire regions of this country. With the freight railroads spending on Positive Train Control, a global positioning addition to current methods of train separation,

and mandated, though not funded by Congress, there appears to not be a lot of interest on their parts to maintain on-time performance for passenger rail.

Two other handouts address these two issues. The first describes PTC by the numbers: the timeline and cost for implementation, numbers and costs of preventable accidents (and much discussion about the accidents caused by the implementation and reliance of PTC), and where we are currently with PTC. As always, OTP (on-time performance) is a major issue. The forth handout describes and defines (though not necessarily our definition) OTP. A serious flaw in this definition is that it EXCLUDES all stations not considered endpoints! (Hello! End-point for whom!) Delays and legal challenges are also discussed on this sheet.

Three Hoosiers joined other RPA members for the annual "Day on the Hill" event on Tuesday, April 17. Participants were Tod Bassler, Indianapolis; Duane Chattin, Vincennes; and Phil Streby, Peru. Our Indiana contingent also added a personal and recent story about the accident

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NJ TRANSIT RIDERS WAIT FOR IMPROVEMENT, BUT IT HAS NOT YET COME

SCHEDULED	ACTUAL	TO	TRK	LINE	TRAIN
5:27	Now	Lk Hopatcong	3	Montclair-Boonton	1009
5:32	5:38	Hoboken	1	Morristown Line	660
5:36	5:45	Dover	3	Morristown Line	6647
5:38	5:57	NY Penn	1	Morristown Line	6662
5:42	5:56	MSU	3	Montclair-Boonton	267
5:45	6:01	NY Penn	1	Montclair-Boonton	6252
5:47		Dover	3	Morristown Line	649
5:50		Summit	3	Morristown Line	337
5:54	6:13	Hoboken	1	Gladstone Branch	432
5:54		Gladstone	3	Gladstone Branch	433

TRACK 1

By David Peter Alan

For the past several issues, we have reported on the difficulties and uncertainties that New Jersey's rail riders face. Gov. Philip Murphy mentioned these difficulties regularly during his campaign last fall and, now that he has occupied the top office in the state for more than three months, riders on New Jersey Transit (NJT) are still waiting for improvement.

In our last issue, we reported that the Lackawanna Coalition is campaigning in Trenton for legislation that would reform NJT, to ensure that genuine rider-representatives, including persons who depend on transit for all mobility, are included on the agency's Board of Directors. The campaign also includes a call for an end to secrecy at NJT, as well as structural reform to remove it from the governor's direct control and change it into a freestanding state agency.

Since the Coalition began this initiative, new legislation has been proposed, but it does not include any of the recommended reform provisions. Recent amendments to the new NJT statute made one change: that rail labor would have a voting representative, while the representative of the bus drivers' union will also have

a vote. This generosity has not been extended to representatives of the riding public, however.

To make matters worse, NJT is now asserting the defense of "sovereign immunity" against persons who have made claims against it for unfair or illegal practices. The doctrine says, in essence, that a government agency cannot be required to compensate its victims for its wrongful acts. It is based on a doctrine from the Middle Ages that "the King can do no wrong." The Coalition has called for a provision in the new statute that would prevent NJT from asserting that defense to thwart its victims. Meanwhile, trains are canceled at an increasing rate, much to the frustration of riders who cannot rely on them and must wait for an hour or longer, until the next available train.

Murphy himself appeared at the NJT Board meeting in March; the first time a governor had done so since 2009. He said that there will be no fare increase until July, 2019, and he said that NJT was hiring more employees. Riders and their advocates hope that more employees will mean that fewer trains are annulled in the future. Murphy specifically did not promise that any service which had been eliminated during the administration of former Gov. Chris Christie would be restored (although a bus route

will soon be eliminated; a move approved on April 10). He also did not promise any specific reforms, and none have occurred.

At the April Board meeting, there were several contracts awarded to large consulting firms that the Coalition and other advocates said were either unnecessary projects, or they could be performed in-house at a considerable cost saving. Some advocates have called for NJT to abandon or defer many of its capital projects and put the money toward new tunnels under the Hudson River, a new four-track bridge to replace Portal Bridge over the Hackensack River and improvements at Penn Station. They say that there is not enough money available to build the proposed Gateway Project in its entirety, so NJT must come up with significant local funding to persuade the Federal Transit Administration to fund a more-affordable project. Despite these calls for fiscal prudence, the NJT Board approved every requested expenditure in its typical "rubber-stamp" style, just as it always has, whether the governor was a Democrat or a Republican.

Murphy often blamed the former Christie Administration for the woes faced by NJT's riders, especially on the rail side. He has now been in office for more than 100 days, he has made no meaningful changes at NJT, and the woes that the riders suffered under Christie have become worse. In the meantime, the riders and their advocates continue to wait and to hope that things improve someday.

David Peter Alan is a member of the RUN Board of Directors, who has also served as Chair of the Lackawanna Coalition since 2000. He lives and practices law in South Orange, NJ.

For more on the current controversy over the Gateway Project, which would build massive new infrastructure in and near Penn Station, whether it is needed or not, see an article entitled: "Gateway: Moving Forward or Fake News?" by John Bobbin at www.lackawannacoalition.org, the Coalition's web site. The article is also available in the May-June issue of the Coalition's newsletter, the Railgram.

ANDY BYFORD TAKES THE REINS

(Continued from page 1)

It was expected that the state would put up half of the money, with the City of New York putting up the other half.

Unfortunately, Mayor Bill de Blasio did not agree to this, saying the state has responsibility for the MTA. Of course, the six million-plus riders using the subway every day are largely city residents, but this didn't move the Mayor. That is, until the recent State budget worked out with the legislature would have penalized the city in another way, if the city didn't pony up their half of the \$839 million. Reluctantly, the Mayor agreed, and now the subway action plan is in full swing, and with full funding should take half the time to improve tracks, signals, switches, etc.

Additionally, there are numerous other issues Mr. Byford must deal with. One example is the reported delay in implementing Communications Based Train Control (CBTC) on the #7 line. It was supposed to be ready by this Spring, but Thales, the contractor, is now estimating the end of 2018 for turning this on. President Byford has said that is not acceptable, and the riders of the #7 line, who have experienced numerous service outages to prepare for CBTC, agree. We will see how this turns out. It is estimated that CBTC could add three trains per hour, which would be welcome news to #7 line riders.

There has also been a huge demand for accessibility in the subways, something President Byford takes very seriously. In fact, he is undertaking a study of all 472 subway stations (some 25% of which are already accessible), and is

studying what it would take—logistically and financially—to make every subway station fully accessible. He is even looking into the possibility of a new, smaller type of elevator for those stations which simply don't have the room or layout to incorporate the typical elevator. While the newer, smaller elevators wouldn't serve those using a wheelchair, they would make stations accessible for those with walkers or canes.

As of all of this weren't enough, there is the huge sprawling bus network, which has been hemorrhaging riders, due to congestion, lack of throughput, and service cuts. This writer has championed a "demonstration route," where the NYPD, Dept. of Transportation officials, and others make sure buses are able to get through—curtailing double-parking, delivery vehicles, and other obstructions and increasing the amount and reliability of service—and see if the ridership returns. President Byford has not only taken up the challenge, but has also put together, along with the Bus Division leadership, a Bus Plan, which has many components, such as: a) a thorough review of all routes, to see if they still meet the needs of a changing, shifting population, b) all-door boarding when the new fare payment system is in place (likely by 2020), which should speed boarding and lessen dwell time, c) a shift to an all-electric bus fleet, d) transit signal priority, where buses have the ability to interact with traffic signals to keep signals green, and allow buses to get through busy intersections, e) a complete re-drawing of the Staten Island Express bus route system, which will allow faster trips to both Lower Manhattan & Midtown Manhattan, as buses will be routed to either of those areas,

but not travel through the congested streets of Manhattan to connect both areas, f) a pilot of double-decker buses on one Staten Island to Manhattan route, to see if this can accommodate additional ridership.

And—to further complicate matters—President Byford (and all riders of the subway system) will face the important shutdown of the L line Canarsie Tube in April, 2019, for 15 months to rebuild the tunnel under the East River from damage resulting from Hurricane Sandy. Fortunately, the rebuilding of the M line viaduct along Myrtle Avenue has been completed on-time and on-budget, which was essential prior to the L line shutdown.

So as you can see, President Byford certainly has his hands full. I've seen him face an angry audience on several issues, and he is competent, cool, knowledgeable, and completely sincere, which comes across. He even wears a name tag whenever he rides the subways or buses (which is every day), so riders can come up to him and let him know their thoughts, issues, complaints, and even compliments.

New York has the largest, most complex, most sprawling network of subways & buses in North America, and there's nothing easy about running this amazing system. We also now have, in President Byford, a leader who thoroughly "gets it," has vowed to fix an ailing system, and is thoroughly devoted to doing just that. We all wish him the best of luck.

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

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CANADA REPORT, SPRING 2018

By Ken Westcar

VIA Rail Canada

The 2018 Canadian federal budget gave hope that VIA's rust-out would be arrested with funding for new trains for the Montreal-Windsor Corridor. VIA's other project, high-frequency passenger rail on the long-abandoned CP Havelock subdivision, remains under scrutiny by Transport Canada, the national rail regulator.

To be fair, VIA has improved its marketing efforts and is gaining ridership with various ticket-based promotions including a C\$29 one-way restricted fare between London and Toronto (about 95 miles). This could help fill underutilized, off-peak trains and encourage more people to switch from Highway 401 driving misery.

SNC-Lavalin, one of Canada's largest engineering companies, is handling the specifications for the new trainsets that may go to international bidding later this year. Bi-mode, push-pull propulsion is expected with Tier 4 diesel power at one end and 25kv electric at the other. VIA aficionados are waiting to see how the high and low platform passenger boarding and legislated accessibility will be designed into the new coaches.

To cope with marginal track and widely varying climatic conditions, the new FRA-compliant rolling stock will need to be more robust than lighter weight equipment built by most global suppliers. What remains to be seen is whether VIA Rail can avoid bureaucratic inertia, the temptation of low-bid and get the procurement right.

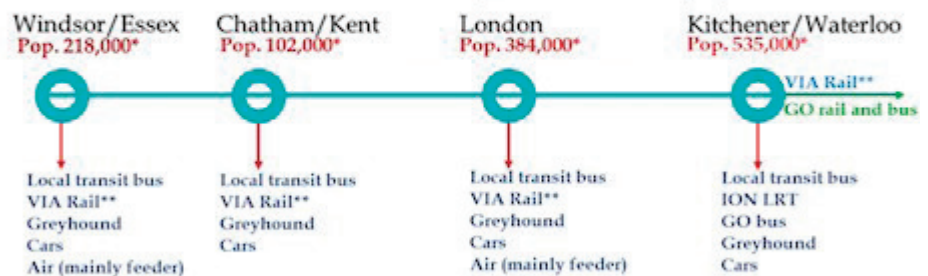
Ontario High-Speed Rail (HSR)

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne re-announced this project to slightly more skeptical audiences in the cities of London and Kitchener in early April. But she and her provincial team were adamant that the project will proceed even though the C\$15m Environmental Assessment process will extend to 2022 and a different provincial government may be in power.

Uncomfortable HSR truths (4)

HSR requires city populations of 2 million or more

But entire HSR corridor has only about 1.25m population:



Inadequate regional public transportation to feed HSR

Based on alarm within the Oxford County agricultural community that over 1,000 acres of prime farmland are at risk from a planned new 155-mph (250-kph) rail corridor, a volunteer group known as Intercityrail (www.intercityrail.org) was formed. In just over six months, it has morphed from being a non-partisan voice for potentially affected farmers into a multi-faceted critic of the entire scheme west of the city of Kitchener. Recently it attracted over 880 concerned citizens to three public area meetings.

The group is pressing for the currently blinkered environment assessment of HSR-only to consider other options including improvement of VIA's services in southwestern Ontario. The province remains adamant that they are only interested in greenfield HSR to the exclusion of everything else and is already expanding its project team bureaucracy to build political momentum.

But, previously nodding municipal heads in the cities of Kitchener and London are becoming somewhat more circumspect as they learn more about some of the downsides. Prickly local issues such as property expropriation and demolition are starting to keep them awake at night. London, whose much watered-down "Shift" local transit plan now appears totally inadequate to receive the claimed HSR ridership, may need to rethink the whole project and perhaps bring previously rejected light rail back into the mix.

The Intercityrail group has studied the prerequisites for successful high-speed rail projects in Europe and found, to no one's surprise, that absolutely none are present in southwestern Ontario. City-region populations are too small to generate needed ridership, local transit is inadequate and apart from Greyhound bus services along the Highway 401 corridor, there is vestigial regional public transportation. Provincial claims that private capital will fund this project are only credible if the Ontario taxpayer is the very deep-pocketed, financial backstop.

Provincially stated benefits of HSR including improved social equality, economic growth and lower greenhouse gas emissions are largely driven by southwestern Ontario municipalities and not necessarily the provincial government. Oxford County, currently VIA Rail served, sees the potential for their progressive sustainability policies to be seriously damaged if VIA exits in the face of competition from HSR (it will have no stops in Oxford County).

Whether evidence-based sanity will return to southwestern Ontario passenger rail planning remains to be seen. VIA Rail is naturally down-playing future services through the region, preferring to focus on its Toronto-Ottawa-Montreal business while figuring out how to sustain iconic long-distance trains like the *Ocean* and the *Canadian*.

Ken Westcar is a Board Member of Transport Action Ontario.

THE DREAMS AND THE DOABLE; WHITHER AMTRAK?

By Lloyd H. Flem

The Northwest Corridor, essentially the Amtrak *Cascades* between Vancouver, BC and Eugene, OR, has been and is a modest but real success story of intercity passenger rail in North America. The tried and true incremental approach of investment, service and ridership has made the *Cascades* a still-small but significant part of travel between the major cities of the far Pacific Northwest.

The tragic derailment on December 18 of last year that took the lives of three men, two of whom were my close friends, did not significantly impact ridership. Passenger numbers are up from last year, as people correctly assume that passenger trains are still safe and travel on Interstate 5 is quite often unpleasant.

All Aboard Washington remains committed to the incremental approach. We will continue to work with our Legislature and the people of Washington to make the decisions and investments to add frequencies of trains within the Northwest Corridor. We will also continue to work toward a restoration of intercity passenger train service east and west, serving the Yakima Valley, which lost their Amtrak service in 1981.

Continued incremental growth is doable. But what some of us see as elaborate dreams of what might be have arisen in our Evergreen State as well. We who have labored in what was originally a lonely vineyard of passenger rail advocacy are pleased to see others have now "discovered" that intercity passenger trains should have an important role in moving people. At least three somewhat separate entities have issued dreams of a much larger rail future for Washington. The first is the idea of an ultra-high-speed route (UHSR) between Seattle and Vancouver, BC. This is being advocated by Microsoft, some Vancouver business interests and Washington Governor Jay

Inslee. By far the greatest ridership on the Amtrak *Cascades* is between Seattle and Portland, yet this northern route is the one now proposed.

Response from the Legislature was lukewarm, with only one-third the funds requested for a study allotted. Projected cost of this UHSR would be in the tens of billions. All Aboard Washington is pleased the idea of faster passenger trains are being talked about, and we won't discourage such conversations, but our focus will remain on that which is doable in the relatively near future.

Another dream is called Solutionary Rail. The advocates for SR are among the strongest representatives of the environmentalist community. SR seeks to have all railroads run by electricity. Now many of us in the far Northwest lament the disappearance of the clean and efficient Milwaukee Road electrics that served the fine *Olympian Hiawatha* trains between Chicago and Seattle decades ago. While reduction in fossil fuel emissions is a goal shared by most rail advocates (and "Tier 4" locomotives have reduced such dramatically from the past motive power), Solutionary Rail seemingly ignores the most prominent and obvious form of non-fossil fuel electrical generation in the Pacific Northwest, hydro power. Only wind and solar are seen by SR as the means of running these future trains.

Again, most AAWA members would support the idea of electric railroads (think Switzerland), but the elimination of fossil fuel power and even hydroelectricity would seem more a dream than something doable in the foreseeable future.

A third rail idea, by people calling themselves "Cascadia Rail," pushes a big, expansive and expensive high speed rail replication of the Amtrak *Cascades* route with the addition of the Yakima Valley train restoration that AAWA has advocated, as well as extension east to

Spokane. They seem to not support incrementalism. Who specifically is behind Cascadia Rail is unknown to this observer. Also unknown is who or what would pay for what is touted as a very costly Big Idea.

The late and greatly admired US Representative Al Swift, who just passed away April 20 at the age of 82, was a very effective advocate for passenger and freight rail at both a regional and national level. Of AAWA (then called Washington Association of Rail Passengers), Rep. Swift said we were once "alone, crying in the wilderness for passenger trains." This, we are pleased to say, is no longer the case. Passenger trains as appropriate means of moving people have been discovered by others, who are making some headlines.

AAWA welcomes the interest and support this discovery can engender. But AAWA will continue to focus at that which is politically, economically, and technically doable, without discouraging dreams of some possible future.

We were moved when Amtrak President Richard Anderson came to DuPont WA on Dec. 19, 2017, the site of the Dec. 18 fatal derailment. He accepted that it was Amtrak's responsibility for the tragedy. I understand Anderson has continued to do right by our state and the victims and families of those hurt and killed.

But since then AAWA has joined rail advocates nationwide with serious concerns about some of the policy decisions Anderson has made. From petty things like taking away meals from the dedicated on-board Trails and Rails volunteer docents provided in part by the National Park Service, to elimination of the Coast Starlight's Pacific Parlour Car, to changing dining service on two eastern trains to cold box lunches, to a drastic cutback of private car owners ability attach to Amtrak trains (at a very high price for the private car owner!).

(Continued on page 9)

A NEW TRAIN OFFERS A SHORT RIDE IN SOUTH FL, BUT THAT RIDE SOON WILL BECOME LONGER

By *David Peter Alan*

There is a new train on the railroad in South Florida. It is called Brightline, and RUN Board member Bill Engel gave us a preview of it in the Spring issue of this Newsletter. Brightline began operation on Jan. 13, and it currently runs only between Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach.

That does not stop curious passengers from taking the short ride, usually a quick round trip. This writer took a one-way southbound ride on Sunday, April 1. Brightline, the official name for the service operated by All Aboard Florida (AAF), has a different look and feel than the two daily Amtrak trains that connect the area with New York and Tri-Rail, the local commuter-rail operation that runs parallel to Brightline and several miles to its west. While Brightline did not disclose ridership numbers, spokesperson Ali Soule said that management was "very excited" and said that the riders are, as well.

Brightline uses the Florida East Coast (FEC) Railway, which once connected Florida's mighty tourist meccas, from Miami and Palm Beach, northward to St. Augustine and Jacksonville Beach. It was the brainchild of 19th Century developer Henry M. Flagler, who developed many of those tourist meccas and capped his career by building a rail line from Miami to Key West across the chain of islands known as the Florida Keys. That line opened to great fanfare in 1912 but, sadly, it blew down in a hurricane in 1935 and was never rebuilt. AAF is a subsidiary of Florida East Coast Industries (FECI), which is developing the Brightline stations and the land nearby. Brightline is the first privately-financed passenger train operation in the country since before the Amtrak era began in 1971. In that sense, it continues Flagler's tradition of operating a railroad as a means to promote new real-estate development.

Prior to Brightline, the last scheduled passenger train over the FEC ran in 1968, in the middle of a decade-long strike. While passenger trains ran on the FEC from Jacksonville to Miami in days gone by, Brightline is not slated to go that far. Plans call for it to run from Miami to Orlando Airport, with intermediate stops in downtown Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach. The two intermediate stops are now in service, and it takes 35 to 40 minutes to travel non-stop between them.

The trains run with conventional, but colorful, equipment. In keeping with the operation's name, the train sets are colored and named Bright Yellow, Bright Orange, Bright Red, Bright Blue and Bright Green. The coaches were built by Siemens. On the day this writer rode, the Bright Orange set was in use. The weekday schedule calls for hourly service during what would be considered "peak-hours" on a commuter-oriented railroad. On weekends, it runs every 90 minutes through the day, so a single train set can provide all of the service. There are plans to expand the day service in the future, and a later train on Friday evenings was added early in April.

The trains are high-powered, with a Siemens Charger locomotive at each end of a four-car train. For anyone used to riding local trains or Amtrak trains, the pickup feels impressive. While Brightline trains travel at the conventional track speed of about 79 miles per hour, the acceleration is so rapid that the train reaches that speed very quickly and stays there. The train moves fast, as a train should, although there is nothing scenic about the route. It is Florida, after all, and the route does not run along the water.

It appeared to this writer that Brightline is designed to suit the tastes of airline travelers. Each of its South Florida stops (West Palm Beach, Fort Lauderdale and the Miami Central station that will soon open in downtown Miami) is located

relatively close to an airport, and each has connections to local transit that goes to the airports, as well as other locations. The sole destination planned for Orlando is at the airport; not Walt Disney World, EPCOT or downtown Orlando; although local transit connections would be available at the airport. The two stations currently in service have the same appearance, with rectangular, glass-and-chrome sterility, reminiscent of the airports of two decades ago and complete with the airline-style security not normally required on other railroads.

The passenger lounges have a cold appearance, but they are comfortable. There are snacks and beverages (including alcoholic ones) available at the stations, but riders must charge their purchases. Brightline does not accept cash for purchases, or for payment of fares. Food service on-board is provided with a rolling cart, again in airline style, and riders must also charge those purchases; no cash is accepted.

The fares are higher than on Tri-Rail a few miles away, but the trip is faster between comparable endpoints. The standard fare ("Smart class") is currently \$10.00, and the premium fare ("Select class") is \$15.00 on some trains and \$20.00 on others. Seniors get 10% off. The fare between West Palm Beach and Fort Lauderdale on Tri-Rail is \$5.65 (\$2.80 for seniors who pre-register with Tri-Rail), but the trip on Tri-Rail takes longer and the Fort Lauderdale station is less conveniently-located, several miles west of downtown. The Brightline station is next to the Broward County Transit terminal for local buses, but it is not a convenient walk from Brightline to the local bus terminal. The Brightline and Tri-Rail stations in West Palm Beach are located within walking distance of each other. Brightline also sells a week-end pass, a seven-day pass and a monthly pass, so it appears that the new railroad wants to attract commuters.

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A NEW TRAIN OFFERS A SHORT RIDE IN SOUTH FL

(Continued from page 8)

The cars have white interiors that continue the sterile appearance of the stations. The seats do not recline the way seats on Amtrak trains do, but the base of the seat can move forward a few inches, which gives the feel of a slightly-reclining seat back. There are no foot rests or leg rests, so the Brightline cars are not long-distance coaches, like those on Amtrak. Still, Brightline plans to offer a three-hour running time between Miami and Orlando Airport, so long-distance-style coaches are not necessary.

Brightline has ambitious plans for the Orlando run, which will take a few years to complete. The railroad is upgrading the segment of the FEC mainline between West Palm Beach and Cocoa for 110-mph operation, and there are plans to build a new line from Cocoa to Orlando Airport alongside Route 528, a state highway. That segment of track will be rated for 125-mph, which would allow a three-hour schedule. That schedule would be faster than a motorist could accomplish on the highway, so railroad officials expect to offer a speedy trip to attract customers. If they can run the intended schedule, Brightline trains would become the second-fastest in the nation, with only Amtrak's Acela trains in the Northeast region running at higher average speeds.

With a renewed interest in passenger trains on the FEC, there are other possibilities

that are not currently in the planning stage, but could be operated in the future. The original FEC main line runs north to Jacksonville, and a train could be run along the length of the Florida's coast to connect at Jacksonville with Amtrak trains to and from New York. There was talk of running an Amtrak train from New York along the FEC about twenty years ago, and this could still be done someday. There could also be stops added in places like Fort Pierce, Melbourne, Titusville, Daytona Beach and St. Augustine. Many of those towns were developed by the railroad, according to Flagler's plans, back in the late 1800s. Some of the towns want to host passenger trains again. It might also be feasible to use the southern part of the FEC line for a "Tri-Rail East" regional service. The line is more conveniently located than the existing Tri-Rail line, which is several miles inland from the population centers of the towns.

Whatever else the future may hold for Brightline, the next step is to begin service between Miami and Fort Lauderdale. At this writing, a date has not been set, but Soule told this writer that it will open for service "within the next few weeks." By the time you read this, it may already be open. The expansion to Orlando will take longer, since it requires a new line. Brightline officials now anticipate a start date sometime in 2020.

Even if such a schedule seems a bit ambitious, Brightline has left its mark on contemporary American railroading. It is a privately-financed service, operated over a line that has not hosted passenger trains for 50 years. For that reason alone, Brightline is a pioneering and innovative service.

Soule is excited about private-sector passenger rail and said: "We believe that Brightline is setting a new national model for what it means to travel by train. The feedback that we've received from guests has been overwhelmingly positive." In addition, she mentioned that the railroad is also improving Florida's infrastructure and creating job opportunities.

Time will tell how the experiment will work, and whether there will be more passenger services sponsored by the private sector, rather than the public sector. In the meantime, the ghost of Henry M. Flagler, one of the greatest real estate developers in American history, who built a railroad so he could develop the towns along it, rides the new colorful trains on Brightline.

For more information about Brightline or to buy tickets, go to their website, www.gobrightline.com.

David Peter Alan is a RUN Board member who has ridden the entire Amtrak system and seldom encounters "new mileage" to ride. He lives and practices law in South Orange, NJ.

THE DREAMS AND THE DOABLE; WHITHER AMTRAK?

(Continued from page 7)

While the above are seen as serious, what really has advocates concerned is the rumors that long-distance trains, including regionally vital and popular trains such as the *Empire Builder*, may be cut from daily to three days weekly or less, with eventually elimination of these trains! Is this even being considered? I do not know! But NARP/RPA, which has sometimes been accused of being too close to Amtrak management, is deeply concerned that the worst rumors may have some reality and are seeking to work to turn around these negative policies, if indeed such are being contemplated. One supporter of Richard Anderson felt he is in the process of making changes in what is seen as

a stodgy Amtrak corporate culture. New people were needed to replace a stale old guard.

Assuming that a change in Amtrak corporate culture is a good idea, I see that as quite different from the specific policy changes that seem to do damage to people and places that have come to depend on Amtrak. Anderson has repeated that only 6% of *Empire Builder* passengers travel all the way from Seattle to Chicago, those who are described as "experiential" riders. But that is the point! The *Builder* provides vital transportation to many of the 94%. People in Montana and North Dakota, for example, in the winter have no other safe options.

Amtrak's long-distance trains are the only rail passenger services that serve "flyover country."

And US Senators from North Dakota and Montana have as many votes as do those from New York and California. Former Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) had lots of support when she said, in reference to federal funding for Amtrak, "national or nothing"

AAWA will be joining rail advocates nationally in urging Congress, which just granted Amtrak the most funding ever, to support President Anderson's affirmative changes, but to limit or reverse policies that seem counterproductive to Amtrak and to those who ride or wish to ride America's intercity passenger trains. LHF

Lloyd H. Flem is Executive Director, All Aboard Washington.

IT'S TIME TO REGISTER!

(Continued from page 1)

Brian Nelson, President, All Aboard Minnesota, will moderate the Minnesota / Wisconsin Rail Advocacy Panel. Panelists include Ken Buehler, Northern Lights Express Rail Alliance; Jessica Treat, Executive Director, Transit for Livable Communities; Scott Rogers, Chairman, West Central Rail Coalition; John Parkyn, President, Wisconsin Association of Rail Passengers; and Nona Hill, President, All Aboard Wisconsin.

The second panel will focus on what is happening in other parts of the country. Richard Rudolph, the Chairman of the Rail Users' Network, will serve as moderator and will talk about rail

advocacy in New England. Other panelists include Andrew Albert, who chairs the New York City Transit Riders Council and the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA; Steve Albro, RUN Treasurer & Vice Chair, Greater Cleveland Transit Authority Advisory Board; J.W. Madison, President, Rails Inc., Albuquerque, NM; and Phil Streby, Treasurer, Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance & RPA Board Member.

The registration fee is \$45 until May 28th, and \$50 for last-minute or at-the-door registration. You can register online at the Rail Users' Network website or send a check payable to the Rail Users' Network, Box 8015, Portland, ME. 04104. We are also offering a reduced rate of \$25 for

college / university students to attend. The registration fee includes breakfast refreshments, lunch, afternoon snack and conference materials.

Participants attending the conference will also have an opportunity to sample public transportation in the Twin Cities area, with an optional tour on June 2. In the morning, we will ride the popular and expanding light rail lines in the Twin Cities. We will also visit the restored St. Paul Union Depot and other points of interest in the city. In the afternoon, we will ride on the Northstar Commuter Rail Line to Big Lake and back.

We look forward to seeing you at the conference.

RPA COUNCIL MEETS AHEAD OF DAY ON THE HILL

(Continued from page 3)

befalling one of our own who stumbled on some unevenness of the street crossing in DC after we were forced to walk quickly when our train (Metro) suffered a breakdown (due to a fire on the route, we were told). Rail issues, particularly the need for consistent, dependable passenger rail funding, were discussed with the following members and/or staff transportation assistants:

Senator Todd Young and Legislative Assistants Andrew Terp and Dan Cheever;

Megan Hrdlicka for Senator Joe Donnelly;

District 1 -- Seth Ehgdahl for Congressman Peter Visclosky;

District 2 -- Congresswoman Jackie Walorski and Legislative Aid Martin Schultz;

District 3 -- Special Assistant Jeffrey Kempler for Congressman Jim Banks;

District 4 -- Legislative Director Parker Reynolds for Congressman Todd Rokita;

District 5 -- Legislative Assistant Rob Hicks and Staff Assistant Emma Hamilton for Congresswoman Susan Brooks;

District 6 -- Legislative Director John Huston for Congressman Luke Messer;

District 7 -- Senior Policy Advisor & Staff Counsel Andrea Martin for Congressman Andre Carson;

District 8 -- Legislative Assistant Susey Davis for Congressman Larry Bucshon;

District 9 -- Legislative Assistant Alec Zender for Congressman Trey Hollingsworth.

A snowmobiler association member from

Indiana -- also in Washington, DC -- was engaged in a discussion about passenger rail. The individual is interested in learning more about RPA.

Wednesday morning was devoted to recapping our Congressional visits, and conducting our annual spring business meeting including elections to fill vacant Council seats and Board seats to be vacated by expiring terms of office. Resolutions were considered, and preliminary planning for current passenger rail events was begun.

I stayed an additional day for a personal tour of the Capitol afforded me by my Indiana Representative Jackie Walorski, arranged by her press assistant, Ella Fertitta, and conducted by one of her staff members, Shawn Singh.

Phil Streby is a RUN Board member and a board member of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance.

WHAT'S NEEDED TO SHORE UP U.S. PASSENGER RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE

(Editor's Note: The following are excerpts from a speech delivered by RUN Chair Richard Rudolph at Toledo's National Train Day on May 5.)

Today America's passenger rail system is a pathetic skeleton of what formerly existed. We lost an incredibly efficient multi-purpose mobility machine that not only moved people, but parcels, express freight and mail.

The Rail Passenger Act of 1970 which created Amtrak relieved the private railroads of their passenger losses and created a nationwide intercity passenger train network under a single management. While most thought it would only last a few years, several key issues helped it to continue to operate during the first decade of its existence: the Arab oil embargo and the OPEC price increases of 1973-74 and long gas lines that followed the Iranian Revolution that led to an increased in ridership.

Amtrak was established as a hybrid: a company that was expected to make a profit but also a government entity dependent on Congress for budget appropriations and subject to government work rules.

Not much has changed in the 21st century. Amtrak continues to limp along with revolving door management, undercapitalization and a perpetual mission conflict: to provide a vital public service and make money at the same time. There have been eight CEOs since 2002, each bringing reorganizations and new management teams.

With the exception of the Amtrak-owned-and-maintained Northeast Corridor, the Keystone Service in Pennsylvania and some service in Michigan, Amtrak services are slower, less reliable, and less frequent than those of almost every other developed nation in the world. They remain popular with many travelers "because of the social atmosphere on board, the lighter environmental impact compared to planes, the spacious design of the cars, the scenic routes, and the overall comfort of the train ride." Trains in the U.S. take longer than cars or planes, but the unique experience trumps the long ride. A trip from one coast to the other is

surely one of the greatest railway journeys that you can make anywhere in the world.

What's needed:

1. We need to first maintain the 15 long-distance routes. An estimated 144 million American taxpayers living in 220 mostly rural communities would lose access to passenger rail service.

2. We need to reinvest in our passenger rail system. Unlike the freight railroads, Amtrak has no profits to reinvest in maintenance, much less in ambitious capital projects that would make American passenger rail services globally competitive. Many Congresspersons view Amtrak's continuing losses as evidence of poor management, and argue that they should not throw good money after bad in the form of public subsidies. The result has been an infrastructure deficit almost unparalleled in the world. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the U.S. must invest an additional \$230 billion to restore its rail infrastructure to a level of global competitiveness.

There are some success stories at the state level. The *Downeaster* service that began in 2001 between Boston and Portland, ME continues to have one of the highest customer satisfaction ratings in the entire Amtrak network and continues to increase its ridership. Annually, more than a half million riders are using the service which now extends beyond Portland to Brunswick, Maine. Five trains a day make the daily round trip from Portland to Boston and with three continuing on to Brunswick.

The MBTA's CapeFLYER seasonal service from Boston to Hyannis, first launched in 2013, continues to be a success and has generated renewed interest in restoring service to the Berkshires in western Mass and to mid-coast Maine.

NNEPRA at its monthly board meeting in January 2018 announced a plan to utilize existing *Downeaster* equipment to offer seasonal summer weekend service from Boston, making additional stops beyond Brunswick to Bath, Wiscasset, Newcastle, and the final destination,

Rockland on Friday nights. Round-trip service was to be provided on Saturdays and Sundays leaving North station in the morning and arriving in Rockland in mid-afternoon. Unfortunately the promise of additional service has been put on hold. The Governor basically told the NNEPRA board that it couldn't use any state funds. Also, the new president of Amtrak said it would be impossible to reach an agreement in a timely manner for tracks, bridges, etc. would need to be inspected.

Another potential success story is the new Hartford line which is now scheduled to open in June 2018. With trains operating at speeds up to 110 mph, cutting travel time between the two cities to as little as 81 minutes, the new service will enable passengers to board trains approximately every 30 minutes during the peak morning and evening rush hour. The number of daily roundtrips will go up from the current six per day to 17, with 12 continuing on to Springfield. Amtrak will continue its six trains a day shuttle service.

There is also new train service in South Florida. It's called the Brightline which currently runs only between Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach. Plans call for it to run from Miami to Orlando Airport with intermediate stops in downtown Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach. Brightline is the first privately financed passenger train operation in the country since before the Amtrak era began in 1971.

Washington State has used nearly \$800 million in federal grants to fund 20 different rail construction projects to upgrade passenger rail stations, enhance rail safety and relieve rail congestion. All of these projects have been completed. The list of projects include a 19-mile bypass route south of Tacoma to relieve congestion, a new rail station in Tacoma which will serve 12 daily Amtrak *Cascades* trains and the *Coast Starlight*, King Street station improvements and landslide mitigation efforts to catch debris before it hits the tracks. The funds were also used to purchase eight new Siemens Charger locomotives, which went into service last fall with the start of expanded service and the opening of the new Tacoma station.

A SURVEY OF LONG-DISTANCE AND STATE-SUPPORTED PASSENGER TRAIN SERVICE IN THE WESTERN U.S.

Part Two: Existing (Continued)

(Continued from page 2)

a year for intercity and commuter rail, such as the Pacific Surfliner, COASTER, and Metrolink, with eligibility for both capital and operating expenses, and \$245 million a year for the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP), both administered by the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA). Agencies may also be eligible in some cases to compete in the new competitive programs created by SB 1 that provide funding for capital improvements.

There is a movement afoot to put on the November ballot a measure to repeal SB 1. This has a crass political purpose as the two chief proponents are Republicans running for Governor. Interestingly a poll of likely voters by the nonpartisan Public Policy Institute of California found, "52 percent favor the plans for spending these new tax funds when read a brief description of the transportation projects included in the governor's budget proposal." Governor Jerry Brown vows, "I will do everything in my power to defeat any repeal effort that gets on the ballot." We'll see how this plays out.

Capitol Corridor

Propositions 108 and 116 were passed in 1990 by the voters of California authorizing bonds be issued to fund expanding passenger rail service in the state. This resulted in the start of The Capitols on Dec. 12, 1991 linking San Jose and Sacramento with three daily round-trips and one train continuing past Sacramento to Roseville. Eventually this trip was extended to Colfax but that stop due to low usage was discontinued in 1998; now the service only goes as far as Auburn. The name refers to the service linking California's first capital (San Jose) and current one (Sacramento). It was subsequently changed to Capitol

Corridor to avoid being confused with the *Capitol Limited* Amtrak service (which runs between Washington DC and Chicago).

The corridor is 170 miles long, serving 18 stations. Major stops besides San Jose and Sacramento are Santa Clara, Oakland, Berkeley and Davis. Currently it has 15 round trips daily between Sacramento and Oakland, with seven continuing to San Jose. It is the third highest ridership route in the Amtrak system, with 1,607,000 riders (all ridership figures are for FY 2017, taken from the Monthly Performance Report for Sept. 2017 (Preliminary and Unaudited) dated Dec. 27, 2017 posted on the Amtrak website).

Initially ridership was weak and there was talk of discontinuing service. In reaction, local officials formed the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority (CCJPA) which assumed management responsibility for the service in October 1998. Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) was designated as the entity to handle day to day operations. A program of corridor improvements was undertaken which assured reliability and more frequent service instituted making it appealing. Gene Skoropowski, a rail industry veteran, was hired as Executive Director during this growth period and under his leadership the number of trips between Oakland and San Jose grew from three to the present seven. As a result of these enhancements, ridership grew dramatically.

This success story is the model the two other California state-supported Amtrak routes (San Joaquin and Pacific Surfliner) hope to emulate and the ostensible reason leaders in those corridors have recently created Joint Power Authorities to take over management of the services in their corridors.

In January, a courtesy light was installed on the Capitol Corridor platform at the Richmond intermodal station served by it and Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART). As a press release explains this will "... alert conductors on eastbound Capitol Corridor trains (to Sacramento or Auburn) of incoming northbound BART trains. The light is activated as a BART train pulls into the station and remains on for approximately two minutes. During this time, conductors of eastbound-only Capitol Corridor trains will wait to depart, giving passengers from the incoming BART train ample time to walk between the BART platform and through the BART Richmond station concourse to their Capitol Corridor train."

On Nov. 13, 2017, a new station at Fairfield was added. The city of Hercules since the 1990s has included in its plans for waterfront development a possible intermodal station served by local buses, the Capitol Corridor train and ferries. Environmental clearance is completed and the project is now undergoing design and investigation of funding options. CCJPA staff are working with Hercules staff to help them through the process of meeting the CCJPA Station Policy, a precursor to the CCJPA Board considering the advisability of a new Hercules station. The city of Hercules website for the project is www.herculestrainstop.com

CCJPA initiated a pilot program on August 28, 2017 to test 100% Renewable Diesel (RD) fuel in a California F-59 locomotive assigned to the Oakland-Auburn route, making it the first train in California to run on this RD fuel. Testing was performed in January 2018 on the locomotive by the California Air Resources Board to determine the benefits and challenges of using RD. Results should be available in a few months.

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A SURVEY OF LONG-DISTANCE AND STATE-SUPPORTED PASSENGER TRAIN SERVICE IN THE WESTERN U.S.



An Amtrak San Joaquin at a stop in Emeryville, CA. The train's corridor has been split between Bakersfield-Oakland and Bakersfield-Sacramento service since 1999. It has the sixth highest annual ridership on the Amtrak system.

Continued from page 12)

Expansion of service on the east end of the corridor between Roseville and Sacramento has been a part of the overall Business Plan since the late 1990s. This will entail adding a third track so passenger service can expand without impacting Union Pacific freight trains already operating along those tracks. The project is environmentally cleared. Final design of Phase I (which will facilitate two additional round trips) is underway. Phase II is currently under consideration for grant funding; a decision on that will be forthcoming soon.

A dynamic visioning process is underway, with a Vision Communications Plan being prepared outlining a program for phasing in improvements incrementally. The

objective over time is for it to be a modern railroad built to international standards, electrified and capable of top speeds of 125 miles per hour. The website for the service is <https://www.capitolcorridor.org/>

San Joaquin

During the era of private passenger rail service, several trains served the San Joaquin Valley of central California, but with declining ridership the number of trains dwindled. By 1971, the sole serving train in the corridor was Southern Pacific's *San Joaquin Daylight* which ended with the start of Amtrak.

Amtrak had no service in the San Joaquin Valley when it began operations. Under political pressure it launched the San Joaquin March 5, 1974 with one daily round-trip

between Bakersfield and Oakland. Beginning in 1999, service began splitting at Stockton with some going to Oakland and others to Sacramento. The corridor is 282 miles (Sacramento) or 315 miles (Oakland) long, depending on the destination.

Seven round trips operate between Bakersfield and Stockton. Five continue on to Oakland while two go to Sacramento. It serves 19 stations. Major stops besides Bakersfield, Sacramento, Stockton and Oakland include Davis and Fresno. The most recent enhancement of service came on June 20, 2016 with the addition of a daily round-trip between Oakland and Bakersfield – bringing the total daily round-trips to seven. This was the first new round-trip between Oakland and Bakersfield in 22 years. The *San Joaquin* is the sixth highest ridership Amtrak route, with 1,120,000 riders.

In 2015 the aforementioned San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA) assumed management of the *San Joaquin*. It contracts with the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRC) to provide day-to-day management of the service (SJRRC also manages the Altamont Corridor Express commuter service which runs between Stockton and San Jose). Since its early years, leisure travel has been the main market for the service. As that has diminished somewhat, SJJPA is now trying to capture some of the large business travel market and same-day leisure travel market.

On May 7, the *San Joaquin* was scheduled to launch what it is dubbing the Morning Express between Fresno and Sacramento. This is being done by reallocating resources with one less trip operating from Bakersfield to Fresno. This train that originates in Fresno will arrive in downtown Sacramento before
(Continued on page 15)

A COLOSSAL BLUNDER IN THE MAKING?



Amtrak's recently appointed President, Richard Anderson, has proposed reducing the frequency of long-distance trains.

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

At a time when Amtrak officials should be celebrating it is once again rolling down the wrong track! The Consolidated Appropriation Act of 2018, which Congress just passed, provides twice as much funding for Amtrak's Northeast Corridor and the National Network in fiscal year 2018 than the budget submitted earlier by the Trump Administration.

The increase in Amtrak total appropriations is certainly good news for the millions of Americans who depend on public transportation to travel to work, visit relatives, seek medical attention, and procure food and other necessities of life. One might expect that with a larger total budget, Amtrak would be thinking of adding or improving service. Unfortunately, it seems that the new President is thinking of just the reverse—cutting long-distance service! Something is very wrong with this picture!

It appears that Richard Anderson, the new President of Amtrak, doesn't fully understand why there is a need to maintain the current national route structure and frequency of service. At various forums, he has indicated a preference for reducing daily service on some of the national routes to three days a week. This would be extremely harmful to the health of the national network.

Instead of cutting some routes back to tri-weekly, we should be making sure ALL routes are daily! A passenger should not have to consult a calendar to see if the journey he/she intends to make operates on a particular day of the week! Instead, Mr. Anderson seems to favor expanding additional daily service to shorter city pairs. To be sure, it would be wonderful to introduce another daily frequency between shorter distance city pairs such as Chicago to St. Paul / Minneapolis or Chicago to Denver, but not if it means short-changing passengers living in remote areas of the nation, where there are few mobility options available for traveling from their communities to other places in the United States.

Faced with a major financial crisis in 1994, Amtrak contracted with Mercer Management Consulting to develop recommendations for reducing its route network. In response to its recommendations, Amtrak closed four routes, truncated six routes, and reduced the frequency of service on 11 additional routes, primarily from daily to three to four times a week during fiscal year 1995.

These route and service changes resulted in a 13% reduction in the total miles that Amtrak trains traveled from fiscal year 1994 to fiscal year 1996 and \$54 million in cost savings in fiscal year

1995. However, during fiscal year 1996, Amtrak's overall ridership dropped by 1.1 million passengers, or 5%, but anticipated reductions in operating costs were not realized.

The Mercer cuts turned out to be a financial disaster. Less-than-daily service caused less efficient usage of equipment and other unforeseen problems. Amtrak learned that many customers were not willing to plan their entire trips around the days when the train would be running, even if it were feasible to do so. Connections between routes sometimes required a layover of more than 24 hours, occasionally more than 48. There were fewer trains over which to amortize fixed costs, so the savings were not as great as Amtrak management had hoped.

A new Amtrak President, George Warrington, restored most of the trains to daily service in 1997. However, there is still the need to restore passenger service from Orlando to Los Angeles with stops along the Mississippi Coast. That service ended after Hurricane Katrina hit. Additionally, the *Cardinal* must be a daily service. It is not a good message for Amtrak to be sending that some passengers matter more than others.

Amtrak riders who utilize these services should contact their respective Senators and Congressperson to let them know that it is unacceptable to reduce Amtrak long distance routes from daily to three or four times a week. Congressional and Senatorial members who represent constituents in remote areas of the nation should know what to expect. They will no doubt urge Amtrak to maintain daily service on the National System and restore daily service on the Sunset Route east of New Orleans, as well as through Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio, and Indiana.

A SURVEY OF LONG-DISTANCE AND STATE-SUPPORTED PASSENGER TRAIN SERVICE IN THE WESTERN US

(Continued from page 13)

8 a.m. A program of improvements at stations to be served by the Morning Express (e.g. parking and lighting) is underway. There are also plans in 2019 for one of the trips to Oakland to be adjusted to facilitate morning travel between the Bay Area and Fresno.

These service changes are anticipated to result in substantial increases in ridership and reduce operational costs. SJJPA is partnering with the Shasta Regional Transportation Agency (SRTA) for development of an all-electric express bus service between Redding and Sacramento via the I-5 corridor, now envisioned to be the core trunk line in a larger network of buses in Northern California to be called the "North State Intercity Bus" service. SRTA is partnering with other local transit agencies to coordinate this bus network.

The intent is to have seamless access/ticketing for San Joaquin passengers. SRTA has submitted a grant application to the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) for the funding necessary to initiate this new service.

The 2017 SJJPA Business Plan update states, "There is great ridership potential if the frequency of service to Sacramento can be increased and offered at the right

times of the day. SJJPA is focused on the implementation of an 8th Daily Round Trip to run from Fresno to Sacramento." This would run along the Sacramento Subdivision instead of the currently used Fresno subdivision, which would offer new stops at Elk Grove, City College, Midtown, Old North Sacramento and Natomas (where passengers would be shuttled by bus to Sacramento International Airport).

SJJPA is planning to commence the 8th and 9th Daily Round Trips in Fiscal Year 2019/2020 if they are successful in receiving the necessary TIRCP funding. SJJPA submitted a joint application with SJRRC for expanded San Joaquins and ACE service in January. Short-term consideration is being given to locations where maximum speed could be increased to 90 mph.

SJJPA has also applied for funding to relocate the Madera station in order to accommodate connections with the bullet train currently under construction. In addition, hourly service to Sacramento is envisioned in the next 10-15 years.

The single-level rail cars being manufactured by Siemens in its Sacramento plant for a joint California/Illinois order mentioned in part 1 are still the subject of discussion as to deployment but the

widespread assumption is they will be used on the San Joaquin. As Paul Dyson, President of RailPAC, notes in his "President's Commentary" in the Steel Wheels 2nd Quarter, 2018 issue, compared to the other two routes, "... there are greater distances between stations [of the San Joaquin], so dwell time is less of an issue."

Potential extensions include:

- Extending rail service north 160 miles along Union Pacific trackage from Sacramento to Redding, directly serving Yuba, Sutter, Butte, Tehama, and Shasta counties.
- Extending some San Joaquin trains five miles past the Amtrak Oakland Station to serve the Amtrak Coliseum Station for a connection to BART and the people mover to Oakland airport
- Longer-term utilization of the Altamont Corridor to bring the San Joaquin to additional Bay Area markets.

The website for the SJJPA is <https://www.sjjpa.com/>

(To be continued in the Fall 2018 issue of the RUN Newsletter.)

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

FOURTH PIEDMONT SERVICE TO BEGIN JUNE 4

By Bill Engel

The North Carolina Department of Transportation has announced a fourth daily frequency for the *Piedmont* will begin between Raleigh, NC and Charlotte, NC on June 4. Train #77 will depart Raleigh at 3:00 p.m. and arrive Charlotte at 6:10 p.m.. A return trip to Raleigh, Train #78, will depart Charlotte at 7:00 PM and

arrive Raleigh at 10:11 p.m..

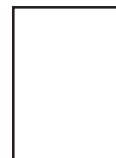
Further, NCDOT has announced that sometime in late May or early June, service will move from the existing Raleigh station on Cabarrus Street to Raleigh Union Station, 510 W. Martin St..

NCDOT's rail service, billed as NC

by Train, is operated by Amtrak. In addition to the *Piedmont* trains between Raleigh and Charlotte, there is the *Carolinian* between Charlotte and New York City. For schedule info visit NCByTrain.org or call 800-BY-TRAIN.

Bill Engel is a RUN Board member based in Canal Fulton, OH.

FROM THE RUN BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Rail Users' Network Newsletter is published quarterly by the Rail Users' Network, a 501 (c) (3), nonprofit corporation.

We welcome your thoughts and comments about our newsletter. Please write to us: RUN, P.O. Box 8015, Portland, ME 04104

As a grassroots organization, we depend upon your contributions to allow us to pursue our important work. Please donate to help us grow.

Rail Users' Network
P.O. Box 8015
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PLEASE BECOME A MEMBER OF RUN...

We invite you to become a member of the Rail Users' Network, which represents 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. 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, international conferences, regional rail forums, 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 hope you will join vital decisions and legislation affecting the North American rail transportation system are being made daily. Don't be left behind at the station!

Please register me/us as a member of RUN today

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Name of individual Applicant (or group, Agency, or Company Contact Person's Name)

Street Address

City

State/Province

Postal Code

Phone number

Fax Number

E-Mail

Enclosed are dues of:

- ☐ \$40 (individual/family)
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- ☐ \$250 (Private Carrier or For-Profit)

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