

INDIVIDUAL HIGHLIGHTS

Calif. Central Coast Rail p. 2

Report from New Mexico p. 4

RUN Ohio Report p. 5

Canada Report p. 6

ADA, Thirty Years Later p. 7

RUN 's Letter to Amtrak CEO Flynn p. 8

Flynn's Response p. 9

NJ Transit Keeps Going p. 11

The Massachusetts East West Passenger Rail Study p. 13

Rail Advocacy on the Front Range p. 17

COVID-19 AND TRANSIT: CUTBACKS TODAY AND DIFFICULTIES TOMORROW

By David Peter Alan

There is not much transit running at this writing, but there are not many riders, either. Much of the country is only beginning to emerge from lock-down restrictions due to the COVID-19 virus, and the states that have been subjected to the most-severe restrictions are the transit-rich states of the Northeast, West Coast and elsewhere. Schools and colleges shut down in March, most businesses have been inactive since that time, there are no public events, and there are no restaurants open and serving (there is only take-out and delivery service). Against that backdrop, there are only a few riders, since there are not many places to go. The traditional torrent of peak-hour commuters to offices in our big cities has dwindled to a trickle, as office workers have adapted

to working "remotely" from home. How many will return to commuting is a question that will only be answered in the future.

Since March, this writer has been a member of the team that has compiled events on the rail (passenger and freight) and rail transit scenes, in response to the crisis spawned by the virus, for publication by *Railway Age* and its sibling publication on their website, www.railwayage.com. It has been a grim task, as one transit provider after another reduced service, sometimes to the lowest levels in history, to limit its mission to accommodating "essential" workers and trips.

In many places, providers continued to run full service for a short time, but realized that it was unsustainable to keep doing

that, because there were so few riders. Most agencies, especially in the transit-rich Northeast, cut back to weekend service during the week on regional rail lines and either Saturday or Sunday service on local rail transit and buses. That usually meant longer intervals between vehicles on subway, light rail and streetcar lines, but it also usually meant a full span of service for the day. On regional-rail lines, most in the New York area continued to run hourly service every day, while other areas were reduced to service every two hours or less; the normal weekend service level in areas like Boston and Chicago. Some agencies, like METRO in the Washington, D.C. area and on BART in the Bay Area in and around San Francisco, ended their service day several hours earlier than normally.

Continued on page 10

NEW YORK SHUTS DOWN SUBWAY SERVICE OVERNIGHT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 116 YEARS!

By Andrew Albert

Since 1904, the year New York's amazing subway system opened, it has been a 24/7 operation, with the obvious exception of strikes, Superstorm Sandy, and the horror of 9/11. On May 6, due to the necessity of cleaning/disinfecting the system, over 3,500 subway cars, 472 stations, crew quarters, yards, and much more, New York's Governor Andrew Cuomo and MTA Chairman Pat Foye announced that subway service would be suspended between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. system-wide.

The increasing numbers of homeless persons making the system their home, the possibility of spreading coronavirus among them, to essential workers, subway personnel, and others, undoubtedly contributed to the decision.

In order to adequately clean and disinfect all surfaces, it was obviously essential that all riders—including the homeless—be removed when trains reach the end of each line. This involves the hiring of additional police officers, as well, to insure that

stations are closed between 1 and 5 a.m. Trains for subway workers continue to run through the system to get them where they need to go, in order to be able to re-start the system at 5 a.m. While ridership has declined enormously since the pandemic began, there are still 11,000 people traveling between the hours of 1 and 5 a.m., especially during the 4 a.m.-5 a.m. hour. To accommodate these, many of whom are essential workers, including nurses, hospital workers, sanitation workers, *Continued on page 5*

CALIFORNIA CENTRAL COAST A WHIRL OF PASSENGER RAIL ACTIVITY

By Dana Gabbard

In 2018, California adopted an updated state rail plan [<https://dot.ca.gov/programs/rail-and-mass-transportation/california-state-rail-plan>]. Its bold vision is that by 2040, Californians will have access to an integrated, state-of-the-art rail system that will revolutionize personal mobility and enhance the quality of life. Through funds derived from SB 1 (aka Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017) and cap and trade (auctions of unused carbon allocations to companies allowing them to exceed carbon emission limits), a steady stream of grants to local agencies and jurisdictions are helping to realize the statewide rail vision.

Along the California Central Coast, the Coast Rail Coordinating Council (CRCC) [<https://www.slocog.org/programs/public-transportation/rail/coast-rail-coordinating-council-crcc>] acts as an interregional forum to discuss rail issues of mutual concern among its member agencies, which include the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG), Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG), Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCRTC), Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC), and Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC).

SLOCOG and the CRCC are leading the Coast Rail Corridor Service Implementation Plan, which will lay the groundwork for implementing the 2018 State Rail Plan in the San Luis Obispo region by determining the optimal options for rail connectivity and operations, equipment needs, governance, and community benefits for service and increased frequencies between Goleta and Salinas.

SLOCOG is also undertaking a Passenger Rail Improvement Study. This study is

more localized and will provide recommendations for implementing commuter rail service in the San Luis Obispo region, and will include a thorough examination of various locomotive technologies.

In December 2019, the City of Grover Beach held a ribbon cutting for the expansion and renovation of its rail station, now known as the Grover Beach Transit Center. This project enhanced safety and accessibility for passengers through improvements, including a new bus shelter and bus loading/unloading area, a new entrance to the station, new loading docks, additional parking, and improved lighting and accessibility. The station is served by Amtrak's *Pacific Surfliner*.

The Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Agency (LOSSAN Agency) was recently awarded funds by the state of California through the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) for several projects to enhance *Pacific*

Once the Gilroy extension is electrified, Salinas service would operate as a shuttle to Gilroy, with transfers onto electric railcars of Caltrain or the High Speed Rail.

Surfliner service, which the LOSSAN Agency oversees. This includes the Central Coast Layover Facility Expansion project, which will expand the capacity and capabilities of the layover facility in San Luis Obispo by relocating and constructing a new facility to advance service expansion and enhancement goals for the *Pacific Surfliner*. An expanded layover facility in San Luis Obispo can also benefit the efforts underway to implement a sub-regional rail service between Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo by providing another location to maintain this equipment.

The TIRCP funding award completes the funding necessary to construct Phase 1 of the project, which will construct sufficient capacity to store and service two *Pacific Surfliner* trainsets, supporting plans to add service to San Luis Obispo. The project is in the preliminary engineering and environmental clearance phase, which should be completed by the end of 2021.

The Monterey County Rail Extension project will offer two weekday round-trip passenger trains from Salinas to Gilroy, San Jose, and San Francisco via the extension of Caltrain south of Gilroy to Salinas. Caltrain's current role on the project is to provide feasibility planning to determine under what conditions Caltrain may be able to operate the Salinas service.

Caltrain is in the midst of electrification between San Francisco and San Jose. The agency is acquiring Electric Multiple Units (EMUs) for this service. These are railcars with their own engines and can feed off overhead catenary.

The TAMC service is anticipated to be an extension of the existing Gilroy diesel service that would then run commingled with EMUs north of San Jose in the first phase of electrification. Once the Gilroy extension is electrified, Salinas service would operate as a shuttle to Gilroy, with transfers onto electric railcars of Caltrain or the High Speed Rail. Also, once all of Caltrain's diesel fleet is retired (2029), even if the Gilroy segment is not yet electrified, the diesel trains would operate exclusively south of San Jose.

When asked if diesel/electric dual mode equipment would be contemplated to facilitate through service, Caltrain responded that this is not currently anticipated.

Continued on page 3

CALIFORNIA CENTRAL COAST A WHIRL OF PASSENGER RAIL ACTIVITY

Continued from page 2

TAMC has secured funding for Phase 1 (dubbed the Kick Start project) which includes renovation of the Salinas station, track improvements at the Gilroy station, a train layover facility in Salinas and improvements to the tracks between Salinas and Gilroy. Utility Relocation and Construction is underway for the Salinas station work while the other elements are still in the design stage. Further details can be found

at: <https://www.tamcmonterey.org/programs/rail/monterey-county-rail-extension/>

Phases two and three are new stations on the coastal route at Pajaro/Watsonville and Castroville, the former to connect with the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line and the latter to connect with the Monterey Branch Line Light Rail service.

SCCRTC is currently performing an alternatives analysis on the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, which is expected to be completed by January 2021. Once the agency completes the study and can narrow down the scope of a potential

project, the next step is to undertake an environmental review. Funding is an issue likely to impact the timetable of the project. Further details can be found at: <https://sccrtc.org/projects/multimodal/transitcorridora/>

Due to funding considerations, TAMC is putting on hold the Monterey Branch Line Light Rail project in favor of exploring with Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST), the local transit agency, the possibility of placing a busway along the 16-mile right of way the agency owns between Castroville and Monterey, to build corridor ridership towards an eventual rail line (technology TBD). Further details can be found at: <https://www.tamcmonterey.org/programs/rail/monterey-branch-line/>

TAMC has commenced work on a Monterey Bay Area Rail Network Integration Study. Funded by a [TIRCP grant](#), the purpose of this study is to lay the groundwork for implementing the [2018 California State Rail Plan](#) in the Monterey Bay Area by determining the optimal options for: rail connectivity and operations, equipment needs, governance, and community benefits for service between Monterey County and Santa Clara County, Monterey and Santa Cruz, and the Coast Rail Corridor. Further details can be

found at:

<https://www.tamcmonterey.org/programs/rail/monterey-bay-area-rail-network-integration-study/>

King City, which is located in Monterey County, contracted with Railpros in April to negotiate agreements with Union Pacific and provide engineering plans for the King Station Multimodal Transit Center Temporary Platform. The Temporary Platform will enable the Amtrak *Coast Starlight* to serve the residents of King City, personnel and troops of Fort Hunter-Liggett, visitors of Pinnacles National Park, hikers along the National Historic Juan Bautista de Anza trail, and bicyclists enjoying the Monterey County wine routes. Further details can be found at: <http://www.kingcity.com/king-city-multimodal-transportation-corridor-plan/>

My thanks to the following for their cooperation in the researching of this piece: Tasha Bartholomew, Caltrain; Anna Devers, CRCC; Doreen Liberto-Blanck, King City; Christina Watson, TAMC; James Campbell, LOSSAN; Guy Preston, SCCRTC.

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

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

Name	Location	Affiliation
Richard Rudolph, Chair	Portland, ME	NARP / TrainRiders Northeast, Maine Rail Group
Andrew Albert, Vice-Chair	New York, NY	New York City Transit Riders Council
Chuck Bode, Membership Secretary	Philadelphia, PA	Tri-State Citizens' Council on Transportation
Steve Albro, Treasurer	Cleveland, OH	Cleveland RTA Citizen Advisory Board
David Peter Alan, Esq.	South Orange, NJ	Lackawanna Coalition
Mela Bush-Miles	Boston, MA	Greater 4 Corners Action Coalition (MBTA)
Joshua D. Coran	Seattle, WA	Talgo Inc.
James E. Coston, Esq.	Chicago, IL	Corridor Capital LLC
Bill Engel	Canal Fulton, OH	Ohio Rail Tourism Association
Dana Gabbard	Los Angeles, CA	Southern California Transit Advocates
Steve Hastalis	Chicago, IL	National Federation for the Blind
Dennis Kirkpatrick	Boston, MA	Rail Users' Network
J.W. Madison	Albuquerque, NM	Rails Inc.
Andy Sharpe	Philadelphia, PA	SEPTA
Phil Streby	Peru, IN	Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance

Please send comments, letters to editor or articles for possible publications to the Rail Users' Network at: RUN; P.O. Box 8015, Portland, ME 04104 or email to rrudolph1022@gmail.com

Editor for this issue: Paul Bubny

REPORT FROM NEW MEXICO



Photo courtesy of Rio Metro

By JW Madison

A Tale of 4 Governors: Trying to Revive a Track Purchase Deal

During the 1980s, our Gov. Toney Anaya damn near got laughed into an early grave for calling for a commuter train between Albuquerque and Santa Fe. Since then, Governor Bill Richardson, having paid attention to all the subsequent studies, and to advocates, including—ahem—Rails Inc, ramrodded the Rail Runner into existence. And, before his terms ran out, he had already begun a deal for NM to buy the Lamy-Raton Pass track segment from the BNSF.

His successor, Susanna Martinez, killed the deal.

We have been trying to reach somebody in the office of our present Gov, Michelle Lujan-Grisham, about reviving this effort, and adding the Belen-El Paso area segment to the deal. At this writing, we have been most unsuccessful in this. To be fair, the Gov does have a hell of a lot on her plate.

A Visionary RWU Editorial

I'd like to call the readers' attention to an editorial in the Spring 2020 issue of the Railroad Workers United (RWU) Highball Newsletter. It raises the issue of nationalizing our Rail infrastructure.

Rails Inc has been advocating something like this for many years, and I've sung this song in this *Newsletter* for at least a few of these years. Look up our back issues, or contact rails@nmrails.org.

This RWU piece includes a startling historical perspective on this subject that I for one knew nothing about, and I suspect many *Newsletter* readers don't either. Go to <https://www.railroadworkersunited.org> and roll down to *The Highball*, Spring 2020, page 11. A hell of a lot to think about, wherever you presently stand on this issue.

While you read any of this material, keep it in the front of your mind that in America, *all modes* of transportation, at the national level, feature a reasonable combination of public infrastructure and both public and private moving parts. *All modes except Rail.*

Albuquerque Transit Update

The City has been taking advantage of the Big Shutdown to make some improvements to the "ART" (BRT) line. They're training the drivers not yet trained for the ART buses. They're putting in curbs to try to discourage traffic left turns in front of said buses. They're adding a couple of shelter canopies not included in the station design for the Old Town area.

A word about these canopies: they're cute white tent-like structures too skimpy to ward off either sun or rain. The edges end way higher off the ground than they should. There are many complaints about this. *Also*—due to the layout of some station stops in relation to side streets and crosswalks, there is a big jaywalking problem in the University area. *Also*—along an unusually narrow section of Central Blvd, one ART lane serves buses running in both directions, leading to considerable rider confusion.

The Transit Advisory Board (TAB) has proposed eliminating fares on ART buses. The City Council thinks that farebox return covers operating expenses. My savvy source thinks said return is under 10%, but nobody knows yet (!).

Pursuant to conversion to Rail— Rails Inc is still calling (unsuccessfully) for a major study to ascertain the feasibility of converting ART to Urban Rail as the buses wear out. As I've already written, we have it on excellent authority that we're stuck with a dead end BRT-only design requiring a major overhaul of pretty much everything above ground. *To their credit*, the builders of ART took the opportunity to first upgrade various utility lines under the right of way.

Rail Runner Update

Our Governor is in overall charge of Rio Metro, and therefore of the NM *Rail Runner Express* (NMRX), which is still out of service. Word is that it should start running again when our numerous state employees are allowed back into their offices and workshops. Rio Metro is lining up a set of pandemic-related boarding and riding procedures so they'll be ready to move when the Governor clears the track (as it were).

As to reported "trouble" with PTC compliance, an official tells me that although the NMRX is "not the shining star of implementers," funding has been secured and things are moving well in this direction. I can furnish appropriate Links to anyone who might be interested in digging deeper into this.

JW Madison is a RUNBoard member and president of Rails Inc. in Albuquerque, NM.

NEW YORK SHUTS DOWN SUBWAY SERVICE OVERNIGHT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 116 YEARS!

Continued from page 1

and more, bus service has been ramped up in a major way, with more than 1,100 additional runs, and 11 new express routes between boroughs. All this bus service is free of charge to riders, and if your new route to/from work involves more than two transfers due to the subway not running, you are entitled to a free ride on a for-hire vehicle.

As the New York subway system is vast and far-flung, I was concerned whether—when service resumed at 5 a.m., and you were at a station far from the end of a line—you would have to wait an additional hour to have your service back. Thankfully, that is not the case, as gap trains are being stored in various places along the lines, to allow for everyone to get their service resumed as close to 5 a.m. as possible.

This major cleaning effort involves every part of every station being cleaned at least once in 24 hours, and each subway car several times in 24 hours, depending on whether that particular car is being used to serve transit workers during the overnight shutdown. Additionally, the MTA is experimenting with some exciting new technologies, which, if proven successful, could be a game-changer in how the system

is cleaned into the future. One of these promising technologies is Ultraviolet Light, which in tests has proven to kill viruses, including the coronavirus. UV lamps are being installed in bus vehicles and subway cars to test their effectiveness. In the case of subway cars, these tests are being conducted without any passengers on-board. Another promising development is antimicrobials, some of which have proven to eliminate germs/viruses from surfaces for up to 90 days at a time! If this proves successful, it will definitely be a game-changer, even though the CDC has now said that the virus does not transmit from person to person on surfaces—only from close contact with one infected person, and the other without protection. Not only are these technologies being tested in our subways and buses, but they are also being tried on our two commuter rail systems: Metro-North and the Long Island Rail Road.

So, the question on everyone's mind is: how long will the subways be shut down overnight? Governor Cuomo will only say "through the pandemic." But there may be signs things could be changing in the near future. Ridership appears to be edging up slightly, even though "New York on Pause" continues, under Governor Cuomo's edict. The Governor is allowing two new regions to re-start—the Mid-Hudson Valley, and Long Island. As I write this, the LIRR and Metro-North are preparing to augment their "essential service" schedules to allow for additional trains. And LIRR President Phil Eng has announced there will be additional cars on trains to allow for more social

distancing. NYC Transit continues to run its version of "essential service," with all lines except the B, W, Z, & 42nd St Shuttle (S) operating. Of course, each of those four lines ran on other routes, so no station is without service. Thanks to many transit employees returning from being ill, more trains are being run than ran when the essential service began. But there is a lingering fear in the minds of transit advocates (and riders) that this overnight shutdown may not be temporary.

As of now, there haven't been announced any metrics that would indicate when service could resume between 1-5 a.m. The Governor and MTA Chair have both said this is a temporary situation, and when it is "safe" to resume 24/7 service, they plan to do that. In polls, many have said they'd think twice before returning to the transit system. But, not everyone has the option to drive, bike, or take cabs/car services to their jobs. Yes, some jobs may disappear, and some may continue to work from home. But we must plan for everyone's eventual return to transit, because it is more than likely they will, especially once a vaccine is made widely available. Until then, the "City that never sleeps" is taking a cat-nap. I, and millions of others, cannot wait until you can walk into a subway station at any hour of the day or night, and jump on a train to wherever you're going. Now, that's *true* freedom!

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

RUN OHIO REPORT

By Bill Engel

A major item of Ohio news is the move of All Aboard Ohio from Cleveland to Columbus. The new address is:

All Aboard Ohio
3136 Kingsdale Center #112
Columbus OH 43221
Telephone: 844-464-7245

Other All Aboard Ohio news is that Stu Nicholson has been appointed as Executive Director. Stu was employed for a number of years before his retirement at the Ohio Rail Development

Commission. For more information about All Aboard Ohio, visit their website at www.allaboardohio.org.

There is also good news from Amtrak in Ohio. The Cincinnati station will be re-staffed! Cincinnati was one of 15 stations nationwide which lost staffing in June of 2018 due to having low passenger boardings. All 15 stations are going to be re-staffed.

There is troubling news from Norfolk Southern in Ohio. As of April 7, several daily freight trains carrying crude oil and ethanol were rerouted off of the so-called

Fort Wayne (ex-PRR) line to the former New York Central route via Vermillion, Elyria, and Cleveland before turning south to Alliance. This route parallels the Cleveland Red Line transit route for over six miles on the west side of Cleveland with no barrier between the two lines. At about the same time, NS requested permission to downgrade the Ft. Wayne line. The Ft. Wayne Line was once home to a fleet of famous Pennsylvania RR passenger trains including the *Broadway Limited*.

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

CANADA REPORT MAY/JUNE 2020

By Ken Westcar

Short-term or long-term?

Although public transportation has remained relevant during this pandemic, its immediate and longer-term customer needs are currently enigmatic. Revenue crashes as ridership plummeted by around 90% could induce governments to suspend new investment and reduce existing services while supporting a return to the personal vehicle as a means of mobile social distancing. Capital budget stress, relatively cheap gas, a potential flood of used cars, "recovery" arguments from the auto sector and the highway construction industry might just see public transportation take a back seat. Increased highway congestion? Be prepared to suck it up.

In Canada, several transportation advocacy groups have written to three federal government ministries recommending a longer-term approach to optimize personal mobility and reduce greenhouse gas emissions simultaneously. The emphasis is on replacing short-haul flights with improved passenger rail services and rewriting the business plan of our larger airports to include European style intermodal hubs integrating air, local transit and heavy rail services. The current Canadian folly of keeping short-haul air services and intercity passenger rail as competitors is nonsensical in a post pandemic reality. And when short-haul air services return will they be affordable except for business or the wealthy, discretionary traveler?

A supplementary argument in ministerial letters has been the need to improve Canadian transportation infrastructure from its current, abysmal 17th place in global rankings to something that befits a country so reliant on trade. It was pointed out that increased use of truck/rail intermodal and the freeing-up of several pinch points in our national rail network would pay substantial dividends for both freight, passengers and the environment. But it seems that federal ministers have

little appetite to sit down with our Class 1 railways and negotiate the necessary political and financial accommodations.

Vancouver Island rail services

British Columbia's Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure (MoTI) released a detailed assessment of the Vancouver Island rail corridor, prepared by WSP Canada (an international engineering firm), on April 28, 2020.

The report sets out a "commuter" option between Langford and Victoria, plus "intermediate" (up to four daily passenger trains) and "ultimate" options for restoring

With VIA Rail having lost interest or having no cabinet funding to maintain services, it's encouraging that the provincial government has stepped forward.

service between Victoria and Courtenay. The headline C\$728 million price tag of the "ultimate" option was swiftly picked up on by the media, but a more detailed analysis of the report suggests that it provides a basis for the line to be reopened, fulfilling BC Premier John Horgan's election pledge, at a more affordable price.

Those of us who were fortunate to travel on this line prior to suspension of services likely saw its potential both as a commuter and a tourist railway. With VIA Rail having lost interest or having no cabinet funding to maintain services, it's encouraging that the provincial government has stepped forward.

VIA's "Ocean" service

VIA Rail is now saying that its "Ocean" service between Montreal and Halifax—abruptly suspended on 12 March—is now cancelled indefinitely. The train crosses two provincial boundaries, representing a major obstacle to its return, even though it's arguably less of

a challenge to maintain physical separation among passengers on a train than either an airplane or motor coach.

Reports suggest that CN plans for its Halifax container operations meant that turning the train prior to entering Halifax station was no longer possible so, without constructive dialog between VIA, the federal government and CN, the service may never return without a push-pull power arrangement and new passenger coaches to replace the clapped-out Renaissance units.

Rail advocates and service-deprived municipalities in Atlantic Canada have taken up the cause but it's likely to be a long and bitter fight. It's hard to imagine how senior VIA management and government ministers can walk away from such an icon of Canadian passenger rail at a time when air travel is likely to get more expensive and climate change deepens as an existential emergency.

Oh, no! High speed rail in southwestern Ontario?

Although the current, conservative Ontario government has shelved plans for high speed rail (HSR) between Toronto and Windsor it remains on the wish list of opposition parties. Both the Liberals (centrist) and the Greens have this zombie idea stalking within their ranks despite evidence the cost/benefit case is nonsensical.

Rail advocacy groups continue to emphasize that HSR only makes sense if it's built adjacent to the Highway 401 corridor so that it doesn't raze urban communities and destroy swaths of Class 1 agricultural land. They are using Britain's HS2 deepening financial hole to prove the point and explain why high-performance rail is actually the best option.

In a world of harsh economic realities, it's incredible that pockets of transportation fantasy remain.

Ken Westcar is co-coordinator of InterCityRail.

WE COMMEMORATE THE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, BUT OLD PREJUDICES CONTINUE

By Steve Hastalis

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law July 26, 1990. Since President George H. W. Bush signed this bill into law, society has made many changes, ostensibly improving the lives of people with disabilities. Has this law really brought about the improvements its backers hoped for? The most obvious changes involve federal regulations pertaining to the built environment. For rail -- streetcars, light rail, rapid transit, commuter trains and cross-country Amtrak trains -- these regulations relate to moving through stations, boarding and alighting, and riding.

These logistics, however, tell only part of the story. Negative societal attitudes are not visible or measurable. Therefore, they create obstacles more formidable than the physical barriers which the ADA purports to mitigate. Federal law largely does not address attitudinal barriers.

The ADA has helped improve physical accommodations of various sorts, but it has done little to help persons with disabilities attain the social acceptance we need to gain appropriate access to what life has to offer persons who are more fortunate. Service providers sometimes have policies and practices which have the effect, if not intent, of discriminating against people with disabilities. Some practitioners who work with people with

disabilities have espoused the erroneous and negative notion that rail travel is not safe.

Most recently, and perhaps most damaging, we have heard the terrible assertion that people are more likely to get Coronavirus on transit than in surrounding communities, despite the fact that transit systems have invested significant efforts deep-cleaning stations and rolling stock. Transit systems by and large now run a small fraction of their service, because COVID-19 has caused a precipitous drop in ridership. These drastic service curtailments, although understandable, impose a burden on those who either cannot drive or choose the transit-oriented urban lifestyle.

None of the amenities or accessibility features, such as benches on train station platforms, will matter if transit systems bar people from using them, ostensibly in the interest of curbing the spread of COVID-19. Moreover, many businesses and other organizations now offer only "drive-through" service. Pedestrians, therefore, must walk through the driving lane, among automobiles, if the organization does not deny them service altogether. These circumstances, related to COVID-19, have relegated non-drivers to an underclass status. Regressive societal attitudes, which make people afraid to ride buses and trains, will render

all the accessibility features and amenities inconsequential.

As we approach the thirtieth anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, let us look forward. We must challenge society's harmful notions, either explicitly related to ADA or having the effect of discriminating against people with disabilities. We must promote positive attitudes about people with disabilities and the "tips and tricks" they use to lead active, positive lives. We must call for rail and transit management to consult with people with disabilities when designing and implementing service.

Most urgently, we must articulate the positive notion that trains, rail transit and bus travel are safe, reliable and economical. We must emphasize the importance of transit, especially for people who cannot drive or choose a transit-oriented lifestyle. We must urge transit systems and Amtrak to restore previous levels of service as soon as possible.

Steve Hastalis is a member of the RUN Board and chair of RUN's Accessibility Committee. He is also Vice-chair of the Transportation Committee of the National Federation of the Blind of Illinois and Vice-chair of Metra's ADA Advisory Committee. Following a career of 35 years, he retired from the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA).

If you would prefer to receive the RUN Newsletter electronically,
please let us know by e-mailing
rrudolph1022@gmail.com

RUN TO AMTRAK'S FLYNN: PURSUE FUNDING AGGRESSIVELY

RUN's Chair recently sent a welcoming letter to William Flynn, the new President and CEO of Amtrak (National Passenger Rail Corporation) to wish him well in his new endeavor and to introduce him to the work that RUN does on behalf of our members who represent millions of passenger train riders and rail transit users who utilize Amtrak and local rail transit throughout North America. The letter included a number of suggestions including:

Amtrak needs to more aggressively pursue funding, not the bare-bones minimal amounts usually received, which has caused the current state of affairs.

It must make the case for rail as a choice most Americans have yet to experience. Marketing has become a foreign language to Amtrak and as a result, has made it even less relevant. The National Timetable which was a great and now forgotten tool should be printed annually. This will enable travelers to plan current travel as well as dream of future travel across the states.

Amtrak needs to restore amenities which made passenger rail a real choice for Americans as well as foreign

travelers. This includes station agents, pillows for overnight coach travelers, clean cars maintained by employees with pride in their Company, and dining car service with professionally cooked-to-order meals at reasonable prices and served with time to enjoy both the meal, the scenery and the on-board train atmosphere.

Amtrak should not discontinue any long-distance trains which by law it is required to provide, in favor of corridor-

Given the renewed interest in overnight train service throughout most of Europe, it is past time to re-establish the service here in the U.S, given the growing concern over the environmental impact of flying.

only service. Expanding or improving corridor service should not come at the expense of eliminating any existing long-distance trains or reducing frequencies or amenities on these trains.

Given the renewed interest in overnight train service throughout most of

Europe, it is past time to re-establish the service here in the U.S, given the growing concern over the environmental impact of flying. The recent acquisition of new Viewliner II sleeping cars makes this possible. Amtrak should restore the *Night Owl*, renamed the *Twilight Shoreliner* which ran to and from Boston, New York and Washington, D.C. This service ended in 2003. A popular option on this train was the "Executive Sleeper" which began in New York, allowing riders to board after 10 PM and then the car was coupled to the train when it arrived.

Rather than wait until 2025, Amtrak needs to aggressively pursue funding NOW for new equipment to begin replacing Superliner I & II equipment, which is at least 40 years old. New equipment is also needed to add capacity, as well as additional schedules on routes and daily service should be restored on the now tri-weekly *Sunset* and *Cardinal* routes.

Editor's note: William Flynn's response to RUN Chair Richard Rudolph appears on page 9.

On behalf of the RUN Board, we hope all of our members are well and surviving the pandemic. Because of the virus, we postponed our spring conference until a still to be determined future date and held our Board Meetings entirely by telephone.

In consideration of the record job losses, we temporarily suspended mailing dues renewal notices. Most members renewed promptly early in the year. We thank those members that renewed and those that donated to our Annual Appeal or included a donation with their dues.

RUN is still producing the newsletter, our main expense. We continue to depend on our members for the necessary funds.

If you have not yet paid your dues for 2020, and if you are able to pay, please send your dues to our post office box, or use PayPal, so that RUN can continue to work for improved rail service. With ridership down across the country we now need to fight harder than ever to prevent abandonments and to make the case for expansion and better attention to passengers.

Thank you for your continued support.

Chuck Bode, Membership Secretary

PS Your newsletter indicates the year through which you have paid.

NATIONAL RAILROAD PASSENGER CORPORATION

1 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20001
Tel 202.906.3963 Fax 202.906.2850

William J. Flynn
President and Chief Executive Officer



May 20, 2020

Richard Rudolph, Ph.D.
Chairman, Rail Users' Network
211 Ocean Avenue
Portland, Maine 04103

Dear Dr. Rudolph:

Thank you for your letter of April 15 welcoming me as the new President and CEO of Amtrak. It is a privilege to join the company, and I am deeply aware that our passengers are counting on us to provide safe, essential service at this critical time. Like each of Amtrak's thousands of dedicated employees, I am committed to helping passenger rail survive the COVID-19 pandemic, and I look forward to continuing our mission of modernizing the company for the 21st century. Advocacy groups like RUN have a key role to play in this effort, and I am pleased that Amtrak continues to inspire so much vision and passion among those who support and believe in America's passenger rail network.

I would also like to thank you for your suggestions, and I look forward to continued dialogue with Amtrak's various stakeholders as we continue to plan for the future. As you know, the company is already taking steps in many of the directions you recommend. I am also mindful of Amtrak's statutory obligation to operate "a national rail passenger transportation system which ties together existing and emerging regional rail passenger service." Finally, I would note that Amtrak employs teams of dedicated professionals who are constantly working to attract new passengers and improve our current passengers' experience. Our efforts are sometimes shaped by resource constraints or by varying needs among our many stakeholders. Please know, however, that our core values, which include "do the right thing" and "put customers first", inform every choice we make.

I am grateful for your and your members' passion for the future of Amtrak intercity train service. I know that we as a nation, and Amtrak as a company, will weather this current storm. Once we have, I look forward to working with Amtrak's many stakeholders to ensure the future of our intercity system is bright and relevant. Thank you again for your support. Please stay healthy and safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "William J. Flynn", written in a cursive style.

William J. Flynn
President & Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 AND TRANSIT: CUTBACKS TODAY AND DIFFICULTIES TOMORROW

Continued from page 1

Some places fared worse than that. In Philadelphia, SEPTA service on regional rail lines normally runs hourly, but service was first reduced to every two hours, seven days a week. Then several of those lines were shut down completely. Metra in the Chicago area suffered severe cuts, as well. In South Florida, Tri-Rail trains normally run hourly, but service was cut to every two hours on weekdays and every three hours on weekends. In New Orleans, some streetcar lines shut down entirely, while service on the Canal Street line (to the Cemeteries only) and the St. Charles Avenue Line were reduced from eight or nine minutes between cars to more than 30 minutes. Streetcars in Little Rock and El Paso stopped running completely, as did trains on New Mexico Rail Runner.

Other lines shut down, too. The worst case we found was San Francisco, where the municipally-owned Muni system eliminated all rail transit: light-rail, streetcars on Market Street and the Embarcadero, and the unique and historic cable cars. To make matters worse, Muni reduced its bus service by more than 75%, cutting from 89 bus routes to only 17. The new service standard was designed to place a bus route within one mile of every city resident; a long walk by anybody's standards.

Amtrak's cuts were more selective, and certainly more ironic. Service on the Northeast Corridor (NEC) sank to its lowest level in Amtrak's 49-year history. Amtrak's pride-and-joy, the "higher-speed" *Acela* trains, disappeared from the schedule, while the number of conventional trains was reduced below the schedule operated during the dark days of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Amtrak has campaigned recently to get rid of its skeletal network or long-distance trains but, ironically, most of them are still running on their normal once-a-day (or

schedules. Amtrak has been running shorter consists on those trains, and amenities like food service have been slashed, but there are still trains to ride. Advocates have given high marks to Amtrak for keeping those trains going, but Amtrak President William Flynn recently asked Congress for more money for the railroad, threatening massive service cuts if Amtrak does not get those funds.

Some of Amtrak's worst cuts were dealt to state-supported trains and corridors. The Keystone Corridor between Philadelphia and Harrisburg disappeared from the schedule, as did the *Pennsylvanian* to Pittsburgh. Other corridor services have been slashed to the lowest level in modern history; often a single daily round

Trains and transit are starting to return at this writing, but the process could take a long time.

trip. The *Dowheaster* trains between Boston and Maine are gone, as well as the two trains serving Vermont. The State of Illinois had added some trains to the Chicago-based corridors in the state in 2006, but they are all gone, too. There are no trains between the U.S. and Canada, either.

The situation in Canada is even worse. Transit has been cut as it was in the US, but the long-distance trains that travel across Canada on VIA Rail are gone, at least until November 1 for the trains between Toronto and Vancouver, and between Montreal and Halifax. Some trains in Ontario and Quebec now run only one round trip per week, on a "weekender" schedule, while the railroad's corridor operations that center on Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto, have been cut to only one round trip per day.

Trains and transit are starting to return at this writing, but the process could take a long time. A number of Amtrak trains are coming back on June 1: the *Pennsylvanian*, some Keystone Corridor trains (but no through service between Harrisburg and New York yet), some trains in California, and North Carolina's *Carolinian*; although

between Raleigh and Charlotte are gone. It seems reasonable to expect that some of the state-supported Amtrak trains will come back as the summer goes on, but nobody knows for sure; not even Amtrak. The states will make decisions about those trains, so riders or potential riders will have no choice but to wait and see what the future brings. That also goes for Amtrak's NEC and the corridor routes on VIA Rail in Canada.

Local rail transit is beginning to come back in some cities, too, including Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Every agency operates differently, depending on local conditions so, as with Amtrak, riders and potential riders must wait to find out when and if their local service will return to previous levels. Even the subways, which gave New York the reputation as "The City That Never Sleeps" now shut down late at night, for the first time in their 116-year history. Many riders and other advocates join RUN Vice-Chair Andrew Albert, who is also Chair of the Transit Riders' Council, in hoping the all-night service will come back soon and fighting to bring that result. If and when the New York subways run all night again, that might act as a harbinger that transit everywhere is coming back to life.

The recovery, to the extent that it happens, will not be easy. Many motorists consider transit to be the vector that spreads the deadly virus. The momentum of the past decade or two toward the urban lifestyle and taking transit instead of spending money on maintaining and storing an automobile has been sharply reversed since the virus hit, although advocates hope that the reversal will be temporary.

Even though transit ridership is low at the moment, it should pick up as more people go back to work. With few riders, it is easy for them to practice "social distancing" by spreading out. When there are more riders, that might not be feasible, so transit providers must figure out how to run enough service to allow riders to sit at least six feet apart. Riders will probably demand that level of capacity, but it will be very expensive for transit providers to furnish it, especially with current economic woes.

Continued on page 12

NEW JERSEY TRANSIT KEEPS GOING, DESPITE AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

By David Peter Alan

The COVID-19 virus has had devastating effects on transit in this country (*see COVID-19 and Transit: Cutbacks Today and Difficulties Tomorrow*, elsewhere in this issue). New Jersey Transit (NJT) is no exception. Still, despite setbacks and uncertainties, transit in the Garden State keeps running, with weekend-level service on most routes serving a few riders, and with the hope that ridership and revenue will begin to pick up as the state and the region recover and businesses reopen.

Gov. Phil Murphy imposed near-lockdown conditions on March 16 and, at this writing, “non-essential” businesses are still closed. Outdoor recreation sites are opening, but essentially all events have been canceled, and restaurants are only offering take-out and delivery. Schools and colleges shut down abruptly in March, replaced by “distance learning” to complete the academic year, and it is not yet clear that they will all reopen in September. The lockdown has affected RUN, too. We had planned to hold our annual conference in Newark in May, but that was impossible. We are now hoping to hold it and the associated tour this fall. Please check our website, www.railusers.net, for updates.

So, under the circumstances, there are few riders on transit here, but those riders absolutely need the transit they have. On Friday, March 20, NJT reduced weekday service to weekend-level on its rail lines. That day, advocates from the Lackawanna Coalition (including this writer) and the New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers (NJ-ARP) requested that NJT add a “mini-peak” that runs on Martin Luther King Day and Presidents' Day. Those trains ran the following Monday. Most rail lines are running hourly, but a few run only every two hours or less. There is a relatively robust “mini-peak” on the Morris & Essex Line (M&E), but less so on the Montclair Boonton Line, with only peak-hour service to Montclair State Station (the campus itself is closed) and three trains running beyond Dover to Lake Hopatcong Station. Service is also limited on the outlying parts of the M&E to Hackettstown and

the Raritan Valley Line to High Bridge (two peak-hour trains on both, with limited mid-day service west of Dover on the M&E).

Light-rail in New Jersey is running on a weekend schedule, too. The Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Transit (HBLRT) line, which does not go to Bergen County, runs on a weekend schedule, which is the same on both weekend days. Newark Light Rail runs on a Saturday schedule (every 20 minutes) and the River Line between Trenton and Camden runs every 30 minutes on a Sunday schedule (the line normally runs later on Saturday nights, because a temporal separation for freight along the line is not imposed on Saturday evenings). Bus service has also been reduced, and most routes run essentially a Saturday schedule on weekdays, and the normal Saturday or Sunday schedules on the weekend.

There are not many riders, so NJT is not bringing in much revenue. Some trains are running full consists with most cars open, while others open only one or two. Either way, there is enough room for all riders to spread out and practice “social distancing” because there are so few. All bus riders enter and leave through the back door (except for those in wheelchairs or who use other mobility-assisted devices) to protect the drivers, which means that few fares are collected. NJT's official policy is that bus riders should charge a fare on the NJT app, but it is difficult to enforce that rule in practice.

So NJT is running a respectable level of service, and has generally received high marks for doing so. In the short run, the agency will receive \$1.75 billion of the \$24.9 billion authorized for transit under the CARES Act. That will keep transit in the Garden State going for the next year or so, but there will be a lot of problems after that. The agency still does not have a secure and stable source of funding, so the governor and the legislature decide how much State money NJT gets each year. With the long-term shutdowns caused by the virus this year, and the resulting massive unemployment, state and local governments around the nation will be strapped for cash next year, and possibly for

many more years to come. New Jersey is no exception, and may be one of the hardest-hit states. At this writing, nobody knows how severely the state's grim financial prognosis will hit NJT.

Many employees are working “remotely” from home these days, if they are working at all. As New Jersey, New York City and other places reopen, it is reasonable to expect that some of those employees will continue to work from home, at least some days of the week. That means less commutation in the traditional five-day sense, which would flatten the peak-hour. That, in turn, would mean fewer trains could supply the seats that the remaining commuters and other riders would need. That would save money on operations, with a new role for transit generally, and no more need for huge capital projects like Gateway. That set of projects, whose cost-effectiveness was questionable before the COVID-19 virus hit, now appears completely beyond the State's means (even with some federal help) as the economy contracts. Fortunately, it now appears that the tunnels between New Jersey and Penn Station, New York on Amtrak's Northeast Corridor (NEC) will be repaired using the same method that was used to repair the Canarsie Tunnels in New York City (on the L-train); a method that averted a total shutdown of that line for 15 months, but remains controversial.

Sadly, the virus hit NJT close to home. Raymond P. Kenny, General Manager of NJT Rail, was one of its victims. Kenny died on April 17, less than one month after approving the additional trains that are now running on the M&E and other lines. He had a 50-year railroad career, beginning as a ticket clerk on the Long Island Rail Road and working his way up through the ranks to become Acting President of that railroad. He had also “worked his way through” undergraduate and graduate schools while working on the railroad. The rail crews respected him, as did the local advocates (including this writer). He will be sorely missed, for many reasons.

Continued on page 12

COVID-19 AND TRANSIT: CUTBACKS TODAY AND DIFFICULTIES TOMORROW

Continued from page 10

The economy is declining quickly and deeply at this writing, and there is little reason to believe that it will recover anytime soon. With fewer people working, the reduced tax base means less money for all government agencies, including Amtrak and local transit. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is allowing transit providers to use money for operations that was previously directed to capital projects. That will help keep transit going temporarily, as will the CARES Act, which is allocating \$24.9 billion for grants to help keep local transit going, along with an appropriation for Amtrak.

Still, Amtrak and transit generally are operating in a world of sickness, fear and uncertainty; probably the worst in living memory. Nobody knows how deep the economic downturn will be, or how long it will last. Neither does anybody know how long the newly-strengthened anti-transit attitude among motorists will last, or how much it will manifest politically in cuts to transit funding and service.

We do know that many people have been working "remotely" from home during the ongoing crisis. While it is unreasonable to expect that all of them will continue to do that every day, it is just as unreasonable to expect that they will all get back on the train or the local transit line and commute to their offices five days every week, as they did before the virus came. There is reason to expect that some of those workers, at least, will continue to work at home one or more days each week, and some will be able to go to the office on a different schedule.

All of that means less commuting and a flatter "peak" during "peak-commuting" hours. Transit providers need to be ready to adjust their schedules and fare structures to accommodate new riding patterns. It may be less-expensive to accommodate a riding pattern that is spread more evenly through the service day than the heavy concentration at

peak-commuting times that was common until this past March. Fewer crew members will be needed to serve the busy peak-hour period, because fewer trains would be needed for the remaining commuters. Capital projects like the Gateway Program in the New York area, whose only theoretical justification is to provide capacity for peak-hour commuters, would no longer be needed, because existing capacity would not be so constrained in the future.

One thing we know is that ridership patterns are changing, and that transit providers must keep up. We at RUN will keep up with the changes, and will continue to push transit agencies to do so, too.

David Peter Alan is a RUN Board Member and a Contributing Editor at Railway Age, where he writes about Amtrak and rail transit. His coverage of events related to the COVID-19 virus and other topics can be found on the Railway Age website, www.railwayage.com.

NEW JERSEY TRANSIT KEEPS GOING, DESPITE AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Continued from page 11

In the meantime, little has changed at NJT, even though board meetings have become phone conferences. The agency is not making good progress toward meeting the year-end deadline for completing installation and testing of Positive Train Control (PTC), according to the Federal Railroad Administration. Without Kenny's guidance, the task will become more difficult during the coming months. In addition, NJT is pursuing projects that may never be needed, or which face strong public opposition, even though there may not be enough money to pay for them. The agency continues to pursue a project that would build more tracks at Hoboken Terminal, even though that facility has been underutilized for many years and remains so.

The NJT Board also approved spending for a power plant powered by natural gas (a fossil fuel), despite strong opposition from the environmental community and a Murphy-administration policy that

otherwise prohibits, or at least discourages, building fossil-fuel-powered facilities elsewhere. To make matters worse for transit riders, the state recently approved \$24 billion for widening the New Jersey Turnpike and Garden State Parkway; highway projects that do not appear necessary, since so many people are working from home and might continue to do so. Transit advocates fear that more highway funding will take needed money away from transit.

So, as in many other places around the country, the future of transit in New Jersey remains uncertain. There is no serious doubt that NJT will survive, but there is plenty of concern about how the agency will raise the money required to keep going. There may be severe service cuts in the future, but time and politics will tell how severe such cuts will be, or if they actually occur. Nobody is optimistic at the writing, but New Jersey is just beginning to open up, and few New Jerseyans are riding on their transit. That's the bad news. The good news is that they still have some transit, and it certainly could have been worse.

David Peter Alan is Chair of the Lackawanna Coalition in New Jersey and a RUN Board member.

Like the newsletter? Care to make it better?

Why not send us an article, so we can possibly include it in the next edition!

Send your article to rrudolph1022@gmail.com, and get published!

THE MASSACHUSETTS EAST WEST PASSENGER RAIL STUDY

By Joshua D. Coran

As we come out of the present health crisis and the country begins to get back to some sort of normal, it is expected that infrastructure projects will be used to bring the economy out of its current "medically induced coma." Fed chair Jerome Powell said as much when he told Congress on April 29 that it would have to provide significant recovery funding.

While high speed internet and highway projects will certainly be on the list, rail projects are likely to be there as well. On April 28, Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) specifically included "intercity passenger rail" in his list.

Many people in western Massachusetts are both hopeful and worried about the project they back, the Massachusetts East-West Passenger Rail Study. They are hopeful because the chair of the US House Ways and Means Committee is none other than Richard E. Neal (D-MA), who has identified this project as one that will be a priority in any infrastructure bill. They are worried because the ridership projections being cited by their consultants are very low and the costs they are estimating are very high.

Six "alternatives" are being considered:

Alt.	Service Between:	Using	Cost (\$M)
1	Springfield - Worcester (MBTA to/from Boston)	CSX track	1,988.5
2	Springfield - Boston (Pittsfield by bus)		2,122.1
3	Pittsfield - Boston		3,213.3
4	Pittsfield - Boston	CSX ROW, new track	4,130.5
5	Springfield - Boston (Pittsfield by bus)		5,181.3
6	Pittsfield - Boston	New ROW	24,942.4

These high costs, combined with low ridership predictions, made all of the alternatives immediately appear unrealistic. At the predicted ridership, if fare box revenue were to cover just 2% annual interest on the construction cost, the impact on the price of the average ticket would range from \$705 (Alt 4) to \$2014 (Alt 6). That's *per ticket*!

Ridership

This writer has no particular expertise regarding ridership projection, but many others have criticized the methodology used. For example, to ascertain what the ridership will be between Springfield and Boston, the consultants looked for a similar city pair which had recently benefited from an increase in rail passenger service. They claim to have found one: Springfield - Wallingford. Wallingford's website claims "over 45,000 residents." You can form your own conclusion here.

Infrastructure

I can, however, add some more specific information relative to cost of the various alternatives. The consultants have one thing right: the fundamental problem is that the existing infrastructure dates from 1831 (when the Boston & Worcester RR was chartered) and 1833 (the Western Railroad). At that time "high speed rail" meant 15 mph.

The presentation on Feb. 6 identified nine "key constraints." Taking each of them in no particular order:

"Complex at-grade crossings near Framingham"

There are only four road crossings anywhere near Framingham, two rather ordinary (albeit wide) ones immediately east of the station and two even more ordinary ones about three miles west of it. Currently, in addition to an unknown (to me) number of CSX freight trains, 54 MBTA passenger trains cross the former pair every weekday. Forty of them also use the latter pair. All four crossings are currently protected in the usual manner (flashers and gates). It is unlikely that the twelve or fourteen additional trains proposed will be sufficient to trigger the need for some undefined additional protection; however, even if such were to be the case the vast majority of the benefit would accrue to the present rail users (if not actually the highway users) and they should cover the vast majority of the expense.

"Capacity Constraints Worcester to Springfield"

This issue will be the most difficult. CSX is an enthusiastic participant in the latest fad among the Class I railroads, "precision scheduled
Continued on page 14

THE MASSACHUSETTS EAST WEST PASSENGER RAIL STUDY

Continued from page 13

railroading." A PSR railroad is anything but precisely scheduled; a very long, slow and heavy freight train can appear anywhere, anytime and in either direction. Making matters worse, the Class 1s have a well-earned reputation of holding projects like this one hostage under the banner of "capacity." Furthermore, it's not clear why this constraint is limited to east of Springfield. In the case of Alternative 3, CSX will certainly insist on capacity improvements on the Springfield – Pittsfield segment as well. Simply replacing the 47 miles of second main track that CSX (or perhaps predecessor Conrail) has removed in this route 106 miles will increase capacity more than enough to compensate for that consumed by the proposed passenger trains. Eight additional universal crossovers (and related signals) will be required. Passenger train speeds are now limited to 40 or 50 mph, implying FRA Class 3 track. Upgrading the existing 165 track miles to Class 5 (90 mph for passenger trains) will be necessary. Quandel Consultants, a small but longstanding and well-respected firm, has provided estimates for this work in the Midwest. When adjusted for inflation (to January of this year), the result is a total cost of \$191.8 million.

"Heavy passenger and freight use poses capacity constraints to new services"

The graphic presenting this constraint pointed to the segment east of Worcester. There is little freight in this stretch (and none at all east of Framingham). West of Framingham, there is always at least 25 minutes between MBTA passenger trains, even during peak hours; the existing infrastructure could easily handle twice the service plus any freight now on the rails or anticipated. East of Framingham one time each weekday, two MBTA trains are only 10 minutes apart, and another pair are twelve minutes apart, but the average headway during the peak is more than 18 minutes, again allowing for a doubling of the service with the existing infrastructure. Zone schedules, in use in Chicago for more than 50 years, would even allow limited stop trains to share the same track. I understand there is a proposal to add (back) 10 miles of third main track east of Framingham. This addition would accommodate what Cal Train (San Francisco – San Jose) calls "Baby Bullet" express trains, further increasing capacity. While it is a project the MBTA may well undertake in any case, to be conservative I have included its cost as part of this project. Quandel's numbers (again, adjusted to 2020 dollars) show the cost to be \$29.6 million. Allowing \$1 million for each of the three station platforms that will have to be relocated brings the total to \$32.6 million. As this railroad was once four tracks wide, it is no surprise that all four railroad bridges over roadways and all 13 road bridges over the railroad can accommodate this additional track. Maintenance here is probably only to Class 3, so I am adding \$35.3 million to upgrade it to Class 5, bringing the total cost here to \$67.9 million.

"Large number of private at grade crossings between Springfield and Pittsfield"

A count on Google Earth shows there are 12. An HDR study in 2006 for the state of Mississippi estimated the cost of gates and flashers at \$250,000. Adjusting to 2020 dollars and adding 7% for program management brings the total to \$408,000. Thus the cost of protecting all 12 comes to less than \$4.9 million.

"Significant grade and ROW constraints between Springfield and Pittsfield" and "Steeper vertical grades and greater curvature reduce operating speeds through Leicester[sic]"

The negative effects of gradient can be mitigated by means of modern lightweight equipment and high-power locomotives. The lower power requirement of the very light Talgo sets currently in use on the Amtrak *Cascades* (Eugene, OR – Vancouver, BC) corridor is currently saving time by enabling faster acceleration. (It is also saving at least a half million dollars annually in diesel fuel cost and reducing the associated greenhouse gas emissions.) On the ascending mountain grades of this route, it will result in significantly higher train speeds with no civil work needed.

"Greater curvature affects rail speeds at several locations between Worcester and Springfield" and "Greater curvature affect[sic] rail speeds at several locations between Boston and Worcester"

This problem can also be mitigated by equipment designed for that purpose. The Talgo sets in use in the Pacific Northwest have a suspension geometry that tilts the cars towards the low (inside) rail in a curve, reducing the lateral force experienced by passengers (and coffee cups, etc.). Conventional equipment will tilt in the opposite direction, magnifying that force. In addition, a low center of gravity allows Talgo equipment to operate safely through curves at higher speeds than can conventional cars. Because this 1830s-vintage railroad alignment is highly curved, this feature is very helpful and will eliminate the immediate need for expensive realignment of the railroad.

"Long-term capacity constraints at South Station"

This service will require occasional use of one station track in Boston. The capacity issue at South Station already exists, and any solution can provide sufficient space for the new service at negligible incremental cost.

Continued on page 15

THE MASSACHUSETTS EAST WEST PASSENGER RAIL STUDY

Continued from page 14

Rolling Stock

The necessary locomotives, passenger cars and maintenance facility were not specifically addressed at the February 6 meeting. The estimates presented there for each alternative did have a line for "vehicles + supporting facilities." At \$192.4 million for Alternative 2 and \$206.7 million for Alternative 3, the numbers appear a bit low. I have estimated \$87 million for a maintenance facility and \$27 million for each train consist. Thus for Alternative 2, which requires three consists, the total is \$168 million. I added an allowance for contingency and program management, bringing the total to \$206.7 million, 7.4% above the consultant's figure. Alternative 3 requires five consists making the total \$273.0 million, 32% above what was presented at the February meeting.

Total Capital

Adding it all up, the cost of Alternative 2 is \$385.0 million, 18% of that projected by consultants. Alternative 3 will cost \$537.6 million, less than 17% of the projection.

Benefits

Under this low-budget approach, one might assume benefits would be significantly less than those produced by spending nearly \$2 billion more (for Alternate 2) or in excess of \$2.5 billion more (Alternate 3). To see what just a half billion would buy, I ran a simulation of the proposed consist, a 10-unit Talgo pulled by a Siemens *Charger* chosen to approximate the capacity and features of a *Downeaster*. The results are shown in this table:

Predicted Schedule Times (minutes)

	Boston – Springfield	Boston – Pittsfield
Proposal	105	166
Alt. 1	N/A [Worcester – Springfield only]	
Alt. 2	134	N/A [Bus]
Alt. 3	115	188
Alt. 4	107	179
Alt. 5	94	N/A [Bus]
Alt. 6	79	138

Thus, this proposal should save not only billions of dollars, but also nearly a half hour to (or from) Springfield compared to Alternative 2 and more than 20 minutes to Pittsfield compared to the even more expensive Alternative 3.

This remarkable result might produce some skepticism; however, the Talgo times are quite achievable. The simulation that generated these results included many conservative assumptions, some of which were:

- Maximum speed is 80 mph (on track built and maintained for 90).
- Schedule padding is included to reduce overall average speed by more than 5 mph.
- The Siemens specified power is assumed to be at the main generator, with 85% available at the rail.
- Train resistance is given by the Davis equation, which is known to be conservative.
- Intermediate stops are made at Chester, Palmer, Worcester, Framingham and Back Bay.
- Passenger load is always 100%. (Over 23 tons of "live" load)
- Speed is reduced 264 ft. prior to all restrictions (due to PTC inefficiencies, which should ultimately be resolved)
- Before power is applied to begin increasing speed out of any restriction, the rear of the train is 236 feet clear.
- Average braking rate on level track is less than 2.2 mph/sec. (compared to the 3 mph/sec. normally achievable)
- Where a grade change is unfavorable, its effect is immediate (as soon as the front of the train reaches it, the simulation assumes the entire train is on the new grade). If it is favorable no advantage is taken until nearly the entire train (all but the last 28 ft.) is on it.
- Super-elevation (banking in curves) is limited to 5" on the passenger-only MBTA-owned track east of Framingham and to 4" (current practice) west of that point. (Six inches has long been the accepted maximum.)

Continued on page 16

THE MASSACHUSETTS EAST WEST PASSENGER RAIL STUDY

Continued from page 15

- Super-elevation of the numerous reverse curves is limited to an additional 0.5" above the current figure.
- Cant deficiency is limited to 5" (compared to the 7.2" for which the Talgo equipment is designed).

Additional Thoughts

In the 1950s, the New Haven built a new station on what is now the Northeast Corridor at a Route 128, a circumferential highway 12 miles from Boston. It featured free parking and easy automobile access, allowing residents of the southern (and western) suburbs to catch "Shoreline" trains without making a reverse trip all the way into Boston. It proved an immediate success and spawned similar stations at Metropark (NJ) and New Carrollton (MD). A station just east of that highway here would benefit from both that suburban convenience factor and the fact that it would be within walking distance of Riverside on the Highland Branch of the MBTA's Green Line. This line, once a Boston & Albany branch, passes through several upscale neighborhoods en-route to Boston. One of them, Newton, is about twice the size of Wallingford.

Michael R. Weinman of PTSI Transportation has suggested a very much "outside the box" idea for avoiding the congestion at South Station: use North Station instead. Using the Grand Junction Branch to get there adds only about one third of a mile to the trip. This routing opens up the possibility of a station at Kendall Square, Cambridge, adjacent to the MBTA Red Line, MIT and the many high tech MIT spinoffs located there.

Summary

Here we propose using available technology and modestly improved existing infrastructure to produce a better result (higher average speeds) at a much lower capital cost than that proposed by the consultants.

All that is needed is to:

- Restore the second main track and, for ten miles east of Framingham, one more track,
- Upgrade all track to FRA Class to 5 (90 mph),
- Increase super-elevation to 4 inches where needed (5 inches east of Framingham),
- Improve a few road crossings and
- Use tilting Talgo train sets with Siemens locomotives.

The result:

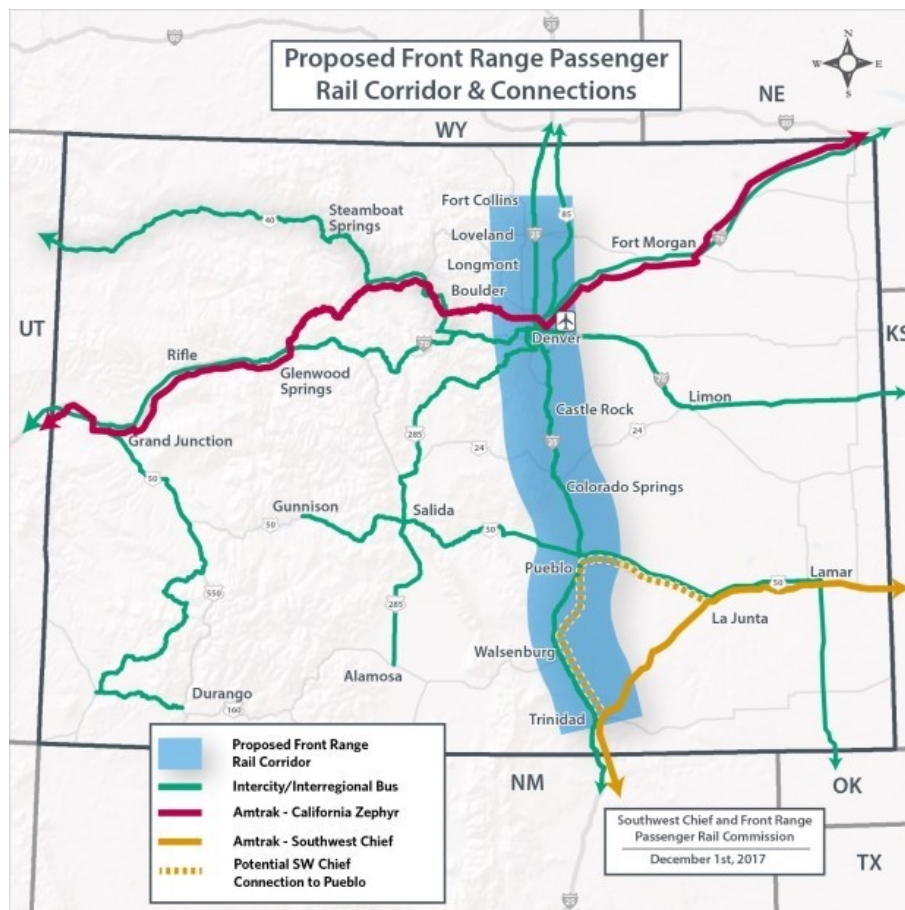
Save time and money.

The wise people of Massachusetts have a choice to make. They can continue to listen to the major consulting firms, the same ones that brought them the Big Dig and have turned the California High Speed Rail project into an unmitigated disaster (13 years behind schedule and \$44 billion over budget), or they might exercise some Yankee frugality and ingenuity to produce a much better result.

I trust they are smart enough to choose the latter.

Joshua D. Coran is a RUN Board member and Director of Product Development and Compliance at Talgo Inc. in Seattle.

RAIL ADVOCACY ON THE FRONT RANGE: FORT COLLINS TO PUEBLO, COLORADO



It has also played a vital role in establishing the Colorado Southwest Chief Commission, which has been primarily involved in saving Amtrak's *Southwest Chief* train service and is being legislatively repurposed in 2017 as the Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission.

In March 2017, under the leadership of Jim Souby, ColoRail conducted a statewide poll of the public concerning support for passenger rail. Over 62% of citizens supported not only the development of a Front Range passenger rail system, but also the creation of a funding mechanism to underwrite its construction. In Front Range communities, the support ranged from 64% in the Colorado Springs metro area to 75% in the Denver metro area. Sal Pace, a former Pueblo County Commissioner and Chair of the original Southwest Chief Commission, also played a major role in convincing the Colorado State Legislature to broaden the scope of the commission to include exploring Front Range passenger rail. The goal, he maintained, was not to compete with widening I-25 from Colorado Springs to Denver, a project which the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) was planning to start in 2019, but rather to work in tandem.

By Richard Rudolph, Ph.D.
Chair, Rail Users' Network
 Reprinted from *Passenger Train Journal*,
 2020-2, issue 283

between. "The Rocky Mountain Flyer would connect Amtrak's four principal East-West routes west of the Mississippi, plus the cities and highways along its route."

This is the eleventh in a series of articles highlighting what rail advocates are doing to improve and expand passenger rail and rail transit services in America.

More than a decade has passed since rail advocates first talked about extending passenger rail on the Front Range. Rails Inc., a non-profit, volunteer community-based action group first proposed what it called the Rocky Mountain Flyer – an Amtrak Superliner or equivalent rail service running from El Paso to possibly Shelby, MT, via Albuquerque, Denver, Cheyenne and points in

Ever since its founding in the late 1980s, the Colorado Rail Passenger Association (ColoRail) has also been promoting passenger rail service in Colorado. It has supported the development of rail transit in the Denver Metro area, the maintenance and expansion of Amtrak service in and through Colorado, and the creation of a statewide passenger rail network. Through legislative action and direct persuasion, it encouraged Colorado's Department of Transportation to broaden its mission to include freight and passenger rail service as a viable part of the state's transportation system.

The Southwest Chief and Front Range Commission is focused on facilitating the development of passenger rail along Colorado's Front Range in and along the I-25 corridor and ensuring that the existing Amtrak *Southwest Chief* service remains in Southeastern Colorado. There are 11 voting members of the commission, which is composed of MPO's, Class One Freight railroads—BNSF & UP, passenger rail advocates and local leaders. There are also three nonvoting members (CDOT, Amtrak and a Wyoming rep.) Souby and Pace are the two rail advocates who serve on the body.

Continued on page 18

RAIL ADVOCACY ON THE FRONT RANGE: FORT COLLINS TO PUEBLO, COLORADO

Continued from page 17

The original Southwest Chief Commission had considered rerouting the *Southwest Chief* through Pueblo and then on to Trinidad, with the possibility of a stop in Walsenburg, CO. Amtrak raised the idea of “through car service to Pueblo” from La Junta as a possible first step for bringing passenger rail service to the Front Range, but nothing came of these ideas early on.

With population growth and traffic congestion increasing on the I-25 corridor, though, there is new interest in Front Range passenger rail. Not only is traffic on this interstate heavy regardless of the day of the week or time of day, I-25 has been called the road from Hell, given the number of fatal accidents and serious injury crashes occurring between Ft. Collins and Pueblo. In response, in 2015 the Colorado Department of Transportation established Bustang, an express bus service, which connects Denver to Fort Collins, Colorado Springs and the I-70 mountain corridor. Bustang carried over 100,000 riders in the first year and has grown every year since. Bustang’s success has also helped to pave the way for returning passenger rail service from Fort Collins and Pueblo to Denver.

Expecting populations along the Interstate 25 corridor to grow by 1.7 million in the next 25 years, the Southwest Chief and Front Range Commission has been tasked with planning for Front Range Passenger Rail as well as sustaining the operations of the *Southwest Chief* in Colorado. In 2018, the Colorado General Assembly made a \$2.5 million General Fund transfer to the Commission enabling it to hire a full-time Project Director, Randy Grauberger, in February 2019. It received a \$16-million Tiger IX grant to replace 60-year old bolted rail, associated turnouts and crossings on BNSF’s trackage in Kansas, Colorado and

New Mexico utilized by Amtrak’s *Southwest Chief*. It also received a \$9.6-million CRISI Grant to install Positive Train Control on 179 miles of BNSF track between Dodge City, KS and Las Animas, CO as required by Amtrak for continued operations.

The Commission has just received word that its 2019 CRISI Grant proposal to USDOT for a *Southwest Chief* Thru-car Service to Colorado Springs Feasibility Study has been awarded. Matching funds for this \$450,000 study will be provided by the Rail Commission, CDOT, Pueblo County, La Junta and ColoRail. The study will analyze the possibility of a spur line from La Junta to Pueblo and Colorado Springs allowing a section of the *Southwest Chief* to serve those communities.

Working with CDOT’s Office of Innovative Mobility, the Commission has helped to put together an online survey

In an online survey, 95% of respondents said they believe that passenger rail service could help address transportation needs along the Front Range and 93% supported establishing it between at least Fort Collins and Pueblo.

regarding Front Range passenger rail during the summer of 2019. The survey garnered a total of 6,965 responses— 95% of the respondents believe that passenger rail service could help address transportation needs along the Front Range and 93% supported establishing it between at least Fort Collins and Pueblo.

The Commission has also engaged a consultant team to conduct a Front Range Passenger Rail Survey of “Likely Voters” along the Front Range Counties last October. The results were also very encouraging: 85% supported the future use of passenger rail service as a mode of transportation for residents and communities along the Front Range.

However, support dropped to 61% when the respondents were asked, “Would you support or oppose a sales tax increase to fund a Front Range Passenger Rail service project that would have regularly scheduled train service to major population centers from Fort Collins down to Pueblo with an estimated cost of \$5 billion?” The Commission has also selected a Nebraska based consulting firm HDR to assist it and CDOT to study Front Range Passenger Rail and conduct a federally compliant Service Development Plan and Environmental Impact Statement.

The SW/Front Range Commission has been considering a range of Governance Options for potential legislation in the 2020 or 2021 Legislative Session which relates to creating a Front Range Passenger Rail Authority. A majority of Commissioners support the idea that counties could be members, while a minority appear to support a more prescriptive option where counties “shall” be part of the authority. The Commission is still also pondering what type of authority the new governing entity will need such as the ability to condemn property via eminent domain or issue bonds. It will also need to decide how to pay for the project such as creating a Front Range tax district which could collect a sales or property tax.

Supporters of Front Range Rail had been eyeing the 2020 legislative session to offer a bill to create a special taxation district to fund the estimated \$5 billion Front Range rail project, but the idea has run into a headwind. The House Speaker, KC Becker (D-Boulder), recently announced that she doesn’t support train service on Colorado’s Front Range and believes transportation dollars should be spent elsewhere.

Becker cited the unfulfilled promises that the Regional Transportation District has made over the past decade to create a regional rail system linking Boulder and Longmont to Denver, even though people in those communities have been taxed since 2005 to pay for it. The six-mile Northwest “B” line doesn’t quite make it to Boulder. Although a Boulder-Denver connection was touted

Continued on page 19

RAIL ADVOCACY ON THE FRONT RANGE: FORT COLLINS TO PUEBLO, COLORADO

Continued from page 18

in the selling of the fast tracks bond issue election campaign, the northwest line was opened in 2016 only as far as Westminster. Beyond that point, the route is as yet undetermined. Meanwhile, RTD's buses link Colorado's capital to its main university campus. Plans are for the B line to share right-of-way with BNSF's freight line.

The House Speaker also believes there are existing needs in the state's transportation system that require funding right now, like Interstate 70 and that "there is a

whole lot of work that needs to happen before folks explore passenger train service." Fortunately, she is term-limited and this is slated to be her last legislative session.

Colorado's Governor, Jared Polis, supports the idea of a Front Range passenger rail system.

Colorado's Governor, Jared Polis, supports the idea of a Front Range passenger rail system. He touted the idea of a Front Range passenger rail system as part of his 2018 election campaign and still believes it is time to create a real plan and feasibility study to prepare a proposal for 2020, 2021 or 2022. The SW/Front Range Commission has also agreed

to assist the legislature if it decides to introduce a bill.

At best, Front Range Passenger Rail appears to be many years away. In the meantime, Colorado DOT is building express lanes on I-25 North from Mead to Fort Collins, and is reconstructing a number of highway bridges and making other safety improvements to reduce the number of crashes and fatalities. It is also adding an express lane on what is called the 18-mile South Gap project from Monument to Castle Rock, which is the only four-lane section of I-25 connecting the state's two largest cities, Denver and Colorado Springs.

Get Involved with the work of RUN!

To find out how to volunteer, ***write to:*** RUN, P.O. Box 8015, Portland, ME 04104

or contact Richard Rudolph via e-mail at rrudolph1022@gmail.com

or visit our new, improved website at: www.railusers.net

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,
Portland, ME 04104



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

Advocacy or Advisory Group or Agency Name (affiliation if appropriate)

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:

- _____ \$25 (introductory/first-year only)
- _____ \$40 (individual/family)
- _____ \$100 (Advocacy or Advisory Group)
- _____ \$250 (Public Agency or Bureau)
- _____ \$250 (Private Carrier or For-For-Profit)

Mail to RAIL USERS' NETWORK. P.O. BOX 8015, PORTLAND, ME 04104 USA