

INDIVIDUAL HIGHLIGHTS

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Save The Date For RUN's Annual Virtual Mini-Conference

“Look West” - Here's Where Advocates Are Fighting To Restore/Expand Rail Service In The Western US / British Columbia”

Friday, April 29, 2022, 12:30 PM – 5:00 PM (EDT)

Please join us at the Rail Users' Network's Virtual Conference, which is taking place on Friday, April 29 from 12:30 pm - 5:00 pm. This exciting event will highlight the ongoing efforts of rail advocates to improve and expand passenger rail service in the West and in British Columbia.

The program will begin with opening remarks given by RUN's Chair, Richard Rudolph, who will briefly talk about RUN's current activities and some of the latest challenges that rail advocates are currently facing across North America. The roster of speakers include:

Mathew Buchanan who is a member of Transport Action BC will talk about efforts to improve service on the Sky Train Routes, West Coast Express and efforts to restore passenger rail service on the Vancouver Island Rail Corridor.

Elaine Clegg who is the President of Boise's City Council, and is also the Program Manager of Idaho Smart Growth, will talk about restoring the Pioneer Passenger Rail Route from Seattle, Washington to Denver, Colorado.

Rick Klein who is a Commissioner, Southwest and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission, will talk about **Front Range Passenger Rail**, the proposed inter-city passenger train service along the Front Range and broader I-25 corridors in Colorado and Wyoming.

J.W. Madison, President of Rails, Incorporated will talk about the sky Mountain Flyer, a proposed Amtrak Superliner service from El Paso to Havre, via Albuquerque, Denver, Cheyenne and northern Montana.

Steve Roberts, President, California RailPAC, will talk about passenger rail service on the San Joaquin Corridor.

David Strohmaier, Missoula Montana County Commissioner will talk about the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority and the possible restoration of the North Coast Hiawatha Route train service.

David Peter Alan, Esq., contributing editor to Railway Age, who is also a RUN Board Member, will provide closing remarks.

A Los Angeles Metro spokesperson will talk about some of the major rail projects under construction in L.A. County: the Crenshaw-LAX line, Metro D - Purple line subway extension, and the Foothill Gold Line extension in the East San Gabriel Valley. If time allows, the mini-conference will close with a Public Forum, which will enable participants to share their ideas for improving / expanding passenger rail / rail transit services in North America.

Our conference is designed not only for rail advocates, but also civic and business leaders, environmentalists, planners, real estate developers, and members of the general public who are interested in knowing more about passenger rail and rail transit in the West and British Columbia.

Please note this is a free event for all Rail Users' Network members, but please be sure to register in advance. The fee for non-members is \$25 that includes a 2022 introductory membership to the organization. Be sure to register early. The deadline is April 25, 2022 so that we can send along the info needed to attend RUN's 2022 Spring Conference. To register, please go to our website at <http://www.railusers.net> and click on the "register" link.

Richard Rudolph, Chairman, Rail Users' Network.

New Safety / Fare Initiatives Unveiled for NYC Transit System

By Andrew Albert

Following the tragic and senseless death of Michelle Alyssa Go on the Times Square/42nd Street N,Q,R,W platform, the place where she was pushed to her death by an emotionally disturbed homeless person, and another pushing death in the Fulton Street station, Governor Kathy Hochul, along with NYC Mayor Eric Adams, announced new initiatives to keep riders and transit employees safe in our system. Adams, a former transit police officer, and Governor Hochul held a joint press conference at the Fulton Center transit hub and announced the new measures would go into effect on Monday, February 21, 2022. It will involve the deployment of up to 30 inter-agency collaborative teams consisting of the Dept. Of Homeless Services (DHS), the Dept. Of Health & Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), the New York City Police Department (NYPD), and community-based providers in "high-need" locations. It also seeks to add more behavioral health emergency assistance teams in precincts that will allow mental health professionals to respond to nonviolent mental health 911 calls, as well as notifying NYPD of subway rule infractions, such as smoking, laying across seats, making the subway your "home," trespassing on tracks, etc.

Not only is it not healthy for these people to live in the subway system, but it is also not healthy for our transit employees, essential workers, and the traveling public,...

Many New Yorkers, after hearing of numerous crimes in the system, such as pushings, stabbings, violent outbursts by emotionally disturbed persons, and other crimes, have said they would avoid using the subway system, which is not good for our city, our economy, our employers, and our essential workforce. Mayor Adams has stated "the subway system and bus system are the lifeblood of our city. If we don't get them right, our city won't continue to recover from COVID. Millions of New Yorkers use the system to go to school, to their place of employment, or just to visit their loved ones. It provides a vital service." Governor Hochul also spoke of the "very real humanitarian crisis unfolding before our eyes for far too long." Many of the crimes have been committed by emotionally disturbed homeless persons, who obviously need help, housing, food, medical assistance, and much more.

The good news is that - even with some well-publicized crimes taking place in the subways, ridership is returning...

Not only is it not healthy for these people to live in the subway system, but it is also not healthy for our transit employees, essential workers, and the traveling public, as these people are not vaccinated, use the system as a lavatory, and inhaling rail dust 24/7 is not a healthy situation.

These teams are already assembled, and have been seen on numerous subway lines, including the A,E, 1, 2/3, N,R, & 7 lines. They have removed "encampments," dealt with violations of the code of conduct, and have referred homeless individuals to housing, medical, and other emergency services. It is everyone's hope that these individuals will also be placed in safe housing after receiving the treatment they must get.

The good news is that - even with some well-publicized crimes taking place in the subways, ridership is returning, with some post-pandemic records shattered last week, as upwards of 3.4 million riders per day utilized our amazing transit system. And bringing back riders also helps to minimize crimes of opportunity, as it is much more difficult to pull off some thefts, violent attacks, and other crimes with crowded trains and platforms. In addition, the State of NY has appropriated additional financial support to the MTA, which will mean no fare hikes in 2022. Other key initiatives to the plan to keep the subways safe is the requirement that everyone leave the trains at end-of-line stations, transitioning homeless individuals to "safe spaces", and enforcement of other code of conduct issues, such as aggressive behavior to passengers, or creating an unsanitary environment. Police Officers are now in stations, riding trains, and watching turnstiles, where fare evasion has become rampant, costing the transit system millions of dollars each year, while allowing some violent criminals access to the system to commit crimes. Most riders welcome the sight of police officers in the system, and many go up to them and thank them. Our transit system is the financial engine that drives the economy of our city, our region, and the entire Northeast. We look forward to welcoming back our 6 million daily riders, as COVID recedes, more employers return their workers to offices, and the New York way of life can return to normal.

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



In memoriam; Dana Gabbard

It is with deep sadness that we share with you the passing of our friend and Board Member, **Dana Gabbard** on January 14, 2022. Dana was one of the most knowledgeable, passionate and persistent transit advocates in the Los Angeles area. He attended L.A. Metro Board meetings and served as the Southern California Transit Associates Vice-President, President, Executive Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, and was the organization's Treasurer at the time of his death. He also served on RUN's Legislative Committee and provided invaluable insights regarding L.A. Metro's plans to expand its service in Los Angeles County, Amtrak's service in California and its 2035 plan to expand service.

While Dana believed Amtrak deserved praise for the first time in more than a generation in proposing expansion, he maintained the effort is seriously flawed for all the new proposed routes are deliberately short links of urban centers with not one new long-distance route. He also stated it is hard to imagine, in these fiscally challenging times, for most states to be all that eager to rush forward with bags of money to make such routes feasible.

Dana will be missed for his thoughtful contributions to RUN's Quarterly Newsletter over the past decade. Besides providing invaluable information regarding L.A. Metro's expansion plans, Dana provided timely updates and reports, such as the "A Desire for Streetcars:



Our friend, Dana Gabbard

A Comprehensive Survey of Southern California Proposals," and an eight part survey regarding Long-Distance and State-Supported Passenger Rail in Western U.S. He will also be remembered for the excellent work done behind the scene to organize our very successful annual conference held in Los Angeles in 2015.

But more than anything, we will miss his friendship and willingness to fight the good fight to expand passenger rail in the United States. Rest in Peace, Dana.

— Richard Rudolph, Chairman, Rail Users' Network

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

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Richard Rudolph, Chair	Portland, ME	NARP / TrainRiders Northeast, Maine Rail Group
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J.W. Madison	Albuquerque, NM	Rails Inc.
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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

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Get Involved with the work of RUN!

To find out how to volunteer, write to: RUN, PO Box 8015, Portland, ME. 04104 or contact Richard Rudolph via e-mail at rrudolph1022@gmail.com or connect through our web site at: www.railusers.net

Amtrak and CSX Slug It Out at the STB as Advocates Raise Questions and Issues

By David Peter Alan

It was a historic slugfest. The Surface Transportation Board (STB) held a hearing on February 15th and 16th that *Railway Age* described as the "Second Battle of Mobile Bay." The first took place during the Civil War, but this one is also expected to have a strong and lasting impact, at least on the upcoming history of passenger railroading in the United States.

The issue is how much infrastructure Amtrak or state sponsors of new trains and corridors will be required to build and then give to potential host railroads, so Amtrak trains can run on their lines. Amtrak and the states want to keep costs low, so budgets can stretch to add as many new passenger-train services as possible. Potential host railroads want to insist on as much new infrastructure as they can, so they get maximum capital improvements in return for allowing passenger trains on their tracks.

At stake is the future of *Connect US*, Amtrak's plan to establish dozens of new state-supported trains and corridors between now and 2035. It was introduced last April. Here at RUN, we have written about the plan and discussed it at recent conferences. The Passenger Rail Improvement and Investment Act of 2008 (PRIIA) effectively precludes any growth in Amtrak's 14-train long-distance network, so starting some shorter routes represents the only chance for Amtrak to expand, as things stand now. If host railroads can demand enough new infrastructure as a precondition for allowing passenger trains on their tracks, there will not be enough money to finance construction for many new starts, and Amtrak's initiative will not go very far. Until now, host railroads have demanded too much money for Amtrak to expand service; examples are BNSF for extending the *Heartland Flyer* north from

Oklahoma City to Newton, Kansas to connect with the *Southwest Chief*, and Union Pacific to allow the *Sunset Limited* between New Orleans and Los Angeles to run every day, for the first time since 1970.

The Surface Transportation Board (STB) now has the authority to determine how much infrastructure the host railroads can demand, in order to prevent undue interference with their freight service. The setting for the current battle is the Gulf Coast between New Orleans and Mobile, Alabama, where Amtrak wants to run two daily round trips. Mississippi officials like the plan, even though Republicans are very strong in the region, because it will provide new mobility to four Mississippi Gulf Coast towns: Bay St. Louis, Gulfport, Biloxi, and Pascagoula. Sen. Roger Wicker is the cheerleader for the project. Alabama officials are strongly opposed to the new trains, because prospective host railroad CSX and the Port of Mobile want nothing to do with passenger trains; at least as long as CSX does not get what others consider an inordinate amount of money to build additional infrastructure.

CSX owns most of the route (all of it, except about five miles of the 145-mile line), which was historically on the Louisville & Nashville (L&N) Railroad. The line is single-track with a number of drawbridges, and it was generally known until recently that CSX wanted \$2.3 billion worth of infrastructure to allow the trains. That number is now down to \$440 million. In contrast, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) estimates the cost of the necessary work at \$118 million, and the Southern Rail Commission's figure is even lower: \$100 million. Amtrak has not provided its own figure yet, because the numbers proposed by CSX have not been determined through a transparent process.

NS (Norfolk Southern Railway Co.) owns five miles of the route from the station in New Orleans to Gentilly Yard in the eastern part of the city, where the trains would enter CSX territory. NS is fighting as hard as CSX, or nearly so.

That indicates how important the freight-carrying railroads consider this case. They are making their stand to keep the STB from limiting the amount that Amtrak and state-sponsors will be required to spend to get permission to operate new passenger services.

Several officials of nationwide standing expressed their support for the proposed new service. Federal Railroad Administrator Amit Bose called for it, saying "service delayed is service denied" and that Congress had authorized \$58 billion to "maintain, improve and expand passenger rail service throughout the country." Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Ore), soon-to-retire Chair of the House Transportation Committee, made an unscheduled appearance. He noted the importance of the precedent that the Mobile case will set and stressed Amtrak's statutory rights, saying that the STB "shall order reasonable terms" (quoting from the statute) and also saying that the "Board has to assert its authority."

Charles "Wick" Moorman, former President of NS and later Amtrak, did not take an "official" position, but called for negotiations to settle a plan for restoring service. He pointed to his success negotiating with Virginia to extend passenger service on NS in the state, and said that Norfolk is a busier port than Mobile, but still accommodates Amtrak service. He called CSX's number "laughable" and added: "I studied CSX for 40 years and never quite understood them."

CSX, the Alabama officials, and their supporters attempted to limit the scope of the case to Mobile and its port. CSX had made efforts to convince its shippers to make statements claiming that the punctuality of their shipments and deliveries would suffer unless the Board sent a strong message about infrastructure to Amtrak, but STB Chair Martin J. Oberman asked most of the shipper-witnesses if they did their own research or relied on CSX. They acknowledged that they relied on CSX, which reduced their credibility.

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Rail Report From Wisconsin

By Clark Johnson / RUN Board

30-January-2022

The main passenger rail focus here continues to be on establishing a second Minneapolis/St. Paul to Chicago (TCMC) train now estimated to commence operation in 2024. This is on an established rail line (CP, ex-CMStP&P) that historically had 10 daily passenger trains. Yet it will have taken 10 years to add two trains with CP demanding funding for additional crossovers and sidings. Note that the Milwaukee Road was double track all the way between Minneapolis and Chicago, becoming single track in many areas after the Soo Line acquisition. While originally requiring this funding CP has now backed away.

The final approvals and states' funding for the TCMC is largely the result of considerable and persistent pressure on both the Minnesota and Wisconsin legislatures by both All Aboard Minnesota and All Aboard Wisconsin. These organizations focus on extending passenger rail beyond the present skimpy Amtrak service. In addition both organizations are meeting with officials and interested residents in towns and cities throughout their states to inform and explain why trains are important to their future and request their support. Persistence, so essential, pays off.

The Hiawatha Service between Milwaukee and Chicago continues to grow and has an on-time performance of over 95%. Lately however, this service has been curtailed unilaterally by Amtrak, as a result, they claim, of insufficient crews and persistent locomotive failures.

Northern Lights Express (NLX), the proposed Twin Cities-Duluth train keeps running into snags. Proposed over ten years ago its implementation has waxed and waned with Minnesota legislative politics. One of the issues with both NLX and TCMC is equipment availability.

Amtrak has had continuing accidents removing cars from service, and serious locomotive issues. New equipment is beginning to arrive for the state-supported services, so one can hope for an improvement in equipment availability.

What remains to be resolved is the gnarly issue of a Minneapolis railroad station. The ex-GN station has been destroyed and the ex-Milwaukee station has no rail access. The local North Star commuter trains terminate at Target Field station, located on the Willmar ex-GN line but incapable of expansion. The Empire Builder does not stop in Minneapolis, relying on a nine-mile light rail line link to access Amtrak at the St. Paul Union Depot. So here, we have the state's largest city without current Amtrak service. The TCMC as planned will not serve Minneapolis either.

There have been a number of half-baked proposed solutions including a new station at Minneapolis Jct. (about a mile north of downtown); providing an Amtrak stop at the Fridley commuter line station (about 8 miles from downtown). If the Empire Builder were rerouted via Willmar (the original routing of GN's Empire Builder) perhaps the Target Field Station could be used. Using it for the present Empire Builder route requires a back-up move. Ultimately, if serious rail services are to return to Minneapolis this issue must be resolved. This issue shows the ghastly shortsightedness of politicians.

* * *

Clark Johnson is RUN's newest board member who hails from Wisconsin. He is an officer with All Aboard Wisconsin, Pro-Rail (Madison Chapter of Wisc. Ass'n. RPA), and a member of NRHS; Railroad Enthusiasts, Milwaukee Road Hist. Soc.; C&NW Hist. Soc.; MinnARP. He is also a private railcar owner and VP of American Ass'n. Of Private Railcar Owners (AAPRCO).

RUN Canada report: Spring 2022

By Ken Westcar

Upcoming federal and provincial budget planning and dealing with the aftermath of the recent border blockades are consuming significant bandwidth at our two senior levels of government. If the border disruptions proved one thing it is that Canada's transportation infrastructure is inadequate and lacks redundancy. Already some corporate bigwigs are assessing whether future investments should stay here or head south. Our governments need to take serious heed.

Cross-border passenger rail.

With Canadian Pacific (CP), granting Amtrak use of its Windsor tunnel for a single, daily return Chicago – Toronto passenger train, there is renewed optimism for near-term service. However, while Amtrak appears proactive, it seems that Transport

Let's hope Transport Canada and VIA Rail to pick up the phone to their U.S. counterparts soon.

Canada and VIA Rail are not. Whether otherwise occupied, apathetic or taking a wait-and-see position on border implications resulting from the 2024 U.S. presidential election remains to be seen.

The last RUN newsletter provided a detailed description of what needs to happen to establish a convenient Toronto-Chicago Amtrak service, and the article has been widely shared with stakeholders in southwestern Ontario. Let's hope Transport Canada and VIA Rail to pick up the phone to their U.S. counterparts soon.

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New discount fare pilot programs to begin February 28!

By Andrew Albert / RUN Board

As New Yorkers return to the subways, buses, and commuter rail as (hopefully) COVID recedes, new fare options will be ready to welcome New Yorkers back to the system! Chief among the new fare options will be New York's first trial of "fare capping", which will utilize our new tap-payment system, OMNY (One Metro New York). If you utilize the same fare payment card/phone to tap into the subway/bus system, and pay the \$2.75 per ride fare, after 12 rides, which will total \$33.00, the rest of your rides - until the next Sunday, assuming you began on Monday) will be free. In essence, you have purchased a weekly-unlimited ride pass, but didn't have to lay out the \$33.00 in advance! This is great for those that found it difficult to afford the entire weekly pass cost up-front, plus it encourages the use of OMNY, which is replacing the MetroCard system, which is definitely in need of replacement, after so many years of cleaning turnstiles, expiration dates of MetroCards, damaged magnetic stripes, and other issues. The OMNY card is available at drug and variety stores, as well as in vending machines in the subways, although that won't happen until October, 2022. Obviously, if you have a debit or credit card with the "tap" symbol, that will work as well, as will the mobile phone app. Free transfers will continue to be available between subways & buses, as long as you use the same card, mobile device.

Big changes are also coming to the commuter rails! Beginning March 1, 2022, new pilot programs will be available for the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) and Metro-North Railroad.

A new 20-trip ticket will offer 20% off 20 peak one-way fares when purchased through Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) eTix, or at a ticket window. Yes, peak fares, suspended for well over a year, are returning March 1st. In addition, monthly tickets, which are currently discounted between 48% & 61% of the price of a comparable number of one-way tickets, will be discounted by an additional 10%. Also, the City Ticket, which offers a reduced, flat fare for stations within NYC limits on both the LIRR & Metro-North - currently only available on weekends - will be extended to all off-peak hours! Of course, Atlantic Ticket, which is good for Southeast Queens stations to Atlantic Terminal, Brooklyn, will continue to be offered, and - when you purchase a weekly Atlantic Ticket for \$60, you get free transfers to buses & subways! At the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC), we continue to advocate for "Freedom Ticket" - a version of Atlantic Ticket that would be good on all commuter rail lines within city limits, and offer the weekly ticket with free transfers to subways & buses. This would get people out of their cars, especially when virtually all your transportation needs would be met - commuter rail, bus, and subway. When the new Penn Access route for Metro-North in the Bronx opens, there will be four new stations, three of which will be far from subways. Freedom Ticket would be a welcome addition at these stations, as well as the many other stations far from subway lines.

These "pilot" program fares are good for four months, but are likely to be extended if they are bringing riders back to the system. The MTA will evaluate the new fares' impact on operations, the customer experience, and fare box revenue. Stay tuned!

It's Electric! Germany Equips Significant Passenger Rail Corridor With Electrification During Covid-19 Pandemic

***What Can The 21st Century Electrification Of A Long Existing Rail Route In Southern Germany Tell Us About
The State Of Affairs Of The 21st Century Electrification Of A Long Existing Rail Route In Northern California?***

Part 2 of 2
By David Beale

Editors Note: Part 1 of this series appeared in the last RUN Newsletter, Winter edition, Vol 19-Issue 1

The 172 year-old "Südbahn" rail corridor between Ulm and Friedrichshafen, Germany, along with the Friedrichshafen – Lindau, Germany section of the "Bodensee Gürtelbahn" (Lake Constance belt railway) began electrified train operations as planned on the 12th of December 2021. Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic surging throughout Germany and other parts of Europe, there were no customary opening ceremonies with crowds, speeches by various dignitaries, festivals, news media, etc., just a sudden but planned switchover into service with a number of used EMU passenger rail cars acquired from other parts of Germany, and the end of a scheduled change of locomotives (electric to diesel or vice-versa) in Ulm, which had been the end point of electrified railway territory on the Stuttgart – Ulm – Friedrichshafen – Lindau rail line. The population of electrically-propelled trains working along the "Südbahn" increased from zero to a dozen or more as the population of diesel locomotives and DMU rail cars in regular operation dwindled to just a small handful of daily passenger trains. Prior to this opening day the newly installed railway electrification infrastructure was quietly tested and commissioned during late summer and autumn 2021 with test trains, teams of electrical engineers, inspectors and safety advisors.

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Canada Report: Continued from Page 5

Western provinces.

In Alberta, where real people wear 10-gallon hats and wouldn't be seen dead in a 4-door sedan, a recently formed advocacy group, Alberta Regional Rail (ABR), is advancing plans for the return of passenger rail services between Edmonton and Calgary. This heavily traveled 185-mile corridor currently relies on a sub-standard highway for the nearly 3-hour drive and short-haul flights. It's therefore ripe for a frequent passenger service on the CP right of way connecting the two cities and hosting between 7 and 11 freights daily.

Because the Alberta provincial government is highway-centric, ABR is generating grass-roots support at the 25 communities along the existing rail corridor and taking a cost-effective and innovative approach to infrastructure upgrades in dialog with CP. Although periodically touted as a high-speed rail opportunity, ABR is pursuing a 110mph maximum service speed and either locomotive-hauled or FRA compliant multiple-unit rolling stock hardened for wide climatic conditions. The route precludes the use of overhead catenary, so the focus is on hydrogen fuel cell or battery power.

Meanwhile, various advocacy groups are making progress on the reinstatement of the "Malahat" passenger rail service between Victoria and Courtney on Vancouver Island. Commuters and tourists are the target customers and the project aligns with British Columbia's intention to substantially reduce vehicle-miles driven in the province by expanding transit and regional rail.

Although a hot market for electric vehicles, the province has realized that accommodating more cars has serious land-use implications and is being proactive on climate change mitigation strategies.

Ontario.

Metrolinx, the transit provider for the Greater Toronto/Hamilton Area (GTHA), is planning to broaden its fare collection options from the current Presto stored value card and cash payments to debit and credit cards and smartphones. Accenture recently received a C\$416m contract extension to implement this within 4 years.

On-Corr, Metrolinx' challenging regional rail expansion and electrification program is proceeding through the bid evaluation process with an award expected in the spring this year. The two consortia are leveraging European and Japanese train technology with system engineering by several global teams. This will be one of the largest infrastructure developments in North America, and accommodates both regional population growth and modal shift as the region struggles with worsening traffic congestion.

Ontario Northland (ONR) is in the final stages of the business case for the return of the "Northlander" passenger train between Toronto and Timmins. Communities along the route and advocates believe that provincial foot dragging is delaying service reinstatement and are looking for new rolling stock pre-purchase funding in the upcoming provincial budget. ONR is planning a train service on par with long-distance services in Europe and Scandinavia, with a strong tourism focus. The service could start in 2025/2026. Relax, there will be space for kayaks and canoes.

VIA Rail.

VIA has launched an Expression of Interest initiative on its long-distance fleet replacement (primarily half century or older Budd-built equipment). Interest from global rolling stock manufacturers was high according to VIA, but no details were released. Advocates are recommending the new equipment be operational by 2018 to avoid service interruption because of rust-out.

The first of 32 Sacramento-built Siemens Tier-4 diesel passenger consists was delivered to VIA Rail late in 2021 for extensive pre-introduction work. A subsequent open house was held in Ottawa for invited guests, and the train received extremely positive reviews. The attractive and assertive exterior graphics are complemented by interiors designed by a U.K. firm that are on par or better than those of European premium trains. VIA Rail will progressively introduce the new trains over the next three years for corridor services between Windsor and Quebec City.

* * * * *

Ken Westcar is the Director of Transport Action Ontario.

TO OUR MEMBERS AND POTENTIAL MEMBERS... Do you have friends or associates that are also interested in a better rail system? There is strength in numbers. The Rail Users' Network (RUN) has established a first-year introductory membership rate of just \$25.00. As we move forward, we hope to expand membership and make our voice louder.

RUN can accept online processing, secured through the facilities of PayPal, as well as a check or money order via postal mail. Adding your email address to your membership will also get you on distribution for additional information on upcoming virtual meetings, invitations to conferences, and receive timely alerts on important legislative issues. Please take a moment to pass this information along to those in your area who may want to be a part of our cause. More membership info appears at the end of this newsletter.

If you have not yet sent in your 2021 membership dues, please also consider doing that today.

Rails Inc. Gulf Coast Statement to the STB

By J.W. Madison / RUN Board

"I'm JW Madison, co-founder and president of Rails Inc., out of Albuquerque, NM.

Mr. Chair, board members, everybody else, my group, Rails Inc., is a bunch of so-called ordinary citizens, mostly in New Mexico, who have learned some great things about passenger Rail, and don't like what we've been missing for at least 50 years.

You've heard about the many advantages of modern passenger Rail. I would add; almost unbelievable fuel economy (that is, smaller carbon footprint); greater passenger safety, comfort, and peace of mind; and popularity with people of all ages, colors, and income levels. The Demand for more and better trains is there, and it's increasing. The supply has been strangled for decades.

Amtrak has not always acted like the company charged by Congress to operate and improve a national passenger Rail system. Although admittedly, they've frequently had to fight with one hand tied behind their back, the ties being unreliable funding, shifting political whims, opposition and sabotage by anti-Rail vested interests, and their own sometimes dubious management.

However, we think, however, that a new day may be dawning for Amtrak and national passenger Rail in general. So we hope. Examples of this are their "Connect US 2035" initiative (which to us is a modest step in the right direction), and, of present interest, the proposal we're talking about today.

CSX says that accommodating both freight and passenger service here requires various improvements to the right-of-way. Everybody seems to agree on this, including us, but things like overly long freight trains need to be factored in here.

What really troubles us is the huge difference between two cost estimates we've seen: The FRA's \$118 Million vs. CSX's **\$2.3 Billion**.

Here's an example from my paid career: I'm a small-scale electrical and general contractor by trade. If you're collecting bids for some improvements on your house, and these bids range from about \$700.00 to maybe \$1,300.00, and I come in demanding almost \$20,000.00, wouldn't you smell at least one rat?

Whatever CSX is trying to pull here, in my group's opinion, bears no resemblance to any workable negotiating process I ever heard of. If we accept the FRA's cost estimate, which my group considers to be at least a ballpark baseline for sitting down in good faith, what does CSX plan to do with all that extra money?

Giving in to CSX's predatory demands would hold the rest of our sketchy passenger Rail network hostage to further sabotage by a few Big Freight entities and their preferred shareholders.

Interstate highway system



Current passenger rail system



Our future passenger rail system



Map created for Rails Inc. by John Perry

We also feel that if the taxpayers across our country are going to shell out for these improvements, we should own them, and that this policy be a step toward the conversion of all our major track segments into a national public utility, with lots of room for both public and private moving parts, and even for the profit motive.

My group calls this dream system the "Rail Interstate". We thought of "Interstate Rail System," but we figured another IRS might not resonate quite like we want it to.

Whatever you call it, this model works fine for all our other modes of transportation, or it would if the other modes were funded like they should be. A long-overdue gas tax increase, for example. But I digress...

Although Rails Inc., being from New Mexico, concerns itself primarily with Western Rail and transit matters, we're involved in this Southern issue because we believe that how the STB handles this case will reverberate for better or worse all across America for decades to come.

Thanks to PRIIA, the connectivity of our national passenger Rail system is skimpy enough. If Big Freight gets its way in this proceeding, national passenger Rail will be further Balkanized in our country. This case is a major opportunity for the STB to strike a blow for good transportation and a cleaner safer environment in America for generations to come.

Thank you for your time."

This statement was issued by J.W. Madison during a period of testimony opened by the Surface Transportation Bureau. Mr. Madison is the chair of Rails Inc. based in Albuquerque, NM.

Not Much Change at New Jersey Transit, as Riders' Woes Continue

By David Peter Alan

Not much has changed at New Jersey Transit. Maybe the “big news” is that advocates in the Garden State are calling for changes, while the transit agency continues with “business as usual.”

Train cancellations ran high over the Holidays. Many were attributed to the Omicron strain of the COVID-19 virus, which took its toll on the agency; both operating employees like rail crews and bus drivers, and managers, too. Many of the reported cases in New Jersey were comparatively mild, perhaps in part because New Jerseyans have established good records for getting their shots and wearing masks on NJ Transit. Now that the Omicron peak is subsiding, service has improved.

Recent reports show that commuting into NYC during historic “peak-commuting” hours is not climbing as management had hoped. Ridership on morning “commuter trains” into Penn Station is about one-third of pre-COVID levels (comparing October 2021 to October 2019), while it has rebounded more strongly at other times, especially on weekends. This has not deterred NJ Transit from pushing for the Portal North Bridge Project, which is supported by a grant from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for increased capacity, although such grants are customarily awarded only where a need for additional capacity has been demonstrated. According to the rules, a provider must show that the line is running at 95% or capacity or higher, but historic “peak hour” ridership into New York on NJ Transit has fallen far below that level. Also, while other regional railroads have rescheduled former “commuter trains” into midday and evening slots, NJT has not made any such changes. For instance, there are also no peak-hour trains on the Raritan Line to New York, which advocate Joseph M. Clift called “a missed opportunity of immense proportions.” It is now feasible to run them by rescheduling.

Environmentalists are up in arms about a Request for Proposals (RFP) by NJ Transit to build a new power plant for its “NJ TransitGrid” project. Gov. Phil Murphy had called for a moratorium on new power plants in the state that burn fossil fuels, but NJT is now proposing one that would be powered by natural gas, despite meeting with environmentalists to discuss solar-powered options. The Don't Gas the Meadowlands Coalition has been leading the charge to use renewable sources instead.

Meanwhile, the controversial “customer advocate” position at NJT remains unfilled. According to rider-advocates, its former occupant, Stewart Mader, had promoted the agency's interests over helping customers.

The Lackawanna Coalition and other advocates have also objected to the job title, saying that an employee can never be an effective “customer advocate” because the agency and its customers are not fully-united in interest, while the “genuine customer advocates” are the Lackawanna Coalition and the New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers (NJ-ARP), along with some unaffiliated rider-advocates. The Coalition would prefer a title like “Ombudsperson” or “Customer Experience Officer” that did not imply that the agency is acting as an “advocate” for its customers.

An unusual event occurred at the NJ Transit Board meeting on February 9: a member voted “NO” on an agenda item, despite an almost-ironclad custom against such dissent. James Adams, an engineer who was appointed by Gov. Murphy two years ago, voted against the agency's proposed budget, saying that he was not given an opportunity to review it in advance, so he could not approve it. He also mentioned the major transfer from capital to operations, as federal dollars sit in reserve.

It's also the end of an era at NJT. Board Secretary Joyce Zuczek retired after 45 years' service. She was the last original NJT employee from 1979. Everybody, including the advocates, will miss her. See my article in *Railway Age* at:

<https://www.railwayage.com/passenger/commuterregional/end-of-an-era-at-nj-transit/>, and headlined *End of an Era at NJ Transit*, for more about her.



*NJT. Board Secretary Joyce Zuczek retires.
(Photo courtesy: LinkedIn.Com
* * **

David Peter Alan is a RUN board member and a Contributing Editor at Railway Age. He previously served as Chair of the Lackawanna Coalition in New Jersey for 21 years.

Amtrak and CSX Slug It Out...

Continued from page 4

The only Alabamian who bucked other officials in his home state was Greg White, former Chair of the Southern Rail Commission. Like his fellow members from Mississippi and Louisiana, he recited examples of what appeared to be bad faith on CSX's part. For his own part, CSX President Jim Foote was demanding, appeared to threaten litigation and, according to reliable sources, appeared "visibly angry" when he made his statement. In contrast, Amtrak President Stephen Gardner appeared significantly calmer and better armed with facts.

Many of the witnesses who spoke in favor of the new service were local officials from Mississippi. They were strongly supportive of passenger trains along their coast, and skeptical of CSX's claims that it would require large investments in infrastructure to make room for them. Betty Sparkman, a Council member in Pass Christian, said that she was "perplexed" when CSX claimed that two daily round trips would disrupt its freight service. She said that there are ten freight trains on the line daily and that she knew because they shake her house as they go by. John Robert Smith, former Mayor of Meridian (in the northeastern part of the state) and former Chair of the Amtrak Board, called for "healthy cooperation between freight and passenger rail" but also said that CSX had not been transparent or completely honest.

Advocates and elected officials from several states had their say, and essentially all of them expressed concern that Amtrak's entire 2035 plan would be doomed if the STB sided with CSX and NS and required large amounts of new infrastructure to be built, just to accommodate minimal passenger service. The ones who were not RUN members came from Colorado, Ohio, and Arizona. Jim Matthews, President of the Rail Passengers' Association (RPA; the other rider-advocacy organization of national scope), expressed the same concern as other advocates: that, if Amtrak were to lose, "this would stop any expansion of American passenger rail in its tracks." Also, as other advocates mentioned, he reminded the Board of the "grand bargain" that was made when Amtrak was founded in 1970: that the railroads would allow Amtrak to have access to their tracks at reasonable fees, in return for being relieved of their historic common-carrier obligation to run passenger trains. He also accused CSX of limiting the capacity of the Gulf Coast line by running 200-car freight trains, when shorter trains (he mentioned 110 cars) more often would improve freight-carrying capacity, while also leaving room for the proposed Mobile trains.

RUN members took the lead in raising a variety of issues. Chair Richard Rudolph was the first RUN member to speak. He noted the difference between the CSX number and the one proposed by the Federal Railroad Administration and agreed with the FRA's. He cited mobility concerns, including for persons with disabilities, complained that CSX had pushed its shippers to make statements supporting CSX's view, and criticized CSX for invoking confidentiality when full disclosure was needed.

He also said that, with the anti-passenger attitude that CSX had exhibited, the STB should not allow CSX to absorb regional New England carrier Pan Am Railways. He noted that four states in New England are considering new passenger services: Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and his home state of Maine, and expressed concern that the proposed Pan Am acquisition would hinder these new starts. He concluded by saying this about Amtrak's 2035 plan: "If CSX gets its way, the plan is doomed."

RUN Board member J.W. Madison, who is also head of Rails, Inc. in New Mexico, recommended public ownership of rail infrastructure as an alternative to the present situation, and suggested that it be called the "Rail Interstate." He added that he thought of calling his plan the "Interstate Rail System" but decided that establishing another agency with the initials "IRS" was not a good idea. Still, he expressed his hope that Gulf Coast service would signify the start of "a new day coming" and added, "We don't like what we've been missing for the past 50 years."

Alan S. Drake of New Orleans gave a local resident's view. He emphasized life-safety issues, saying that passenger trains could help people, especially non-motorists, evacuate in the event of an emergency like Hurricane Katrina, which devastated the Crescent City and the Mississippi Gulf Coast in 2005. He also suggested that trains could bring Mississippians from the coastal towns into New Orleans for "premier" health care, which is accessible by streetcar from the train station. It was not necessary for Drake to mention that it was Katrina that killed the former train service along the line at issue. Everybody concerned with the case knew that fact.

Along with Amtrak, CSX and NS, the STB allowed the Port of Mobile to intervene, essentially adding the Port as a party. One proposal to keep a train station in the city away from the Port was to locate it at the future site of the Brookley Aeroplex, an airport billed as "downtown," but would actually be located five miles from there. Amtrak is pushing for the "legacy" location downtown, where the old Louisville & Nashville (L&N) Railroad stopped, and became a CSX location until tri-weekly passenger service ended in 2005. Amtrak spokesperson Marc Magliari spoke to this writer by phone from the old station location and said that there are two tracks, a place where a platform can be built, and room for a layup track off the main. This leads to hope that negotiations will allow the use of a convenient location in downtown Mobile for the terminal station. It's a historic area, with attractions like museums nearby.

The next battle will be fought early in April, when a full evidentiary hearing will take place. In the meantime, negotiations will continue. There is hope that those talks will lead to an agreement between Amtrak and the potential host railroads. That appears unlikely at the moment, but the numbers provided by each side are within negotiable range so, at this writing at least, some hope remains.

— DPA

The Comeback of Amtrak's Pioneer Route?

Richard Rudolph, Ph.D.

Chairman, Rail Users' Network

Reprinted from Rail Passenger Journal, 2022-2, 2022

The passage of the Infrastructure and Jobs Act has sparked renewed interest in restoring a number of train routes that Amtrak abandoned in 2009. Section 22214 calls for the Secretary of Transportation to conduct "a study to evaluate the restoration of daily intercity rail passenger service along routes that have been discontinued or operate less-than-daily since April 1971. This may seem like good news especially since "nonprofit organizations representing Amtrak passengers" will be consulted. However, it remains to be seen whether any of these routes will ever be restored given Amtrak's past record and the passage of PRIIA in 2008 which defines Amtrak's Long-Distance networks including only routes at least 750 miles long that were operating in 2008.

The Rail Users' Network has called for the return of trains that Amtrak once ran, but has discontinued over the years. This article will focus on the past and current efforts to restore the Pioneer, a three-car Amfleet train that ran from Seattle to Portland, Ogden and Salt Lake City starting in June 7, 1977. The route of the Pioneer passed through the Blue Mountains and ran for 150 miles along the south shore of the Columbia River. Most of the route used UP tracks with BN handling the train between Seattle and Portland. Connecting services were provided in Ogden for passengers traveling to Denver and Chicago on Amtrak's San Francisco Zephyr. (SFZ).

The assignment of Superliner equipment in 1980-81 enabled the Pioneer to offer convenient "through car" services to Chicago via the SFZ. The renaming of the SFZ as the California Zephyr in 1983 and its rerouting over the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad between Denver and Salt Lake City shifted the Pioneer-Zephyr connection to Salt Lake City. It also ended passenger rail service in Wyoming.

In 1991, Congress directed Amtrak to study separating the Pioneer and the Desert Wind, also part of the California Zephyr, and routing the two trains via the North Western through Iowa and Union Pacific through Wyoming. Instead, Amtrak moved the Pioneer's terminus with the Californian Zephyr interchange point from Salt Lake City to Denver to reduce the need for four EMD F40PH locomotives to haul the 16 Superliner carload along the Moffat Tunnel Route from Denver to Salt Lake City. It also enabled Amtrak to restore daily passenger rail service through southern Wyoming utilizing Union Pacific's Overland Route. The new Pioneer route enabled Amtrak to provide new service north through Greeley, Colorado to West Cheyenne - Borie, Wyoming, west to Laramie, Rawlins, Rock Springs, Green River, Evanston, and beyond to Ogden, Utah and northwest to Boise, Idaho, Portland, Oregon and Seattle.

Despite this route change, falling revenue resulted in the Pioneer becoming a tri-weekly train west of Denver on November 4, 1993. This marked the beginning of the end of the service. Tom Downs, who became president of Amtrak after W. Graham Claytor stepped down in late 1993, would admit years later that this was the wrong approach to produce the savings demanded by the Clinton Administration and Republican lawmakers. On the advice of Mercer Management Associates, Amtrak in 1995 reduced frequencies "on all or a portion of the Crescent, Empire Builder, California Zephyr, City of New Orleans, Texas Eagle, Desert Wind and the Pioneer." As a result, 1996 Amtrak's overall ridership dropped by 5% and anticipated reductions on operating costs were not realized on routes with reduced frequency of service. Ultimately, Amtrak returned daily service on most of the routes, but discontinued the Pioneer, Desert Wind between Salt Lake City and Los Angeles and in 1997 the North Coast Hiawatha as well, which provided service from Butte Montana to Fargo, North Dakota and Seattle. However, this isn't the end of the story.

Eleven years later, Oregon Senator Ron Wyden and Senator Mike Crapo of Idaho received a Congressional mandate forcing Amtrak to study restoring the former Pioneer route. Section 224 of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act, which reauthorized Amtrak in 2008, required Amtrak to undertake a study of reinstating the Pioneer, Desert Wind and the North Coast Hiawatha route which connected Fargo, North Dakota to Butte, Montana, until it was discontinued in 1979.

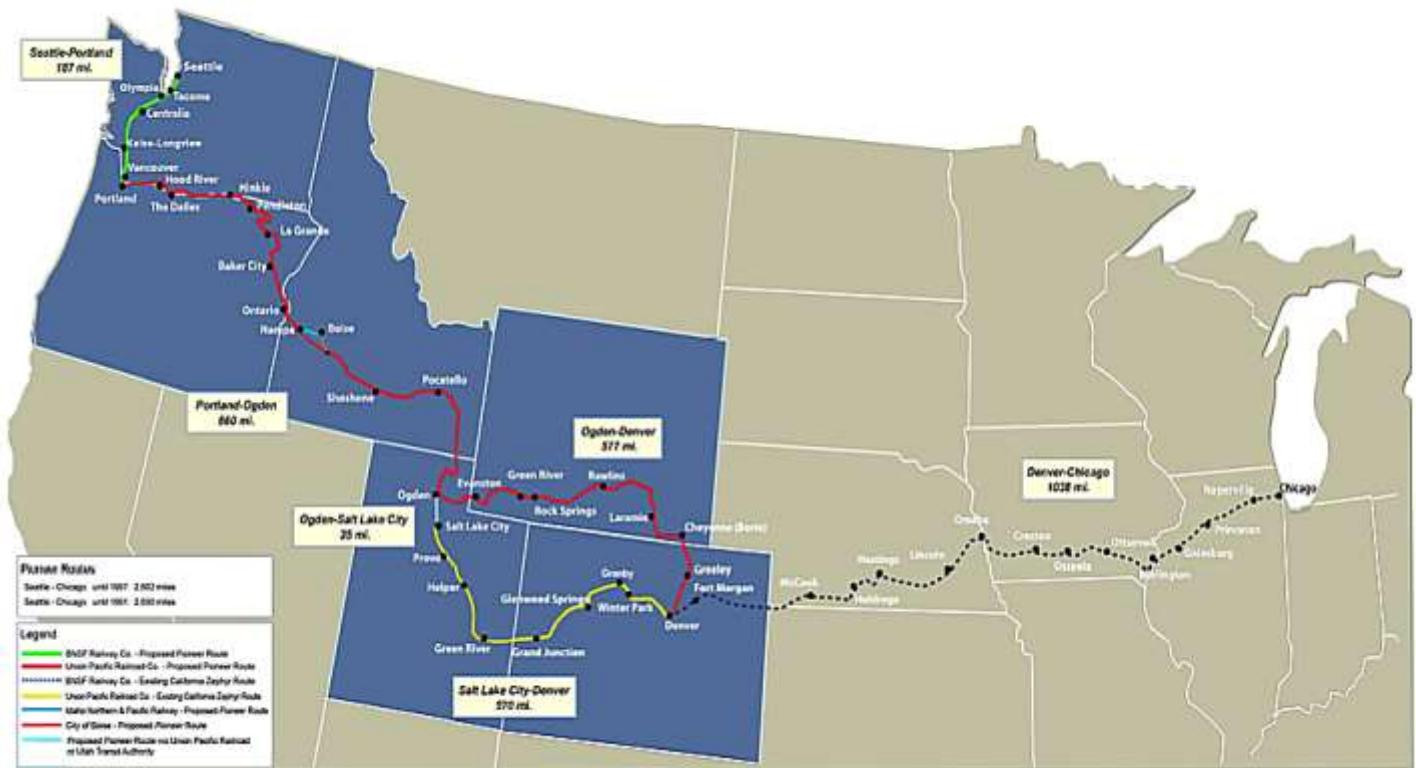
Regarding the Pioneer, Amtrak evaluated four different route options, all of which would provide through service to Chicago via the California Zephyr: Seattle to Salt Lake City or Denver, and Portland, Oregon to Denver or Salt Lake City. The various Pioneer options increased Amtrak ridership between 82,000 and 110,000 annually and increased revenue (including food and beverage revenue) \$7.6 million to \$13.1 million. Estimated annual operating cost could run between \$30 million and \$40 million annually. Capital and startup costs including those for locomotives, passenger cars, sleeping and food service cars could exceed \$400 million.

Senators Ron Wyden of Oregon and Mike Crapo who represented Montana were dissatisfied with the preliminary study. In a letter sent to Joe Boardman, President and CEO of Amtrak, Wyden pointed out that system-wide expenses were attributed to the Pioneer and Amtrak needed "to separate equipment costs from operating costs." He also stated that the current projections for required infrastructure improvements had been provided solely by the Union Pacific, which owned most of the track on the proposed routes, and that price estimates should be made "by a trusted independent source".



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Senator Crapo also had concerns. In his letter to Boardman, he asked Amtrak to review figures for both cost and ridership for it understated ridership projections nearly 30 percent below the historic high in 1992, and overstated the capital investment requirements and annual costs. The report needed to be reworked “so that its assumptions can withstand scrutiny and comparison with the other fifteen long distance trains that Amtrak operates.” The goal for the study, he wrote, “should be to develop a blueprint to reinstate the Pioneer Train at the lowest capital investment costs that supports safe and efficient operation, and to quickly grow ridership to a level that will bring a fare box recovery and the net cost per passenger mile to the median for Amtrak long-distance trains.”

The Pioneer Route Restoration Association, a coalition of communities along the Pioneer route, supported an effort to change the route in order to provide rail service from Cheyenne to Loveland, Fort Collins, Longmont and Boulder. However, Amtrak was not required to look at how the service could be operated differently, with new stops.

The final report, which was issued in October 2009, described a number of public benefits: reinstating the Pioneer would restore a key central corridor link between the Midwest and Rocky Mountain States, Idaho and the Pacific Northwest. It would also increase options and mobility, especially in communities that lack convenient access to air service and have only limited intercity bus service. It would also provide a “welcome alternative for those who cannot drive or do not own a car, and for persons who are unable to fly.” Restoring rail service along the Pioneer route could also have a positive impact on job creation, local/state tax revenues and tourism activity in the region.

While the restoration of the Pioneer could produce numerous benefits, the report concluded by pointing out that the PRIIA legislation which Congress passed in 2008 did not provide capital or operating funding for expansion of service beyond current levels. Therefore, additional federal and / or state funding would be required for any service expansion.

More recently, even before President Joe Biden released his American Jobs Plan in March 2021, there has been renewed interest in restoring the Pioneer Route. The Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates held an Eastern Oregon Rail Summit in La Grange, Oregon on October 23, 2019 to revive at least the Portland to Boise segment of the Pioneer. The lack of passenger rail service, loss of air service at smaller airports and the realization that intercity passenger rail can provide significant economic benefits has also led to the creation of the Greater Northwest Working group. It has been collaborating for over a year to support initiatives to return intercity passenger rail service to the Greater Northwest.

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President Biden's Infrastructure and Jobs bill created a great deal of excitement in the Pacific Northwest, but it was soon dashed when Amtrak issued its "Connect Us" fact sheet and map, which would primarily jump start additional state-supported services and direct the majority of funding to the Northeast Corridor. However, rail advocates haven't given up. Elaine Clegg, President of the Boise City Council, has personally contacted Secretary of Transportation, Pete Buttigieg, about resurrecting the Pioneer. Boise's city council in June passed a resolution unanimously urging Amtrak to restore the return of the Pioneer route and asked Congress to authorize working groups and studies to evaluate the costs and benefits of restoring the route and Montana's North Coast Hiawatha, which connected Fargo, North Dakota to Butte, Montana, until it was discontinued in 1979.

The city of Rock Springs, Wyoming has also moved forward with supporting the restoration of the Pioneer Route through Rock Springs and Southwest Wyoming. The City Council voted unanimously to support a resolution calling for restoration of Amtrak's Pioneer Route. Since the resolution has been made public, other communities have been reaching out and asking what they can do to help support this effort.

Meanwhile, Senator John Tester of Montana, who worked with a team of Senate Democrats and Republicans to craft the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, was successful in including language in the bill that directs the U.S. Secretary of Transportation to study the restoration of long-distance routes across the country. Section 22214 of the Infrastructure and Jobs Act calls for the Secretary of Transportation to conduct a study to evaluate the restoration of daily intercity rail passenger service along routes that have been discontinued or operate less-than-daily. Routes that operated on April 1, 1971, but were not continued by Amtrak, would be included in the study.

In conducting the study, the Secretary "shall consult through working groups or other forums that the Secretary determines to be appropriate" including Amtrak, each state along a relevant route, regional and metropolitan planning organizations, host rail-road carriers, organizations representing onboard Amtrak employees, nonprofit organizations representing Amtrak passengers and relevant regional passenger rail authorities and federally recognized Indian Tribes. The report is to be submitted no later than 2 years after the enactment of the Act to the Senate's Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and to the House's Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

As a national non-profit organization, the Rail Users' Network is prepared to participate in this new study, but recognizes that ultimately Congress needs to repeal the offending language in the PRIIA legislation which restricts long distance service to that which existed in 2008. This will require building a robust citizen constituency to advocate for the inclusion of discontinued routes which existed prior to that date.

It's Electric...

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Here are some of the facts:

Length:

Ulm – Friedrichshafen — 104 km (64 mi.) double track
Friedrichshafen – Lindau — 23 km (14.6 mi.) single track with
sidings for passing in three stations

Maximum in-service speed: limit

before electrification: — 100, 120 and 140 km/h
after electrification: — mostly 160 km/h (100 mph)

Electrification:

DBAG standard AC overhead catenary 15,000 VAC 16.7 Hz
single phase

Cost of new electrification infrastructure:

Current estimated final EUR 390 million (approx. US \$ 453 million), including modifications to six bridges for increased vertical clearance, excluding new rolling stock

Financing and budget:

generally new infrastructure costs shared 50-50 between the German federal government and the Baden-Württemberg state government.

Costs of modifying or replacing of two bridges over the rail line paid for by local and/or state government

Costs of "bustitution" (temporary bus transportation) around rail line closures paid by DB Regio, the local / commuter transit unit of DBAG (German Railways)

Catenary Installation / Construction period:

September 2018 – November 2021

Planning, design, permit and approval time:

August 2011 – October 2015

Original railway construction period:

April 1843 – June 1850

Double-track expansion / installation:

1905 – 1913 (Ulm – Friedrichshafen)

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The start of electric operations in December 2021 was the successful conclusion of a project which had been in proposals and conceptual planning schemes going back 50 – 60 years, but were stalled several times over the past half-century period due to various political squabbles, financial limitations, and lack of prioritization compared to other (often far more expensive) German transportation projects, such as new Berlin central train station (Hauptbahnhof) and related north-south rail connector, upgrade of both the Hamburg – Berlin and Hannover – Berlin rail corridors, construction of the new Berlin-Brandenburg International Airport on the grounds of the existing Berlin Schönefeld Airport, the new Leipzig City Rail Tunnel, construction of the new Frankfurt – Cologne high-speed rail corridor, construction of the new Berlin–Munich high-speed rail corridor, electrification of the Hamburg – Luebeck – Travemuende rail route, and several other significant German transportation infrastructure projects in the 2000 – 2020 time period. Similarly, major new rail projects were started or accomplished in other European countries, such as the HS1 high speed rail line between the Channel Tunnel and central London, new high speed rail lines in Holland and Belgium to connect with France's growing TGV high-speed rail network, additional new high-speed rail corridors across Spain and Italy, significant increase of catenary / rail electrification on rail lines across the middle and northern regions of the UK, and the start of new high-speed rail lines in Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Scandinavia, and two new railway "base" tunnels built and opened in the Swiss Alps to dramatically reduce travel times and relieve highway truck traffic between northern Italy and southern Germany through the environmentally sensitive Alps mountain region.

The start of installation of the electrification infrastructure on the "Südbahn" began in "normal times," i.e. in the world pre-Covid-19, in summer 2018. Mostly the installation work progressed in stages from north in Ulm, Germany and moved slowly in the next few years to the south towards Friedrichshafen and Lindau. Sections of the rail corridor were closed and then re-opened as construction work moved in stages from north to south. The rail line closures lasted in durations from three – four months each. The final section of installation work and line closure was in September – early November 2021, between Wasserburg and Lindau for completion of catenary installation and replacement of several rail interlockings on Lindau Island, where the long-standing historic Lindau central rail terminal sits.

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ABOVE – Some assembly required - in April and May 2020 construction crews began installing and assembling catenary masts in and around the Auledorf station. The poured concrete mast foundations were dug and cast a month or two earlier. The design of the masts follow standard designs used in electrification in Germany with few changes since the mid 1960s. The detailed design of the electrification infrastructure along the "Südbahn" was performed twice: once on CAD/CAM 3-D models on a computer screen, then copied in real life at the construction sites, after verification of the 3-D computer models.

AT RIGHT – Diagram of the "Südbahn" rail line in southern Germany, which runs from Ulm in the north of the region to Friedrichshafen and Lindau on the shore of Lake Constance (Bodensee) in the south. Connecting and intersecting rail lines not shown here for clarity. The section between Friedrichshafen and Lindau is actually part of the "Bodensee Gürtelbahn" (Lake Constance Belt Railway).



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During the past few years, a new passenger through-station in Lindau was built on the site of a rather lightly-used rail freight marshalling yard in Lindau's Reutin area on the German main land. The old passenger rail terminal on the tourism-centered island of central Lindau will remain in operation, albeit with somewhat fewer passenger trains per day, as several regional express trains, including Zurich – Munich and Innsbruck (Austria) - Dortmund passenger intercity trains, now bypass the train terminal on Lindau Island, but stop at the newly-built Lindau-Reutin station. This development opens up the possibility for local and regional passenger trains to operate between northeast Switzerland, western Austria, and southern Germany via the "Südbahn" without the need to pull into and back-out of the Lindau Insel passenger terminal, thus saving considerable time.

In fact, another significant rail project, which ran nearby in southern Germany's Allgäu region about 18 months ahead of the electrification of the "Südbahn", was electrification of the previously non-electrified Lindau – Memmingen – Buchloe part of the Zurich – St. Gallen (Switzerland) – Bregenz (Austria) - Lindau – Munich intercity rail route. Somewhat similar to the history of the nearby "Südbahn", electrification of this route between Zurich and Munich remained incomplete within Germany until catenary was finally installed and energized along

the section between Lindau and Buchloe in the past several years, although the electrification of the other parts of this important rail corridor between Zurich and Munich, including sections within Austria and Switzerland had been completed decades earlier. In eagerly pro-rail transit Switzerland, completion of the missing electrification of the route within Germany was even partially financed by the Swiss government as an incentive to Germany to speed up the full electrification of the route. Electrification of the "Allgäu" rail route from Lindau to Buchloe (where electrification of the rest of the route to Munich was already in-place) was completed and opened for full electrically-powered train operations in December 2020, thus eliminating the time-consuming electric to diesel locomotive change in Lindau. Swiss rail operator SBB replaced the "classic" locomotive-hauled conventional rail cars on Zurich – Munich intercity trains with new ETR 610 high speed train sets built by Alstom in Italy, which are similar to Amtrak Avelia Liberty train-sets operated on the Northeast Corridor in the USA, the ETR 600 series trainsets operated in their home of Italy or analogous to TGV trainsets in France, ICE trainsets in Germany, and AVE train sets operated in Spain and other electric high speed train sets now in operation in Italy, Japan, Korea, China, Taiwan and Turkey and now in Morocco in northern Africa.

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Bridge over historic rail line - view of the "Südbahn" just south of Aulendorf in July 2021. The new electrification infrastructure is complete at this point, but not yet energized. A new replacement bridge, one of two which were not paid for by the electrification project, is nearly finished and has already been attacked by local graffiti artists. The funds for this new replacement bridge (the original one was demolished to clear the way for the electrification catenary) were located in a special state infrastructure fund for repair and rebuilding local streets and roads not designated as federal or state roads within this German state.

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Back on the "Südbahn" it is currently unknown if Deutsche Bahn's famous ICE train sets will travel on a regular basis between Ulm, Friedrichshafen and Lindau at some point in the future. With electrification now fully installed on this route, the rail line can certainly host these trains at any time, albeit only at 160 km/h speed, significantly below the 260 – 320 km/h top speeds most ICE train sets are capable of on designated high-speed rail lines existing in other parts of the German rail network. Nevertheless the first high-speed train set has begun regular service on the "Südbahn", however from its home in Austria, namely a RailJet train set of Austria train operator ÖBB using Siemens Euro Sprinter electric locomotives semi-permanently coupled to Siemens Viaggio Comfort coaches, which are directly related to Siemens Venture passenger coaches built for new Brightline passenger trains operating in Florida and planned for Brightline train services between Los Angeles and Las Vegas. The Siemens Charger diesel locomotives powering the Brightline trains are based on the Siemens Amtrak City Sprinter and Vectron electric locomotives, which were derived from the Siemens Euro Sprinter locomotive powering the RailJet series of passenger train sets in Europe. This particular RailJet train set currently operates only once per day on the "Südbahn" as it travels between Bregenz, Austria and Frankfurt, Germany. The over a century and a half old "Südbahn" has, surprisingly, some things in common with another railway electrification project currently in progress 5000 miles away in northern California directly in the Silicon Valley region with Caltrain, the local passenger rail operator in the San Francisco Bay area.

Comparison between Caltrain electrification and "Südbahn" electrification

	Caltrain	Südbahn
<u>Location:</u>	USA, northern California San Francisco – San Jose	Germany, Baden-Württemberg Ulm – Friedrichshafen
<u>Length and breadth:</u>	49 miles mostly double track	64 miles double track
<u>Age of Right-of way in 2022:</u>	150 years	172 years
<u>Top speed</u>	80 mph	100 mph
<u>Project construction start:</u>	July 2017	September 2018
<u>Project construction finish:</u>	February 2024	December 2021
<u>Electrification type:</u>	Catenary @ 25 kV 60 Hz AC	Catenary @ 15 kV 16.7 Hz AC
<u>Estimated project cost:</u>	\$ 2.3 billion (source: Feb. '22 edition of Railway Age)	\$ 450 million (370 million €) (sources: SWR News and B-W "Staatsanzeiger")
<u>Project cost per mile:</u>	\$ 47 million / mile	\$ 9 million / mile
<u>Project cost per mile (less rolling stock):</u>	\$ 28 million / mile	\$ 7 million / mile

A side-by-side comparison of the capital costs on installing new railway electrification makes one's eyes water. . . . the electrification project in northern California comes out to a sum which is around 4 times of the electrification costs per mile or km of the similar project in southern Germany.

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rrudolph1022@gmail.com



Out with the old and in with the even older? Local train operator BOB replaced its fleet of Stadler RS-1 Regio Shuttle DMU rail cars (average age 13 years) with 19 - 20 year-old ex-DB Class 426 EMU rail cars. Although these trains are still in the original white on red and grey colors of their previous owner, a DB Regio operator near Saarbrücken in northwest Germany, BOB has plans to fully refurbish and repaint these trains in its white on blue color scheme in the next few months. Here a pair of BOB class 426 two-car EMUs await departure in Aulendorf on a local service to Friedrichshafen in mid December 2021.

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A partial explanation of this huge discrepancy in costs of two otherwise similar railway electrification projects may be the utter lack of experience in railway electrification in North America: the last two major electrification projects of standard (i.e. non-light rail) train lines in the USA are a project between Denver airport and downtown Denver in the 2014 – 2017 time frame, and the New Haven – Boston part of the Northeast Corridor electrification completed between 1997 and 1999. Prior to those two projects, only a few miles of conventional suburban rail lines in the USA, all of them in northern New Jersey and southeastern Pennsylvania, were electrified after the end of World War 2 as minor extensions to the existing 1930s era PRR and Reading-built Northeast Corridor network in those two states, as well as replacement of the 1920s-30s era 3000 VDC overhead catenary with 25 kVAC catenary in the mid 1980s on the Morris & Essex commuter rail lines of the former [Erie-Lackawanna Railroad](#) (today NJ Transit) in northern New Jersey.

In Germany, and indeed across Europe and the U.K., electrification of conventional rail lines has been expanding nearly continuously since the early 1960s through present day, in some countries such as the U.K. and Poland at a snail's pace, in others such as France, Italy, Holland and Switzerland (including newly-constructed high-speed rail lines) at a considerable pace over the past 50 years. In fact, 100% of Swiss rail lines are now equipped with overhead electrification, with Belgium and Holland now over 70% electrified.

Other issues, which possibly make this study of electrification costs of these two railway electrification projects somewhat of an "apples-to-oranges" comparison, are certain expenses not directly related to installation of the overhead AC electrification infrastructure on these two rail lines. The stated costs of the "Südbahn" electrification project in southern Germany do not include acquisition costs of electric locomotives and self-propelled EMU rail cars, which have replaced the previous diesel-powered rolling stock. On the Caltrain rail line electrification project the capital costs of acquisition of new electrically powered rolling stock are apparently included in their cost figures. Press releases of the past three years show that Caltrain will acquire 133 new Stadler KISS double deck EMU cars arranged into 19 train sets at a contracted price tag of US \$ 935 million from the Utah based rail car builder.

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On the "Südbahn", existing electric locomotives based at DB depots in Stuttgart and Ulm will propel hourly Regional Express trains Bombardier Twindexx multi-level coaches. These Regional Express trains have been operating on the Stuttgart – Lindau route for a number of years anyway, the only major change is that the trains will operate now with electric propulsion 100% of the time, no change to diesel locomotives in Ulm any longer. This does of course mean there has been an incremental change to more electric locomotives dedicated to these trains to make up for the withdrawal of diesel locomotives south of Ulm. I estimate that the fleet of electric locomotives delegated to haul these particular trains increased by 5 – 6 locomotives, to compensate for the withdrawal of the now retired diesel locomotives delegated to hauling these particular trains between Ulm, Friedrichshafen and Lindau. The class 218 diesel locomotives, which were approaching nearly 50 years old, likely had little more than scrap metal value as of their December 2021 retirement. The much newer class 245 "Traxx" diesel locomotives, withdrawn from their duties on the "Südbahn", still have at least another 25 - 30 years of life left in them, and will certainly be deployed in useful service elsewhere in Germany or Europe.

A new change is the addition of an hourly Ulm – Friedrichshafen regional express train. The rolling stock for this additional service are used 20+ year-old class 425 EMU train sets, which had been in operation with a train operator in northwest Germany. Another change involves local train operator Bodensee Oberschwaben Bahn (BOB), which replaced their seven unit train fleet of approximately 13 year-old Stadler RS-1 Regio Shuttle DMUs with four used 20 year-old class 426 EMU 2-car train sets. I cannot find what the acquisition costs for these two-decade old used electric passenger trains was, but I suspect it was under 2 million € (about US \$2.4 million) per train set, which due to the nature of local and regional passenger train operations in Germany, is a completely separate financial transaction executed between state and local governments, leasing firms and train operators and / or transit authorities when passenger rolling stock is purchased or leased.

I assumed that the electrification project in northern California includes all modifications and construction costs of any existing bridges due to vertical clearance issues with the new catenary above the rail tracks. If not, then the electrification costs of Caltrain are simply even more than currently stated, thus making the costs even worse than represented. In southern Germany it is already known that modifications and construction costs of at least two bridges over the "Südbahn" were handled under separate budgets, and not within the electrification project's budget, at an expense to local governments of approximately 20 million EUR total.

However that can not be the only explanation why railway electrification costs in the USA are over six times more expensive per mile than in Europe, where salaries, real estate, sales and income taxes and costs of living are as expensive, if not more expensive than in the USA and Canada. The Caltrain electrification project in the San Francisco / Silicon Valley is, by far, not the only public transit infrastructure project in the USA where capital costs are multiple times more expensive than approximately equivalent transit infrastructure projects in Europe and U.K. Readers are encouraged to review the 2021 study "[*A Blueprint for Building Transit Better*](#)" by the Eno Center for Transportation, an independent non-partisan think tank based in Washington DC. In that comprehensive and detailed study, the Eno Center found that *"180 domestic and international public transit projects completed since year 2000 shows that the United States pays a premium of nearly 50 percent on a per-mile basis to build transit for both primarily at-grade and primarily tunneled projects. The tunneling premium in the United States rises to roughly 250 percent when New York City's disproportionately expensive projects are included."*

Some countries, notably the USA, have developed a very serious and strong aversion to equipping conventional heavy passenger and freight rail routes with electrification, despite a number of advantages electrification brings to such rail lines and a number of drawbacks related to diesel powered passenger and freight trains. But when one looks at the expected final cost of such a plan, as now exists in the San Francisco – Silicon Valley area in northern California, the basic reason for this aversion becomes crystal clear: wildly high capital costs. It certainly makes some sense to ask, if it would be better to acquire new available low emissions and fuel-efficient diesel locomotives (such as the Charger series of locomotives from Siemens Mobility USA) now in operations with Amtrak, Brightline, MARC, Canada's Via Rail and several other passenger rail operators, rather than paying for outrageously marked-up overhead electrification infrastructure, until the reasons for this rip-off of taxpayer money can be investigated, resolved and rectified ?

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We hope you will join us in this important work. The Rail Users' Network is made up of individuals, grass-roots organizations, enthusiasts, and hobbyists with a common goal of promoting new rail systems and sustainability of those we already have. We hope this newsletter is informative and provides good information. Please visit us at www.railusers.net

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This is clearly not sustainable nor logical for future railroad-based transportation projects across the USA. Are the laws of physics and economics in the USA that much different than in the rest of the industrialized world? Or has the public transportation system, including long-term planning, forecasting, design and execution in the USA become so tied up in non-value added processes and poorly performing private and public (government) agencies to cause such transportation projects to consistently spiral out of control? US \$2.4 billion just to string electric cables (old off-the-shelf technology) above 52 miles of existing railway tracks? How is this cost justified, when a rather similar rail electrification project in high-cost "old Europe" in southern Germany costs a fraction of that bloated price tag?

Certainly here in Germany there are also numerous examples of major public transportation projects going out of control. Two current examples of this are the recently completed Berlin-Brandenburg International Airport, finished approximately 9 years behind schedule and several billion euros / dollars over original cost estimates, or the ongoing Stuttgart 21 project to re-configure the main central rail station from a surface level rail terminal to an underground thru-station (roughly analogous to New York City Penn Station or Philadelphia Market East / Jefferson Station) along with new rail tunnels and stations around Stuttgart, which is now approaching five years behind schedule and at least 4 billion euros / dollars above original project cost estimates. Even electrification of the "Südbahn", subject of this article, experienced a doubling of its capital costs over the past decade from an original estimate of 140 million € a decade ago to current 370 – 390 million € bill as the project was executed and completed. But when compared to a number of current and recent public transit projects across the USA spanning from eastern Massachusetts to western Washington State and southern California or even Honolulu, Hawaii, a cost increase of "just" a quarter billion € (about US \$ 300 million) in this day and age is sadly nearly a perfect landing for public transportation projects. The benefits to rail users of the electrification of the "Südbahn" rail line as well as the taxpayers and public at-large will last for decades to come.

* * * * *

David Beale lives in Germany and active in rail advocacy with organizations similar to RUN. He was the Foreign Editor for Destination: Freedom, the newsletter of the former National Corridors Initiative. He is currently a sales and support manager for a major manufacturer of diesel engines used for power generation, boats, and rail locomotives. His travel for work has taken him throughout Europe and Asia.



One week after the opening day of the "Südbahn" electrification and one week before Christmas 2021 a Regional Express train hauled by a Traxx electric locomotive (DB class 146, related to the Traxx ALP-46 and ALP-46A electric locomotives in operation with NJ Transit between northern New Jersey and NY City Penn Station) from Stuttgart to Lindau stops in Aulendorf.

From the RUN Board of Directors

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