

California Rail News

Volume 19 Number 5

Sacramento, CA

January-February 2007

Sacramento Trains Connect



BUT WILL NEW LINK SURVIVE NEXT YEAR?

Public celebrations the first week of December marked the 15th anniversary of the start of Capitol Corridor service and the inauguration of the long-awaited extension of the Sacramento Regional Transit light rail line to the Amtrak station. The festivities, however, were overshadowed by concerns about the future of the station, the light rail connection, and the Capitol Corridor.

Two days before the opening of the light rail line, the City of Sacramento made a commitment of \$95 million of public funding that will break the light rail connection, perhaps by next year. Sacramento will purchase 8.8 acres containing the Amtrak station for \$55 million. It also agreed to pay \$40 million plus half of cost overruns for the Union Pacific Railroad tracks and Amtrak platforms to be moved hundreds of yards away to the north. This means passengers will have a 1200 foot walk from the back of the station to the nearest train door.

Why did the City of Sacramento promise to do something so obviously anti-transit? It appears that the lure of developer dollars was greater for City Council members than the goal of good public transportation.

Sacramento's Amtrak station is by far the strongest in Northern California, with over 900,000 annual passengers, but Union Pacific has been openly hostile to its role in regional public transportation. The reason for this position is not so hard to see.

The land on which the station was built in 1926 was deeded by the city to Southern Pacific to bring train service closer to the

Capitol. At the time, SP's passenger trains were at a competitive disadvantage with Northern Electric trains that departed from 8th and K Streets. Current owner Union Pacific only profits from freight or resources and views downtown land as being too valuable to waste on mere passengers.

To cover its tracks, UP invoked safety, always a winning public relations ploy. According to UP, the curve which brings tracks to the station constitutes a safety hazard and should be replaced with tracks and platforms hundreds of yards away. The land enclosed by the curving tracks and straight passenger platforms just happens to be the most valuable on the entire site. If safety were a real concern, Southern Pacific wouldn't have removed the freight bypass 35 years ago. If UP were sincere, it would have simply rebuilt the freight bypass years ago at its own expense.

Instead, UP spent millions on a ten-year campaign to convince Sacramento to move the tracks, and eventually interposed a third party, Thomas Enterprises, into the deal. Involving Thomas raised the price, but if UP had directly sold the City of Sacramento a parcel for which the city has an arguable claim to title, the transaction could have been challenged easily in court.

Thomas Enterprises claims it cannot tell the public how much it paid UP for the 240 acre railyards parcel, due to a non-disclosure agreement, but City Hall insiders hint that it was very similar to the amount the City paid for just 8.8 acres.

(continued on Page Two)

19 years after light rail transit arrived in Sacramento, the 5-block gap to the Amtrak station was finally bridged. Sacramentans are hoping that the station and connection will remain intact despite city decisions that seem to signal their demise. Photo: R. Tolmach

INSIDE

PAGE 3
COAST
OBSERVATIONS

PAGE 4
WILL PROP. 1B
BUILD RAIL?

PAGE 8
PARIS T3 TRAM
PROJECTED TO
CARRY 100,000

TRAC
Train Riders
Association
of California

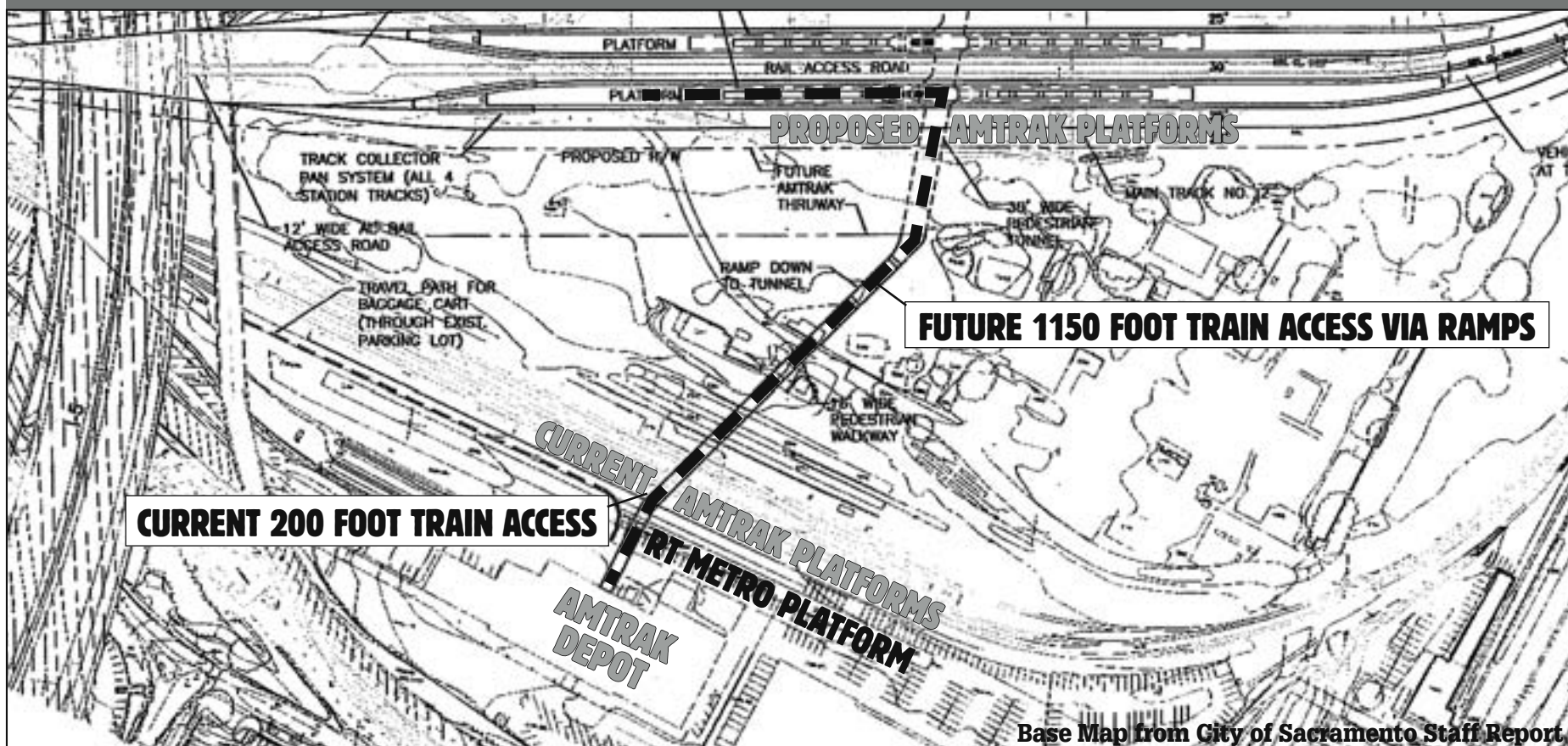
1025 Ninth Street, #223
Sacramento, CA 95814

Return Service Requested

MEMBERS, PLEASE CHECK
THE RENEWAL DATE ABOVE
YOUR NAME AND RENEW YOUR
MEMBERSHIP IF THE DATE IS
APPROACHING OR PAST

Non-profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Sacramento, CA
Permit #811

SACRAMENTO TO PAY FOR RAIL DISCONNECT



(continued from Page One)

Ever since 1996, UP acted like a slumlord, refusing to fix roofs even after they collapsed at the REA Building adjacent to the station. Instead, UP broke up the historic station parcel two years ago and sold the REA to another of its development partners. The developer retains the only legal street access to Amtrak, making it landlocked.

The City reportedly ignored negative environmental impacts of this sale splitting up the historic site, because the REA building was so close to complete collapse, the result of nearly a decade of UP actions seemingly calculated to destroy historic structures. A few years before, UP illegally demolished another historic structure in the path of the current proposed bypass line, following a mysterious weekend fire.

Sacramento Amtrak traffic abruptly stopped growing in late 2005, when Union Pacific started obstructing passenger access with onerous new station parking and entry constraints. Shortly afterwards, light rail and bus stop construction began, taking an additional bite out of the parking lot.

Despite addition of eight daily Capitol Corridor trains, Amtrak ridership has continued to decline in Sacramento due to a combination of botched parking and pedestrian access decisions by the city, Regional Transit, and Union Pacific.

Capitol passengers have been angered and frustrated by a parking management company which seemed hell-bent on disrupting their commutes. The last straw for many passengers was the installation of

homemade parking ticket machines and gates by Platinum Parking.

Malfunctioning software, unintelligible messages, tickets which would not work, and \$91 default charges if a ticket couldn't be read by the machine brought the station parking issue to a boil, highlighted by *Sacramento Bee* editorials.

Eventually, the City of Sacramento knuckled under and let the railroad have its way on moving the tracks, even picking up \$40 million of the costs that Sacramento politicians had always promised that the railroad would pay.

An end-of-the-year *Sacramento Business Journal* article by Michael Shaw pointed out that the sale raises "a host of new questions about the ambitious plan" for overall development at the railyards site including the following; "How much will the public pay for a transit hub planned for the rail-yard? How long will it take to clean the site of pollution?" and "How will the city and the developer cover the estimated half-billion dollars in costs to build sewers, streets and other infrastructure needed to support redevelopment?"

Damage Control at Sacramento

The day of the anniversary celebration, the president of a Sacramento bicycle organization was beamed on the head and knocked off his bicycle by a falling parking gate. Days after the sale went through at year's end, the gates were removed.

Picking up or dropping passengers at the depot has gotten a lot easier with gates gone, but parking at the station is almost

as much of a problem today as it was a year ago. Commuters grab most spots early in the morning, so availability is uncertain.

Mayor Heather Fargo, addressing bad press on the parking issue, said she was dedicated to solving traffic and parking problems at the year-end session that finally cleared the way for the land deal. Council member Steve Cohn went even further, inviting the public to suggest ways to improve conditions at the Amtrak depot.

How to Undo the Sabotage

Passengers still face a daily obstacle course from downtown, with I Street signals for 5th Street set in peak hours for up to four minutes of east-west traffic. People about to miss a train because of the signal delay often become so anxious that they dart into traffic despite the red light. Pedestrians need more of a fair shake.

Then there are tank traps to navigate at the Federal Building, and the dangerous station parking lot with no pedestrian path marked. Since construction started at the old REA building, commuters have been forced to detour through the station. Re-establishing a line-of-sight path direct to trains would save another minute or more.

Light rail should be the first choice for access to the Amtrak station, but schedules are unfortunately set for maximum delay. Capitol trains depart just as light rail arrives 15 of 16 times weekdays, forcing a 15 minute wait. A tweak of seven minutes to light rail times (swapping times of the two LRT lines) could fix this problem and expand Capitol passengers' usage of the connection.

Join TRAC and Help Fight for Improved Trains

Clip & mail with your check or money order payable to:

Train Riders Association of California (TRAC)

1025 Ninth Street, #223 Sacramento, CA 95814 (916) 557-1667

Please fill out the following, or attach address label:

	Regular member	\$35	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name _____	Contributing member	\$60	<input type="checkbox"/>
Street _____	Sponsoring member	\$100	<input type="checkbox"/>
City _____ State _____ Zip _____	Sustaining member	\$200	<input type="checkbox"/>
Telephone _____ E-mail _____	Benefactor	\$500	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Fixed income member	\$25	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/> Renewal	<input type="checkbox"/> New Member	

To help TRAC keep its staff at full-time, I am enclosing a special donation of \$ _____

Enclosed is a donation to TRAC's Legislative Action Fund in the amount of \$ _____

I want to support the *Rail News*. Enclosed is a tax-deductible donation to TRAC's Educational arm, the **California Rail Foundation** in the amount of \$ _____

TRAC HEARS KEMPTON ON CAL RAIL FUTURE

by Richard Tolmach

Caltrans Director Will Kempton gave a rousing keynote speech at November's Cal Rail 2020 meeting in Oakland, challenging TRAC members to help set California's rail future. He began by saying he came to speak despite a grueling week, because he "didn't want to deliver a message that I was not interested in passenger rail."

Accompanied by Caltrans rail chief Bill Bronte, Kempton laid out a forward thinking view of California's rail prospects. His leading message was that the 32 trains a day on the Capitol Corridor are the kind of high quality service that could turn the corner for passenger rail in California.

"The difference that [schedule] makes is that we have the frequency of service to make that a very attractive alternative to using the automobile." Kempton called the recent service boost a "positive improvement to the corridor that can take pressure off the highway corridor on Interstate 80."

Kempton told of plans to "get state workers focussed on using the Capitol Corridor and ... say that all trips need to be taken by rail unless you justify the use of an automobile." Citing "90,000 state workers in Sacramento," he noted how state vehicles populate I-80 at peaks. "There is no reason why with the frequency of service we now have between those two points that we can't see a significantly higher number of state business trips taken by rail," said Kempton.

Kempton was candid about the hurdles to expanding rail use. "People don't know about rail service. They are afraid to use it. You go to the light rail station and you look at that farebox machine and you say, naah, not today," said Kempton. "I know because I've done this. I've gone to BART in the early part of my career and looked at the farebox thing and stuck in a dollar and had it kick back a dollar and said 'OK, I'm leaving, and you go away.'"

"One of the problems is getting people comfortable with using transit," said Kempton, noting that once people have a good experience, they become believers. "How can you **not** want to ride from LA to San Diego on the *Pacific Surfliner* or the Coaster when you can sit in the car on the right side of the train looking at some of the most beautiful scenery in the world sipping a glass of chardonnay?" Kempton contrasted this with "driving and fighting the traffic," saying "travel time is not that different."

Citing his commute on Regional Transit's Folsom light rail line, Kempton told how the train is a reliable 50 minute trip that gives him the ability to get work done, while the drive takes "40 minutes on a good day."

Kempton acknowledged California train service is provisional. "When we look around at what's going on in Japan and Asia and Europe in terms of rail, we are neophytes," Kempton said. "We are in the playpen in terms of where we need to mature as far as providing passenger rail operations. There's a suggestion that we could make a modal shift to 10 percent by rail. Before I would commit the Department to saying yes to that goal," Kempton said, he wanted to see if such a target was feasible, but said "it is something that we should consider."

Kempton touted the performance of existing rail corridors, noting that they were first, second and fourth after the Northeast Corridor, but observed that each corridor is handicapped by its isolation. "If you could carry the San Joaquin over to Santa Clarita. If you could get that train over the hill, it connects. If you want to talk ridership, you would see that 800,000 double overnight."

"The biggest problem we have is work-

ing with the private railroads," Kempton acknowledged, citing a trip to Omaha last December, on which he approached U.P. brass about "more cooperation with our passenger rail. They were fairly blunt about it. Their business came first."

"I don't fault them being business people, but I do think they have a responsibility" to provide service to the public. In reference to chronic delays on shared track, Kempton said, "If we don't resolve them, we are going to do business another way," though citing higher costs of exclusive passenger track.

He later criticized past arrangements which gave railroads additional capacity without clear priority for passenger trains. He said he was "not so sure that's a good idea without contractual assurances."

Kempton touted the "recover, reform, rebuild message" of Gov. Schwarzenegger and portrayed the \$37.3 billion infrastructure package as beneficial to rail. "I know that a lot of folks think that is highway-centric," said Kempton. "But I will tell you there is a lot in that bond that's going to help us with developing alternative transportation. There is \$4 billion in the bond for rail and transit, \$400 million of will go for intercity rail. We're going to spend \$125 million of that on new equipment which we sorely need to expand our services."

Kempton also expressed support of local areas formulating plans for rail, and stepped forward with suggestions of how to proceed. "Any opportunities for expansion of rail service in counties where we don't have it, obviously, you need to get those requests to the Division of Rail so they can consider those and provide assistance."

Kempton left the impression that Caltrans supports citizen-led proposals and would "work jointly together to either do an analysis or to help to provide resources for those kinds of research or investment reviews."

"One of the things we are trying to do at Caltrans across the board is change our organization from a transportation bureaucracy into what we call a mobility company. And in doing that, we want to act not like a business but as a business," said Kempton. "We have to take a complete review of all the things we do and how we are doing them," said Kempton. Frankly I want to see where we can take the Division of Rail, the Division of Mass Transportation, and the Division of Aeronautics."

"I'm proposing to have workshops with the divisions invite everybody in the division to sit down with management, myself and have a brainstorming session, and see what we we can do for rail service, for mass transit, and what we can do to expand our effectiveness in dealing with our customer base," said Kempton.

"What can we do that we are not doing? There are things we can do that bring the system together, that help make the interoperability work better, so you can buy one ticket in San Luis Obispo and ride all the way to San Bernardino," said Kempton. "Those are the kinds of things that I want to try to take [in] this Department ... [and] move forward."

Kempton closed by saying he wanted to "thank the leadership of TRAC for all you are doing. You are a very dedicated group and I have known about you for some time. I think that you have added a good deal of importance to the debate in Sacramento on transportation." Kempton asked TRAC to "keep in touch" as it develop ideas of mutual concern.

A photoessay on the California Rail 2020 Conference and Excursion is available at www.trainweb.org/carl/TRAC2006

Coast Observations

MEASURE R IN SONOMA AND MARIN Counties, to fund construction of the SMART commuter rail service alongside snarled 101, achieved a supermajority in Sonoma, but the slim majority it achieved in Marin failed the overall 2-county requirement of 2/3 by a margin of barely over a thousand votes. Backers plan to put the plan up on the 2008 Presidential ballot, when it may have a better chance... MEASURE D IN SANTA BARBARA County, to fund a combination of road and commuter rail improvements along Highway 101, also failed its required super-majority passage... HEARINGS BY THE Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission in Los Angeles February 22 and 23 are an opportunity for activists to revive national rail policy from the limbo it has been in for the past 50 years or more. Matt Rose of BNSF is a member... THE HIGH SPEED RAIL AUTHORITY at its December meeting voted to award contracts for environmental analyses on two segments of the proposed high-speed rail line. The joint venture of Hatch Mott McDonald and URS & Arup won Palmdale to Los Angeles work, while STV obtained the L.A. to Orange County contract... BRITISH PRIVATIZATION didn't end high subsidies on corridor service. Since 2002-03, Virgin Rail has received more than £1.5 billion (\$3.0 billion) to subsidize its West Coast Main Line service and is in line to receive £1.4 billion (\$2.8 billion) in the next five years. Virgin hopes to raise route ridership from 20 million a year to 30 million a year over the period... DEFENDERS OF VIRGIN point to the botched £8.6 billion (\$17.4 billion) rebuild of the line (in which several familiar American contractors participated) as being the underlying problem that drove track access costs so high that a subsidy is required. On the East Coast Main Line, for example, operator Great North Eastern Railways will pay £1.3 billion (\$2.5 million) for the franchise over the same period... BIPARTISAN AMTRAK BILL IS BACK: Senators Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Trent Lott (R-MS), Daniel Inouye (D-HI) and Ted Stevens (R-AK) relaunched the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act as S.294. The bill reauthorizes Amtrak and creates a new state/federal partnership for passenger rail development. This bill allows 80/20 matching funds for rail capital, similar to highway matches. Changes from the 2005 version that passed the Senate 93-6 include an update to the authorization years to FY08-12, and addition of the Commerce Committee's rail security package... ORANGE COUNTY APPROVED an extension of Measure M, the sales tax dedicated to transportation projects, by a margin of 68.5%. The new measure would collect \$11.9 billion in taxes through 2041. Critics complained that there was too much money for buses and rail, 25%, the same rate as the original measure. New Metrolink rail cars are scheduled to be delivered in 2009 and improvements in Orange County Metrolink service are expected as soon as the equipment passes operational testing... STOCKTON-SAN JOSE SERVICE frequency on Altamont Commuter Express will increase because San Joaquin County residents voted through a sales tax boost...

WHAT ARE CHANCES FOR PROP. 1B RAIL PROJECTS?

by **Richard F. Tolmach**

Proposition 1B, the \$20 billion statewide infrastructure bond that passed with 61% of the vote, contained significant rail and transit funding provisions for Southern California because of effective lobbying by local leaders, including Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and Assembly Speaker Fabian Nuñez (D-L.A.).

Villaraigosa, who actively supported the bonds, hopes to see the Purple Line subway (recently renamed from Red by the MTA) extended west towards Wilshire and Fairfax using bond funds. Rep. Henry Waxman, (D-L.A.) who originally blocked the extension in the 1990's has become convinced

Other local rail advocates in the Southland hope for bond funds to build the Downtown Regional Connector light rail line, extend the Foothill Gold Line to Azusa, bring the Green Line to LAX and beyond, or the Exposition light rail line all the way to Santa Monica.

Commuters and Amtrak users are hoping for progress on triple-tracking the congested Fullerton-Los Angeles corridor, other track capacity projects, and more equipment for packed Surfliner and Metrolink consists.

Several categories of projects will have to compete for funding in an analytical/political process overseen by the California Transportation Commission. Regional transportation planning agencies will propose projects for priority, which will be arbitrated by the CTC. But because no one has done such a large bond measure before, the politics and metrics of the process are unpredictable.

Recent meetings involving the Governor's Office, BT&H Officials and the California Department of Finance showed a wide range of opinion on the measures which should be applied to determine cost effectiveness. The biggest controversy may be on funds which have discretionary rail or highway use, such as those for Corridor Mobility Improvement (\$4.5 billion) and Ports, Infrastructure, Security and Air Quality (\$3.1 billion).

Corridor Mobility Improvement (CMI) funds are supposed to be mode-independent, but the prevailing view is that they will become highway money unless some very compelling rail projects develop a following.

CMI is to be allocated by the California Transportation Commission to highly congested travel corridors in the State. Projects in this category must have a high priority; be start construction by 2012, improve mobility in a highly congested corridor by improving travel times and reducing vehicle hours of delay, connect the state highway system and improve access to jobs, housing, markets and commerce. For competing projects, the CTC must evaluate quantifiable air quality and safety benefits. A 40%/60% North/South split guarantees that Southern California receives its fair share of funding.

Ports Infrastructure, Security and Air Quality (PISAQ) has \$3.1 billion, which rail supporters hope won't be piddled away on highway-based improvements. \$2 billion of this is for infrastructure improvements on trade corridors with high volumes of freight movement. \$1 billion is for Air Resources Board grants for freight emission reduction and \$100 million for Office of Emergency Services grants for security enhancements to ports, harbors and ferry terminals.

The CTC will apportion PISAQ funds between competing projects serving movement of freight from seaports, navigable waterways, land ports of entry and airports. Eligible projects include highway capacity boosts, port efficiency improvements, toll truck roads, or rail improvements that improve freight capac-

ity, including projects that separate rail lines from highway or move freight through mountainous areas.

The \$4 billion slice of the pie Villaraigosa and Nuñez asked for is funded under Public Transportation, Modernization Improvement and Service Enhancement (MISE).

This program allocates \$3.6 billion for new transit projects including intercity rail projects and for commuter or urban rail operators, bus operators, waterborne transit operators for rehabilitation, safety or modernization improvements, service enhancements and new capital projects. With the 40/60 split, this means that Southern California rail projects are in for nearly \$2.2 billion of state funds, and successfully match for a much bigger slice of federal dollars.

In the Bay Area, there is not much consensus yet over regional transit projects, with localized pockets of support for individual extensions or service improvements. A compelling proposal like a 125 mph Altamont-Dumbarton line for Caltrain, ACE, and Amtrak could change this picture in a hurry.

The remaining \$400 million is dedicated to intercity rail, of which \$125 million must be used to purchase new cars and locomotives. However, just because money is in the bond, doesn't mean it will automatically be spent. Sources across the state indicate the Department of Finance is opposed to issuance of any bond funds this year for intercity passenger rail. Luckily, Prop. 1B language gave the legislature, not Finance, the role of deciding the final budget submitted to the Governor for use of bond fund proceeds.

Capitol Corridor Exec Gene Skoropowski expressed great concern that a delay in making available any intercity rail funds from the recent voter-approved transportation bonds would have a devastating impact on the quantity and quality of services on all three state-supported corridors. "The Capitol Corridor has several projects that are designed and ready to go into construction. Our four top projects are: Bahia crossovers: \$7.5 million, Emeryville track and crossover: \$8.0 million, Yolo West Causeway crossovers: \$6.0 million, and Santa Clara-Great America double track extension: \$27.0 million," said Skoropowski.

"I am not at all certain when the rail rolling stock funds will become available in order for Caltrans to place an order for the new rolling stock," said Skoropowski. "The apparent 'strangling' of any capital funds this year for intercity passenger rail greatly concerns me, because with the three to four years it takes to deliver new railcars, the costs go up every year primarily due to steel prices and other 'global economy' issues."

Said Skoropowski, "We actually need more cars as of today. Caltrans will also have documents ready for bid by this summer. As I understand it, Caltrans must have the funds secured in order to even solicit bids, let alone award a railcar contract."

"I am hoping that Caltrans gets the OK to order these cars mid-2007, but so far it appears to be a 'no go'. The modest track projects listed above (primarily crossovers) are designed to improve train reliability and flexibility to conduct maintenance work," said Skoropowski.

Rail supporters who want to see trains in California's future need to be proactive, and make their voices heard in the debate about new cars from now until June. We need to: 1) Inform the Governor and regional transportation agencies about our preferences for rail projects from the bond funds, 2) Develop support among city and county officials for bond rail projects, 3) Lobby our Senators and Assembly Members on the need for more cars.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Soap Bubble Bonds



Pursuing capital funds for rail transit at this State Capitol at times reminds me of a child pursuing a soap bubble. Just as she grabs for the bubble, it bursts and there is really nothing there.

Early last year, a group of visionary staffers at the State Capitol formulated a regionally-balanced \$2 to 3 billion statewide plan to fund specific intercity and commuter rail projects. Planning was halted when 1B was unveiled for November vote. With 1B's passage, we are left with \$400 million for intercity rail over a ten year period. Each annual allocation must be included in the state budget in order to be tapped. The Governor's proposed '07-'08 budget calls for zero.

We are entering a boom era of highway building, one with few actual new highways. It is a boom of new lanes, widenings and interchange rebuilds. Conversely, we have experienced a rail boom era over the 15 years since the passage of Prop. 116. The Capitol Corridor from nothing to sixteen round trips. Metrolink from nothing to the build-out of the expansive system we see today. This is what billions for rail can do.

Regardless of what we don't have, Prop. 1B potentially has real rail money, especially for urban projects in the south state. At our annual conference, Caltrans Director Will Kempton noted that in addition to the \$4 billion for rail and transit, "rail can also compete for projects in the Corridor Mobility Improvement Program; that's another \$4.5 billion dollars ... [Though] highways will get the bulk of those dollars ... there is an opportunity for us to use some of that money for rail in corridors where there will be a substantial reduction in congestion. I hope to see a number of candidate projects for rail as part of that particular program."

There may not be any other large state funding sources coming for quite awhile. Arnold's 2007 state-of-the-state address proposed that voters consider approving more non-transit bond billions that will max out the state's bonding capacity for over a decade. The administration plans to remove the high-speed rail bonds for a third time, probably without a forth rescheduling.

If that were not enough, Arnold's budget proposes diverting more than \$1 billion from public transit. The State Department of Finance also apparently convinced the Governor to turn down the Caltrans request to place an order for more intercity rail cars in this budget.

The Governor gained major points from environmentalists by verbally supporting the effort to cut greenhouse gases. However, there is a real disconnect if the Governor's current policies tilt the balance to highways. Transportation contributes roughly 40% of air contaminants. The Governor's policies do not support the Governor's goals.

Rail transportation is seen worldwide as a large part of solving the greenhouse gas problem and is perhaps the only feasible way to mitigate the negative environmental effects of major urban highway projects embedded in the infrastructure bond. The Governor needs to support his words on greenhouse gases with action on transportation. Otherwise, the environmental stance that helped Arnold claim victory in the November 2006 election will be seen as just another broken promise.

—Alan C. Miller

Fast Forward for the Capitols

New TRAC President Bill McGeehan and Board Member Michael Kiesling sat down late in 2006 with Gene Skoropowski, Managing Director of the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority. We learned of interesting future plans for California's second busiest passenger rail corridor.

Benicia Bridge

There is a need for an eventual replacement of the drawbridge at Benicia. The project could be in conjunction with UP or as a stand-alone passenger-rail bridge. With the UP in on the project, the ruling grade would be 0.8%. As a passenger-rail only bridge the grade could be up to 3.5%. This difference has huge ramifications in design and cost for both the alignment and bridge. This is a long-term but necessary project and no funds have yet been identified to pay for it.

New Stations

Stations are moving forward at Santa Clara, Fairfield (Peabody Road) & Hercules. The plans for Fairfield are further along than those for Hercules.

The Capitol Corridor is going to be using the Caltrain platforms at Santa Clara, the junction point where the Capitol Corridor comes into the Caltrain line just north of San Jose. Caltrain is making improvements at Santa Clara to allow the Capitols to stop at the station. New crossovers are being installed, and a new platform is under construction on the outside of the northbound Caltrain track, inside the UP freight lead. The platform will be connected to the station by an underpass. Once complete, ACE and Capitol Corridor trains will not need to cross the Caltrain lines to access a platform at Santa Clara.

The Capitol Corridor is developing a "standard" design for future stations that is impressive. Fairfield (at Peabody Road) will be the first to use this design standard. There will be a center platform, accessed by a wide underpass and ramps. The entry to the station will be a wide, sloping bowl that is designed to provide an open and safe feeling. The Capitol Corridor should be commended for this well-considered, passenger-friendly design. Pedestrian bridges at some locations have proven time-consuming and

difficult for passengers changing platforms, while elevators are often out-of-service or used as make-shift urinals.

The Peabody station will be designed for four tracks. Too often capital projects are designed for current needs and known long-term improvements that could be cost-effectively incorporated into the design are ignored. The result is taxpayers pay for ripping out the old project, then designing and building a new one. The Capitol Corridor should be further commended for this pound-wise thinking ahead.

New stations require mitigations along the entire corridor to allow for more efficient and/or faster train movement so that there is no loss to overall end to end runtime.

New Neighbors & "Noise"

With redevelopment of trackside industrial areas into housing projects, much new development has occurred near the right-of-way. Meanwhile, the Capitol Corridor and Union Pacific have increased train frequencies. This has produced a conflict for some of the new neighbors, who are complaining about train noise. In response, some cities are requesting sound-reducing walls and looking into quiet zones where trains sound their horns at crossings only in an emergency in exchange for improved (and expensive) safety features at crossings.

The Capitol Corridor is working with local governments to establish buffer zones between new development and the tracks. The goal is to minimize impacts on people who CHOOSE to live next to a railroad and then realize that a railroad is loud and causes vibrations.

Electronic Train Status Signs

New signs have been ordered, and the software that runs the signs is being upgraded to increase reliability. At Jack London Square the neighboring residents were hearing loud announcements all night long, even after trains were no longer running. The City and Capitol Corridor met to adjust the announcement volume. There is a delicate balance with the volume, as some passengers have now complained that the audio is inaudible.

Train Frequency

The Capitol Corridor is at the limit for

frequencies with the current equipment allocation. The rail bonds should provide some money for additional equipment, but an order hasn't been placed and new equipment cannot be expected within three years of placing such an order. The Capitol Corridor is considering going to 18 round trips when they are able.

California Car Doors

The "improved" door hardware works worse than the equipment it replaced. Dust and grime must constantly be cleaned and there is no set procedure with Amtrak crews to do this work. A single trip on the San Joaquin route will almost surely take at least one door out of service.

Train Scheduling

Memory scheduling is desirable and is a hoped-for eventual goal. The inability to establish trains on more of a memory schedule is affected by the different origins and destinations of the trains, the differing meet locations and threading through schedule slots on single track. The scheduling is also affected by UP's requirements for scheduling minimum windows through which to operate their freight trains. There will be an effort to coordinate weekend and weekday schedules in future schedule changes so that the weekend schedule will more closely resemble a subset of the weekday schedule and most of those weekend trains that operate will be on the same schedule as their weekday counterparts.

UP Tie Replacement Program

The Capitol Corridor will have a morning schedule reduction while UP is undertaking a massive tie replacement program. This will also result in the annulment of a few trains. From January 17 to February 17 40,000 ties will be replaced between San Pablo and Cordelia. These dates were chosen as this is the period with lowest ridership of the year.

Other Capitol Corridor Tidbits

There was discussion of retraining conductors to use wheelchair lifts more efficiently A permanent "wifi" system is under development. It will cover a great deal of train diagnostics and security features, as well as internet access for riders New automated ticket machines are coming to all stations.



METROLINK'S NEW CARS HAVE CRASH SAFEGUARDS

Metrolink's new cab cars have a new look based on new technology. The new passenger cars will be the first rail cars in the U.S. to incorporate crash energy management technology (CEMT) to enhance the safety of passengers and crew members in collisions.

The front coupler of the cabs is the key link in the technology. It is a "push-back" design which is less rigid than a conventional coupler, and designed to absorb collision energy, similar to the buffers on new European cars, which have taken on a new safety role instead of just softening impacts of normal train assembly.

Inside, the cab cars will have controlled crush space built of honeycomb material which can absorb and deflect energy. Metrolink staff and consultants have worked closely with the Federal Railroad Administration and the U.S. Department of Transportation's Volpe Center transportation safety research team to develop the design specifications for including this technology in the new cars. The SCRRRA contract is for a base number of 54 trailer cars and 33 lead position cab cars at a total bid price of \$176,334,755.

Metrolink has signed up for several options. Option one is for 10 additional

cab cars at a total cost of \$17,788,200. Option two is for 10 more cab cars at total cost of \$17,859,400. These two options will be implemented as additional funding becomes available. Three additional contract options are included for 14 trailer cars and 10 cab cars to be delivered to the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority, operators of Tri-Rail commuter train service. The total value of the contract with all options exercised would be \$305,974,486.

The Rotem Company has committed to deliver the first trailer car in this order in December 2008 with the first new cab car to be delivered in February 2009.

NEW TRAC OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS



RANDELL HANSEN

Born in New York and raised on Long Island, Mr. Hansen graduated from Hofstra University with a major in Management and a minor in Accounting. To get around the New York area, he utilized public transportation, including the Nassau County local bus system, the Long Island Railroad, and New York's subways. Because Hansen thought he was always going to be a New Yorker and was proud to use transit, he didn't learn how to drive until he was 19.

In 2002 he moved to Northern California and worked in retail before taking a financial job with the state. Hansen has been commuting on Sacramento's RT light-rail and bus system for over 2 years. He also has used LA's Metro system on frequent trips to LA Kings hockey games. He hopes to see local transit systems expanded, the current Amtrak service improved, and the establishment of high-speed rail.

Besides promoting transit and Amtrak travel by word of mouth, he's had letters to the editor published in USA Today, the Sacramento Bee, and US News & World Report advocating more government investment in passenger rail. Mr. Hansen currently serves as TRAC's Treasurer.



WILLIAM F. MCGEEHAN

Bill McGeehan has worked in the fields of disabled adaptive technology and design within the transportation industry for almost 20 years. An avid proponent of

train travel, and the economically-conscious expansion of rail, he has traveled more than 370,000 miles by Amtrak alone.

Bill believes that improvement of train service isn't just an obligation of rail operators and governmental committees, but is a duty of all train riders. He says advocacy is an important component that is essential to improvement of rail services, their expansion, and their financial success. He invites you to join TRAC and become a part of the future of passenger rail in California. Mr. McGeehan currently serves as TRAC's President.



MIKE MCGINLEY

A native of Glendale, CA and a registered civil engineer, Mr. McGinley has had a career spanning three stages of rail transportation: operations and maintenance of way for the Southern Pacific (18 years), design and operations consulting (5 years) and construction and maintenance operations for Metrolink in Los Angeles (14 years). All three of these have provided a broad background on California trans-

portation infrastructure, engineering principles, and practical economics of railroad operations.

Mike believes that advocacy for practical, incremental, affordable public investment in transportation infrastructure and operation must be based on sound knowledge of the existing conditions, the best current practice for design, construction, maintenance, and operations, and with a vision of how planners in future decades will utilize and build upon the projects we develop. Preserving the existing rights of way for the transportation needs of the future is a starting point.

ROBERT REYNOLDS

A St. Mary's College of California graduate, Bob has taught college and high school, flown Navy carrier jets, and managed several military programs over a 37 year career. In 2003 he retired from Air Force civil service as the business manager for the F-117 Stealth Fighter program office. He fills his retired days baby-sitting three avid railfan toddlers, supplemented with volunteer activities and teaching religion to fifth graders. He married Kathy in 1974 and they have two adult daughters. She served thirty years as an Air Force nurse, retiring in 2001. Her father and grandfather were railroad men, too. Bob is a second-generation Californian.

His ancestors and relatives have worked on American iron horses since the mid-1800's. He has traveled on the rails in Europe and Asia and has visited many of the US's steam excursion operations over the last twenty years. Trains Magazine's web site recently featured one of his



trackside photos. He started volunteering at TRAC after the Rail 2020 Conference in 2004 with an interest in California's evolving rail passenger network. He currently has been working on reinstating lapsed TRAC members and recruiting new members at rail fairs and other California festivals.

JOHN G. TELLEZ

Mr. Tellez's curriculum vitae will appear in the March edition of CRN.

CONTINUING BOARD MEMBERS

Other members of TRAC's 2007 board are Lynn Franks (Secretary) Sacramento; Michael Kiesling, San Francisco; Marcel Marchon, Mountain View; Richard McLaughlin (Vice President), San Diego; Dan McNamara, San Carlos; Victor Rampulla, Los Angeles; and Richard Tolmach, Sacramento.

Please note new address:

TRAC
1025 Ninth Street, #223
Sacramento, CA 95814

California Rail News

Published 4 times annually by the California Rail Foundation in cooperation with the Train Riders Association of California

William McGeehan,
TRAC President
Alan C. Miller,
TRAC Executive Director

Signed articles represent the views of their authors, not necessarily those of the above organizations.

**1025 Ninth Street, #223
Sacramento, CA 95814
Telephone: 916-557-1667
e-mail: trac@omsoft.com
www.calrailnews.com
www.trainriders.org**

The California Rail News encourages letters, comments, and reports on local issues. Please submit your material to California Rail News at the above address. Sorry, we do not guarantee return of photos or articles submitted. Deadline for material to be included in the next issue of the California Rail News is February 15, 2007.

METRO PROGRESS SEEN AS L.A. BUS DECREE LIFTED BY COURT

by Roger Christensen

On October 24, Paving the way for significant changes at Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), a federal judge lifted a 10-year-old consent decree that forced the agency to spend \$1.3 billion to expand bus service for the urban poor.

In a major victory for the Metro, the U.S. District Court Judge Terry Hatter ruled that the agency had taken all "reasonable steps" to improve the bus system for poor minorities, easing crowding, extending service and adding hundreds of buses. She found that the consent decree had "served its purpose and will not be extended."

The decision sets the stage for a massive reorganization of Metro bus lines mandated under the decree but that officials say have been a drain on the budget. Many transit advocates view the consent decree as a wrong turn

that cost Los Angeles a huge amount of resources that could have gone to rail expansion. The ruling calls the decree "a less than perfect document ... impossible to achieve absolute compliance" and says the Bus Riders Union complaints "have not established by clear and convincing evidence that MTA ... failed to substantially comply"

Consider the impact of being under the Court's thumb since 1996. In the 1990s, MTA built 60 miles of rail including a subway. This decade there has been no MTA rail since the summer of 2000 with the Red Line to North Hollywood. We will not be seeing more rail until East LA in 2009 and Culver City in 2010. (Pasadena in 2003 was not built by the MTA.)

Perhaps we are on the verge of another spurt of rail expansion and a lot of projects are waiting in the wings.

SWEEP IN CONGRESS MAY HELP RAIL

by **Randell Hansen**
TRAC Treasurer

The November 7 landslide in Congress, though arguably a result of foreign policy, changed the domestic lay of the land for transportation funding. The new Speaker of the House is San Francisco's Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), with Steny Hoyer (D-MD) as Majority Leader and James Clyburn (D-SC) Majority Whip. John Boehner (R-OH) is the new Minority Leader and Roy Blunt (R-MO) Minority Whip.

On the Senate side Harry Reid (D-NV) is Majority Leader and Dick Durbin (D-IL) Assistant Majority Leader. Mitch McConnell (R-KY) became Minority Leader with Trent Lott (R-MS) as Minority Whip.

The Capitol Hill changes also meant committee reassignments that affect the funding for Amtrak and other transportation programs.

In the House of Representatives, the Transportation & Infrastructure (T&I) Committee is chaired by Jim Oberstar (D-MN), who said he wants to see more funding for Amtrak as well as high-speed rail in the Midwest. Oberstar has also worked well with Steven LaTourette (R-OH) the past couple of sessions in securing additional funding for Amtrak.

LaTourette became the ranking member on the T&I Railroads subcommittee with Corrine Brown (D-FL). However, the Vice-Chair of the T&I Committee is John Mica (R-FL), a long-time Amtrak critic who has referred to it as a "Soviet-style railroad" and has denounced former CEO David Gunn's progress of having Amtrak carry more passengers with fewer employees.

Amtrak supporter John Olver (D-MA) became chair of the House Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee with Joe Knollenberg (R-MI) as ranking member. Last year, Knollenberg slipped language into the appropriations bill that prohibited Amtrak

from discounting tickets over 50% as well as requiring it to haul more perishable foods with ExpressTrak cars. The New York Times revealed that one of Knollenberg's big contributors was the President of the company that makes the ExpressTrak cars. Even though the ExpressTrak provision was later repealed, the discount limit has remained in effect.

Unfortunately, pro-rail Members of Congress Nancy Johnson (R-CT) and John Sweeney (R-NY) lost re-election. But Christopher Shays (R-CT) narrowly won. Also gone is Ernest Istook (R-OK) who chaired the subcommittee on Treasury, Transportation, and Special Agencies. In 2004 he took the extreme measure of cutting funding for local transportation projects in the districts of 21 Republicans who had broken ranks and supported a \$1.8 billion funding level for Amtrak. Istook gave up his House seat to run for governor where he lost by 33.5% - 66.5% against incumbent Brad Henry.

Senate Majority Leader Reid has long supported Amtrak and has also been trying to get rail service restored to his Las Vegas constituency by securing funds for studies on high-speed rail as well as a maglev project. Sen. Durbin has been trying to get Amtrak service restored to Rockford, IL and last fall he stepped in when Canadian National tried to back out of its agreement to allow additional Amtrak service in Illinois.

The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, is now headed by Daniel Inouye (D-HI) and Ted Stevens (R-AK). Other pro-Amtrak senators who chair committees are: Kent Conrad (D-ND) of the Budget Committee, Chris Dodd (D-CT) heads the Senate Banking Committee, which has jurisdiction over financial institutions as well as mass transit. Sen. Robert Byrd (D-WV) chairs the Senate Appropriations Committee and Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) chairs the Appropriations Transportation

Subcommittee.

Also in the 2006 election, voters returned pro-Amtrak Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) and Trent Lott (R-MS) to the Senate. Sen. Lott co-authored the bipartisan S. 1516 with Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) which would fund Amtrak with \$11.4 billion through Fiscal Year 2011. However, pro-Amtrak incumbent Senators Rick Santorum (R-PA), Conrad Burns (R-MT), Mike DeWine (R-OH), and Lincoln Chafee (R-RI) all lost.

Based on who now chairs the committees, the new environment for Amtrak looks encouraging, but because of the loss of some strong Republican supporters of Amtrak, nothing is guaranteed. Elected officials still need to be informed and reminded that the majority of Americans want more, not less passenger rail due to growing concerns about gas prices, dependence on foreign oil, congestion, and poor air quality.

January Update

In the first week of the new session, Sen. Ted Stevens (R-AK), Vice Chair of the Commerce, Science & Transportation Committee, joined Chair Daniel Inouye (D-HI) to introduce legislation to improve security on rail, bus, and other modes.

The bill would make the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) lead agency in the area and authorize a total of \$1.25 billion for TSA over the next three years. Following attacks on passenger trains in Madrid, Spain, and train accidents in the U.S., rail security vulnerabilities receive particular attention under this legislation. The bill requires TSA to conduct a railroad sector threat assessment and submit prioritized recommendations for improving rail security.

The legislation would also provide grants through TSA to Amtrak, freight railroads, and others to upgrade security. It also contains earmarks of DOT funds for safety enhancements to Amtrak railroad tunnels in New York, Washington, and Baltimore.

Southern California Rail Briefing

by **Numan Parada**

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) awarded the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) the 2006 Outstanding Public Transportation Award at its annual meeting in San Jose. "Metro has aggressively added new service, including additional freeway express buses and the wildly successful Metro Orange Line," while keeping costs low, according to the APTA. As a result, Metro has been conferred labels on its buses and website designating the agency as "America's Best."

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a repeal of a law prohibiting federal funds for the construction of the Purple Line down Wilshire Boulevard on September 20. Rep. Henry Waxman wrote H.R. 4653 to undo a ban he wrote 20 years ago due to safety concerns. Waxman had a change of heart when he learned that new technologies would make tunneling safer. The bill awaits a vote by the U.S. Senate in 2007 and signature by the President.

Also, one of the two tunnel boring machines digging the tunnels for the Eastside Gold Line, nicknamed "Lola", completed its work on Thursday, November 16. The second tunnel boring machine, nicknamed "Vicki", achieved breakthrough on December 9.

Bart Reed, executive director of The Transit Coalition, continued his transit advocacy work by speaking to members of the North Valley Democratic Club, which is based in the San Fernando Valley. Reed discussed the importance of upgrading

Metrolink service in the area with increased frequency, extended hours and a new line to Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) and the South Bay.

Connecting the Metro Green Line to LAX was the subject of a meeting between transit advocates and the LAX Area Advisory Committee. Bart Reed presented Committee members various ideas to improve transit access, with the goal of extending the Green Line 2.4 miles north to the rental car areas and installing a people mover between the Green Line and the terminals. In October, the Los Angeles City Council approved studying a Green Line extension that would connect with the Expo Line in the Westside.

Rail advocates orchestrated a Rail Customer Conference with Metro to discuss various improvements completed and in progress on Tuesday, October 24. Rail Operations representatives discussed the new 2550 light rail cars that are capable of running on all three Los Angeles light rail lines, major communications upgrades, safety issues on the Blue Line, speed issues on the Gold Line and connectivity with the Red Line.

Rail advocates also participated at a Beverly Hills Mass Transit Committee town hall meeting on November 2. The ad hoc committee discussed four possible alignments for a speculative subway extension through their city but ultimately suggested an alignment under Wilshire Blvd., with stops at Beverly Dr. and La Cienega Blvd.

The popularity of the Waterfront Red Car Line in San Pedro is moving officials to study practical extensions of the streetcar.

Possible extensions include south to Cabrillo Beach, north to Wilmington and west into Downtown San Pedro, as well as a spur into the Ports O'Call Village.

In September, the San Diego Association of Governments voted to devote up to \$18 million in local funds to keep the Oceanside-Escondido Sprinter project moving, in lieu of delayed federal funds. Critics contend that the North County Transit District (NCTD), which oversees Sprinter construction, is not doing enough to stem rising costs. Also, two Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) trains ran on the track of the future Sprinter line for the first time on Saturday, October 28, mainly to ensure that its computer systems would accurately record train movements.

The Orange County Transportation Authority Board recently approved spending \$7 million to study a high-speed rail line connecting Los Angeles with Anaheim. The rail line would connect with the proposed California high-speed rail system and whisk passengers end-to-end in less than 20 minutes. The Orange County Transportation Authority Board previously approved \$22.5 million to purchase nearly 14 acres in Anaheim for a new transit hub that would serve the proposed line. Local bus, Metrolink and Amtrak service will be moved to the new station by 2010.

This article appears courtesy of the Transit Coalition, a Southern California based non-profit organization working on land use and transportation mobility issues. Numan Parada is Communications Director. More info: www.transitcoalition.org

INSTANT STARDOM FOR PARIS TRAM

The latest North American trend in rail development is the circulator streetcar line, as embraced by Seattle, Portland, and San Francisco. However, to see how far this mode can really go, you have to fly to Paris.

December 16, Mayor Bertrand Delance was the guest of honor on an inaugural journey of Paris's new T3 tram line from Porte d'Ivry (in the city's 13th Arrondissement) west to Porte de Versailles (15th district).

Although Paris has two successful suburban light rail lines built in the 1990's, the T3 is the first tramway to operate in Paris since 1937. The 5-mile line crosses three districts in the south of the French capital (13th, 14th and 15th), from Porte d'Ivry (13th district) to Pont du Garigliano (15th).

Surface streetcars or trams have become an increasingly popular alternative because their costs have stayed low, even as new technological developments have increased their capacity. New shallow excavation methods, modular panel track, and grass track are much cheaper than traditional construction techniques used in most North American light rail systems.



(Above) Construction crews celebrate first run of Paris T3 tram. Photo: © Alstom Transport (Below) Modular interior and full width openings between sections of Citadis cars (this one from Barcelona) make it easier for passengers to find seats.



The sleek new 142-foot Alstom electric cars can carry upwards of 350 passengers silently and without exhaust up a green lawn in the median of the Boulevards des Maréchaux, replacing an overloaded bus service. The 21 car fleet runs at an average 13 mph including 15 intermediate stops. The trams provide service daily from 5 am to past midnight, and run every 4 minutes during rush hour.

Tapered platforms rise at the center to about 11 inches over rail height to accommodate level boarding for seniors and the handicapped. This saves so much time for passengers at stations that the trams can maintain schedules faster than traditional streetcars.

Acting as a periferal circulator along the

southern fringe of Paris, the line crosses seven metro routes, making connections with each. 100,000 passengers are expected to use the T3 each day. Launched six years ago, the project took three years to construct and cost 311.5 million euros.

The trams chosen for the T3 line, the Alstom Citadis design, has become a defacto standard for new light rail systems in France and Spain. Alstom signed four new tramway contracts last year— in Toulouse, Reims, Angers and Orleans — and inaugurated six new lines.

The Citadis, with a modular interior and exterior design, has a distinctive set of features that appeal to the public. Scalable passenger capacity has allowed Alstom to tailor orders to suit particular rail operators,

yet keep a proven platform that uses 80% standard parts. Citadis offers each city the opportunity to customize its trams' exterior style and interior fittings and to adapt passenger capacity to traffic conditions, by varying the length of their Citadis between 66 and 142 feet.

Also unique to the Citadis is a range of alternative "wireless" power solutions. This has become important because many European cities are using new rail lines to revive neglected central cities. For superior urban integration of the trains, many cities want solutions which do not require overhead wires in landmark locations.

Responding to this market, Alstom developed a range of power solutions that enable cities to show off their architectural charms without overhead wires. Alstom's APS ground power supply solution, put into service in Bordeaux in 2003, was chosen this year for new systems in Angers, Reims and Orleans. In Nice, city's authorities have opted for a system using onboard batteries.

Alstom reported at the end of 2006 that 870 Citadis trams have been ordered by 24 cities around the world, 15 of them in France. The 1000 mark isn't far away.

Another 30 cities have surface tramway projects scheduled for the next 3 years. Trams are becoming mainstream because they can unsnarl traffic, re-energize urban centers and preserve architectural heritage, while contributing to city growth.

