

STARLATE

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and reached all California media markets.

That freight traffic must have instantly gone away, because by the first week of September, Starlight performance suddenly improved drastically, and at press time, three of four trains were less than an hour late. One interpretation is that Union Pacific hates passenger trains, but hates bad press about its railroad operations even more.

IS TRAFFIC A FALSE ISSUE?

While freight tonnage has increased significantly on many rail lines, including an overall increase of 41% nationwide since 1994, the increase in Union Pacific freight traffic on the *Coast Starlight's* route has been negligible.

The table at right compiled from historic and current data compares tonnage densities on Union Pacific portions of the Coast Starlight route in the past two decades. It excludes Sacramento-San Jose and Santa Barbara-Los Angeles segments, where capacity has been significantly increased at public expense to accommodate commuter trains and state-supported Amtrak service.

As indicated below, the increase in freight traffic from 1994 to 2005 ranges from a high of 19 percent on the Portland-Eugene segment (on which the State of Oregon has funded capacity increases for the Cascades) to a low of a 26 percent decline on the Marysville-Sacramento segment.

Only on the Tehama-Marysville segment is there a capacity problem caused by traffic growth without public funding. Even in this particular case, U.P. has caused the problem itself by removing capacity from its network, by embargoing the West Valley Subdivision from Tehama to Davis to through traffic. At the time, the railroad logic was that the line was redundant. If the tonnage over Tehama-Marysville were a problem, U.P. could solve it rather simply, by re-opening the Tehama-Davis bypass tracks, still in service as a California Northern local line.

CAPACITY VS. EXTORTION

California politicians and bureaucrats are typically taken in by Union Pacific's argument that before any new Coast Route passenger train operates, such as an extension of one of the San Luis Obispo Pacific Surfliners to San Francisco or Sacramento, or a new overnight train that the Union Pacific must be compensated for the cost of capacity improvements to the route.

The public should be aware that there is no capacity problem whatsoever on the Coast Route between San Jose and Santa Barbara, where only nine million gross ton-miles of traffic move annually. U.P. delays on that line are completely without a traffic basis, and relate directly to the railroad's hostility to passenger service and desire for unearned profits.

UP TONNAGE DENSITIES - PORTLAND-SACRAMENTO

From	To	Miles	Tonnage (MGT) 1982	Tonnage (MGT) 1994	Tonnage (MGT) 1998	Tonnage (MGT) 2005	% Increase 1994-2005
Portland	Eugene	124	n.a.	21	28	25	19%
Eugene	Chemult	124	n.a.	30	28	35	17%
Chemult	Klamath Falls	74	n.a.	30	35	31	3%
Klamath Falls	Dunsmuir	106	27	32	29	32	0%
Dunsmuir	Tehama	110	28	30	27	31	7%
Tehama	Marysville	64	27	30	29	33	10%
Marysville	Sacramento	37	15	27	12	20	-26%
San Jose	San Luis Obispo	203	11	8	6	9	12%
San Luis Obispo	Santa Barbara	119	11	8	6	8	0%

An additional four passenger trains daily could operate on the segment without any significant negative impacts to freight, because the line is essentially at 30 percent of capacity. An overnight passenger schedule with an hour or more of padding could be kept 90 percent on time or better, without any improvements whatsoever.

ENDING U.P. OBSTRUCTIONISM

The refusal of Union Pacific to invest in Coast or Valley capacity or run more

passenger service between northern and southern California is one of the key factors holding up growth of the California economy. There are three ways California can get around this monopolist blockade:

1) begin acquiring right of way and building an alternate route, 2) review the tax status of railroads that refuse to be common carriers and block passenger traffic, or 3) create a California terminal railroad authority to control key trackage leading to ports.

STB RESPONDS TO NARP ON UP

August 9, 2006

Mr. Ross B. Capon
Executive Director, NARP

Dear Mr. Capon:

Your letter to me dated July 12, 2006, expressed your concern over the on-time performance of Amtrak trains that operate over the lines of the freight railroad; particularly those of CSX Transportation, Inc. and the Union Pacific Railroad Company. As I said I would in my preliminary response to you of July 13, 2006, I sent a copy of your letter to officials at those railroads and asked them to respond promptly to the issues you raised.

I have now received responses from the railroads. Each indicates to me that they are striving to handle Amtrak trains in as efficient and timely a fashion as possible, and that any suggestion that their "corporate culture" is anti-Amtrak is simply untrue and unfair. Indeed, both carriers emphasize that their employees take their responsibilities to Amtrak very seriously, that they communicate and coordinate regularly with Amtrak personnel, and that the on-time performance of Amtrak trains often surpasses that of many freight trains on many routes. Both carriers point out, however, that their rail systems are currently capacity-constrained at many locations, and that this necessarily impacts the timeliness of both freight and passenger trains.

In particular, both CSX and Union Pacific explain that the Amtrak trains that routinely experience the most significant

delays operate over single-track portions of the railroad. Both railroads are currently making very significant capital improvements to repair and upgrade substandard track and to add track and other facilities to accommodate today's higher traffic levels, but it will take some time for these projects to be completed. In the meantime, CSX points out that it has asked Amtrak to adjust its passenger schedules on some routes where trains are routinely late, to more realistically reflect the realities of traffic on the line, but that so far Amtrak has not done so.

While I am sympathetic to the concerns you raise in your letter, the railroads have clearly represented to me that they are trying to do their best to accommodate Amtrak trains within the constraints of today's significantly increased rail traffic levels. Of course, if Amtrak should ultimately conclude that a carrier is failing to meet any of its obligations under a contract, then Amtrak could pursue its contractual remedies in court.

And if Amtrak should have a dispute with a carrier about statutory preference for its trains under 49 U.S.C. 24308(c), or accelerated speeds for its trains under 49 U.S.C. 24308(d), or permission for operation of additional trains under 49 U.S.C. 24308(e), then Amtrak's recourse under the statute is to the Secretary of Transportation

Sincerely
W. Douglas Buttrey
Chairman, Surface Transportation Board

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