

# Miller Helps Revive Rail Movement

TRAC is pleased to announce that Alan C. Miller is the new Executive Director of the Train Riders Association of California. He has been our acting Administrative Director since January 1, 2002; the promotion is effective July 1. This change reflects the TRAC Board's full confidence in Mr. Miller's abilities to perform the duties required. He is now considered a permanent employee of TRAC and is empowered to speak for TRAC on official positions.

"This is a critical time for both conventional and high-speed rail in California," said Miller, a TRAC member since its founding in 1984 and before that a Citizens for Rail California member since its founding in 1975. Mr. Miller became interested in rail travel upon his birth. "I don't ever remember not believing that rail was the way to travel. As a child I watched the trains I'd ridden disappear, and it made no sense to me. Then in my college years I traveled to Europe and saw their rail systems. It was as if I was on a planet with different laws of physics where trains could run often, everywhere and fast."

Mr. Miller assisted with the campaign to pass Proposition 116 which TRAC and the Planning and Conservation League drafted and was passed by the voters in 1990. "That \$2 Billion went a long way. We built a state rail system from scratch. I remember standing along the south wall of the platforms at

LA Union Station after a TRAC conference in the mid-80's with Rich Tolmach (current TRAC President) and Leif Lange (co-author of Prop. 116). Rich was pointing here and there around the quiet, largely unused facility, showing the potential that the station had as a regional transportation hub. I go there today and trains are pulling in and out



**Executive Director Alan C. Miller**

every few minutes and there's a subway in the basement and a light-rail line being built on the inner tracks. Those locomotives and cars and much of the track improvements they run on were paid for with Prop. 116 funds. We [TRAC] did that!"

Miller has a diverse employment background which brings many useful skills to

the position. In the years before working at TRAC he worked on contract doing database design, graphics and transit planning. In the early 1990's he operated a mobile espresso service which he designed, marketed and operated almost single-handed. The seven years previous he worked as an environmental consultant specializing in groundwater contaminant characterization. He holds a degree in Geology from U.C. Davis.

Not himself affiliated with any political party, Mr. Miller sees TRAC's role as a mix of views usually considered liberal and conservative. "If you take it as given, as we do, that rail must be large component of our transportation system, then TRAC champions two often opposing views. First, we are environmentalists in that rail provides an option for transportation which is potentially far less polluting than other modes. Second, we are taxpayer watchdogs in that we oppose wasteful transportation projects—rail or otherwise—which don't give the traveling public a return on limited transportation dollars.

Miller believes TRAC is back on track as an effective and professional organization with a mission like it was in the Prop. 116 days. "I am pleased to work with such a talented Board and enthusiastic members in our effort to improve rail passenger service in the state. It is also great to see the *California Rail News* back in print in the classic newspaper format."

## Transit Backers Stop BART Grab

A September 18th MTC meeting to consider projects to be funded by the new \$1 toll increase turned into a rout, as a standing room only crowd of transit advocates turned out to protect their proposed projects from being drained by new extensions to BART.

State Senator Don Perata (D-East Bay) led off the public comment and called for a collaborative approach in place of the BART-take-all method. Perata spoke for alternative projects including express bus lanes, the Dumbarton rail bridge, and ferry service. Perata said BART needed to increase tube capacity and do seismic retrofits, not build new extensions. Perata's views were largely endorsed by community activists as well as spokespersons for AC Transit and the Bay Area's new Water Transit Authority.

MTC's Commissioners were split on the issue. Sup. Scott Haggerty, who represents his Livermore constituency not just on the Alameda County Board but MTC, seems to have engineered a staff recommendation that Regional Measure 1 (RM-1) projects be given priority to receive the new toll funds. RM-1 projects include the San Jose and Livermore BART extensions.

Haggerty's claim is Livermore has paid for BART and that it once took him two and half hours to drive to San Francisco from Livermore, versus 20 minutes from Oakland on BART. His logic was strained. If traffic is that jammed on 580, why didn't he park at BART's Dublin Park and Ride?

Tom Ammiano, MTC Commissioner and San Francisco Supervisor, stole the action by proposing a modification to the principles, that projects must have a "clear nexus" to bridge congestion. This was meant to aid in keeping the measure a fee requiring only a majority vote instead of requiring a harder-to-achieve two-thirds vote. Haggerty and one other commissioner were the only votes against this change.

Most observers of the funding battle believe the Livermore and San Jose BART extensions fail the nexus test constructed by Ammiano, and that commuter trains, ferries, and buses will be beneficiaries of the vote, but vigilance is always advised with MTC.

## GETTING AARP ON BOARD

One of the greatest hopes for preserving Amtrak nationally may lie in AARP support for passenger trains. As America's largest lobby, they command respectful attention in Congress. We conducted an e-mail campaign several weeks ago asking TRAC members to e-mail AARP. We realize many of our members don't have e-mail and we'd also like you to pass the word on to friends and relatives who belong to AARP.

TRAC member Doras Briggs has been working tirelessly for over 10 years to get AARP to actively support Amtrak. After her trip East in April, Doras reported: "My meeting with key AARP people while I was in Washington was so heartening that I'm convinced we can finally win their open support. As you know, they are the biggest lobby in the country—well over 33,000,000 members and those people vote, so their views are respected by legislators. If AARP supports Amtrak, I have no doubt our national passenger system will survive, be strengthened, and some day expanded. To achieve that goal, however, the AARP people told me, very firmly, "WE NEED LOTS AND LOTS OF LETTERS", from AARP members, of course.

"To understand why these letters are so important, you should know that AARP staff go through a set process each year, determining from communications they receive what issues are most important to their members. It culminates in AARP's annual Policy Manual. Once approved by the AARP Board, the issues in that Manual are the ONLY ones their lobbyists are permitted to work on. The process is RIGHT NOW under

way for the 2003 Policy Manual, so we need to be sure Amtrak is included."

Our strength is in our numbers! A large number of TRAC members are over 50 (the age required for AARP membership), and those that aren't probably have relatives and/or friends that are. By using our numbers we may win AARP's significant strength in favor of a stronger, more financially secure Amtrak. It's worth all our efforts.

TAKE A MOMENT RIGHT NOW AND PUT THIS ADDRESS ON AN ENVELOPE:

**Judith Kenyon AARP National Legislative Council 601 E Street NW Washington, DC 20049**

or e-mail:

[jknyon@aarp.org](mailto:jknyon@aarp.org)

Then, don't postpone it. Stuff a quick note in the envelope saying you want AARP to include Amtrak in its 2003 Policy Manual.

Add a sentence or two about what Amtrak means to you (visiting

family across the country, helping our environment, enjoying magnificent scenery, maybe you don't drive, don't fly for health reasons, or other). Just one or two sentences. Sign and add your AARP member number.

If you AREN'T an AARP member and can join, insert a check for \$12.50 for one year, or PLEDGE TO JOIN IF they add support of Amtrak to their Policy Manual. This may be one of the simplest and most effective ways that we, as TRAC members, can help influence national policy on passenger rail service. Grab pen, paper, and envelope right now. Don't fail. When Amtrak wins, you can take the credit!



**Doras Briggs, of AARP & NARP**