

# California Rail News

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## Daylight Gets Running Start

### SURFLINER GOES TWICE DAILY TO SAN LUIS OBISPO

by Patrick Montague

Blue skies and spring-like temperatures greeted the November 17 launch of the second Pacific Surfliner round trip between Los Angeles and San Luis Obispo. Amtrak, Caltrans and Metrolink could not have asked for a better day for the inaugural.

Departing at 7:35 a.m. from Los Angeles Union Station (normal departure time is 7:30 a.m.) and attended by some fifty invited guests, railroad officials, stakeholders, media and another ninety five revenue paying passengers, the service enjoyed an enthusiastic send off after speeches from several keynote speakers.

Welcome ceremonies were also conducted by the cities of Oxnard, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo. Each city had approximately one hundred attendees gathered to enjoy the celebration along the route with coverage from local radio and television.

At each stop, citizens came out to see the new train. It consisted of nicely refurbished Horizon cars powered by Genesis class locomotives and included a baggage car, business class car, cafe car and four coach cars. Interiors of the train have been upgraded with new seats, flooring, carpeting, lighting, heating, air conditioning and modernized restrooms.

The treat of the day was the inclusion of Amtrak's remaining full dome car loaned courtesy of Mr. David Gunn, president and CEO of Amtrak for the first few runs. It is anticipated this consist will give way to standard blue-and-silver Surfliner double-deck trainsets when such equipment becomes available in the future. Crew service was exceptional, giving passengers a favorable taste of train travel as they enjoyed their coffee and a rare ride in a dome car.

The new train is a unique partnership between Amtrak and Metrolink to improve service for both networks. It gives Amtrak a badly needed and greatly anticipated additional frequency to central California while serving Metrolink's ridership between Los Angeles and Oxnard. On this schedule, Metrolink negotiated honoring of its tickets



**ASSEMBLY MEMBER HANNAH-BETH JACKSON WITH NEW CALTRANS DIRECTOR WILL KEMPTON. The new service was dedicated to Assembly Natural Resources Committee staffer Jeff Arthur, who helped broker the agreement with Amtrak and Metrolink. Mr. Arthur died November 12, days before the service started.**

in exchange for giving Amtrak a slot formerly used by its trains. Metrolink benefits by being able to reassign one of its trainsets to help relieve overcrowding on other routes.

The new train also connects in San Luis Obispo with deluxe motorcoach service connecting to a Capitol train in San Jose or onward to San Francisco allowing passengers to arrive in time for dinner. Southbound, the bus leaves the Bay Area early in the morning, providing a dinner-time arrival in Los Angeles. It is a winning proposition for all until the issues of more train equipment and how it can be funded are resolved.

A unique positive of this cooperative arrangement is the new service comes at no additional cost to the taxpayer. Caltrans identified surplus funds from current successful Surfliner services and earmarked them to inaugurate the new service. Time will tell of its success but with Thanksgiving and Christmas approaching, it is expected this additional train service should do well going into the new year.

Having invested over 7 million dollars in its station facilities from Santa Barbara to San Luis Obispo since 1990, The Central Coast area now enjoys three roundtrips daily between Los Angeles and San Luis Obispo which include the two Surfliners and Amtrak's famous Coast Starlight. The route covers 225 miles with eighteen station stops serving twenty cities, three airports and six major universities. While not all stops are staffed, all are accessible to the disabled.

The new service departs Los Angeles daily at 7:30 a.m. and from San Luis Obispo at 1:20 p.m.. Travel time is five hours and fifteen minutes.

Contact Amtrak at (800) USA-RAIL for fares and additional information. For Metrolink fares and service information between Los Angeles and Oxnard, contact Metrolink at (800) 371-LINK.

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