

## INDIVIDUAL HIGHLIGHTS

Good News for Illinois Rail	p. 2
A Tale of Two Streetcars	p. 3
Passenger Rail In Canada	p. 4
Lake Shore Limited Timekeeping	p. 5
RUN to L.A.!	p. 6
L.A.'s Urban Rail Odyssey	p. 7
Phoenix Light Rail Update	p. 14
Improve Communication Within Your State	p. 15

## IT'S TIME TO REGISTER

*By Richard Rudolph  
Chair, Rail Users' Network*

"Making the Transition from Roads to Rail Conference" is taking place Friday, March 27, 2015 from 8:00 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Southern California Association of Governments Offices, 818 W. 7th St., 12th Floor in Los Angeles. This national conference, which is being sponsored by the Rail Users' Network, will examine how Los Angeles is making the transition from roads to rail.

The day will begin with opening remarks from Richard Rudolph, Chairman, Rail Users' Network and Hassan Ikhrata, the Executive Director of SCAG. Featured speakers include Denny Zane, the Executive Director of Move

LA; Arthur Leahy, CEO of L.A. Metro; and Mark Murphy, General Manager of Amtrak's Long Distance Services. Zane will talk about his organization's efforts to build a powerful business-labor-environmental coalition that has worked with L.A. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and L.A. Metro to get Measure R, a half-cent sales tax for transportation on the ballot in 2008 and ensured its passage. Because of Measure R, Los Angeles has embarked on this country's most ambitious transit expansion—a virtual doubling of the size of L.A. County's transit system from 120 miles and 103 stations to 236 miles and 200 stations. Leahy will talk about L.A. Metro's current efforts underway to further expand service, as well as what should be done in the future. Murphy will provide an update on the *Southwest*

*Chief*, as well as other challenges and new initiatives that Amtrak is taking regarding long distance service.

Christopher Coes, the Managing Director of LOCUS who is also a staff member of Smart Growth America, will give the keynote address. LOCUS serves as a vital voice for real estate developers and investors who are calling for a new federal transportation formula that would redirect a substantial portion of funds from building roads and bridges to developing "walkability, bike lanes and mass transit." Coes's talk will focus on how federal, state and local policies can be re-aligned to support walkable urbanism which is affordable.

*(Continued on page 6)*

## WHY THE MTA NETWORK MATTERS TO THE NEW YORK REGION AND BEYOND

*By Andrew Albert*

The health and well-being of New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority matters, and not just to the New York City region, but to the entire country. How can I make such a sweeping statement? It's simple: the MTA network is the economic engine that powers the New York City region. The New York City region is the economic engine that powers New York State. And New York State is one of the most important economic engines in the entire United States. As such, it is imperative that the transit network—consisting of the largest

bus, subway, and commuter rail system in the country—be kept healthy and vibrant. The key to this health is, of course, the Capital Program, through which tracks, signals, infrastructure, railcars, buses, and much more are kept upgraded and/or replaced.

Keeping this powerhouse network in good health sounds like a no-brainer, right? So why is it always so difficult to get the Capital Plan approved in Albany? How is it that our elected officials seem to have money for most everything else, but not the key engine to the state's economic recovery—its transit system?

Some background is in order. The MTA moves one in three mass transit users in the U.S. The system consists of 5,600 buses, 6,300 subway cars, 2,400 commuter rail cars and in the area of five billion trips on an annual basis. It is the KEY to economic growth in the region. When a new subway or commuter rail extension is announced—even just in the planning stages—real estate values shoot up. When phase I of the 2nd Avenue subway—which will run from 63rd Street to 96th Street—was announced, real estate values east of Lexington Avenue shot up. The same thing happened when the Washington, DC Metro's Bethesda station was announced.

*(Continued on page 11)*

## TWO NEW APPOINTMENTS PORTEND GOOD THINGS FOR RAIL IN ILLINOIS

By *F.K. Plous*

When Republican Bruce Rauner beat veteran Democrat Pat Quinn in the race for Illinois governor last November, rail advocates trembled. It wasn't that Rauner was anti-rail or anti-passenger train. It was simply that his views on rail—if any existed at all—were unknown.

A suburban Republican businessman who had always traveled by car or air—including corporate jets owned or chartered by his numerous investment companies—Rauner did not display the profile of a transportation activist or reformer. It's still not known whether he has ever traveled on a train, and while his campaign speeches and literature never targeted Amtrak or commuter rail, his embrace of classic conservative arguments, including the need to “cut government waste” and “run government more like a business” suggested the state's ambitious list of rail improvements and investments just might end up in Rauner's crosshairs.

And then Rauner surprised everybody by naming Randy Blankenhorn as acting secretary of the Illinois Department of Transportation. Everybody except the highway contractors breathed a sigh of relief. At last it looks as if a real professional is going to run IDOT.

And it's about time. During the five-year administration of disgraced ex-Gov. Rod Blagojevich, now doing federal prison time for trying to auction off the vacant U.S. Senate seat of President-Elect Barack Obama in 2008, and the six-year administration of his successor, Pat Quinn, IDOT went through four secretaries and one acting secretary, depriving the Department of much of the continuity needed to plan, finance and implement long-term projects.

Almost everybody agrees Blankenhorn, 56, will provide the experience, gravitas and transportation-planning chops that IDOT, and particularly its rail program, need.

At the time of his appointment, Blankenhorn had been serving since 2006 as executive director of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, the region's official metropolitan planning organization (MPO), which must approve all federal grants for transportation-infrastructure improvements in the six-county Chicago metro area.

Blankenhorn, in fact, was the first executive director in CMAP's history, because the organization was formed in 2006 from a merger of two MPOs, the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) and the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC). The overlapping jurisdictions and unclear responsibilities of the anomalous twin MPOs had left regional land use policy virtually paralyzed in the face of an army of developers and the 284 separate municipal governments they manipulated to get their projects (and the roads serving them) approved. Blankenhorn, who had 20 years of experience at IDOT before taking over CATS, brought CMAP the strength it needed to enforce a genuine region-wide land-use-and-transportation policy for the first time since architect and city planner Daniel Burnham proposed the idea a century before.

Nobody doubts that under Blankenhorn, rail will be seated in its proper place at IDOT's table and will be treated with the full respect to which it is entitled. As evidence, note a couple of moves Blankenhorn made while still in charge of CMAP.

First, he courageously positioned CMAP in opposition to Gov. Quinn as well as Indiana Gov. Mike Pence by opposing construction of the Illiana Expressway, a \$1.5-billion circumferential toll road proposed to connect the big intermodal ramps southwest of Chicago near Joliet with I-94 at Michigan City, IN. Billed as a Public/Private Partnership, the Illiana was exposed by CMAP researchers as mostly public, with the two state governments acting as “payers of first resort” in the event the toll road failed to earn enough revenues to keep up payments to its lenders. CMAP researchers showed that such a failure was

likely, with truckers shunning the high tolls by detouring to nearby free roads, leaving state government on the hook for between \$440 million and \$1.5 billion in debt-service payments. Shortly after taking office, Rauner put the Illiana project on hold, and a couple of weeks later Gov. Pence followed. The Illiana scheme almost certainly is dead.

And shortly before leaving office (but after Rauner's election last fall), Blankenhorn appointed Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph C. Szabo as a senior fellow and transportation advisor at CMAP. Szabo, 56, a native of Chicago's south suburbs and a former mayor of the blue-collar suburb of Riverdale, brings not only his five and a half years of federal experience to CMAP but decades of railroad experience, including passenger-rail activism, to his new job as well.

A former Illinois Central Railroad brakeman who became a Metra employee when the IC sold its electric suburban train system to the public sector in 1985, Szabo served as Illinois Legislative Director of the United Transportation Union from 1998 until his 2009 appointment to the FRA. During the same period, he spearheaded two initiatives that seemed iffy at the time but quickly mushroomed into major advances in both freight and passenger-rail effectiveness and legitimacy.

Starting in 2003, Szabo began lobbying for systemic improvements in Chicago's antiquated rail network that ultimately became formalized as CREATE—the Chicago Region Environmental And Transportation Equity program that ultimately won support from the railroads, the federal and state governments and the City of Chicago. Starting by jawboning his fellow suburban mayors, then moving on to his contacts in the Illinois General Assembly and in Congress, Szabo built a powerful coalition that secured the federal funding needed to finance game-changing infrastructure improvements such as the recently opened Englewood Flyover to carry Metra/Rock Island commuter trains over the Norfolk Southern main line on the South Side of Chicago.

*(Continued on page 5)*

## A TALE OF TWO STREETCARS

By *David Peter Alan*

When our Winter issue went to press early last December, there were two streetcar projects that were about to open for revenue service, and it seemed that they were engaged in a race to determine who would begin carrying passengers first. Downtown streetcars in Atlanta and Washington, DC were undergoing non-revenue testing at that time, and the transit community wondered if either, or both, would start transporting customers before the end of the year.

Atlanta won the race. The Atlanta Downtown Streetcar started revenue service on Dec. 30, while nobody knows when Washington, DC will actually see the revival of streetcar service.

Atlanta Mayor Kassim Reed had insisted that the Atlanta Downtown Streetcar line begin operations before the end of the year, and revenue service began just in time to meet his deadline. In a statement posted on the project's website, [www.theatlantastreetcar.com](http://www.theatlantastreetcar.com), Reed said: "The Atlanta Streetcar Project is a collaborative effort among Atlanta's political, business and transit communities to create efficient, sustainable and critical infrastructure that connects neighborhoods, the metro area and the greater region."

The new route is 2.7 miles long, has 12 stops and connects with MARTA (Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority) rail and bus lines, although it is not part of the MARTA system. The single-trip fare is \$1.00. Day passes, as well as weekly and monthly passes, are available. The line runs near such attractions as the Georgia State Capitol, Olympic Stadium and the World of Coca-Cola. Most of the line runs along Auburn and Edgewood Avenues. "Sweet Auburn" (as the locals call it) is the main street of Atlanta's historic black community. At its furthest point from downtown, the streetcar line goes to the Martin Luther King Center, which contains a museum about Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., the house where he grew up (now preserved as a house museum) and the Ebenezer Baptist Church, where King and his father, Rev. Martin Luther King Sr., preached.

The line runs a full-service day, with headways of 10 to 15 minutes. According to the project website: "Operational costs will be covered by fare box revenue, advertising, Atlanta Downtown Improvement District (ADID), Atlanta car rental and hotel motel tax and federal funds." The cost of building the project was \$69.2 million, with a federal grant paying \$47.6 million, the City of Atlanta chipping in \$15.6 million, and ADID paying the rest. The new line runs on the

street in mixed traffic, and does not have its own dedicated lanes. The last time streetcars operated in Atlanta was in 1949.

Meanwhile in the nation's capital, hopes that streetcars would start running on H Street and Benning Road before the end of last year were dashed. The "H/Benning" line will be 2.4 miles long with eight stops, beginning at Union Station. Then-Mayor Vincent Gray wanted service to start before he left office at the end of the year. City officials have said that the line will open for revenue service as pre-revenue tests continue, but there is no promise of a specific date for starting that service.

The streetcar line is owned by the District of Columbia Department of Transportation, and is not part of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Metro system. The line has been under construction since 2009, after years of delay caused by disputes over funding and how the cars would be powered. When it opens for service, it will be the first streetcar line to run in the city since 1962. Unfortunately, many Washingtonians, along with us at RUN, wonder when that will occur.

*David Peter Alan is a RUN Board member and chair of the Lackawanna Coalition.*

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

Current board members include:

Name	Location	Affiliation
Richard Rudolph, Chair	Steep Falls, ME	NARP / TrainRiders Northeast, Maine Rail Group
Andrew Albert, Vice-Chair	New York, NY	New York City Transit Riders Council
Chuck Bode, Membership Secretary	Philadelphia, PA	Tri-State Citizens' Council on Transportation
Gary Prophet, Treasurer	Ossining, NY	Vice President, Empire State Passengers Association
David Peter Alan, Esq.	South Orange, NJ	Lackawanna Coalition
Steve Albro	Cleveland, OH	Cleveland RTA Citizen Advisory Board
Mela Bush-Miles	Boston, MA	Greater 4 Corners Action Coalition (MBTA)
James E. Coston, Esq.	Chicago, IL	Corridor Capital LLC
Bill Engel	Clinton, OH	Ohio Rail Tourism Association
Dana Gabbard	Los Angeles, CA	Southern California Transit Advocates
Steve Hastalis	Chicago, IL	National Federation for the Blind
J.W. Madison	Albuquerque, NM	Rails Inc.
Dave Mitchell	Virginia Beach, VA	Hampton Roads for Rail
Andy Sharpe	Philadelphia, PA	SEPTA

Please send comments, letters to editor or articles for possible publications to the Rail Users' Network at: RUN; 55 River Road, Steep Falls, ME 04085 or email to [rrudolph@fairpoint.net](mailto:rrudolph@fairpoint.net)

# PASSENGER RAIL IN CANADA: HANGING IN THE BALANCE

By Tony Turritin

Canada's founding legislation places railways under the federal government's jurisdiction. In the post-WWII period, Canada lagged the U.S. by about a decade in motorization and super-highway building. It wasn't until 1977 that VIA Rail Canada was created to relieve the freight railways of their passenger train services. The job of doing so was badly flawed.

VIA Rail was created by a cabinet order-in-council rather than by parliamentary legislation. Though claimed to be at arm's length from the government, in practice it has been, and still is, subject to both direct and indirect interference by the government of the day. It has faced continuous hostility from the finance and transport ministries, and Treasury Board. VIA has been starved of needed capital improvements. Service cuts were forced on VIA in 1981, 1985, 1990, 1994, 2004-05, and 2011-2012. VIA was not given statutory priority for its trains on the freight railways and not given statutory provisions for determining fair charges for track access. As David Gunn once wryly noted, VIA has been going out of business since it was founded.

There were two short periods when it appeared VIA's decline might have been turned around. In the early '80s, the Conservatives rallied behind VIA to gain voter support. On gaining power in 1984, the Conservatives reinstated five train services cut by the Liberals in 1981, and created a Rail Passenger Action Force to advise on next steps. The Action Force review was comprehensive and pro-rail. It recommended many things, including

a VIA Rail Act, re-equipping the transcontinental trains with superliner cars, and new lower track access charges. But top anti-rail bureaucrats scuttled the Action Force and its report was never made public. In 1990, the Conservatives cut half of VIA's trains, and in western Canada an even higher percentage disappeared. VIA's flagship Toronto-Vancouver *Canadian* was shifted from its CP route through Calgary and Banff to the CN through Edmonton and Jasper, and reduced to three-days a week.

As the new century began, during the latter half of the Liberal government of Jean Chretien, with David Collinette as transport minister, VIA received funding for much-needed equipment upgrades. In a quixotic move to ease its equipment shortage, in 2000 VIA acquired mothballed never-used European high-speed Night Stock cars which it rebuilt and designated Renaissance cars rather than order new coaches and sleepers. In 2002, VIA even completed a plan dubbed VIAFast for high performance rail in the Windsor-Toronto-Ottawa-Montreal-Quebec City Corridor. When the Conservatives became a minority government in 2006, under Stephen Harper's leadership, VIA received major funding for track, station, and equipment upgrading. VIA upgraded track that it owns between Smith Falls, Ottawa and Coteau, just west of Montreal. Several third track sections and new signaling were put in on CN track that VIA uses between Toronto and Brockville on the Kingston subdivision. VIA was aiming at faster, more frequent service in the Toronto-Ottawa-Montreal triangle to increase ridership, demonstrating that passenger rail can compete in the medium-distance market against driving and flying.

Starting about 2010, VIA's situation began to get much worse. Track upgrades on CN's Kingston subdivision went way over-budget, and, even when third track was finally in place, CN denied added VIA trains, claiming intractable congestion further east on this line. CN freight train interference with VIA trains is notorious: in 2007, an extra night was added to the schedule of the *Canadian* to reflect CN's treatment of this train. Renaissance cars are in serious decay. The program to upgrade LRC cars, now 33 years old, was cut to a snail's pace as funds were diverted to the Kingston subdivision project.

In 2011, after the Harper Conservatives achieved a majority in Parliament in an election, shrinking the size of government began in earnest. Even the barebones VIA system was required to take a budget cut to its annual grant. As with most VIA presidents, VIA's president Marc Laliberté, appointed for the term 2010-2014, was the hatchet man. In 2011-2012, service was severely cut in Southwestern Ontario, with some cuts Toronto-Montreal; VIA's eastern transcontinental, the Montreal-Halifax *Ocean*, was reduced to three-days a week. Station agents were removed and patrons forced to purchase tickets on the internet. Train connectivity suffered. Ridership has declined. Not surprisingly, operating costs per passenger have shot up. Laliberté cloaked the cuts in the rhetoric of profitability, claiming that cut trains were not making enough money, as if it was possible that passenger rail could pay a stock dividend. His interest focused narrowly on the Toronto-Ottawa-Montreal triangle. Winter season service on the *Canadian* was cut to two-days a week.

(Continued on page 12)



# LAKE SHORE'S TIMEKEEPING IMPROVES

*By Bill Engel*

I first wrote on this subject in the fall of 2014, comparing the timekeeping of Amtrak's *Pennsylvanian* with the *Lake Shore Limited*. The *Pennsylvanian* kept to the schedule very well, while the *Lake Shore Limited* was very often hours late. Part of the problem with the *Lake Shore* keeping to the schedule was extreme freight train congestion on the Norfolk Southern (NS) main line between Cleveland and Chicago. NS has been working hard to resolve this freight train congestion issue. Additional train crews have been hired. The major expansion project at the classification yard in Bellevue, OH was due to have been completed by the end of 2014. A third main line track is in place on a portion of the line in Indiana. Finally, the grade separation on the southeast side of Chicago near the former

Englewood station, part of CREATE, was placed into service in October.

The NS effort did not stop there. Starting around mid-January 2015 they have rerouted some freight traffic to the (former Pennsylvania Railroad) Ft. Wayne line between Ft. Wayne, IN and Bucyrus, OH. Although CSX owns the track, and regional freight railroad Chicago, Ft. Wayne & Eastern operates over the line, NS has trackage rights for a specified number of trains per day. They have made plans to use those rights.

This writer has seen more freight passing through Orrville, OH on the Ft. Wayne line than in recent years.

These efforts have been showing results. Although this is not a scientific study by any means, between Feb. 8 and Feb. 11, Amtrak #49 has arrived in Chicago 47 minutes late, three hours and 34 minutes

late, three hours and 24 minutes late and two hours and six minutes late, respectively. Three out of four days, the train lost time west of Cleveland, but the most time lost was one hour and three minutes. On one day, #49 made up 23 minutes.

On eastbound trips between Chicago and Cleveland, timekeeping has also improved. In the same four-day period as above, Amtrak #48 lost time all four days, but the most time lost was 32 minutes.

The freight congestion west of Cleveland also impacts Trains #29 & #30, the *Capitol Limited*. They have experienced similar improvements in their timekeeping. We can only hope for continued improvement as 2015 goes along.

*Bill Engel is a RUN Board member based in Clinton, OH.*

## TWO NEW APPOINTMENTS IN ILLINOIS RAIL

*(Continued from page 2)*

And starting around 2004, Szabo joined with the Midwest High Speed Rail Association to double the number of Amtrak frequencies supported by the state. Reaching out to his fellow mayors in Downstate Illinois, as well as to state legislators in both parties who respected his depth of transportation experience as well as his strong civic commitment, Szabo persuaded the General Assembly to double its budget for Amtrak service.

Result: In October 2006, the number of state-supported trains between Chicago and

St. Louis jumped from two to four, while the routes between Chicago and Carbondale and Chicago and Quincy went from one train a day to two. For the first time in more than 50 years it became possible to make a day trip from Chicago to Quincy or Chicago to deep Southern Illinois. Within two years of the doubling of service ridership had doubled as well, so that the frequency increase ended up costing the state almost nothing additional in subsidies.

Genial, non-ideological and well liked by politicians of both parties as well as by the Class I lines, Szabo brings to rail advocacy a set of coalition-building skills that are truly

awesome on the rare occasions when they are visible to outsiders. Usually, however, they are not. He does his best work quietly, behind the scenes, explaining the issues to decision-makers in the privacy of their offices, or over a late lunch, or while lingering at the hors d'oeuvres table during a fund-raiser. He may be gone from the corridors of power in Washington, but Joe Szabo's best days as a rail advocate could still lie ahead of him back in Illinois.

*F.K. Plous is director of communications at Corridor Capital LLC.*

**See any red on your address label?**

**It means your dues are past due!**

**Please remit immediately to continue receiving the RUN newsletter!**

# IT'S TIME TO REGISTER

*(Continued from page 1)*

Participants attending the conference will also hear from rail activists and planners who are working at the ground level to extend the reach of rail transit, promote transit oriented development at the local level, the multi-state efforts to save the Southwest Chief and promote best practices for rail advocacy.

Our first panel of the day, "Big Rail, Little Rail," which will be held during the morning session, will highlight rail expansion and the emerging regional and inter-regional rail network. Dana Gabbard, RUN Board Member and Executive Secretary, Southern California Transit Advocates, will moderate. Panelists include: Elza Echevarria, Community Relations Manager, Riverside County Transportation Commission; Raffi Hamparian, Director, Federal Affairs, Los Angeles County Metropolitan

Transportation Authority; and spokespersons (invited) from the California High Speed Rail Authority and the downtown L.A. street car project. During lunch, participants will be afforded a prime opportunity to share information and experiences regarding their efforts and those of their organizations to promote passenger rail and rail transit in their local areas.

In the afternoon, participants will learn how Transit Oriented Development has impacted the local economy. Rail Users' Network Chair Richard Rudolph, Ph. D. will moderate. Panelists include Diego Cardoso, Executive Officer, County Wide Planning and Development, L.A. Metro; Roger Moliere, former Executive Officer for Real Property at L.A. Metro and now currently serving as Senior Advisor at Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP; Dan Rosenfeld, a private real estate investor who

alternates between private and public-sector service; and Huasha Liu, Director, Land Use and Environmental Planning, Southern California Association of Governments.

The third panel of the day will focus on Best Practices for More Effective Advocacy. Andrew Albert, RUN's Vice-Chair and Chair of the NYC Transit Riders' Council, will moderate. Panelists include Lynda Bybee, former Deputy Executive Officer, Community Outreach, L.A. Metro, currently President of the Women's Transportation Seminar; Jaime de la Vega, former Deputy Mayor for Transportation under Mayor Villaraigosa, former General Manager, Los Angeles Dept. of Transportation and former Board Member, Metrolink; and Darrell Clarke, who helped get the Expo Line started, and extended as far as Santa Monica.

*(Continued on page 7)*

## RUN TO LOS ANGELES!

*By David Peter Alan*

That is what we will be doing at the end of March, for our Annual Conference. The City of Angels was dominated by automobile culture for most of the Twentieth Century, but things are changing. The network of rail transit in and around the city is now large, and it is still growing. RUN wants to help celebrate this achievement and spread the word that, if transit can catch on in Los Angeles, it can catch on anywhere.

Our conference session will take place on Friday, March 27 and our attendees will be welcome to join us for a tour on Saturday that will include inspections of some transit facilities and rides on the rail transit that is revitalizing the city and its surrounding area. There will be an "opening reception" on Thursday evening, and we may have some other events during the day on Thursday,

and on Sunday, too. Keep checking our website, [www.railusers.net](http://www.railusers.net), for more information.

There is a lot to see and do in Los Angeles and the surrounding area, so you might want to extend your stay. When this writer first visited the city in 1979, there was no rail transit and you could not get very far on local buses, but times have changed. At that time, historic Union Station hosted three long-distance trains, to and from Seattle, Chicago and New Orleans. That has not changed. There were only three daily trains on the Surf Line to San Diego then. There are 11 today, and there are also five daily trains on a recently-developed corridor to Santa Barbara. Union Station is now a busy commuter-rail hub, with several lines on Metrolink, the region's regional rail system. Most of the service runs during peak-commuting hours, although most lines have some "off-peak" service, and four have

limited weekend service. The most scenic is the Antelope Valley line to Lancaster. The line is part of the historic Southern Pacific San Joaquin Line that ran to Bakersfield and eventually to the San Francisco Bay area. It was famous for the slow-running and scenic Tehachapi Pass, but it has not hosted a scheduled passenger train north of Lancaster since 1971.

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (commonly known as "Metro"), operates two subway lines, five light-rail lines and a large bus network. The Red Line subway goes to Hollywood, and the Purple Line branches off for two stops under Wilshire Boulevard. It will eventually be expanded. The Blue Line to Long Beach had once been part of the mighty Pacific Electric streetcar and interurban system, which was eliminated in 1961. It came back as light rail in 1990, and has been a busy line ever since.

*(Continued on page 8)*

# IT'S TIME TO REGISTER

*(Continued from page 6)*

The final panel of the day will focus on the "Multi-State Effort to Save the Southwest Chief: A Case Study in Advocacy." David Peter Alan, Esq., RUN Board Member and Chair of the Lackawanna Coalition, will moderate. Panelists include: Jim Souby, President of the Colorado Rail Passenger Association; J.W. Madison, President of Rails, Inc and RUN Board Member; and Sal Pace, Pueblo County Commissioner and former member of the Colorado House of Representatives.

Participants attending the conference will also have an opportunity to be part of an optional inspection tour of public transportation in the Los Angeles area on Saturday, March 28. Besides

a behind-the-scenes tour of Union Station and Metro's rail operations center, conference attendees will have an opportunity to experience riding subways, commuter and light rail in Southern California.

Conference attendees will also have time to network and enjoy refreshments offered at the pre-conference welcoming reception, which will be held Thursday evening March 26, in the Edison Room at MOVELA headquarters, 634 S. Spring St. #818 in Los Angeles.

The early registration fee is \$75 until Friday, March 6—\$85 thereafter, and \$90 at the door. It includes a continental breakfast, lunch, afternoon refreshment break, the pre-conference reception, the optional inspection tour on Saturday

(excluding rail/ transit fares) and all conference materials/handouts.

Who should attend: civic, business & non-profit leaders, real estate developers, planners, environmentalists, rail advocates, rail & rail transit riders and other residents of California and elsewhere who are interested in learning more about rail's impact on local and regional economies.

Please join us at what promises to be a very exciting, worthwhile event. To register, fill out the conference form on our website: railusers.net. Pay online using your credit card or PayPal account. The registration form can also be downloaded and filled out. Registrants choosing this option should send the form along with their check to RUN, 55 River Road, Steep Falls, ME. 04085.

## THE LOS ANGELES URBAN RAIL ODYSSEY

*By Dana Gabbard*

Los Angeles has always been a city built on dreams and ambitions. And on the vast acreage that has proven alluring and suitable for exploitation, first for agriculture and subsequently habitation.

The arrival of the railroad linking the region with the transcontinental railroad via San Francisco in 1876 facilitated a startling transformation. The sleepy little pueblo began to experience explosive population growth and development. By the start of the 20th century, extensive streetcar systems had begun spreading throughout the region, facilitating the aforementioned growth and commerce. The inter-urban standard gauge Pacific Electric Red Cars and urban narrow gauge Los Angeles Railway Yellow Cars, between them, constituted at their peak the largest electric passenger railway network in the world.

It was during the 1920s that the automobile began its ascent to being the dominant form of personal transport in Los Angeles, a process

that accelerated in the period after the Second World War, as the freeway system began criss-crossing Southern California. The private business interests who had formerly provided the investment to fund the private streetcar companies as a means of providing access to the regional development they were building found it to their advantage to instead favor automobiles, given this mode operated on publicly built infrastructure, and the car owners paid for the vehicles, fuel, insurance, etc. All a developer needed was to find out where a new freeway was to be built and secure empty land in the areas adjacent to the off-ramps. By the early 1960s, the streetcars were gone.

Also, from the early 20th century onward, the possibility of mass transit for Los Angeles and environs with subway tunnels or elevated structures—like the great systems that had emerged in the eastern U.S. in New York, Boston and Philadelphia—was contemplated and studied. Yet even as the Bay Area to the north in the 1950s and 1960s began planning then building the BART regional electrified mass transit system, Los Angeles could not

reach consensus amidst parochial squabbles and a widespread belief that it was unneeded due to the freeway system and autos.

Exploding construction costs spelled doom for the ambitious plans for freeways, with something under half of the originally planned roads eventually being built. Freeways were now seen as scars defacing the landscape and by the 1970s expansion of the freeway system was essentially over.

By then the decrying of traffic congestion, on surface roads and highways, had reached deafening levels. Southern California was no longer an utopia of free-flowing traffic but a nightmare choked by a "rush hour" which seemed to only abate in the wee hours of the morning, even weekends. The region had put all its eggs in a automobile basket and was beginning to have second thoughts.

But the chief problem—besides a lack of consensus, of course—was the need to secure a source of local funding to augment what

*(Continued on page 9)*

# RUN TO LOS ANGELES IN MARCH!

*(Continued from page 6)*

The Green Line, running south of the city's core, connects with it. Most of that line runs in the median of a highway. Californians call their highways "freeways" because they are free of traffic lights. They are also free of tolls, which helped to intensify the dominance of the automobile, from which the city is now recovering. The Gold Line is actually two lines centered on Union Station; one to Pasadena and the other to East Los Angeles. The Expo Line runs along Exposition Boulevard to Culver City.

While you can get to some interesting places on transit, there is also a lot to see within walking distance of Union Station. A motion picture by that name, made in 1950, featured William Holden and Barry Fitzgerald as policemen trying to thwart a kidnapping on station property. Some critics said that the real star of the picture was the station itself. It was built in 1939, and parts of it have not changed since that time. The historic waiting room and station gardens are in essentially original condition.

Looking out from the front entrance of the station, across Alameda Street, lies the Plaza, the heart of the original city. La Ciudad de Nuestra Señora, Reina de Los Angeles (The City of Our Lady, Queen of the Angels) was founded on that spot in 1781. The city's Mexican community and others still gather there for music and other activities, especially on Sunday afternoons.

A number of historic buildings around the Plaza are still standing. They include the Pico House (a hotel built in 1870), an old fire house that is now a fire museum, and the Chinese-American Museum, located in the sole surviving building from Old Chinatown. The rest of the Chinatown neighborhood was demolished in the 1930s to build Union Station and relocated to its present location. Olvera Street, a historic street from the

original village, is now a tourist mecca. It is full of stores, stands and restaurants that sell Mexican food, souvenirs and gift items to tourists and "locals" alike. The best-known restaurant is La Golondrina, which has been there since 1924. The prices are lower at the taco stands in the middle of the street, but the atmosphere is different. Wherever you buy it, the food is authentic. The neighborhood is designated the El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument.

If you walk three blocks to the right of the station on Alameda Street to the corner of Ord Street, you will find a culinary landmark, Philippe the Original (1001 North Alameda St.). This venerable eatery has been in business since 1908 and claims to have invented the "dipped" sandwich. Those are meat sandwiches on French bread, dipped in juice before they are served. They are messy, but they are local favorites (this writer recommends the lamb). Don't forget the hot mustard! Philippe's also has soups, salads and other items. Their coleslaw and potato salad are phenomenal, and the pies are good, too. There are large tables for community seating, so you never know who you might meet.

One block west on Ord Street is Spring Street and the start of the current Chinatown, which extends to the right. The food is good there, and some of the eating places are inexpensive. They have names like Lucky Deli, Family Pastry Shop, CBS and ABC (there is no NBC). In the other direction, Spring Street leads toward Downtown L.A. The 1928-vintage City Hall is there (200 North Spring St.), and so is the famous Bradbury Building (304 South Broadway), a landmark from 1893 that is both Victorian and futuristic at the same time. Some of the old theaters from the "golden age" of cinema on Broadway and Spring Street are returning to their original purpose. Sid Grauman's Million Dollar Theater (307 South Broadway) is probably the best-known.

There is plenty of good food downtown, too. Continuing along Broadway, you will find the Grand Central Market (317 South Broadway), a place for shopping and finding a variety of food since it opened in 1917. Another downtown favorite is Clifton's Cafeteria (648 South Broadway), which opened in 1935. The inside looks like a fantasy conjured up by a set designer from the silent-film era. At this writing, the restaurant is closed for renovations, but is scheduled to reopen soon. If it has reopened and the décor has not changed, stop in and take a look. At least have pie and coffee. Los Angeles is known for its pies. It is relatively easy to find unusual flavors like pineapple, and even more exotic flavors like raspberry and gooseberry can be found, too.

There are other interesting transit-accessible destinations, as well. The local Japanese-American community was exiled to concentration camps during World War II, but they came back after the war was over. Today, Little Tokyo (as their neighborhood is known) is bigger than ever. Japanese restaurants again line the historic blocks on First Street. That street is near downtown, and the Little Tokyo stop on the Gold Line serves it. Don't miss the Japanese-American National Museum and the Fugetsu-Do Sweet Shop (315 East First St.), which has been making traditional bean-cake pastries and other delicacies since 1903. The Original Pantry Café, at 9th and Figueroa Streets (877 South Figueroa St.; walkable from the 7th Street station on the Red, Blue and Expo Lines) is a steak house that has been open 24 hours a day since 1924. If you want a light meal there, you can get a bowl of soup, great coleslaw and sourdough bread. There is more to see as you continue down Figueroa Street, toward a number of museums and the University of Southern California (USC) campus.

The entire downtown area is coming back, thanks to the recent infusion of transit: both the new rail lines and the augmented bus service provided by Metro and the Los Angeles Department of Transportation

*(Continued on page 10)*



# FROM RED CARS TO THE RED LINE: THE LOS ANGELES URBAN RAIL ODYSSEY

*(Continued from page 7)*

officials hoped to secure from the state and federal governments. A key turning point was the election in 1973 of Tom Bradley as mayor of Los Angeles, who campaigned on the establishment of mass transit in the area and began working with officials at all levels of government and stakeholders to build support for the idea. In 1968, 1974 and 1976, measures to have countywide taxes for mass transit were on the ballot; all went down to defeat. After these setbacks, a painstaking process was undertaken to overcome the various factors that doomed previous measures, such as suburban fears that mass transit funding would be monopolized in serving the urban core. This consensus building bore fruit in 1980 when Proposition A, a half-percent sales tax, passed.

Reputedly in this period, legendary County Supervisor Kenneth Hahn would take those who he hoped to enlist in supporting mass transit to the top floor of Los Angeles City Hall, which commands a view of the surrounding area. He would gesture toward a gap in the built landscape south of downtown, a straight line marking a right-of-way currently being used for freight service and formerly Red Cars (in fact the last line, discontinued in 1961). He would declare something along the lines of “There it is. All we have to do

is buy it and we can have a light rail line like in San Diego, linking downtown Los Angeles and downtown Long Beach.”

Eventually a portion of the right of way was purchased and tracks for Union Pacific’s freight service shifted to one side, parallel to the tracks constructed for light rail service that commenced in 1990.

After the aforementioned Blue Line was opened in 1990, others followed. The light rail lines currently operating include the Green (1995), Gold (Pasadena branch, 2003; Eastside branch, 2009) and Expo (Phase I, 2012). The heavy rail Red Line opened in phases between 1993 and 2000.

While development of the system has been hobbled by various interests including the infamous anti-rail Bus Riders Union, touting buses alone as a solution to the mobility needs of the region has fallen from favor, as signified by the successful passage of two further county-wide sales tax measures that include significant mass transit funding components that augment Proposition A: Proposition C, passed in 1990, and Measure R, passed in 2008. An extension of Measure R (Measure J) barely failed by a minuscule margin in 2012. Even as you read this, behind-the-scenes consensus building among various key players is occurring to negotiate the details of a probable try—not at an extension, but instead a fourth tax in 2016 to accelerate

the pace of rail construction.

Amazingly, five urban rail projects are currently either being constructed, finishing construction or about to commence construction in Los Angeles County: the Gold Line Foothill extension to Azusa; Expo Line Phase II to Santa Monica; the Crenshaw Line linking the Expo Line and Green Line through the mid-city with a station at LAX; the Regional Connector linking the Gold and Blue/Expo light rail lines through downtown Los Angeles; and the Purple Line extension Phase I to La Cienega/Wilshire. The last is heavy rail while the other four are light rail.

This brief and somewhat simplified history barely scratches the surface. Those wishing a more in-depth treatment are encouraged to seek out Professor Ethan Elkind’s recently published book *Railtown*. Or learn more by coming to our conference to hear the various speakers who will share the amazing history and status of the Los Angeles urban rail miracle. You can also join the Saturday tour to see a portion of it for yourself.

See you there?

*Dana Gabbard is a RUN Board member and executive secretary of Southern California Transit Advocates.*

If you would prefer to receive the RUN Newsletter electronically,  
please let us know by e-mailing  
**RRudolph@fairpoint.net**

## RUN TO LOS ANGELES!



*The Hollywood and Vine Stop on the Red Line*

*(Continued from page 8)*

LADOT). Businesses are moving back into some once-deserted office buildings, while other buildings are being converted into apartments. There is also talk of more transit for downtown. One project is a proposed streetcar on Broadway, while Metro is talking about a Downtown Connector that would connect 7th Street and Union Station—on a different route than the Red Line uses between the two stations today.

There are a number of interesting destinations elsewhere that are accessible by transit. The most famous is Hollywood Boulevard, which still offers some of the best “people-watching” anywhere. Take the Red Line to the Hollywood and Vine station. The station under that legendary location features bench backs that look like 1950s-vintage automobiles, and 35mm film reels that are used for sound baffles on the ceiling. There are some historic motion-picture projectors at strategic locations, too. The station is a destination

in itself. Between there and the next stop out (Highland Blvd.) lies the heart of Hollywood, with its Walk of Fame and numerous vendors hawking tours of “the homes of the stars.” The heritage of cinema is celebrated at the Hollywood Museum in the Max Factor Building (1660 North Highland Ave.), built by the make-up king during the 1930s. For serious fans of cinema history, there is the Hollywood Heritage Museum, (2100 North Highland Ave.) in the barn that Cecil B. DeMille and Jesse Lasky rented in 1913, when they started the company that later became Paramount Pictures. It is filled with memorabilia and equipment from the early days of motion-picture entertainment. Further up Highland is the Hollywood Bowl, the location for seasonal outdoor concerts.

Los Angeles has a number of other museums, too. There is the Travel Town Museum, a railroad museum located in Griffith Park, the city’s largest green space. There are also a number of art museums: the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA),

the Getty Museum (founded by J. Paul Getty, but reservations are required), the Armand Hammer Museum at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) and the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena. Old Town Pasadena (the city’s “downtown”) is worth a visit. Its office buildings from the 1920s are often used as filming locations. The city’s main street, Colorado Avenue, is the route of the Tournament of Roses Parade every New Year’s Day. Metro’s Gold Line can take you there.

There are other worthwhile destinations, as well. Going the other way from Union Station, the Gold Line passes through the city’s largest Mexican-American community, on its way to East Los Angeles. One of the nation’s most interesting pieces of folk art and architecture is the Watts Tower, located within walking distance of Metro’s Blue Line, near the 103rd Street Station. West of downtown, don’t miss Wilshire Boulevard, an interesting street that runs from downtown to the beach at Santa Monica. Along parts of it are the buildings that made film history in the 1920s and ‘30s. The #20 bus takes you west from the end of the Purple Line subway at Wilshire and Western Avenues, although there are plans to extend the subway.

If you have more time, you can take an express bus from downtown (or the LADOT #142 bus from the Blue Line at Long Beach) to the Port of Los Angeles at San Pedro. This is the location of the city’s cruise ship terminal and the Los Angeles Maritime Museum. On Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, two replica streetcars run on a line that comprises only four stops from end to end. The cars were built to replicate 1902-vintage cars from the Pacific Electric system. Sometimes, they run Car #1058, the last of the original “Red Cars” still in the city. At this writing, there was talk of eliminating Friday service and limiting it to weekend afternoons only.

*(Continued on page 13)*

## WHY THE MTA NETWORK MATTERS, IN NY AND BEYOND

*(Continued from page 1)*

And the same thing happens throughout the country: transit is a key driver to economic activity. It fosters social equity, especially in a place like New York, which has a flat fare for virtually any distance traveled. A large transit system allows employers to pull from a vast geographic area, reaching a broad pool of talent. It allows citizens to partake of all the city has to offer—all without the use of a car. It cleans the air, as well as the roads, so motorists also benefit. I could go on and on about the benefits of public transportation—but as stated earlier, the key to keeping a large (or small) system in shape and expanding is its capital program. In New York State, getting the needed funds has been a hard sell.

The MTA submitted a \$32-billion (yes, billion) Capital Plan to the Capital Program Review Board in Albany, where it was summarily rejected. But that frequently happens, and then the negotiations begin. No reason to panic yet. Some negotiations have taken place, and there is now a \$15-billion hole in the plan—i.e. almost half remains unfunded. This is a serious cause for concern. If projects included in the plan were deferred, postponed for a time when the state was flush with money (wonder when THAT would be?), those projects won't

be getting any cheaper. They will most certainly get more expensive to build, thus prompting a future battle over funding.

Many of the projects contained in the Capital Plan are ones which will allow the system to handle the ever-increasing passenger load. During five days last October, the subway system carried over 6.2 million riders each day. Trains remain very crowded, so new signals are imperative to carry the ever-increasing passenger loads. Communications-Based-Train-Control (CBTC) is being installed on several lines, and has already had success on the L line, which is now scheduled more frequently than ever. The Capital Plan also includes new subway cars, as some of the fleet currently in service dates from the 1960s. Also included are new commuter rail cars, replacement of aging bridges and viaducts, more tracks in places, such as the main line of the Long Island Rail Road, new storage yards so service improvements can take place, etc.

These things are not luxuries, they are necessities. Businesses have choices about where they locate. Many businesses have chosen the New York region because getting from one place to another is easier by mass transit than virtually anywhere else in the nation. But, if the system begins to slide back to the condition it was

in during the '70s, things will go rapidly downhill. Businesses will relocate, and so will the workers. Now is the time to get a vibrant Capital Program going, and guarantee the nation's premier transit system continues to stay healthy and grow.

There is nothing grandiose in the plan—just solid improvements and repairs to the system, allowing for expansion and phase two of the 2nd Avenue subway to 125th Street. Thus far, the only thing we know is that fares are going up on March 22. While the fare hike is smaller than previous ones, and there are no service cuts, once again the straphanger is paying their share of the cost of their ride, while the vital infrastructure that makes their ride possible and safe is under attack. Make no mistake: if the State and City (and to a lesser extent, the Feds) don't step up and close the gap in the Capital Program, the MTA may have no option but to either a) do more bonding, which increases their already overloaded debt service, thus putting pressure on fares and service; or b) defer important expansion and maintenance work, thus putting at risk millions of riders and their safety and convenience. Let's hope for everyone's sake they make the right choice.

*Andrew Albert is Vice-Chairman of RUN, the Chair of the NYC Transit Riders Council, and Riders' Representative on the MTA Board.*

### **2015 Schedule of RUN Board Meetings:**

*Meetings for 2015 are scheduled for Feb. 21, March 27 (Los Angeles, CA), May 30, July 25, September 26 and December 12.*

*Board meetings take place at the MTA headquarters in New York City from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m., unless otherwise noted.*

*For more information, contact Richard Rudolph, Chair, at 207-776-4961.*

## PASSENGER RAIL IN CANADA: HANGING IN THE BALANCE

*(Continued from page 4)*

The train is an important mobility option for everyone. Fearing a lack of public reaction to the Conservatives' agenda to wind down VIA, journalist and consultant Greg Gormick approached Transport Action Ontario to mount a campaign to save and expand VIA Rail. Out of that came Transport Action Canada's National Dream Renewed (NDR) campaign. It was kicked off by a series of town hall meetings in Ontario, and, focused on saving the Ocean, in New Brunswick (NB) and Nova Scotia under the auspices of Transport Action Atlantic.

NDR town hall meetings began in September of 2012 and extended into 2013 as late as May. In Ontario, public forums were held in Sarnia, Stratford, Kitchener, Welland, Toronto, Kingston, Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie, Wawa, Hearst and Thunder Bay. In the east, meetings were held in Halifax, Moncton, Bathurst, Mirimachi, Campbellton and Edmunston. In May, meetings were held in the west in Vancouver, Victoria, Melville and Winnipeg. The format was to explain VIA's decline, with particular emphasis on the deteriorating condition of its car and engine fleet. A promising future would be based on new equipment, fast and more reliable service, more frequencies bringing added connectivity, and some added routes. More attractive fares, predictable funding, and a VIA Rail Act were discussed.

The reception to the NDR campaign by the public was remarkably

supportive. People gave testimony about the importance of their train for their community and for themselves personally. There was significant media coverage. In NB, our presenter Greg Gormick was so well received that he was subsequently asked by five cities to complete a study on revitalizing the rail industry in that province. At the time of these advocacy efforts, CN had given notice that it wanted to abandon a key section of track (and several large bridges) connecting Bathurst and Moncton. This abandonment would have forced the *Ocean* off the North Shore of NB, where there is significant local population. We

***We estimate that such an initial train/bus network could be developed at a cost of \$400 million, about the cost of one kilometer of new subway line in Toronto.***

believe NDR advocacy was a key element in a final agreement between NB and the federal government to fund a track upgrade staving off the abandonment of this track.

Transport Action is currently involved in a new campaign in Southwestern Ontario, basically VIA lines west of Toronto to Niagara Falls, London, Windsor, Guelph, Kitchener, Stratford, St. Marys and Sarnia, again with the involvement of Greg

Gormick. Network Southwest advocates bringing high performance rail to this region using the region's CN track still hosting VIA trains. Using new bi-level coaches hauled by diesel engines, Network Southwest proposes starting with more frequencies with trains timed to meet at hubs at Aldershot and London. Eventual hourly service is anticipated. In addition, Network Southwest would include integrated feeder buses, with this bus network increasing over time. Because of existing good track, we estimate that such an initial train/bus network could be developed at a cost of \$400 million, about the cost of one kilometer of new subway line in Toronto. The Network Southwest plan is being taken to cities in the region as a series of public forums.

Stay tuned. Network Southwest is modeled on very successful similar corridor rail services in the U.S. such as found in California and Illinois, and now being developed in Michigan. Will it happen? Sometime this year, there will be a federal election in Canada. The Network Southwest concept is just in time to become an issue in this election. We are also hoping that broad public support will stimulate the Liberal provincial government to take a role in working with the federal government in providing Ontario with a better intercity rail system, something provinces have not done in Canada to date.

*Tony Turritin is vice president of Transport Action Ontario, based in Toronto.*



## RUN TO LOS ANGELES!



*Union Station in Los Angeles*

*(Continued from page 10)*

For transit information, contact Metro at [www.metro.net](http://www.metro.net) or (323) GO.METRO. For Metrolink information, contact them at [www.metrolinktrains.com](http://www.metrolinktrains.com) or (800) 371-

LINK. Both Metro and Metrolink have sales and customer service offices at Union Station near the Metro Red Line entrance.

To learn more about the city, contact the

Los Angeles Convention & Visitors' Bureau. Their website is [www.discoverlosangeles.com](http://www.discoverlosangeles.com). They also have another website, [www.latourist.com](http://www.latourist.com), which has more information about destinations outside the city. Their phone number is (888) 733-6952. The Los Angeles Conservancy offers walking tours and other information about historic structures in the city. Their website is [www.laconservancy.org](http://www.laconservancy.org), and their phone number is (213) 623-2489.

Los Angeles was once the "auto capital of the world," but it is becoming a transit city again. If you come to our conference, you will see that for yourself. Otherwise, we suggest that you visit at your convenience, and enjoy everything the city has to offer. You can get there on transit now, too!

*David Peter Alan is a RUN Board member and chair of the Lackawanna Coalition. He lives and practices law in South Orange, NJ.*

## Get Involved with the work of RUN!

To find out how to volunteer, **write to:**  
 RUN, 55 River Road  
 Steep Falls, ME 04085

*or*

**contact Richard Rudolph** via e-mail at:  
[RRudolph@fairpoint.net](mailto:RRudolph@fairpoint.net)

*or*

**visit our new, improved website** at: [www.railusers.net](http://www.railusers.net)

# PHOENIX LIGHT RAIL UPDATE



*By Will Keller*

There is much happening these days on and about the Phoenix Light Rail line, currently a 20-mile long line that opened in December 2008. The line carries approximately 40,000 riders on an average weekday. (The entire Valley Metro System transports approximately 250,000 riders daily.) Current Light Rail ridership levels are at the projected 2020 level.

## ***Northwest Phase I Extension.***

On the north end, the Northwest Extension to 19th Ave and Dunlap from the current terminal at 19th and Montebello is well along. This is a three-mile extension that will add three stations including a Park and Ride facility at 19th and Dunlap. Track work is progressing, with the Dunlap terminal essentially complete, and over a mile of double track installed in the street southward. The extension is scheduled to open next year.

## ***Central Mesa Extension.***

This is a 3.1-mile extension along Main Street in Mesa from Sycamore Street to Mesa Drive. Construction started two years ago with utility relocation. Track work started in

2013, at both ends of the extension. Effort was well programmed and the street is now 100% completed in this area. The overhead wire east of Sycamore is currently being installed eastward. Track work appears over 90% complete. Final street paving is continuing. The extension is presently scheduled to start formal service in September.

## ***Gilbert Road Extension.***

Approval has been obtained for construction of a 1.9-mile extension along Main Street in Mesa from Mesa Drive to Gilbert Road. Construction will start in May, with operations scheduled for 2018. An interesting design in this extension is the installation of two traffic circles along the route—the trains will travel straight through the circles. There will be two stations, at Stapley Drive and at Gilbert Road, with a Park and Ride at Gilbert Road.

## ***Tempe Streetcar.***

Approval has been granted for the design and construction of a three-mile modern streetcar route in Tempe. It will start at Apache Boulevard and Terrace Ave, extend west on Apache Boulevard to Mill, run north on Mill to Rio Salado Boulevard, then east to a point just west of Rural Road.

## ***Other Rail Projects.***

The Capitol/I-10 West route (aka Phoenix West) will extend 11 miles from the State Capitol to I-10 and 79th Avenue. Most of the route will be in the median of I-17 and I-10. Completion is scheduled for 2023. The Northwest Phase II extension along Dunlap road to Metro Center is proposed to open by 2026.

The South Central Light Rail Extension is currently in the public comment phase, until March 5, 2015.

Grand Avenue Rail Project (GARP)

The city is considering a proposal for the introduction of a modern streetcar line to extend from downtown near the Washington Street and 7th Avenue Light Rail station to the 17th Ave gate of the State Fair Grounds, a distance of about 1-1/2 miles.

## ***Budgeted Expansion Costs.***

*Northwest Phase I:* \$326 million.

*Central Mesa Extension:* \$198 million.

*Gilbert Road Extension:* \$161 million.

*Tempe Streetcar:* \$184 million.

*Capitol/I-10 West Route:* \$1 billion.

*Northwest Phase II Extension:* \$295 million

**Total: \$2.16 billion**

For more information, visit [www.valleymetro.org](http://www.valleymetro.org).

*Will Keller is a member of both the National Association of Railroad Passengers based in Arizona and the Arizona Street Railway Museum.*

## IMPROVING COMMUNICATIONS WITHIN YOUR STATE/LOCALE

*By George Stupski*

After I became the representative for Arizona on the Council of the National Organization of Railroad Passengers (NARP), I saw a picture of an Arizona NARP member who was handing out literature at a model railroad show. Then it hit me. Why aren't we working together?

I set a goal to create an effective means to communicate with RR advocates who were NARP members in my state. I wanted to provide a forum for them to share stories, ideas and facts with other members.

I decided to create an email group, as it is fast, cheap, and I am a prolific emailer. I also prepared to send a snail mail appeal to those who didn't provide an email address to NARP. NARP sent me an Excel list of all the Arizona members. I created the email group and sent out a letter of introduction for myself. Members had to reply that they wanted "in" to the

group. I later did a snail mailing and asked for more email addresses. The results were good. Of those who gave email addresses to NARP, 53% opted "IN" to the group. Only 2% opted out (the rest were no responses).

On a regular basis, I send out a group email with news that either pertains to Arizona, or to Amtrak nationally, or things of possible interest to us here (like the new lounge at Union Station L.A.). I add my own thoughts, and invite responses. I paste the members' comments, thoughts, train experiences, event notices, etc., into the next email. This way, it functions as a forum for all.

Some results: I found some members who got together in Tucson and did a great National Train Day Event. I made contact with the Arizona Rail Passengers Association (ARPA), and joined their group. One problem with this is that NARP does not routinely send me addresses of any new members from Arizona—I am trying to work on that.

Some tips if you try this:

- Identify yourself up front in the first email, state that you are an unpaid volunteer, and thank them.
- Make it clear you are providing a service for dues paying members only (I will carry someone for a while, and then ask them to join).
- Invite them to send you comments, newlinks, stories about trains, etc.

**IMPORTANT:** Send the email to yourself in the "To" line, and put the group name in the "BCC" line, or "blind copy." This protects members from capturing each other's email addresses.

Finally, my take on this is that our members here perceive this "service" to be an added value to their membership that they don't have to pay for. Good luck.

*George Stupski is Arizona representative on the council of the National Association of Railroad Passengers.*

### ***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 [rrudolph@fairpoint.net](mailto:rrudolph@fairpoint.net), and get published!

