

INDIVIDUAL HIGHLIGHTS

The Union Pacific's Wellton Line p. 2

Notes from New York p. 3

New Jersey Report p. 4

Canada Report p. 6

RUN Resolution on Amtrak Performance p. 14

Rushing to Judgment on Rails to Trails p. 15

TWELVE NEW LINES OR EXTENSIONS HAVE OPENED OR WILL SOON OPEN FOR SERVICE; HALF IN CALIFORNIA

By David Peter Alan

Before the COVID-19 virus struck, we brought you a “New Starts Roundup” as an annual feature. Since that time, the pace of new lines or extensions has slowed, but there are twelve new stretches of rail transit in the United States that have opened for service during the past three years, or are scheduled to open in December. Six are in California, one is in Arizona, one is in Charlotte, and the other four are in the Northeast: two near Boston, one near Washington, DC and the other in New York.

For 77 days in 2019, I had the distinction of having ridden every mile of rail transit that ran in the United States at the time. That distinction ended on Saturday,

December 14, 2019, with the opening of a new segment of Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) between Larkspur and San Rafael, the former southern terminus of the line. Larkspur, in the South Bay, is a transfer point for ferries to San Francisco's iconic Ferry Building. At the same time, service to a new infill station at Novato was inaugurated. Elsewhere in the Bay Area, BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) began service on a new extension in the southeastern corner of the system (on the S-Line), from the former terminal at Warm Springs/South Fremont to new stops at Milpitas and Berryessa/North San José, on June 13, 2020. The most-recent opening was the Central Subway, built to extend Muni's T light rail line, which runs on Third Street.

The new extension comprises 1.7 miles of subway tunnel with three stations, and 0.4 mile of surface running with a fourth station. Weekend service began on November 19, while full service is expected to begin on January 7, 2023.

Not to be outdone, Southern California also boasts a new start and two extensions of rail lines. The new start is the Arrow train between San Bernardino and Redlands. The nine-mile line started service on October 24, 2022. Although there is a single weekday round-trip at commuting times (the Arrow Express), normal operation is a shuttle between the stations at Downtown San Bernardino and Redlands University, with a stop
Continued on page 11

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE RAIL USERS' NETWORK OCTOBER 29 VIRTUAL MINI CONFERENCE - “SOUTHERN COMFORT—HOW NEW & EXPANDED RAIL SERVICE WILL IMPROVE THE LIVES OF EVERYONE IN THE SOUTHERN US.”

By Richard Rudolph, Chairman, Rail Users' Network

Our Fall 2022 virtual conference, held on October 29, was outstanding! It's the first time that we have focused on the southern part of the U.S. since our last conference held in Richmond, VA in 2018. With the passage of the Infrastructure and Jobs Act passed last year, there is new interest in expanding passenger rail in that part of the country. The chair gave opening remarks, thanking the folks who registered for the event, as well

as the members of the conference committee who helped put the event together. He then talked about Amtrak's 2035 plan which could lead to the expansion of state supported rail service, but reminded attendees that it isn't a “slam dunk deal.” Amtrak believes expressing interest in the program is an easy, effective and no-cost way for states and local groups to take the first step to bring more trains to more people, but fails to mention that it ultimately requires states to be ready to pay for the service after

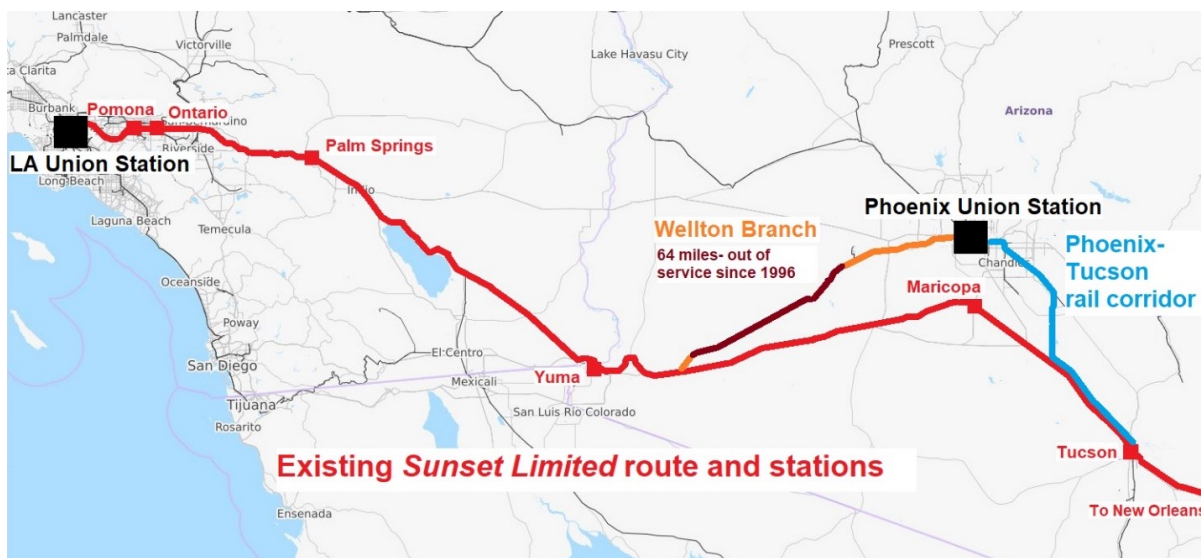
the first five years. He also talked about FRA's new I.D. Corridor Development Program, which will facilitate the development of intercity rail corridors, highlighting selection criteria that could be a deal breaker. It assumes that a feasibility study has already been completed for a proposed project and is mentioned in the current state plan, and that there is committed or anticipated non-federal funding for operating and capital costs.
Continued on page 8

THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE UNION PACIFIC'S WELLTON BRANCH: OPPORTUNITY IN THE 'PHOENIX WEST LINE,' PART 1

By Brian Yanity

There is great potential in re-establishing a direct passenger train service between Phoenix and Los Angeles. Re-opening of the Union Pacific Railroad's Wellton Branch west of Phoenix would allow the return of a daily *Sunset Limited* to Phoenix and support new regional trains. The business case for refurbishing the Wellton Branch is based not only on passenger service but also new "medium-haul" freight services between the Valley of the Sun and California (for a more detailed discussion, see The Prospects for Future LA-Phoenix Passenger Rail, 1st Quarter 2021 Steel Wheels <https://railpac.org/2022/06/03/the-prospects-for-future-la-phenix-passenger-rail/>)

Amtrak's Connects US plan, released last year, identified Los Angeles-Palm Springs-Phoenix-Tucson services as one of the "corridors under review" to be implemented by 2035. (See annotated map below.) Amtrak proposed to start a service of one round-trip a day between Los Angeles and Tucson via Phoenix, and three round-trips a day between Phoenix and Tucson. Amtrak has not proposed a budget, a project plan, or a timeline to start such a service. However, in July 2021 Amtrak President Gardner did suggest that LA-Phoenix direct service could start "within three years" but did not offer any specifics on how this could happen. This service would require re-opening of the Wellton Branch. *Continued on page 12*



Background map: OpenStreetsMap (annotations by author)

NOTES FROM NEW YORK

By **Andrew Albert**

Fiscal Cliff

As has been predicted for some time, and due to a variety of issues (COVID, crime, COVID relief funds running out, as well as new state pension rules), New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), the agency that moves 40% of the nation's mass-transit riders, could - if new federal, state or city aid don't materialize - run out of money by 2024 or 2025. Of course, this would have devastating effects on the entire nation, and particularly the Northeastern region. The MTA is the economic engine that moves New York City, which is the economic engine that moves New York State, which is the economic engine that moves the entire Northeast, which in turn, is the economic engine of the entire United States! Nobody believes the MTA will shut down, and too much depends on a frequent, well-maintained mass transit system in the nation's largest city for that to ever happen. But several things must be done to insure we don't get too

close to the brink, and the MTA is planning for some of those things.

One will be the use of technology to allow for capital improvements before major issues become much more expensive - such as wheel truing, wheel maintenance, track maintenance, etc. Known as Predictive Artificial Intelligence, this allows repairs to take place before more costly breakdowns take place. It will also mean the replacement of the subway system's aging work trains, which will mean less costly maintenance in the future years. Investment of capital dollars will mean a reduction in future outlays on maintenance.

Ridership has remained relatively stagnant at approximately 62% of pre-COVID levels, although there have been several days with record ridership, such as the day of the New York Marathon, as well as several weekend days. There have also been no fare increases since April of 2019, for various reasons - election years, covid, and the desire to bring riders back to the system. The MTA is now talking about fare increases

in 2023 and 2025, and not just the usual 4% yield, but perhaps an additional amount, resulting in a 5.5% yield, which would raise the base fare from \$2.75 to \$2.90. There would still be fare incentives and "deals" for multiple-ride purchases, as well as the ongoing farecapping, thanks to OMNY, the new tap-card system. But all of this points to the continuing need for ongoing, sustainable support for our amazing transit system, which serves the entire New York Metropolitan Area, from the tip of Long Island at Montauk, way north to Wassaic, in the northern reaches of Dutchess County.

As MTA Chair Janno Lieber has said many times, the MTA needs to be treated like the essential service it is, similar to police, fire, and sanitation services. Transportation is, quite obviously, an essential service, and must be treated as such. People are discussing various fees that could be increased to provide ongoing, sustainable support for the MTA, including raising the sales tax, the mortgage recording tax, the petroleum mobility tax, etc. *Continued on page 7*

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	Portland, 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
David Peter Alan, Esq.	South Orange, NJ	Lackawanna Coalition
Joshua D. Coran	Seattle, WA	Talgo Inc.
Clark Johnson	Madison, WI	All Aboard Wisconsin
Dennis Kirkpatrick	Boston, MA	Rail Users' Network
J.W. Madison	Albuquerque, NM	Rails Inc.
Andy Sharpe	Philadelphia, PA	SEPTA
Phil Streby	Peru, IN	Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance
Brian Yanity	Fullerton, CA	RailPAC

Please send comments, letters to editor or articles for possible publications to the Rail Users' Network at: RUN; P.O. Box 8015, Portland, ME 04104 or email to rrudolph1022@gmail.com

Editor for this issue: Paul Bubny

NEW JERSEY REPORT: PLANNING IN ESSEX COUNTY AND TWO ANNIVERSARIES- HURRICANE SANDY AND NJT RAIL

By David Peter Alan

This has been a relatively quiet time in New Jersey, although many New Jerseyans and a large number of New Yorkers remember what happened to them and to their transit ten years ago. Hurricane Sandy, one of the most-destructive storms in history, battered their homes and their transit. Thirty years earlier, three regional railroads got their start: NJ Transit Rail, Metro-North, and SEPTA Regional Rail.

Local planning in Essex County

Essex County, which encompasses the City of Newark and a number of towns to the west, is one of the nation's most transit-rich counties. Newark has Penn Station, where trains on Amtrak and several NJ Transit lines stop, the Newark Light Rail, PATH trains to Manhattan, and dozens of bus routes. It also hosts trains on the Morris & Essex and Montclair rail lines, which make a number of stops in the county and are lines of primary concern to the Lackawanna Coalition.

The county is engaged in Transportation Plan 2045, a once-in-a-decade planning effort. As part of the outreach for the plan, Planning Director David Antonio appeared at the October meeting of the Lackawanna Coalition, described the plan, and received a large amount of feedback from Coalition members. Vito Havrilla reported on some highlights in the Coalition's newsletter, the *Railgram*: "improving bus service on Bloomfield Avenue; pedestrian crossings working properly, including audio and visual countdown clocks; more weekend service on Montclair-Boonton Line, Newark Light Rail, and various New Jersey Transit bus routes." The Coalition passed a resolution at its November meeting that calls for more weekend service between Hoboken and Montclair, with connections at Newark.

In a separate initiative, the Millburn Town Council is soliciting input about potential changes at the Short Hills Station. Coalition Chairperson Sally Jane Gellert attended the session and reported in the *Railgram*: "it

was clear that the residents were engaged and informed, with questions raised about pedestrian safety, congestion, and pick-up locations." In addition, Gellert reported that the Coalition "is reviving our 1990s practice of checking on station conditions and reporting our findings." There is now a Station Inspection Form on the Coalition website, www.lackawannacoalition.org, and Gellert encouraged readers to use it and report station conditions. Their findings will be reported to NJ Transit.

Ten Years Ago: Hurricane Sandy Devastated Transit in New Jersey and New York

Hurricane Sandy slammed into New Jersey and the New York area on Monday, October 29, 2012. She ended up causing \$70 billion worth of damage and killed 233 people in eight countries, from the Caribbean to Canada. Although she had lost much of her punch by the time she got to the local area, the National Weather Service and local media were referring to her as "Superstorm Sandy." Low-lying areas, including New York's Rockaway Peninsula, the City of Hoboken, Little Ferry and Moonachie in Bergen County, and the Jersey Shore, were hit hard. So was transit on both sides of the Hudson, as millions were left without power and millions were left without transit. The power came back first.

Transit on the New York side, including the city subways, Metro-North, and the Long Island Rail Road, returned to service during the first week after the storm hit. New Jersey Transit's recovery took longer. Amtrak service on the Northeast Corridor (NEC) and NJ Transit trains on the Raritan Line and NEC all came back during the first week. It took longer for other rail lines to come back, and the agency provided shuttle buses from temporary park-and-ride locations to a limited number of destinations during peak-commuting hours only. Two weeks after Sandy hit land, most rail lines were running again; at least with limited service. The last line to restore any service was the Gladstone Branch, which splits from the Morris & Essex Line at Summit. It did not return to

service until December 3; five weeks after Sandy hit. It was January 14 before full pre-Sandy rail service returned.

For more-detailed coverage of Sandy's impact on the region and specifically on its transit, see my article: *Hurricane Sandy: Ten Years Later*, posted on the *Railway Age* website, www.railwayage.com, on October 27. It includes several photos from the *Railway Age* collection, as well as reporting from the time by *Railway Age* Editor-in-Chief William C. Vantuono, and my reporting on Sandy for the now-defunct rail-news site *Destination:Freedom*.

Forty Years Ago: Three New Railroads Established to Keep Local Passenger Trains Going

January 1, 2023 marks the 40th anniversary of the founding of three new railroads: Metro-North, New Jersey Transit Rail Operations, Inc., and SEPTA Regional Rail in Philadelphia. All three were formed to continue running local "commuter" lines that had previously been operated by the Consolidated Rail Corp. (Conrail), but which Conrail was forced by statute to discontinue.

Conrail was formed in 1976 to merge the Penn Central, Erie-Lackawanna, Jersey Central, Reading and several other railroads in the Northeast, and whose lines extended west to Chicago and St. Louis, into a single entity that would eliminate duplication. The hope was that Conrail would turn a profit. That eventually happened, but the Northeast Rail Service Act of 1981 mandated that Conrail was required to halt its passenger-rail operations at the end of 1982 and concentrate entirely on freight.

Those local operations included non-Amtrak local trains in places ranging from Boston to Washington, DC. Somebody had to start running those lines on short notice, or they would cease to exist. In the meantime, Conrail discontinued some limited-service routes in New

Continued on page 7

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Rail Users' Network, an all-volunteer non-profit organization which represents the interests of long distance, regional and commuter rail passengers as well as rail transit riders in North America. The need for the Rail Users' Network is clear. We continue to press for reinvestments in passenger rail and rail transit infrastructure as well as provide a forum for rail passengers, advocates and citizen advisory committee members to share information about best practices. We do this through newsletters, regional meetings and conferences.

Besides publishing our award-winning newsletter, this year we conducted two well-attended virtual conferences highlighting the ongoing work of rail advocates to improve and expand passenger rail service in the West and in the Southern States. RUN was also involved in the historic slugfest between Amtrak and CSX over the return of passenger rail from New Orleans to Mobile, AL. At the Surface Transportation Board hearing held in February, we testified in favor of restoring the service. We pointed out the huge discrepancy between the Federal Rail Administration's cost estimate to upgrade the track along the line and CSX figures, which would allow for two daily round trips from New Orleans and Mobile. We expressed concerns regarding the lack of mobility along the proposed line and stressed that CSX's high estimate should be rejected, for it would create a dangerous precedent that could ultimately undermine Amtrak's 2035 plan to expand service to other cities across the nation.

We also submitted testimony to the chairs of the House and Senate Transportation Committees regarding Amtrak's decision to extend five-day-a-week long distance service and the furloughing of service and operating crews. The restoration of daily long distance is not complete because of Amtrak's service reduction plan, which included closing its hiring and training departments. This comes after an unprecedented allocation which was given Amtrak last year to support them through the government-mandated business shutdown- \$22B to repair existing equipment and to purchase new equipment, and \$44B to improve and expand the state and national network.

More recently, we passed a resolution calling on members of Congress as well as other government officials and agencies to conduct thorough investigations of Amtrak's recent performance regarding Train 351 from Pontiac, MI via Detroit, which was scheduled to take six hours and six minutes and actually took 19 hours and 21 minutes. The hardships which passengers and crew encountered during that trip included equipment breakdowns, lack of heat, electricity, running water and functioning toilets, and disorderly passengers. Some passengers felt compelled to disembark from the train and make their way to a highway in the dark and under unsafe conditions, in the hope of using their phones to hail "for hire" vehicles.

We have also joined in a national effort to call on Congress to hold hearings about the deterioration of Amtrak's service on its national network. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) provided an advance appropriation of \$16 billion for the Amtrak system including its long-distance routes. Yet, with funding now in hand, Amtrak's current five-year plan delays any replacement of the long-distance fleet for at least five more years with delivery not expected for at least ten more years - after the IIJA funding expires.

We depend on your generosity to continue our important work. Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution during our Annual Appeal. Each organization is stronger when we work together; and we are strengthened with a geographically diverse, larger membership base. Your contribution will help us continue to represent all rail passengers, including long distance, commuter, and transit riders. We thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

Richard Rudolph, Ph.D.
Chairman, Rail Users' Network

CANADA REPORT WINTER 2023

By Ken Westcar

Canada's High Frequency Rail (HFR) project needs full transparency

In 2017, VIA Rail's HFR project saw estimates of between \$4.0 billion and \$6.6 billion for a new 800km passenger only service between Toronto (ON) and Quebec City (QC) by way of Peterborough and Smiths Falls. The lower of the two estimates was for diesel propulsion utilizing the new Siemens built equipment currently being delivered to VIA Rail. The higher amount was for electric or hybrid propulsion. A top speed of 177 kph (110 mph) meant that at-grade road crossings could be retained according to current [Transport Canada rules](#).

The proposed route along the long-abandoned, meandering CP Havelock subdivision between Toronto and Smiths Falls and passing through suburban areas of the GTA, Montreal and Quebec City will be extremely challenging from cost and deliverability standpoints. The March Transport Canada RFEI procurement document cites speeds "up to 200 kph" (125mph) and there are remarks in the [updated RFEI](#) that even higher speeds will be considered. Capital costs can be expected to escalate if a maximum train speed, above the original 200kph (125mph), is adopted due to the need for precision track up to [Federal Railroad Administration](#) Class 8 standards that allows up to 240kph (150mph) for passenger trains.

Building new Class 7 or Class 8 track on the old Havelock subdivision track bed to accommodate maximum speeds more than 177kph (110mph) will be challenging because of the need for wide radius curves to maintain high train speeds and the uncertain geology of the Canadian Shield, glacial till and the protected Frontenac Arch region over which the preliminary route is

envisaged. A very intensive subterranean and land survey will be required to minimize the likelihood of surprise subsurface problems that can incur major unplanned costs and project delays. Climate-hardening is also essential.

If HFR is to be time-competitive with driving and flying, it is vital that trackage through urban areas be upgraded to facilitate higher average speeds and a smoother ride than that suited to most existing, freight-only, urban traffic routes. Very precise, horizontal and vertical aligned welded rail alignment capable of withstanding the high axle loading of freight cars potentially weighing up to 130tonnes (286,000lb), may be necessary. Slow and rough approaches to stations in city centres can reduce average train speeds, lessen HFR's appeal to intercity travelers and travelers and annoy local residents.

Trackage shared with freight railways may also preclude overhead, high-voltage, electric power catenary. Although there are routes carrying double-stack containers "under the wires" in the USA, it seems unacceptable to Canadian Class 1 freight railways. Unless resolved, it would require hybrid propulsion for HFR trains making them more expensive and less efficient.

Although the Government of Canada has funded early-stage work on HFR to the tune of C\$396 million and delayed any final go-ahead until 2026 or 2027, surely the priority should be to provide Canadian taxpayers with high-reliability cost estimates, properly inflated to a realistic in-service date, potentially a decade or so hence. In this regard the HFR business case submitted to Cabinet in 2021 by the [Joint Project Office](#) and funded at a cost of C\$71.1m, must be made public. The ongoing level of project financial and technical transparency should at least emulate that of Metrolinx for their GO Expansion project.

A realistic order of magnitude cost for the [Toronto to Quebec City HFR project](#) is therefore essential before project planning proceeds in earnest. As the competition for federal funds for climate-related remediation, national defence, supply-chain improvements, health care, housing and other national needs escalates, it is vital to have an informed discussion on public investment priorities. A federally funded HFR gravity train that might eventually hit the cost and political buffers or end in a scandal, as several light rail projects have done, seems a poor one.

That the entire Windsor-Quebec City corridor requires substantial investment in much improved passenger rail services is without question. Except for procurement of the new corridor fleet, VIA Rail has deteriorated into a rolling museum sustained, not by successive federal cabinet tinkering and paucity, but by dedicated customer service and maintenance staff and users who have few or no other travel options and/or understand its environmental advantages.

Many will be familiar with Daniel Burnham's maxim, "Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood". Intercity passenger rail in Canada requires big plans. But we should be smart enough not to have our financial boiler explode far short of our destination with many more passengers waiting endlessly at the VIA Rail station.

Ken Westcar is secretary of Transport Action Ontario.

If you would prefer to receive the RUN Newsletter electronically, please let us know by e-mailing RRudolph1022@gmail.com

NOTES FROM NEW YORK

Continued from page 3

The MTA Board will meet again in December to vote on a proposed budget, but not on a fare increase at that time. In the January or February Board meetings, that issue will likely come up. The State Legislature will reconvene in early January, and the subject of ongoing financial support for the MTA will likely be brought up then. Depending on what comes out of those discussions, the fare increase will be dealt with at that time. Stay tuned!

Grand Central Madison set to open!

The biggest increase in the Long Island Rail Road's history is set to take place, possibly in late December, as the dream of many - East Side Access service to Grand Central Terminal from Long Island - is set to open! Work trains have been running for months now on the new route, from Harold Interlocking in Sunnyside, Queens, beneath Sunnyside Yards, into the 63rd Street tunnel under the East River, and into the Park Avenue Tunnel into the lowest level of Grand Central Terminal - approximately 17 floors beneath the street! The new terminal - dubbed "Grand Central Madison" by Governor Hochul - is a magnificent public space, and replicates the grandness of the existing Grand Central Terminal, which as most people know, is quite magnificent. A 40% increase in Long Island Rail Road service is envisioned with this new terminal, with stations on Long Island (& Queens) offering service to both Penn Station and Grand Central Madison! One casualty of all this expansion is that service to Brooklyn's Atlantic Terminal station in Downtown Brooklyn will become largely a shuttle service - more frequent from Jamaica to Atlantic Terminal, but requiring a change at Jamaica. Extensive testing is still under way to make sure everything will be perfect on opening day, all necessary fire alarms are installed, smoke detectors are up and functioning, and all signage is up to par. Emergency air-flow systems are still being tested, and the new terminal is still in need of approval from the Fire Marshall. After years of delays and some massive cost overruns, the MTA pledged that the

new terminal would open in 2022, and both Chair Lieber and Governor Hochul have pledged to have that happen, and all signs are that it will! Long Islanders will have a choice as to whether to go to Manhattan's East or West Sides! Along with this great news is the completion of the Long Island Rail Road's main line 3rd track, which allows for major service improvements, including more reverse-peak commuting! With all the service going to Grand Central Madison, this will allow work to take place in Penn Station, hopefully in time for the trains from Metro-North's New Haven line to utilize Amtrak's Hell Gate Bridge, and enter Penn Station, some time in 2027.

Major Accessibility Upgrades

The MTA has announced that 48 elevators will be installed or replaced at 14 subway stations, and 9 Long Island Rail Road stations! This is great news, as we strive to make our incredible transit system available to all users. This will make 9 more subway stations accessible, replace or repair elevators at another 5 subway stations, and make 7 Long Island Rail Road stations in Queens, Nassau, and Suffolk Counties fully accessible for the first time! The subway stations receiving new elevators are: Church Ave (B,Q), Sheepshead Bay (B,Q), Rockaway Blvd (A), Kings Highway (F), Woodhaven Blvd (M,R), Steinway St (M,R), Junius St (3), Moshulu Pkway (4). The subway stations receiving replacement elevators are 34th St (A,C,E), Euclid Ave (A,C), 161st St/Yankee Stadium (B,D), 161st St/Yankee Stadium (4), 3rd Ave/149th St (2,5), and Borough Hall (2,3,4,5). The Long Island Rail Road stations that are being made accessible are: Amityville, Copiague, Laurelton, Lindenhurst, Locust Manor, Massapequa Park and St. Albans. Existing accessible components at Auburndale and Valley Stream will also be upgraded. Making more of our extensive transportation system available to all is a major goal of the MTA, and should result in more ridership and less use of automobiles.

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

NEW JERSEY REPORT: PLANNING IN ESSEX COUNTY AND TWO ANNIVERSARIES

Continued from page 4

Jersey and elsewhere. Amtrak formed a subsidiary, Amtrak Commuter, to run local trains. It ran trains in Maryland and a few other places, according to a presentation given by Jim Blaze, a RUN member and Contributing Editor at *Railway Age*, to the Lackawanna Coalition. New York's Metropolitan Transportation Jersey and Authority (MTA), New Jersey Transit, and SEPTA decided to start their own rail divisions, and Blaze participated in the negotiations and the transition in his capacity as a Conrail manager.

The transition was difficult. All three new railroads faced strikes: 35 days at Metro-North, 42 days at NJ Transit, and 108 days at SEPTA; the railroad with the most-severe labor-management problems. The strikes did not begin with the new year but started in March.

Some limited-service lines were eliminated, especially in New Jersey, both before and after the transition from Conrail to local operation. Most of the services that ran in 1983 are still going, while ridership on the three public-sector railroads founded 40 years ago rose steadily until the COVID-19 virus struck in 2020. The railroads face challenges today, especially concerning their new role: more as full-time local railroads providing mobility to a multitude of communities daily, and less as "commuter railroads" for the former "9-to-5 army" that once commuted five days a week to city offices. However difficult the current challenges might be, they will not be as daunting as the ones posed forty years ago.

David Peter Alan is a RUN Board member and Chair Emeritus of the Lackawanna Coalition in Millburn, NJ.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE RAIL USERS' NETWORK OCTOBER 29 VIRTUAL MINI CONFERENCE

Continued from page 1

Our next speaker, Joanna Campbell, Assistant Division Director, Intermodal Division at Georgia DOT, described the scope of the \$8-million Congressional earmarked received and the \$2 million in state funds which is being used to conduct a feasibility project that is currently underway for possible high speed passenger rail service between Atlanta and Savannah, GA. The first phase of the study, which will take up to two years to complete, will evaluate 3-6 different alignments over the 250 miles between the two cities, determine potential ridership, and estimate preliminary costs to build and operate the service. She believes ridership may exist because the new service would not only serve 1/4 of the area of Georgia, but also five of the six largest cities over 100,000 as well as most of the largest universities in the state. Given a positive outcome, Joanna believes her agency will apply to the new FRA Corridor Identification Program or to some other federal grant program to obtain funds to cover the next phase of development, which includes pre-engineering and environmental assessment costs.

Our third speaker, Danny Plaugher, Executive Director, Virginians for High-Speed Rail, talked about the "Case for Transforming Rail in Virginia" and the factors that led Virginia to go big on rail, and the milestones that Virginia achieved leading up to the announcements and benefits from the state's \$4 billion in investments in passenger rail. He pointed out that over the past thirty years, Virginia's population has grown by over 40% and there has been an 81% increase in the urban crescent, which includes the Washington, DC area, Richmond and Hampton Roads. Even before the pandemic, one in four trips along the I-95 corridor were taken using Virginia Rail Express, Amtrak or the Washington Metro. Adding an additional lane on I-95 in both directions over 50 miles would cost over \$12.5 billion, resulting in the

corridor becoming as congested as it is today. Roadway maintenance already takes up 52% of the state budget. In all, 1,000 additional Interstate lane miles would need to be added at an estimated cost of \$44.3 billion. Danny also pointed out that young drivers prefer using phones and 1 in 4 between the age of 16 and 34 don't have driver's licenses and there is a growing number of older folks who choose not to drive. This is a huge change from 2010. There is also the need to get folks out of their cars to reduce climate impact, for 58% of the carbon emissions released are from cars and light trucks compared to 2% from rail. In closing, he addressed "why trains?," pointing out that the state has tried everything else, but it hasn't worked. Passenger rail is successful and ridership continues to grow since the state has taken public ownership of 252 miles of rail trackage and has invested \$4.28 billion. There are now 14 Amtrak regional trains (7RT), 20 VRE express trains (10 RT) and the state has purchased the Buckingham Branch Railroad, which will enable it to add a second frequency to Roanoke and expand service to Christiansburg in southwestern Virginia's New River Valley.

Our next speaker, Martin Wheeler, Jr. who is the President of the Carolinas Association for Passengers Trains, first provided a brief history of the organization, which was created in 1982 and is focused on promoting passenger rail in both North Carolina and South Carolina. The seed for state involvement dates back to 1984, when a Public Transportation Division was initiated by Governor Jim Hunt. The first tangible result was the creation of the Charlotte-Raleigh-Richmond-Washington-New York *Carolinian* that year, giving Charlotte and Greensboro a daytime route to New York in addition to the nocturnal Crescent, and via a different route east of Greensboro, one that introduced Charlotte-Raleigh service for the first time in over 50 years until 1990 before it returned, under the administration of Governor Jim Martin. Meanwhile, in 1989, Gov. Martin's Passenger Rail Task Force determined that the state should preserve essential rail corridors for future freight and passenger service, and should establish

additional passenger service between Raleigh and Charlotte.

Martin also talked about how the state funds passenger rail, mentioning that there is not one unified pot. Instead, the state splits money from different pots, including funds received from the North Carolina Railroad, which owns several hundred miles of track in the state. While North Carolinians enjoy long-distance trains such as the *Silver Star*, *Crescent*, *Carolinian* and state sponsored *Piedmont* trains, there are ongoing efforts to improve and expand service in the state. North Carolina has purchased the so-called S-line from Raleigh to the state border with Virginia and has received a federal grant in the amount of \$58 million to begin engineering work on the rail corridor between Raleigh and Petersburg, VA, with plans to eventually extend to Richmond. NCDOT is also launching a feasibility study to consider the possibility of operating passenger rail service between the Raleigh-Durham area and Greenville, NC, and has received funds for a feasibility study to restore service to Asheville, which is one among many potential destinations included in Amtrak's Connects US Plan for new passenger corridors. In closing, Martin said the climate in North Carolina is favorable for passenger rail and there is interest in commuter rail, such as the proposed commuter rail system between Fayetteville and Raleigh, which could change how people get to work.

Our next speaker, Michael Cegelis, Executive Vice President, Rail Infrastructure, Brightline talked about the extension of Brightline service from West Palm Beach to Orlando's Airport. He pointed out that Brightline's express passenger rail business started in Florida in 2018, was shut down temporarily because of COVID in March 2020 and restarted in November 2021. Since then, the company has introduced what it calls Brightline +, which provides first- and last-mile service using a set of shuttle routes and demand-response rides for passengers going to and from their stations. As the company is looking for opportunities to connect cities

Continued on page 9

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE RAIL USERS' NETWORK OCTOBER 29 VIRTUAL MINI CONFERENCE

Continued from page 8

“too short to fly or too long to drive,” it is engaged in extending its existing rail line, which extends from Miami to West Palm Beach to Aventura and Boca Raton, opening at the end of 2022 and to Orlando’s International Airport station, beginning service in 2023. A high-speed rail line is also being planned to run in the I-4 corridor from Orlando to Tampa and Brightline West, an affiliated company, is planning to offer high speed rail service from Las Vegas to the Los Angeles area.

Michael pointed out the track work between West Palm Beach to Cocoa and then to the Orlando International Airport is 85% complete. The project is estimated to cost \$4.5 billion and 1,000 workers are on the job. They expect to finish work early next year and will launch the service after the FRA testing requirements are satisfied. The Orlando International Airport has built the 37,000-square-foot station space, not only to accommodate Brightline trains, but also for possible commuter and light rail service. A 135,805-square-foot vehicle maintenance facility, which cost \$100 million has also been built on a 63-acre site and contains an 80K biodiesel fuel farm and a car washing facility. Brightline trains will operate at 79 miles per hour from Miami to West Palm Beach, and from there to Cocoa at 90 miles per hour. On the final 40-mile leg of the journey from Cocoa to Orlando, the top speed will be 125 mph. Besides building a second track from West Palm Beach to Cocoa, the company is also rebuilding bridges and building new profiles outside the rail corridor and installing quad gates, new warning signs and other safety enhancements at grade crossings to reduce the two primary types of accidents: vehicle collisions and trespasser strikes.

Our next speaker, Stephen Sayles, who is currently serving as the Vice President

of the Florida Coalition of Rail Passengers, first described the organization and what it has been able to accomplish over the years. It’s an all-volunteer organization working to promote intercity Amtrak, Brightline and commuter rail to give Americans a choice in transportation. Among the many accomplishments cited, what stands out the most is its work to support depot restoration projects in Tampa, Orlando and other station stops in Florida, and its work to restore the *Sunset Limited* from New Orleans to Florida, which was annulled following Hurricane Katrina. It also successfully urged Amtrak to restore sleeping car service to Tampa, and encouraged state support for the creation of Tri-Rail in Southeast Florida. Stephen also talked about where to go from here? He mentioned that Florida’s DOT claims to have a plan, but it appears to just piggyback on what exists now: Amtrak, Brightline, Sun Rail, etc. There is a need to approach the governor to ask him to intervene in FDOT “to dictate to them versus FDOT dictating to the state,” for there is a need to develop regional trains on the west coast from Tampa, Ocala, and Tallahassee, also south from Tampa to Sarasota, Venice, Ft. Myers, Naples and across the alley. He believes it is time to create a multi-county authority to promote passenger rail throughout the state and to join the multi-state Southern Rail Commission to coordinate with Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana in order to seek out federal and local funds.

Our next speaker, Knox Ross, Chairman of the Southern Rail Commission, talked about the ongoing work of this agency and the current status of several projects underway. He first talked about the possible restoration of passenger service from Baton Rouge to New Orleans, which could function as one of the key segments in the creation of a regional network of passenger rail service stretching from Houston, TX through New Orleans to Mobile, AL. He mentioned that an updated feasibility study, which was completed in 2014, estimated it would cost \$260 million to upgrade the line to run two frequencies a day from Baton Rouge to New Orleans.

Now that the merger of Kansas City Southern with the Canadian Pacific (CP) has been completed, CP is willing to run one round trip per day without any infrastructure improvements needed. It also agreed to study what capacity improvements are needed to have more than one train a day to New Orleans. Knox believes all parties are cooperating to determine what needs to be done to expand the service and to increase speeds up to 79 mph. Cities along the right of way are also seeking funds for rail stations and are working with officials at the Louis Armstrong International Airport in New Orleans to have a train stop.

Knox is also optimistic about the second project that the Southern Rail Commission has been working on, regarding passenger rail service from New Orleans to Dallas and Fort Worth, now that the merger between CP and KCS has taken place. He mentioned that Louisiana’s U.S. Sen. Bill Cassidy is championing the project, and all the states along the line with Amtrak have asked the FRA to include the route in its studies. Amtrak sees it as an extension of the *Crescent*, with one train a day service in each direction.

The third project is also ongoing. The SRC has had good conversations with Florida DOT officials about restoring service from New Orleans to Jacksonville and Orlando over the years, but now is more focused on service from New Orleans to Mobile, AL. He mentioned that the rail infrastructure has been rebuilt since Katrina and is ready to be used to run passenger trains to Mobile. He stated everyone has an opinion, but believes there is money from states to help pay for improvements. He mentioned that his group is working with the state delegations and Sen. Roger Wicker, who has been the real champion. Discussions are ongoing, and he doesn’t see it as a red / blue state issue. The cities have invested millions of dollars in their downtowns and have great working relationships with the FRA and Amtrak. Knox is quite optimistic that an agreement will soon be reached.

Continued on page 10

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE RAIL USERS' NETWORK OCTOBER 29 VIRTUAL MINI CONFERENCE

Continued from page 9

Our next speaker, Alan Drake, who is a RUN member and a leading expert on railroad electrification, talked about efforts to expand the use of streetcars in New Orleans. He mentioned that there are five lines, but only three are currently operating. The Rampart Streetcar line has been shuttered since the Hard Rock Hotel, which was under construction, collapsed in October 2019. The Canal Street line is also not currently running and the RTA hasn't yet announced when it will reopen. This line, which currently ends just before City Park Avenue, is being stretched across the busy intersection toward Canal Boulevard to link up with an existing bus shelter near Rosedale Drive. He believes several useful extensions could be made, but the federal government won't fund any of them for it is only interested in funding bus rapid transit. He pointed out that half of all RTA riders start their trips on streetcars. The trend, however, is to promote busways. Although there are activists pushing to restore the Charles Streetcar line, he stated that most activists are either satisfied or dead. He pointed out that streetcars are cheaper to operate than buses and there is a need to get more people to understand it's a way to further reduce carbon emissions in the city.

Our final speaker, Peter LeCody, President of Texas Rail Advocates, first briefly talked about the history of the organization which was established in 2000 as a 501(c)3 organization. It advocates for both freight and passenger rail development and is based in Dallas. As it isn't a dues-based organization, most of its funding comes from its annual Southwestern Conference and from various sponsors. The organization is a stakeholder on the rail division steering committee and the TXDOT rail plan and is an active participant in the I-25, I-20 and I-10 corridor committees. He pointed out that Texas has more rail than any other state, with more than 10,000 miles of track, over 50 short line railroads and 3 major Class 1 railroads.

The central question, Peter said, is whether Texans will give up their pickups and instead take the train. While folks have been pondering for a while, he believes there is growing public support for passenger rail. He then described what is going on at Texas Central, stating the project is not dead, but rather in hibernation right now. They won the fight over eminent domain which was fought out at the state Supreme Court. The project developers had to lay folks off, but key people are still there and the 240-mile high speed rail project between Dallas and Houston "is still on track, for they now not only have the route, but have picked the equipment and are at the 10-yard line."

He pointed out that Texas currently has some passenger rail service. It has the daily *Heartland Flyer* from Dallas to Oklahoma City, the *Sunset Limited*, which runs three days a week, and the daily *Texas Eagle* which is now down to a four-car consist. Peter is more optimistic now that Amtrak wants to deliver more frequent and reliable trains and that Texas is included in its 2035 Connect Plan. It wants to extend the *Heartland Flyer* to Wichita and Newton, KS, where it would connect to the *Southwest Chief's* Chicago-to-Los Angeles service and would add two additional frequencies from Dallas to Oklahoma. The plan also calls for two additional round-trips between Dallas-Fort Worth, Austin and San Antonio to supplement the daily *Texas Eagle*, operating from Chicago to San Antonio, with tri-weekly service on the *Sunset Limited* onward to Los Angeles and reinstating train service between Dallas and Houston via College Station, with three daily round trips on a route that was cut in the late 1990s. Texas DOT has sent letters to the FRA and the U.S. Department of Transportation supporting the idea of train service to Kansas and asked the FRA to consider the five other passenger corridors in Texas. Peter reminded the audience that nothing happens overnight. Our message to state legislators is that the state has lost over \$19 billion in federal funds because there wasn't a state match. There is a need to put money into the Texas Relocation and Improving Fund for public and privately run rail facilities. The money could come from issuing bonds or state appropriations. In closing, he mentioned the state has a \$27-billion surplus in 2023,

which could be used to provide the 20% state share to be in the game.

David Peter Alan, who is a RUN board member and contributing editor to *Railway Age*, gave closing remarks, stating that we heard from some strong advocates and innovative managers, but advocacy is weak in the South, and so is Amtrak service and local rail transit. There is one overriding reason for that, and that reason is POLITICS. The only truly "purple" state in the region is Virginia, and as Danny Plougher pointed out, plans to acquire rights-of-way for expanding passenger-train service are still being implemented, even with a Republican administration in Richmond. The only multi-frequency corridor in the region is the Piedmont Corridor in North Carolina, and the Democrats were stronger there when it was established than they are now. The other states in the South are "red" states, with no other state-supported trains or corridors, and where recent cuts in Amtrak long-distance service lasted longer than anywhere else in the country. He mentioned that Brightline is doing some exciting things, but it's in the private sector, which makes it unique. Local rail transit is also weak in the South and some states in the region have none at all. Local transit is strong in cities where Democrats are strong, like Charlotte, Atlanta, New Orleans, Houston, and Dallas - Fort Worth. The advocates who presented are competent and strong, but they have an uphill fight to convince Republicans, who control politics in the region, to support transit and more trains. Roger Wicker's support for the proposed Gulf Coast trains that would serve his state of Mississippi is a good sign, but he seems to be an exception to the rule. Environmental and "social equity and justice" arguments are valid. But many elected officials don't agree. The best argument that is likely to have the best effect on elected officials is the "business case": that trains and transit benefit the local economies of the cities and towns they serve. Every politician, Republican or Democrat, wants more money for their constituents, and we advocates know that transit and trains can bring it in.

TWELVE NEW LINES OR EXTENSIONS HAVE OPENED OR WILL SOON OPEN FOR SERVICE

Continued from page 1

at the historic Santa Fe Depot in downtown Redlands. The line was planned and built by the San Bernardino County Transportation Authority, but it is operated as a component of Metrolink, the regional passenger railroad in the Los Angeles area. Most service is provided with Stadler DMU (diesel multiple unit) equipment, although there are plans to run a unit powered by a hydrogen fuel cell in 2024; the first such unit slated for passenger service in the United States. On Metro Rail in Los Angeles, the first segment of the Crenshaw Line (K Line) light rail began service on October 7. The line, which has seven stations and took eight years to build, connects with the Expo Line (E Line), and further extensions to Wilshire Boulevard (connecting with the subway) and toward LAX Airport are planned. The new line goes through a deep-bore tunnel, along Crenshaw Boulevard on a dedicated lane, through a cut-and-cover tunnel, and on an elevated segment.

Farther south, the Blue Line of the San Diego Trolley (actually a light rail line using articulated units and pantographs) has been extended 10.9 miles from its former northern end at Old Town to UTC Center, a high-rise development with residential buildings and shopping malls. The line runs along the Mid-Coast corridor, adjacent to the historic Santa Fe Surf Line, which today hosts Amtrak's *Pacific Surfliner* trains to Los Angeles and points north to Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo, as well as local *Coaster* trains to Oceanside. The line also goes near the University of California at San Diego (UCSD). It opened for service on November 21, 2021.

There is one more new start in the West: the Tempe Streetcar in Arizona. It connects with Valley Metro's light rail line, which serves Phoenix, Tempe, and Mesa. It has fourteen stops, serving the

Arizona State University campus and downtown Tempe. Service started on May 20, 2022. The line is the first that connects with the Valley Metro Rail, which it does at two places.

The only recent expansion in the South, not counting the DC suburbs in Northern Virginia, is the CityLynx Gold Line in Charlotte, NC. The line originally opened in 2015 as a 1.5-mile streetcar line running along Trade Street with heritage-style streetcars. Phase 2 of the line, with 2.5 more route miles on both ends of the original line, opened for service on August 30, 2021. The current equipment consists of modern-style cars built by Siemens. There are now seventeen stations, the six original ones and eleven which opened last year. There are also plans for a Phase 3 expansion on both ends of the existing line, but the eighteen stations in the expansion plan are not expected to open until 2033.

The new line in northern Virginia, also known as the Dulles Connector Metrorail Project, is now complete. The new segment, consisting of six stations in Loudoun County, opened for service on November 15, 2022. It includes a stop near Dulles Airport and continues to Ashburn. The original segment of the Silver Line, which started service in 2014, branches off from Metrorail's Orange Line at East Falls Church and originally went as far as Reston East. Falls Church is west of the District, and the Silver Line proceeds northward from there.

At the other end of Amtrak's Northeast Corridor, part of the long-awaited Green Line Extension (GLX) on the MBTA's light rail system is now open, and the other part is scheduled at this writing to open soon. The extension is designed to serve Somerville primarily, along with Medford, the home of Tufts University. The project had run into trouble because of projected cost-overruns in 2015-16 and was scaled down. As built, it included closing the former Lechmere station in East Cambridge in 2020 and replacing it with a new station that would serve the new lines. The new Lechmere station and the Union Square branch opened for service on March 21,

2022. There are no stops between them, and new buildings in the transit-oriented-development (TOD) style are springing up near Union Square. The 0.7-mile Union Square Branch runs along the right-of-way of the Fitchburg Line, which hosts regional trains. Cars on the Union Square branch operate between there and Riverside, west of Boston in Newton (D Line). The three-mile-long Medford Branch is scheduled to open for service on December 12, and it will consist of five stations; four in Somerville and the other in Medford, near the Tufts campus. West of Red Bridge Junction, it will operate along the right-of-way of the regional rail line to Lowell. Cars on the Medford Branch will operate between Medford and Heath Street on the E Line.

There is one other project scheduled to open in December: the "East Side Access" deep-cavern tunnel for the Long Island Rail Road, which will end close to and far below Metro-North's Grand Central Terminal. It has been under construction for years, and it will give Long Islanders access to the East Side of Midtown Manhattan, in addition to their current access to the West Side at Penn Station. Many of the trains which now run between points east of Jamaica (historically the major transfer point) and Brooklyn will disappear, leaving essentially only shuttle service to Brooklyn. For more information on this project, see Andrew Albert's report, also in this issue.

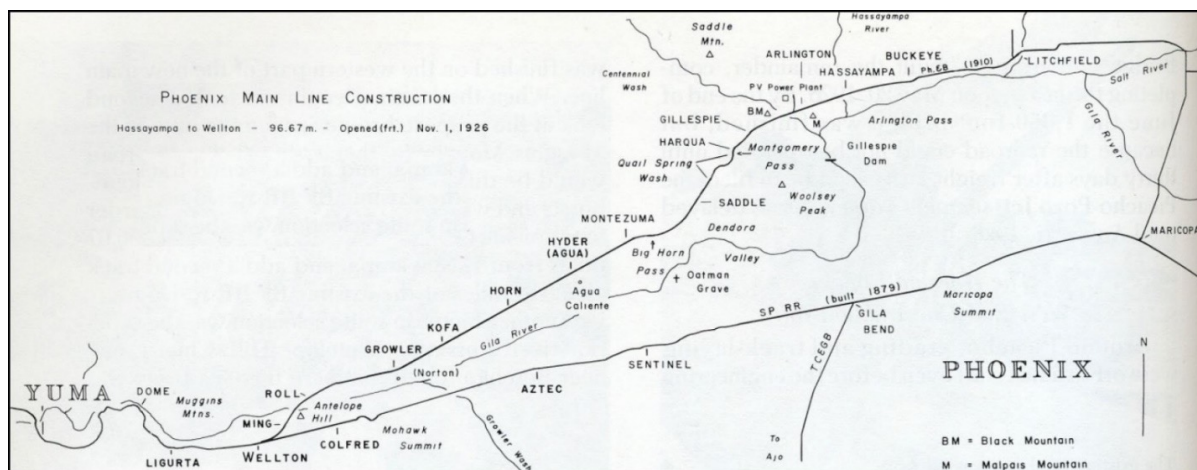
There have not been any recent new starts in Canada. The last new lines were the Confederation Line in Ottawa and the ION light rail line in Kitchener and Waterloo, both in Ontario. They opened for service in 2019. There are plans for next year, though, especially in Ontario. The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) is planning several projects: not only extensions, but also the closure of the Scarborough Rapid Transit Line, a 1980s elevated line that will be rebuilt as a TTC line. In Ottawa, the Trillium Line (the original O-Train line) is being replaced and expanded, for re-opening next year.

THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE UNION PACIFIC'S WELLTON BRANCH: OPPORTUNITY IN THE 'PHOENIX WEST LINE,' PART 1

Continued from page 2

Wellton Branch- the Phoenix 'West Line'

The Wellton Branch, also known as the "Wellton Cutoff" or the "Phoenix-West Line," is a Union Pacific (UP)-owned track which runs west from the end of the Phoenix Subdivision, west of Buckeye, to a junction with the mainline Sunset Route at Wellton. What was formerly the Southern Pacific's "Wellton-Picacho Cutoff" through Phoenix is today divided into UP's Wellton Branch to the west and the Phoenix Subdivision to the east. Southern Pacific (SP) completed this north cutoff in 1926, primarily to enable *Golden State* and *Sunset Limited* passenger trains to pass directly through Phoenix. Between Phoenix Union Station and Wellton Junction, there are 137 miles of single track, with a few sidings. Aside from a few 50-60 mph curved sections, most of the route is very straight and could easily accommodate 79 mph or faster trains if the track were refurbished and reopened.



Detailed map of about 100 miles of the Wellton Branch between Buckeye and Wellton.

About 64 miles of the Wellton Cutoff, from east of Roll in Yuma County to west of Arlington in Maricopa County, has been out of service since 1996. The 64-mile midsection of track is today used as a path by desert animals. The 1995 domestic terrorism incident on this section of track, in which one Amtrak crewmember was killed and scores injured, was not the reason for the track's closure.

Southern Pacific absorbed by Union Pacific in 1996, had been wanting to discontinue use of the line due to deteriorating track conditions and very light freight traffic. By then the *Sunset Limited* was almost the only train using the Wellton Branch, and service was slow and bumpy along this worn-out section. SP had requested help from the state government of Arizona to refurbish the line. Neither UP nor Amtrak wanted to pay for refurbishment and maintenance costs, and did not find any outside financial support from the state of Arizona's political leadership, which was then (and has since been) unwilling to use any state funds to support intercity passenger rail. Thus, by June 1996, the *Sunset Limited* was bypassing Phoenix, and UP promptly put the 64-mile midsection of the Wellton Cutoff out of service.

To get the Wellton Branch back in service, the necessary capital projects include repair and replacement of ties, rail, and bridges, along with new signals and installation of Positive Train Control. In 2009, the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) requested federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds to help restore the Wellton Branch and bring the *Sunset Limited* back to Phoenix but was unsuccessful. In 2014, ADOT hired the consultants URS to do a more in-depth Wellton Branch rehabilitation study.

The 2014 Wellton Branch study looked at replacement of ballast, rail, ties, lengthening sidings, signal systems, crossings, and bridges. Four alternative scenarios were evaluated:

- **Scenario 1** – Through freight service only (FRA Class 2 Track) w/ max speed = 25 mph
- **Scenario 2** – Through freight service and basic Amtrak service (FRA Class 3 Track), w/ max freight speed = 40 mph and max passenger speed = 60 mph
- **Scenario 2A** – Same as Scenario 2, w/ PTC
- **Scenario 3** – Through freight service and higher speed passenger service (FRA Class 4 Track), w/ max freight speed = 60 mph and max passenger = 79 mph.

Continued on page 13


THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE UNION PACIFIC'S WELLTON BRANCH

WELLTON BRANCH RAILROAD REHABILITATION STUDY 

CAPITAL COST ESTIMATES

Scenario	Total Estimated Cost	Cost/ Route Mile
S1 – Class 2 Track	\$165 Million	\$1.8 Million
S2 – Class 3 Track	\$195 Million	\$2.1 Million
S2A – Class 3 Track (w/ PTC)	\$266 Million	\$2.9 Million
S3 – Class 4 Track	\$420 Million	\$4.6 Million



WELLTON BRANCH RAILROAD REHABILITATION STUDY 

ALTERNATIVE #3: FRA Class 4 Track

Requirement	Amount	Notes
Remove rail, ties and ballast	Multiple	90.8 miles of main track; 2.73 miles of passing sidings and grade roadbed
Drainage Improvements	Multiple	90.8 miles along main track
New ballast and ties	Multiple	12" sub-ballast and 12" rock crushed ballast, new concrete ties, new 136# CWR along 90.8 miles of main track and 10.2 miles of passing siding
New turnouts	19	12 new #20 turnouts and 7 new #10 with 136# rail;
New bridges	12	New bridges will be concrete or steel girder (600')
Bridge and handrail repair	Multiple	123 Minor repairs (12,124 ft.), 8 Major repairs (671 ft.)
Bridge replacement	23	2 at MP 482.75 where washout occurred plus 77 ft. per bridge 50% of 42 bridges that are 10' to 30' long (21 total - 360')
Talking detectors	6	Replacement
Active Warning Devices	21	10 existing at-grade crossings, 11 additional currently with passive warning
Passive Cross-Bucks	10	Private crossings up to latest standards
Concrete crossing panels	31	21 public crossings, 10 private crossings
Railroad signaling system	Multiple	Install PTC along 90.8 miles of main track

Continued from page 12

The 2014 study concluded that the level of freight demand at the time did not warrant re-opening Wellton Branch, although if demand increased, phased rehabilitation made sense. It also recommended that the state seek to identify and develop freight opportunities for the Wellton Branch. Proposed next steps listed in the 2014 ADOT report included development of more detailed engineering design and construction cost estimates, and coordination with UP and Amtrak to conduct further studies.

Article to be continued in Spring 2023 RUN Newsletter

Brian Yanity is a RUN Board member and vice president – south, RailPac.



November 8, 2022

Senator Maria Cantwell.

Chair of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation (also sent to Rep. Peter DeFazio, Chair of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure)

Dear Senator Cantwell:

I am writing to inform you of a resolution that was passed at the annual meeting of the Rail Users' Network Board of Directors on October 29 regarding Amtrak's performance regarding trains 351 and 353 on October 7, 2022. We do hope your committee will respond to this resolution and conduct an investigation of the events surrounding Train 351 and other affected trains on October 7, 2022, and report its findings and recommendations for actions that will prevent any more incidents like those at issue from occurring again, to the public at large, including RUN members.

Rail Users' Network Resolution, October 29, 2022.

WHEREAS the Rail Users' Network (RUN) advocates for Amtrak and rail transit riders in the United States for, among other things, improved service on Amtrak; and

WHEREAS on October 7, 2020, the run on Train 351 from Pontiac, Michigan to Chicago via Detroit was scheduled to take six hours and six minutes and arrive in Chicago at 10:49 AM, actually took 19 hours and 21 minutes; more than three times the scheduled running time" and

WHEREAS the hardships to which passengers and crew were subjected during that trip included equipment breakdowns that were not repaired within a reasonable time, lack of heat and electricity, lack of running water and functioning toilets, misbehavior by disorderly passengers, medical emergencies, locomotives with serious mechanical problems, negative impacts to following Train 353 (which arrived in Chicago almost six hours late; almost double its advertised running time), and crew members who had come to the end of their hours of service and "gone dead"; and

WHEREAS conditions had become so bad that some passengers felt compelled to use self-help to escape from the train and make their way to a highway in the dark and under unsafe conditions, in the hope of using their phones to hail "for hire" vehicles; and

WHEREAS it has been alleged that Amtrak's performance concerning those trains fell below an acceptable level, as demonstrated by Amtrak failing to follow its own procedures specified for situations of this sort, and by Amtrak issuing misleading statements about the trains in question and incidents concerning them:

IT IS, THEREFORE, RESOLVED that the RAIL USERS NETWORK (RUN) hereby calls on Amtrak to issue a full and thorough report regarding all incidents concerning Trains 351 and 353 on October 7, 2022, to all government officials and agencies concerned and to the public at large, including to RUN; and

FURTHER RESOLVED that RUN calls on all government officials and agencies concerned with railroad operations or specifically with Amtrak conduct thorough investigations of the events surrounding Train 351 and other affected trains on October 7, 2022, and report their findings and their recommendations for actions that will prevent any more incidents like those at issue from occurring again, to the public at large, including RUN members.

WHEREAS, despite this and other instances of poor performance (including postponing the return of daily service on some long-distance trains and canceling runs on state-supported corridors for periods of time), Amtrak paid top executives bonuses amounting to 50% or more of their base salary, and in one instance, the bonus was in excess of \$300,000.

FURTHER RESOLVED that RUN expresses its deep concern that high-level executives at Amtrak were given such large bonuses despite substandard performance, and that giving them such large amounts of money constitutes a misuse of taxpayer dollars, and further requests that the bonus issue constitute a part of the subject matter of the investigation requested in this Resolution.

Sincerely,

Richard Rudolph, Ph.D.
Chairman, Rail Users Network

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

THE RUSH TO JUDGMENT - RAIL TO TRAILS ADVISORY COMMITTEES!

By Richard Rudolph, Maine Rail Group, Director

At the very time that other New England states are expanding passenger rail service, the Maine Department of Transportation is rushing to convert the three inactive state-owned rail corridors, which were acquired from Guilford Industries in the late 1980s and early 1990s into pedestrian, bicycle paths. Meanwhile, Amtrak and MASSDOT have recently announced that the pilot Valley Flyer passenger rail service, which runs twice a day from Greenfield and Northampton, MA to New Haven, CT, will become permanent. This service to these two communities which are similar in size to the population of Bangor and Augusta is designed to increase Pioneer Valley's residents' access to New Haven and the New York metropolitan area and other points on the Northeast Corridor. In Vermont, residents also witnessed - and celebrated - the return of regularly scheduled passenger rail service on July 29th after a 69-year hiatus as Amtrak extended its geographic reach to Burlington. This new service extends the *Ethan Allen Express* train 67 miles north of its previous northern terminus, Rutland. This daily train's southern terminus is New York City's Penn Station. No doubt the associated increase in economic activity will be a boon to these communities.

Last year, MEDOT submitted a bill - LD1133 - to the Maine legislature. It was passed, authorizing the Commissioner of Transportation to convene rail corridor use advisory councils to advise and make

recommendations each time one or more governmental entities representing communities along a state-owned rail corridor request a review of non-rail recreational use or non-recreational transportation use of that rail corridor. While this bill was being considered and voted on last year, the state legislature modified a bill which called on the state to fund a feasibility study for restoring passenger rail service to Bangor either through Pan Am's "Back Road" from Lewiston /Auburn or the state owned "Lower Road" from Brunswick to Augusta and then on the former Pan Am's rail line to Waterville and Bangor. The modified bill that was passed, however, provided \$150,000 in state funds and \$50,000 from the major cities in Central Maine to conduct a propensity study, which examines where people travel to work, shop and seek medical care.

The "Lower Road Rail Corridor Advisory Council" which MEDOT is establishing appears to be a stacked deck, for only one person on the Committee represents passenger rail interests. Even worse, there are no representatives from either Waterville or Bangor which have provided funds for the propensity study. Although the law doesn't require representation from these communities, they should have a seat at the table, especially regarding decisions about the use of the "Lower Road" rail corridor.

Given the significant economic development potential of restoring passenger rail to Central Maine coupled with providing an alternative for the young and old and tourists who don't want to drive or can't afford to buy an all-electric car,

MEDOT should support a new bill which will be submitted to 131st legislature next year for a feasibility study for restoring passenger rail on the "Lower Road" to Augusta and beyond to Waterville and Bangor. Restoring passenger rail will also relieve ever increasing major highway congestion on I-95 and I-295 and help reduce carbon emissions which are the leading cause of climate change.

A completed "feasibility" study of a proposed new or restored passenger rail line is the first step required for a state to be eligible to be considered to apply to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA's) new Corridor I.D. Program, which has been created after the passage of the Federal Infrastructure and Jobs Act passed last year. The FRA will receive \$1.8 billion to pay for state service development plans, which are the next step in the process needed to receive federal funds for pre-engineering and environment assessment of new or restoring rail lines for passenger usage. MEDOT also needs to support and mention this endeavor in the State's rail plan which is currently being revised.

While the return of passenger service to Central Maine may take years to accomplish, it will put 90% of the state's population within one hour of passenger rail service, contribute to a cleaner environment and help build sustainable economic development. It is now past time for the MEDOT and state legislators to call for and fund a feasibility study to expand rail passenger service in Maine!

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 rrudolph1022@gmail.com, and get published!

