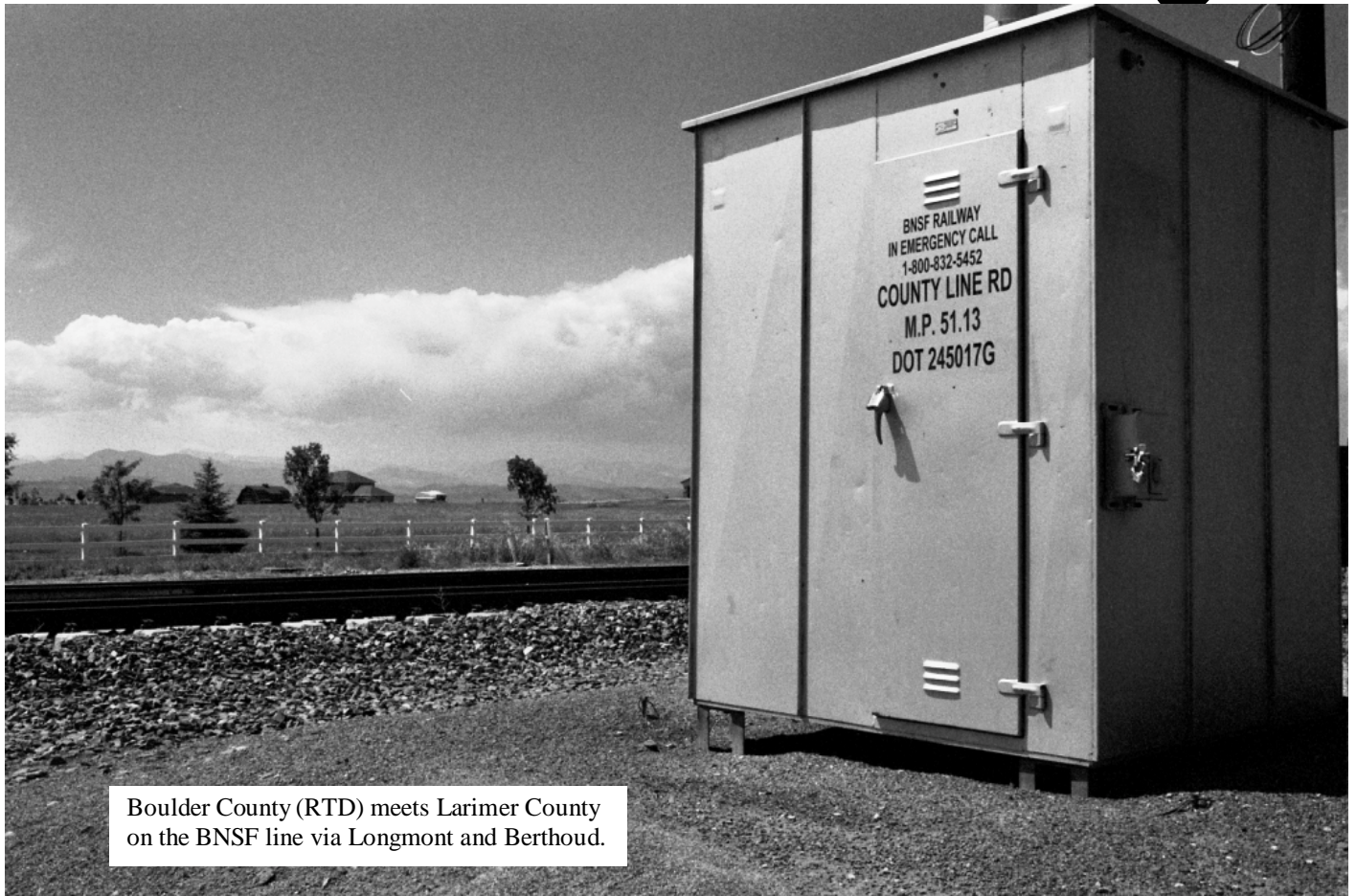


ColoRail Passenger

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Boulder County (RTD) meets Larimer County on the BNSF line via Longmont and Berthoud.

Crossing the border

A lonely signal box marks the dividing line between the Regional Transportation District's commuter rail plans and the less specific phases of planning for the North Front Range region's commuter rail lines, the studies of north-south high-speed trains and the Amtrak *Pioneer* study.

ColoRail's Fall General Meeting is set for Boulder on **Saturday, October 3rd at 2:00 p.m.** We'll be

meeting in the Boulder Public Library, where previous Fall meetings have been held. The room will be open at 1:30 p.m. so that members will have a chance to catch up with others from around the state.

One possibility crossing the Boulder-Larimer County Line is the restored Amtrak *Pioneer*. Robert Rynerson will report on the amazing conditions of stations in Wyoming, the status of Amtrak's study and what may

happen next. This will also be an opportunity for members to express their preferences on the alternative Wyoming and Colorado routes.

Updates on North Front Range commuter and regional service plans and information researched by Bob Brewster on Light Rail in other U.S. cities will also be offered.

Kansas improvements on SW Chief line? -- page 3.

"A Voice for Colorado's Rail Passengers"

Visit other cities and see how they are set up

Denver heads wrong way

By Bob Brewster, Vice-President, ColoRail

Several ColoRail members have recently visited other cities with operating light rail systems.

What did they all have in common? They either have placed, or are placing, LRT in close proximity to their heavier rail cousins for expeditious and convenient transfers between modes in a mutually beneficial manner. Cities visited were Minneapolis, Seattle, Portland, Sacramento, San Jose, and Los Angeles. Previous visits include Dallas, San Diego, Salt Lake City, St. Louis and Baltimore.

In every case, LRT is a very convenient distance from Amtrak and commuter rail services, either via a cross-platform connection, or a pedestrian underpass very much like Denver's current arrangement, or a short walk.

What would ever possess cities to make such investments? Could it be that the planners understand what it

takes to attract transit riders? Maybe they understand that time and convenience play a role in transit patronage.

In Denver, planning is being done with different goals:

- Light rail will be moved two blocks farther away from Denver Union Station and the other trains - the very opposite of all the other cities mentioned above.
- It is more important to place real estate development where the current platforms are.
- It is more important for single-occupant autos to claim the right-of-way on Wewatta Street, rather than light rail's crossing of it.
- It is more important to "activate" the new neighborhood by spreading out the transit components and the passengers thereon.

When the voters approved the FasTracks sales tax almost 5 years ago, what did they have in mind?

The best transit system their dollars would buy? Why should they accept anything less at this most important transit hub?

These questions are the foundation for ColoRail's legal action regarding Denver Union Station. There is only one opportunity to get it right and that is right now.

ColoRail urges all interested parties to attend the October 3rd general membership meeting, open to the public, at the Main Branch of the Boulder Library. Denver Union Station will be discussed and there may be some time to view the photographic evidence of how other cities value light rail.

Notes from ColoRail's president:

Well, it has been an interesting quarter year. The number one topic has been our lawsuit against the Federal Transit Administration. We have received their reply and have to make our reply by November 18th. This could all wrap up by mid-January, 2010.

Finances are a part of number one and we continue to work on getting the funds to continue our suit. We will need about \$25K to bring it to a successful, we hope, end. Our law team is optimistic, but there are no guarantees.

The national passenger rail scene still seems to be in a state of turmoil, no surprise there. Critics abound and some of them are spot on. If you are not a member of the Na-

tional Association of Railroad Passengers, I suggest that

you join. <www.narprail.org>.

If you are a member of NARP, but have not yet joined ColoRail, we hope that you enjoy this complimentary copy of the *ColoRail Passenger* and will participate in Colorado and Wyoming events. <www.colorail.org>

There are some slow, but positive, moves to bring a Ski Train back to DUS. Iowa Pacific Holdings, headed by Ed Ellis, is spearheading the move. They operate a number of short lines in the west, including the San Luis & Rio Grande.

Remember our next quarterly meeting, October 3rd, in Boulder.

-- Ira Schreiber

ColoRail Board and Colorado NARP Council Members:

(with telephone numbers and <e-mail addresses>

Ira Schreiber, President, Aurora (303-750-4507). <ischreiber@aol.com>

Bob Brewster, Vice-President, Boulder. <railbob@pop.ecentral.com>

Jay Jones, Secretary-Treasurer, Denver. <sunjones@earthtones.com>

Jay Jones, NARP Council Member, Denver. <sunjones@earthtones.com>

Eric Miller, NARP Council Member, Denver. <eric@rockrail.com>

Mike Rowe, Board Member, Boulder. <mikerowe@ecentral.com>

Don Zielesch, Board Member, Littleton. <dwz1@juno.com>

Robert Rynerson, Newsletter Editor, Denver. (720-570-0647) <rw.rynerson@att.net>

Reducing trip times and increasing reliability..."

(Continued from page 4)

approach is FRA Administrator Joe Szabo. When addressing a group of federal and state railroad planning officials in Chicago in late May, Mr. Szabo said, "We've got to stop worrying about achieving top-end speeds like they have in Europe or Asia and focus instead on reducing trip times and increasing reliability."

On the other hand, just one month later, Richard Harnish, Executive Director of the Mid-West High Speed Rail Association, announced the results of study commissioned by his group that calls for making immediate plans for trains that would travel at 220mph. July saw the founding of the US High Speed Rail Association whose vision is a 220 mph, 17,000 mile national high-speed rail system completed by 2030.

Though President Obama's call for the development of a "world class" high-speed rail system is inspiring, the level of funding proposed to achieve this goal is not. The president asked for and Congress approved \$8 billion for passenger rail as part of his stimulus package earlier this year with \$1 billion per year to follow for the next five years. Unfortunately, Congress has been making cuts in Amtrak's regular appropriation which may make it difficult to operate the national system at current levels.

In order to lay the foundation for a true high-speed rail network, initial funding should be limited to the following class of projects:

- Eliminate bottlenecks and constraints to high-speed service on existing corridors, the so called "low hanging fruit" criteria. Examples include reconstructing the Baltimore tunnels and ancient draw bridges in Connecticut on the NE Corridor, increasing track speed on the Albany-Buffalo Empire Corridor, and eliminating rail congestion in and out of Chicago.

- Replace or rehabilitate locomotives and rolling stock. The stimulus money could help reinvigorate the US passenger car building industry as well as modernize and expand Amtrak's fleet. Funds also could be utilized to upgrade Amtrak's dated maintenance facilities.

- Initiate cooperative ventures with communities and local/regional transit agencies. On too many occasions, passengers get off trains at dreary stations with no service or effective transit to convey them to their ultimate destinations. Stations need to be welcoming places, reflective of the pride citizens have in their communities. Transit needs to be an integral part of the trip.

If money is allocated for new 150+ mph corridors, then much of the available funds would have to be spent for studies. We need to take a break from studies and put money into some real passenger rail projects.

Jon Esty is Past President of ColoRail. He resides in Ridgway.

And Kansas shows us how...

From: Ronald Kaufman Date: Fri, 28 Aug 2009 10:22:03 -0500 Subject: KDOT Submits Passenger Rail Grant Applications.

KDOT submitted two final grant applications on August 24, 2009 to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for funding under the High Speed/Intercity Passenger Rail program. The completed Tracks 1a and 3 final applications and letters of support are available on the KDOT Passenger Rail website at www.ksdot.org/passrail.

The first application (Track 1a) is for \$7.6 million for track improvements on the *Southwest Chief* route between Emporia and Barclay. This is an in-

crease over the \$6.95 million submitted in the pre-application due to better cost estimates. The improvements will permit the Southwest Chief to increase its average operating speed in that section. Track 1a grants are funded with economic stimulus funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

The second application (Track 3) is for \$500,000 to prepare a Service Development Plan for intercity passenger rail service between Kansas City, Oklahoma City and Fort Worth. Track 3 grants do not use ARRA funds and require a 50 percent state match. Of the \$500,000 total project cost, KDOT has committed \$250,000 for the state match, of which the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) has committed up to \$125,000. We deeply appreciate this commitment from ODOT. This is a key application. A Service Development Plan, including environmental documentation, will be required to receive funding for Track 2 grants to implement passenger rail services. We will submit a third application (Track 2) by the deadline of October 2, 2009. It will be for \$10 million for signal and crossing upgrades between Newton and the Kansas/Oklahoma state line.

PLEASE NOTE: We do not expect to receive this funding because we will not have the required Service Development Plan or environmental documentation (mentioned above) to be eligible for a Track 2 award. It is impossible for KDOT to prepare a Service Development Plan before October 2 due to the detailed, comprehensive nature of such a plan. The Amtrak Expansion Feasibility Study (due later this year) will not be detailed enough to be a Service Development Plan, and it will not include environmental documentation.

We are confident there will be more federal funding opportunities in the future. In an August 25, 2009 article in the Wall Street Journal, Joe Szabo, FRA Administrator, said this grant program should be viewed as the beginning of a long undertaking similar to the effort to build the interstate highway system. He said people need to understand this isn't about winners and losers, that it is the beginning.

Alamosa area tourist line impresses

Bears watch 'trained' humans

by Ron Vander Kooi

Betty and I just returned from a circle trip of Colorado, observing, no Amtrak service in Grand Junction due to UP rerouting, two very FULL tourist trains each day in Durango, but the high point was riding, for the first time, the Rio Grande Scenic from Alamosa to LaVeta over LaVeta Pass.

The most interesting story there was that bears are almost always gathered (and they were for our both east and westbound runs) at a site between the two tunnels where a carload of barley was spilled and fermented some time ago.

Also, for anyone interested, Mr. Arlyn Van Ry, Manager of Passenger Services, told me in our conversations that he would like to have some sort of docent program on that train.

His phone numbers in the 719 area are 587-0522 (office) and 580-2521 (cell). If anyone cares to pursue this, you might call him. He would be pleasant to work with, and the ride is fine. He was working hard to make the train ride enjoyable, and

this new tourist railroad a success. The ride includes amenities with snacks, etc. and, full length domes are available.

www.riograndescenicrailroad.com/

View from the Ridge... by Jon Esty

Emerging vs. Express Speed Rail

Now that the excitement generated last spring by President Obama's enthusiastic support for high-speed rail has quieted down, advocates have settled into two camps as to how to proceed with the development of a high-speed passenger rail system. Some would like to move slowly with improvements that would gradually improve and expand existing Amtrak service on existing and possible new intercity corridors. Others would like to move immediately into planning

high-speed rail systems that would boost train speeds to over 200 mph.

While the top speed for Amtrak trains which don't operate in the NE Corridor is 79mph, new federal guidelines define a new class of speeds as: 90 to 100mph "emerging high-speed rail," 110-150 mph "regional high-speed rail" and 150mph and beyond "express high-speed rail."

Typical of the comments made by those supporting an incremental

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1550 Larimer St., Ste. 271
Denver, CO 80202