In November, California voters elected a President who is ostensibly pro-Amtrak, passed a state ballot initiative calling for $10 billion to be spent on high speed and regional rail, and passed numerous local rail funding measures including Los Angeles County’s Measure R half-cent sales tax. There is no doubt that voters want progress on rail.

Passengers who have seen trains fill to capacity on Metrolink, Pacific Surfliner, Capitol Corridor, and San Joaquin routes are impatient for progress on arrival of new cars. Voters who supported the rail measures because of claimed economic benefits and job creation want to see the projects start moving. Up until a few weeks ago, activists were sanguine about new expansions of rail service.

Now, the worldwide economic crisis, the budget-busting grants of billions of federal dollars to corporations, and California’s state budget crisis appear to be combining to threaten even meager existing levels of rail service. The hope that Federal economic stimulus spending might save the day for California rail is looking increasingly unlikely.

Early signals from the Obama camp, including his nominee for Transportation secretary Rep. Ray LaHood (R-IL), are that projects involving significant manual labor may have more appeal than ones involving lengthy engineering, design, and construction. In other words, track upgrades and highway paving projects are likely to trump high speed rail or new freeways because the facilities physically exist and can be worked on immediately.

The new President has sought to discourage expectations that new public works projects would be standard pork. “What we need to do is examine, what are the projects where we’re going to get the most bang for the buck? How are we going to make sure taxpayers are protected? You know, the days of just pork com-

CalRail 2020 attendees on November 9 tour of Siemens light rail and subway car fabrication plant in Sacramento.

Photo © by Randell Hansen
including the Chicago–Miami oil embargo, Jimmy Carter slashed back more damage. In the middle of the 1979, the junior Bush, Amtrak service was to Savannah, Georgia. However, under the administration oversaw three Amtrak cuts: the Chicago–Louisville segment of the Northeast bloc for any significant piece of its December meeting, “There is a lot of elation among rail supporters over the Democratic margin of majority in both houses. However, several key Republican Amtrak supporters won’t be returning in the 111th session and it shouldn’t be forgotten that most Amtrak routes were lost under Democratic, not Republican administrations. The current Bush administration oversaw three Amtrak cuts: the NY-Pittsburgh-Chicago Three Rivers, the Chicago-Louisville Kentucky Cardinal, and the segment of the Palmetto from Florida to Savannah, Georgia. However, under the junior Bush, Amtrak service was restored to Portland, Maine and frequency increased on the strongest corridors.

By comparison, Democrats did much more damage. In the middle of the 1979 oil embargo, Jimmy Carter slashed back Amtrak funding, forcing major route cuts including the Chicago–Miami Floridian, the North Coast Hiawatha, and the New York–Kansas City National Limited. Ronald Reagan vocally opposed Amtrak funding, but he never carried out any major cuts. Bill Clinton expressed support for intercity rail and did a photo-op where he donned an Amtrak conductor’s hat giving a thumbs-up. But halfway through his first term, Amtrak eliminated the LA-Las Vegas-Salt Lake City Desert Wind, the Seattle-Portland-Denver Pioneer, and cut the Texas Eagle back to tri-weekly.

**State Bill Eliminates Rail Funds**

AB 2, backed by Democratic leaders in the state legislature, removes gasoline and diesel sales taxes, a funding source for transit since 1972. Only the Governor’s reluctance to sign AB 2 in deference to Republicans who oppose a defacto tax increase has postponed a crisis for the state’s passenger rail operators. However, defection in the budget-delivering December 31 suggests the Governor is falling in line. If this provision becomes law, rail will have to compete against bigger fish (e.g.: education, health, and welfare) for already scarce General Fund monies. Anyone who thinks Caltrans has a chance to have a world class network of trains ought to think about what the loss of a dedicated source means for rail funding.

Huge permanent cuts are on the way, if AB 2 and its companion measures are signed and transit is not made whole by some other infusion of cash. The San Francisco Chronicle reported that the Bay Area may lose up to $20 million and San Diego’s rail operators may lose another $10-$17 million. California voters have repeatedly acted to approve more funds for rail and transit, most recently on the November ballot. The actions by the Legislature and the Governor are at odds with the will of the voters, as well as probably illegal, and are likely to generate major opposition once they come to light. Rail’s success at the ballot is about to be stolen if we let it.

Authors of the legislation seem to have this well in mind, as they have included a provision that any suit filed against the fund transfer has to be submitted within 90 days of passage of the act.

9 Transit Measures on Ballot

Nationwide, 23 out of 32 transit related measures passed on election night. In California alone, there were nine different transit/transportation related propositions.

1 – Prop 1A to authorize the sale of $9.95 billion in bonds to help establish a high-speed rail (HSR) passed by a vote of 52.6% to 47.4%. $950 million of the bond proceeds would go to local transit and rail providers to help connect them to HSR.

2 – Measure G in Sonoma and Marin Counties to help construct the SMART commuter train from Cloverdale to Larkspur was approved by an overall vote of 68% to 32%. The measure funds $450 million of construction and annual operating costs of $13.3 million.

3 – Measure V in Contra Costa and Alameda Counties to level a parcel tax on property owners to help fund AC Transit bus service passed 72% to 28%.

4 – Measure B in Santa Clara County needed 2/3 vote to have a 1/8 cent sales tax to help fund the $6.1 billion, 16 mile BART extension from Fremont to San Jose. The measure won with 66.78%, and a challenge of the count was not allowed.

5 – Measure V was passed by West Sacramento voters, 57.8% to 42.2% to continue the 1/4 cent tax until 2033 for general government purposes. Voters also approved 64.9% to 35.1%, Measure U which allocates some of the general purpose funds to a proposed streetcar project that will link West Sacramento to downtown Sacramento.

6 – Measure 2 in Stanislaus County, a better roads/safer streets initiative narrowly failed to reach 2/3 with a 66.4% yes vote. A fair share for transit might have helped.

7 – Measure 2 in Monterey County, which required 2/3 vote approval, on a 25-year ½ cent sales tax to help pay for congestion relief on highways 1, 68, 156, and 101 and bus service improvements, failed 62% to 38%.

8 – Measure A in Santa Barbara County which would renew a ½ cent sales tax for transportation projects was approved 76.63% to 23.37%.

9 – Measure R in Los Angeles County, which added a ¼ cent sales tax increase to help fund road and transit projects, was approved 76.3% to 23.7%. Likely projects include extensions of the Expo Line to Santa Monica and the Gold Line from Pasadena to Azusa.
D.C. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

in September, Congress expedited passage of legislation imposing new safety measures and reauthorizing Amtrak. Features of H.R. 6003/S.2094 and S.1889 were combined into one bill, H.R. 2095, the Railroad Safety Enhancement Act of 2008. Following a swift House voice vote, Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK) attempted to block a full Senate floor vote.

After members of both parties voted 69-17 to cut off debate, the Senate approved the bill October 1st with a vote of 74-24. Had Joe Biden (D-DE) and Edward Kennedy (D-MA) been present on the Senate floor, the vote would have likely been 76-24. Sen. Obama (D-IL) voted ‘yes’ and Sen. McCain (R-AZ) voted ‘no’. The White House had threatened to veto the bill’s predecessor H.R. 6003/S.2094 but on October 16th, President Bush signed the revised bill into law.

The bill authorizes $13.06 billion over five years for safety and high speed rail programs and overhauls the Amtrak Board of Directors. It addresses on-time performance and also requires a plan for bringing the Northeast Corridor to a state of-good-repair by 2018 and includes $1.5 billion for the Washington Metro subway over the next decade. Amtrak also must submit a safety enhancement plan to Congress. Sunset Limited New Orleans to Florida, the Pioneer Seattle-Salt Lake City and North Coast Hiawatha Seattle-Minneapolis.

Positive Train Control will be required on passenger and certain hazmat rail lines by 2015 and $250 million authorized in federal grants for the bill. It also guarantees each 12-hour work period have 10 hours of rest for railroad employees. It also requires studies and regulations on distracting devices like cell phones in locomotive cabs. The Safety Enhancement Act authorizes funds, but does not appropriate them, which will require subsequent legislation. The President also signed a continuing resolution to keep federal government programs, including Amtrak, at FY 2008 levels to March 6, 2009.

On November 19th, Senators John Kerry (D-MA) and Arlen Specter (R-PA) unveiled the High-Speed Rail for America Act of 2008, S.3400 which would provide $8 billion in tax-free bonds over a six-year period. Kerry (D-MA) and Arlen Specter (R-PA) were re-elected to another term in 2005, and the case was settled late in 2007. According to Amtrak spokesperson Cliff Black, Boardman “is a good supporter of Amtrak...he has been all along, in spite of what went on with New York state. He really has Amtrak’s best interests at heart and is very interested in seeing the company succeed.”

A SAFETY REPORT issued in December by a peer review panel on Metrolink operating practices indicated that the railroad needed to step up its monitoring of “safety critical” workers, primarily conductors and engineers. In addition to more frequent testing and video monitoring of “safety critical” work- crews, the railroad should overhaul what the panel called an antiquated rapid identification of problems…what the panel called an antiquated…system that was thwarting rapid identification of problems…they are going to have significant re-training…they are going to have significant re-training

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In the California 4th Congressional district longtime anti-transit voice Tom McClintock (R-CA) defeated Democrat Charlie Brown, who has spoken in favor of the Capitol Corridor and the Folsom Commuter Express bus. Dan Lungren (R-CA) who also voted against Amtrak and transit legislation this year was also re-elected in a re-match with Democrat Bill Durston, M.D. a supporter of passenger rail. After the election, Lungren lost a challenge of John Boehner (R-OH) as minority leader.

In the Senate, Amtrak opponent John Sununu (R-NH) lost in a re-match to former governor Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) 52% to 45%. Also in the Northeast, Amtrak supporters Susan Collins (R-ME) and Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) were re-elected on last year’s S.2094 but ‘yes’ on H.R. 2095 was re-elected to another term and long-time Amtrak supporter Richard Durbin (D-IL) was also re-elected.

Amtrak lost a couple of key Republican senators. Sen. John Warner (R-VA) retired from the Senate. His successor is former governor Mark Warner (D-VA), who defeat- ed another former governor Jim Gilmore (R-VA). Sen. Gordon Smith (R-OR), a recipient of NARP’s Golden Spike Award, also lost on last year’s S.2094 but ‘yes’ on H.R. 2095 was re-elected to another term and Amtrak supporter Richard Durbin (D-IL) was also re-elected.

In committee news, Henry Waxman (D-CA) won the chairmanship of the House Energy and Commerce Committee to succeed long-time auto industry ally John Dingell (D-MI).

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California Rail News encourages letters, comments, and stories on local issues. Please submit your mate- rials to California Rail News at the above address. Sorry, we do not guarantee return of photos or arti- cles submitted. Deadline for material to be included in the next issue of CRN is January 15, 2008.

REP. RAY LAHOOD (R-IL) is Obama's pick for Transportation Secretary. LaHood said at an Amtrak Transportation Secretary designate, “We have a task before us to rebuild America. As a nation, we need to continue to be the world leader in infrastructure development. We cannot stand by while our infrastructure ages and crumbles,... ALTHOUGH LAHOOD broke with his party to vote for an expanded Amtrak authoriza- tion last summer, and has sup- ported local transit, LaHood has close ties with the highway lobby and is a strong supporter of equipment manufacturer Caterpillar. He also appears to be rather conservative on climate change and environmental issues. . . . ATRAK’S NEW CEO is Joseph Boardman, former New York State Transportation Commissioner who recently headed the Federal Railroad Administration. The WHAD had a very public disagreement with Amtrak over its lack of prog- ress on refurbishment of New York’s Turbulent trains, however, which Amtrak in 2005, and the case was settled late in 2007. According to Amtrak spokesperson Cliff Black, Boardman “is a good supporter of Amtrak...he has been all along, in spite of what went on with New York state. He really has Amtrak’s best interests at heart and is very interested in seeing the company succeed.” . . .
California AB 3034 placed Section 117 million claimed by campaign brokers.

The fluidity of the Authority's San Francisco-San Jose high-speed rail plans has notable differences with the other two segments. A June 2008 report, poignantly titled The Authority's San Francisco-San Jose high-speed rail plan was released in early 2009. According to a recent conventional wisdom directed much of the Authority's overall business strategy towards greener electric power directly from an independent supplier. This is in illegal in California for anyone except those who secured suppliers before the energy crisis, or for cities and counties that combine customers under a “community choice” plan.笛卡尔的理论。the Authority would be further complicated because the rail lines cross several power supply jurisdictions. If HSRA elects to build new solar or wind power facilities, this would cost $1.4 to $2.8 billion up front. However, Navigant showed that electric supply from solar could be dispatched at mid-day and wind peaking at night would not match the daily energy demands of high-speed rail, which peaks in the morning and late afternoon hours. If solar or wind are relied upon, additional power supplies, either from the grid or built by the authority itself, may still be needed.

Not Public Private Partnership but Debt Financing & Borrowing
“Navigating the energy crisis, or for cities and counties that combine customers under a ‘community choice’ plan, the Authority would be further complicated because the rail lines cross several power supply jurisdictions. If HSRA elects to build new solar or wind power facilities, this would cost $1.4 to $2.8 billion up front. However, Navigant showed that electric supply from solar could be dispatched at mid-day and wind peaking at night would not match the daily energy demands of high-speed rail, which peaks in the morning and late afternoon hours. If solar or wind are relied upon, additional power supplies, either from the grid or built by the authority itself, may still be needed.

Fixing these problems will require either a new law allowing green energy purchases from an independent supplier, or new bond financing beyond the $6.5 billion bond project. One—or more likely both—of these will be necessary if high-speed rail is to live up to its potential for climate protection.

Acknowledging that provision of an alternative to the existing electrical distribution network is a part of the high-speed rail debate, the Authority has taken a step to address this concern. To date, the Authority’s RIR/EIS work has been limited to substations and other transmission and distribution generation and distribution impacts. The Authority is near capacity and there is no way for a high-speed rail network to piggyback on existing transmission lines, making it too expensive.

To pull itself out of a looming climate change crisis, HSRA commissioned energy consulting giant, Navigant, to examine opportunities for converting the high-speed rail system to 100% green electric power. This will allow the Authority to build high-speed rail lines while meeting the minimum generation and distribution. One of the greatest potential benefits of a high-speed rail line in California would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by avoiding fossil fuels to power the trains. Achieving this demand goal depends upon a number of factors. If ridership grows from 40 million to 70 million by 2030, 93 million passengers per year would be whizzing along at 180 miles per hour or more per hour. According to a recent conventional wisdom, some estimated that 10% of the regular electric rail claims to be the right call itself. This right would set the boundaries of the UNFCCC, or 30 million annually.

The proposed SF-LA travel time is longer than 3 hours.

True North for the Peer Review panel. One of the three segments is commercial.

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By Michael E. McGinley P.E.
TRAC Board Member

The tragic collision of a Metrolink commuter train and a freight train at Chatsworth on September 12, 2008, and the similar but less violent collision on the similar but less violent collision on November 20 have focused attention on railroad safety, both in the current service conditions and in the current service that could be filled this year at little or no cost.

Los Angeles Union Station, where only 2 of 11 daily Surfliners continue north, is arguably the location of the biggest gaps. Only 1 of those 7 Surfliners that ends in Los Angeles has a bus continuing up the coast, and only 1 has a useful weekend Metrolink connection to Ventura.

Rail2Rail, despite its name, never led to schedule coordination. Van Nuys, Oxnard, Ventura, Santa Barbara and Goleta need bus connections at a minimum.

Bus gaps are also physical. Switching from train to Thruway bus at L.A. involves negotiating a quarter-mile path from the train down a ramp, through the station to bus bays hidden away on the north side of the concourse, far from seating.

Seniors, those with impaired mobility, and anyone traveling with children or baggage are challenged by the current setup. Extension of trains to Van Nuys or Glendale, where cross-platform connections can be made, should be considered. Extension would likely be profitable, not only because the Los Angeles-Van Nuys segment is the most productive territory per mile on the Surfliners, but also since the move would open up the currently banned L.A.-Bakersfield travel market.

Moving the transfer to Van Nuys may only cut bus travel times by 20 minutes, but it would allow passengers to stay in train seats 45 minutes longer, save the need to hobble between distant platforms, and cut waiting time from the current 54-minute average down to a half-hour.

San Joaquin bus schedules have plenty of slack to absorb most train delays. Actual bus arrival times at Bakersfield averaged 45 to 70 minutes before train departure, and crews often wait until 10 minutes before whistle time to open up. There are a few benches under cover, enough for about 15 percent of passengers. Encouraging hospitality among San Joaquin crews would help dispel the current platform mood that reminds travelers that they are among the disenfranchised.

If train service is to have a future in California, the first priority is to close the service gaps that make most Californians think travel by train is too strenuous for them. Someday we may have high speed trains like in Europe. Today we at least need service that is not abusive.

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Positive Train Control Arriving Soon

PTC is not an autopilot; instead, it is a safety net. With a PTC system, the train operates and dispatchers still rely on dispatcher instructions and wayside signals. Meanwhile the PTC system is continually updating the train location and speed (using GPS and radio links). It compares this information to the signals and speed limits ahead of the train and continually updates the braking distance to stop safely short of any signal restriction.

If for any reason, the engineer fails to apply the brakes, PTC will intervene and stop the train. This is not a routine thing; it is a reportable event and the train must stay stopped until the issue is resolved.

Why isn’t PTC an autopilot? PTC relies on radio and GPS information and there are occasional skips in coverage, therefore it doesn’t offer universal coverage. However, by combining it with conventional operating practices, PTC offers more than a 1000-fold decrease in the risk of collision or overspeeding.

You will continue to see engineers running trains, hear dispatchers giving instructions, and signalmen keeping the lights lit; but by 2015 they will all have some smart technology backing them up.
Plans are shaping up for the annual CalRail2020 rail advocacy conference this fall on November 6, 7, & 8. Join us as we bring CalRail 2020 to the Ventura/Oxnard area for the first time. The 2009 conference will include a range of exciting speakers discussing California passenger rail issues with a focus on Southern California transit. We will also look at the first year of progress on California’s Prop. 1A, identifying which commuter and intercity projects from the $950 million pot are proceeding and which high speed rail initiatives from the $3 billion pot have found federal or private matches, as well as other ongoing progress on improving passenger rail service throughout the western states. For 2009, the conference’s popular Sunday excursion is planned for the Fillmore and Western Railroad with a look at the historic Santa Paula line and its potential for future regional service.

**Robert H. Huddy, L.A. County**
I have over forty years of continuous experience in transportation history, economics, operations, safety, analysis, planning, and advocacy, in the private and public sector. Retired Transportation Program Manager-Regional Transit and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Planning-Responsible for over $3 million in annual planning studies, demonstration projects, and special grants. I served as Manager for SCAG’s annual Transit Summit, transit operator issues, coordination with Transit Oriented Development, and traffic operations Issues and as a member of the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission and the ITS Regional Architecture Working Group. I was a project manager assigned to oversee the completion of the 710 Gap Closure issue, including tunnel options and innovative finance strategies. My previous employment includes experience in environmental and air quality planning. This involved special projects dealing with freight and rail passenger issues. In addition, I was employed by the Southern Pacific Transportation Company with 17 years in rail operations experience, including certifications up to railroad engineer. An early member of CRC as a representative from the United Transportation Union, I urged the Union’s involvement in supporting the growth in rail passenger in California from the 1970’s to what we have today.

I also had extensive public service as Transportation Commissioner for the City of Pasadena and lead many activities that resulted in final completion of the Gold Line, as well as other transportation polices and actions (e.g. ARTS Bus, Dial-a-ride, Transit Oriented Development) that make Pasadena an example of a transit-friendly city.

I have served on numerous task forces, committee’s, professional organizations, and have published numerous presentations and professional papers in transportation planning.

I am a graduate of California State University Los Angeles, BA Economics.

I have been married 26 years to Denise Aronow.

**Ron Lewis, Ventura County**
I was born and raised on a farm in Northern Colorado. My first exposure to railroad was the Great Western Railway crossed through my dad’s farm. I first rode Great Western Engine 51 when I was around 6 years old. While hanging out by the corrals, next to the tracks where 51 was doing some switching work in Windsor, CO the engine stopped, the fireman asked me if I wanted to ride and the rest is history... I am now retired from a 45-year career with State Farm Ins. Co. in management and as an agent in Woodland Hills. I earned my BSBA Degree at the University of Redlands and I also hold a CPCU Designation in insurance and other degrees in insurance as well. In addition, I have been an active member in the Santa Clara River Valley Railroad Historical Society since 1995 and currently serve as President of the Society for my third year.

My hobbies include rail travel, photography, G Scale railroad, and of course anything to do with the 1 to 1 scale. I am committed to assisting the Ventura County Transportation Commission and Metrolink to increasing and improving rail travel in Ventura County. I am intensely interested in seeing the completion of the extension of the old Southern Pacific Branch line from Montalvo to Santa Clarita and the addition of Metrolink access on that line.

I bring much experience in business management and a strong love for railroad travel. I am committed to improving our rail transportation system in any way possible.

**Justin Walker, L.A. County**
Justin Walker, born and raised in Southern California, has been subject to the same transportation problems others face. As a transportation advocate, he has been involved in several major transportation projects. He has promoted a more balanced transportation system, integrating the complementary elements of freeways, urban rail, intercity rail, buses, bicycles, and pedestrian facilities. Justin is himself an avid transit user and bicyclist.

For the past three years, Justin has been a member of the Train Riders’ Association of California (TRAC) and the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP), and The Transit Coalition.

When NARP announced its intentions to launch grassroots campaigns for each of Amtrak’s long-distance trains, Justin was recommended to lead the Coast Starlight team, today known as the Coast Starlight Communities Network (CSCN). The group has been involved with the recent relaunch of the Coast Starlight and is constantly in contact with legislators to help improve rail travel within and between California, Oregon, and Washington. Justin has been recognized for his work with the Coast Starlight team by the leadership of several transportation advocacy organizations.

Due to his involvement in Southern California transportation issues, Justin is the most recent addition to the Board of Directors of the Transit Coalition. He has testified before the Los Angeles City Council in support of California high-speed rail and the recent Amtrak reauthorization bill.

As a current student at the University of Southern California Viterbi School of Engineering, Justin will graduate in 2012 with a B.S. in civil engineering. His experience with transportation policy prompted an instructor to have Justin compose and lead a recent lecture in transportation. Most recently, Justin, as a local college student, doubled his efforts for smart transportation policy by joining his campus chapter of the California Public Interest Research Group (CalPIRG) as a transportation advocate. His extensive campaign efforts contributed to the victory of the Prop 1A high-speed rail measure and Measure R rail improvement. Justin will remain with CalPIRG after the election as a transportation advocate on ongoing needs for our transportation system.

An excursion on Fillmore & Western cars using the Santa Paula branch is planned for Sunday November 8. Ventura County envisions future commuter service on the route.
Californians are Building a Rail Future at Sacramento Car Plant

By Michael E. McGinley P.E. TRAC Board Member

Californians worried about the future of US manufacturing jobs and the economy should consider the Siemens plant in Sacramento: Since 1992, up to 500 employees have been building Light Rail Transit (LRT) vehicles for 14 cities, including Sacramento, Houston, San Diego, Los Angeles, Denver, Calgary, and St. Louis.

Statewide, Siemens employs about 6,500 Californians engaged in electric power, medical technology, communications, water treatment, and financial services. Worldwide, Siemens is a recognized leader in all of these fields and more.

The site at 7464 French Road, about 8 miles south of the Capitol, is where about 100 new LRT cars will be built and shipped this year and the next. This report is from the tour that about 50 attendees at the Cal Rail 2020 conference experienced on Sunday, November 9th. Here are our tax dollars at work, building rail cars and keeping Californians employed.

From the outside we see a clean, landscaped set of buildings. Shining on the roof and covering adjacent parking areas are solar panel arrays, capable of supplying about half of the plant’s electric needs. Siemens has become one of California’s leading technology companies, and trains are far from their only specialization.

Behind the buildings are a short test track (with overhead wire) and the main line of the Union Pacific. Passengers on Sacramento-branch San Joaquin can see the plant a few minutes south of Sacramento.

Why Sacramento? Because certain public transit project procurements have statutory requirements that vehicles be assembled in California or the United States and because there was available industrial land near a potential customer, the Sacramento Regional Transit District.

One of the cleverest features of the plant is the big orange transporter: it can move whole rail cars between bays in the plant and deliver them to the test track or a truck or railroad car for shipment. It is the biggest radio controlled “toy” any of us had seen! We are looking at four seats, flooring, wiring, air conditioning, controls, wheels, door operators, and thousands of other hits and pieces fill in the body shell and make it a functional LRT. Each unit carries its own identity tag, so workers can see who has bought it and when it is due to ship. Quality control and inspection are a part of all steps.

Surprisingly, some urban political leaders do not welcome manufacturing plants. Some communities are more focused on creating parks or open space than on creating jobs and a strong tax base. However Sacramento can be proud of the jobs, the appearance, and the tax base created by Siemens and their 500 employees. The facility is still growing, with $26 million being invested in a 100,000 square foot expansion of the Sacramento plant, that will mean up to 200 new jobs next year.

Every economic decline can have a silver lining. Recently, the housing downturn made it possible for the company to buy a 10-acre site near the existing 13-acre plant to expand welding and introduce a machine shop where wheelsets will be manufactured by Sumner 2009.

Also, if not for the 2006-2007 U.S. dollar decline against the euro, the light rail truck work probably would have stayed at a Siemens factory in Austria, instead of coming to the booming new Sacramento facility. Continuing investment means the plant is poised to become a major factor in creation of California’s rail future.

CallRail 2020 attendees explore the Siemens rail car manufacturing plant in Sacramento. Siemens began car body production in Sacramento two years ago, is expanding welding operations, and will open a light rail wheelset machine shop in 2009. With huge potential orders on the way, business is booming in the midst of a recession. Photos © by Randell Hansen

S70 low floor car for Houston (above) near completion, along with one (below) at an earlier stage of assembly.