High Speed Bait and Switch

$8 BILLION BILL TO PRODUCE ZERO MILES OF HSR

by Richard F. Tolmach

SB 1029, the $8 billion trailer bill for high speed rail jammed through the State Senate by a single vote just before adjournment on July 6, provides no high-speed service for the next decade and no prospect of an eventual statewide network, because it consumes so much of existing bond funding in one huge gulp. Advocates of high-speed rail with the longest history of support have expressed the most anger about the fraudulent bill.

Sen. Joe Simitian (D-Palo Alto) delivered a stinging critique of SB 1029, including its lack of an operable segment (see Page 7), but most Senators remained ignorant of specifics and voted the party-line. The bill was in print for only 48 hours before the vote and no public testimony was permitted by the Senate.

150 years of progress in public works fraud informed the swift action. Optimum use of shell game technique requires that before the deal is cut, media and public attention must be distracted by so many changes in details that no news reporter, let alone a legislator or taxpayer, can keep the facts straight.

Naming “Borden to Corcoran” as a starter line in 2010 apparently was no strategic error by the High Speed Rail Authority (HSRA). “Nowhere to nowhere” descriptions now seem part of a conscious process to turn off public attention and media coverage. It was not a sign of incompetence that the endpoints kept changing. Scrambling the details allows HSRA to play fast and loose with project scope and entitlements to contractors.

What remains standing with no fatal construction problems is the 25 mile Madera-Fresno leg, a fraction of the 170 mile Merced-Bakersfield line touted by recent Authority press releases. Its utility is questionable.

Perhaps it is a miraculous coincidence, but that route from Madera to Fresno now most closely resembles the plan hatched by the Fresno County Railroad Committee two decades ago to relocate the then-AT&SF Railway to run adjacent to Union Pacific. Plans languished for two decades due to lack of state funds for an obvious piece of local pork, but Fresno politicians have retained an unreasonable attachment to the project, with Council Member Brian Calhoun calling BNSF rails “a dagger through the heart of our city.”

The railroads were never very interested in the plan but Fresno land speculators are so keen on it that the County’s Measure C set aside $100 million for the purpose. A more lavish recent set of plans proposed a whole new western bypass of Fresno usable by both nonstop high-speed trains and freight. That plan was pronounced dead in 2011, but persistent rumors say Fresno rail relocation is very much alive and has only shape-shifted.

What was the thinking behind this multi-billion project? If mile-kng freight trains and diagonal grade crossings are removed from a swath of Fresno, the theory is that property in the zone becomes much more valuable. The project might be impossibly expensive, but if funding is covered by Sacramento and (Continued on Page Two)
SWITCHED FROM HIGH SPEED TO PORK

(Continued from Front Page)

Washington, locals in the know stand to hugely benefit.

Those probably include High-Speed Rail Authority Vice Chair Tom Richards who has an uncertain future at real estate holdings in the center of Fresno, as well as Rep. Jim Costa (D-Fresno), his donation recipient, author of the high-speed project and responsible for many of its current flaws. For two years, rail advocates have puzzled over how the Federal government could have mandated that construction of the high-speed rail network must begin in the Central Valley instead of serving one of California’s many congested corridors.

Astonishment about Fresno’s primacy has traveled all the way to London’s Financial Times, which on July 17 carried a Pythonish send-up of the plan. “So rather than Los Angeles and San Francisco or San Francisco and Sacramento, the first stretch of high-speed track laid in the US will connect the mighty metropolises of Bakersfield and Fresno,” quipped FT writer Matthew Garrahan.

The Wall Street Journal, naming Costa as the project’s “godfather,” said the project may never be built because of legal challenges, “but it will save a few Democratic seats.”

Costa appears to have engineered the FRA mandate. Los Angeles Times political writer George Skelton reported that Costa, a leader among conservative “Blue Dog” Democrats, voted for Obama’s health care reform in exchange for a promise that high-speed rail construction would start in his district. Costa denied the charge to a WSJ opinion staffer.

Only a covert earmark, however, would explain the switch of the first construction segment from Fresno-Bakersfield to Fresno-Merced earlier this year. Costs jumped from Fresno to Bakersfield to district 16 from Fresno to Merced (map above) and so did the starter line. The track may never become high-speed rail, but it is in his district.

California’s high-speed rail project has a second Bermuda Triangle where companies and NIDLS stop functioning, in the vicinity of Mojave and Palmdale. The 45 extra miles added to serve the Antelope Valley blew the legally mandated 2 hour 40 minute SF-LA schedule, but that didn’t matter to successors of Metrolink tracks from L.A. to Palmdale, giving XpressWest Las Vegas to Victoria trains access to L.A. Voters were sold L.A. to S.F. trains plus smart growth, but are being switched to a chance of Las Vegas trains plus parking the high desert.

Rail activists and farmers decried the legislature’s failure to rejoin in the project, but not all observers were willing to let corruption be the last word. Attorney Mike Brady, once he became convinced the Senate would pass SB 1029, walked from the State Capitol to Sacramento Superior Court, where he filed an amended complaint for Kings County and two residents in the path of the project.

His suit asks the Court to make a finding that spending state bond funds on the initial construction segment and unrelated projects violates the terms of Proposition 1A and is an illegal expenditure under California law for the following reasons: (1) no electrification, (2) lack of an operable segment, (3) lack of adequate committed funding, (4) trip times longer than the promised 2 hours, 40 min in Prop 1A, (5) need for an operating subsidy; (6) inability to meet the Prop. 1A mandate to complete project by 2020, and (7) inability to meet the Prop. 1A promise of a “one-seat ride” from Los Angeles to San Francisco. The suit is likely to go to trial sometime in early 2013.

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California Rail News
July-September 2012
Private Projects Proceed as HSRA Devises Public Scam

Italy’s private operator NTV chose Ferrari red for new trains. Photo: NTV S.p.A

The 2012 Business Plan of the High Speed Rail Authority (HSRA) says private capital refuses to invest in high-speed rail without government taking all the risk. However, 3 new services in Florida, California, and Italy are proceeding without revenue guarantees or decades of delay, giving a lie to the claim.

A new privately operated passenger train service will link Miami, Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach and Orlando starting in late 2014. Florida East Coast Railway plans to run “All Aboard Florida” service on 200 miles of flat and straight FEC right-of-way along the coast from Miami to Cocoa, where it will turn west towards Orlando on 40 miles of new track and develop what will be about 1.4 billion. Feasibility studies into the new service began in late 2011, and by this spring had delved into ridership and final engineering. Service is planned to begin in 2014, and by this spring the project has been completed and does not require additional federal right-of-way.

Service span is from 6 AM to 9 PM, and travel time is 3 hours, 2 minutes versus a typical 4 hour drive time. FEC plans are advanced enough that ten trainsets will be ordered this summer. Construction will begin by the first half of next year. A segment of the proposed line would run up to 125 mph, meeting the USDOT definition of high speed rail. The project intends to achieve an average speed of 80 mph, similar to Amtrak’s Acela Express between New York and Washington, DC.

Meanwhile, Southern California’s first high-speed trains will likely be private ones to Las Vegas. XpressWest, which already has lined up $1.4 billion of private finance, advanced its plans for a 150 mph line to Las Vegas costing $6.9 billion. L.A. County Metro is working with XpressWest on links to Los Angeles via Metrolink trains and a Victorville - Palm Springs line. The regionwide reach of Metrolink substantially improves the revenue potential of the Victorville-Las Vegas line.

Andrew Mack, CEO of XpressWest points out that the environmental review process is complete, all required federal right-of-way approvals are in place, as well as required licensing and approvals to construct and operate. With $345 average one way fares, XpressWest claims its projected revenues can cover its operating cost and capital costs. Once $5.5 billion in federal funds are issued, the company expects to rapidly begin track construction and purchase of equipment, with service expected within 4 years.

In April, a private Italian operator led by the chairman of Ferrari, Nuovo Trasporto Viaggiatori (NTV), began competing on eight state-owned Trentitalia lines centered on Rome. Luca Cordero di Montezemolo, in a recent Reuters interview, smiled at the idea he was addicted to risk and velocity. “Yes, speed and risk,” he said. “I think an entrepreneur has to risk it. If not, it is not an entrepreneur anymore.” NTV has bought 25 of the world’s fastest and lightest Alstom trains.

Luca and investors (one is France’s SNCF) are betting $1.3 billion they can provide profitable high-speed service, using EU rules that opened tracks to competition in 2011. “We…end one of the longest monopolies in the history of our country. Finally, Italian travelers and tourists can choose,” he told Reuters.

NTV aims to grab 25 percent of Italy’s high-speed train market by 2014 and break even the same year. It hopes to attract 8 to 9 million passengers a year. NTV intends to win riders away from Trentitalia by offering better onboard service and amenities like Wi-Fi, live television and first-run films. NTV offers meals by tony caterer Eataly and seating by luxury furniture maker Poltrona Frau. Trains make the Rome-Milan run in about three hours, no faster than Trentitalia. Montezemolo bets that travelers will choose NTV for ambiance, service and ride quality.

What do Florida, Las Vegas, and Italy have that we lack? Ways for private capital to participate in state projects. A world leader in this area is HSRA, which proposed in 2010 that California open its high-speed rail project to private investors, but HSRA kept the idea a state secret for two years.

SNCF America, a subsidiary of the French national rail operator, told HSRA in 2010 that private capital could finance a statewide system, shouldering all risk beyond $8 billion of state bonds and $3 billion of FRA grants, but it would require state officials to relinquish rights to determine routings and contractors. SNCF saw the 48-mile SPLA route picked by the Authority as hopelessly slow and costly, and thought costs could be halved.

SNCF proposed HSRA pick an operator for the system, not necessarily SNCF. It pointed out only operators of profitable high-speed rail are competent to choose routes or optimize use of capital. The idea sank because our state officials are using high-speed rail to distribute political pork, not as a way to produce a successful high-speed rail system.

When SNCF’s idea surfaced July 9, HSRA officials went into overdrive to try to attack the source. It is a hit too late. Denis Douté, author of the SNCF America proposal died six months before on January 9, about the day the Romeos of Ark told HSRA he was resigning. The world has changed since Douté died. HSRA projects of Florida, Las Vegas, and even Italy look far more honest than those of Gov. Brown, and little hope of reform remains.

Longer Weekend Service on L.A. Metro subway and light rail is now providing Friday-Sunday night service to 2 AM, responding to board action in May adopting an expanded operating budget. It has made a measurable improvement, especially for young adults without cars… THE ONE BRIGHT SPOT on use of HSR funds is that Los Angeles Union Station track improvements are proceeding without any potential of the Victorville-Las Vegas line.

Metrolink substantially improves the revenue picture. AMTRAK has a new $1.4 billion of private finance, and is working with XpressWest on links to Los Angeles via Metrolink trains and a Victorville - Palm Springs line. Metrolink substantially improves the revenue picture.

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By Richard T. Tolmach

On every side of the Alps, remarkable railway enterprises are redefining what is possible to accomplish with new thinking applied to traditional infrastructure. These systems need to wake up, because at the same time our state seems unable to build new local rail or high speed tracks for less than $70 million a mile. Europeans are showing how to do it, for as little as $4 million a mile.

In Italy’s Val Venosta, a regional branch line that had grown weeds for 15 years is now an engine for tourism and eco-friendly development. It is a model worthy of emulation, because it combines low capital cost, a popular and affordable service plan, full handicapped access, sensible reuse of a historic resource, and encouragement of smart growth along a 37 mile corridor.

The 2005 upgrade of the line used the same type of lightweight diesel-electric multiple unit trains recently chosen by Denton County, Texas. The entire cost of the Val Venosta reconstruction project was approximately $150 million, including all the new platforms and 11 cars.

The Val Venosta’s complicated social history is key to understanding the fate of the 20th Century. Until World War I, the region was part of the Austrian Empire’s province of Tyrol. Tyrol had a multicultural feel, with Tyrolean German spoken as much as Italian. Virtually every place name has an Italian and German version.

The Val Venosta railway was opened in 1886. By 1964, the Austrian railway company AG Vinschgaubahn, it was through-tracked into the Italian valley Adige River from Meran to Mals. The line was originally meant to connect its west end in South Tyrol to its east end in the Venetian region and division of Southern Tyrol from Austria put that idea on ice.

The construction was occupied by Italian forces in November 1918 and annihilation of the Tyrolean/German in 1920 as the Alto Adige. Service was taken over in 1918 by the Italian State Railways in the Republic of South Tyrol. But, for a long time, they didn’t seem to have much use for the line. For the next 60 years, FS didn’t really care. The old line had little for the infrastructure of the railway, although it did build a turntable in Mals for freight trains.

Rumors of impending closure of the line started in 1961. Hardly any freight was being handled, and the decision of the South Tyrolean Valley cooperatives in the 1960’s to transport apples by truck. In 1985, there were some hopes of modernization, as renewals of various sections of tunnel and track took place. For example, between Tschach and Kastelbell. On the other hand, most of the railway still dated from 1860. The alignment of the adjacent Meran-Bolzano tracks in 1934 made the Val Venosta line a costly stand-alone operation.

FS had an ever-increasing operating deficit and was determined to dismantle, especially ones with sufficient infrastructure on the perimeter. By 1987, the Venosta Valley railway was classified as a “zona secco” (dry branch) and targeted for abandonment.

The threat was marked by conspicuous indifference by FS to traffic. In the 1980’s, during the summer months with the most tourist traffic, branches were closed from Lombardy to replace trains, ostensibly to allow stall vacations or hunting excursions. In recent years, the FS schedule consisted of only three weekday round trips. On June 9, 1990 the last scheduled FS train rolled through the Venosta.

Buses run by the Südtirol/Alto Adige regional operator SAD took over service. Discontent by locals and tourists with the increase in road traffic in the Val Venosta led to many voices calling for a reopening of the rail service. A threat by locals to withhold taxes apparently didn’t hurt.

In 1999 the line was turned over to the South Tyrol regional government, which rebuilt it from 2004 to 2004 under the leadership of the STA (Transportstrukturen AG) Inc., a publicly-owned enterprise. Regional bus operator SAD Transport Ltd and the SBA (Südtiroler Bahnanlagen GmbH, Infrastruktur) participated in the project.

The operational concept was developed by the engineering firm Willi Hüsler, Zurich. Though life-expired rails and crossties had to be entirely replaced, even this proved to be advantageous. The new infrastructure uses Y-shaped metal crossties that are more stable than concrete ties for light trains, require less capital cost and are cheaper to maintain. Also, the fact the old rails never had been removed in the decade and a half of abandonment preserved the right-of-way from alternate uses such as highways, and the line never completely disappeared from public consciousness.

Historic train stations were restored and, where necessary, supplemented with new buildings in a uniform modern design. At several stops, station buildings were converted to bicycle rental businesses. Especially in the summer months, trains are often overloaded. In periods of high demand, bicycle capacity is often inadequate. Because of this, cyclists at intermediate stations are only exceptionally served, with preference given to bicycle pass holders.

The revived Val Venosta railway makes full use of the low-floor capability of the new cars by providing level boarding at all stations. No lifts, or expensive high platform or other measures are required, so seniors and handicapped find the service very accessible. Cars have “Flexi” space adjacent to each door with ski racks, bicycle racks, fold-down seats and open areas for luggage and strollers.

Meran station and several other train stops serve as hubs linking to the integrated SAD bus network. From the re-opening of the line in May 2005, trains departed weekly matching the rhythm of bus schedules, which for a period of time remained unchanged in the Val Venosta.

This trial operation phase was intended to gain experience in operating and identify needed improvements. To keep travel time from Mals to Meran around an hour, a set of express runs now runs in the peaks, but east of Kastelbell stops only at the larger towns. These trips fill in to provide roughly half-hour coverage in bigger markets. A few daily GTW runs also serve Bolzano, filling in missing commuter runs on the Trentinana-operated Meran-Bolzano line.

Ridership success on the lightly populated Val Venosta has led to study of a line to Switzerland. Photo: © R. Tolmach

By 2007, traffic on the “dry branch” to Malo overtook that on the Trentinana main lines from Bolzano on the Brenner Pass. Especially in the summer months, trains are often overloaded. In periods of high demand, bicycle capacity is often inadequate. Because of this, cyclists at intermediate stations are only exceptionally served, with preference given to bicycle pass holders.

Timed Swiss PostBus connections to Zürich serve the majority of trains. In 2010, a century after original plans, a feasibility study began considering a 40-mile rail link westward from the Val Venosta into Switzerland’s Lower Engadine. It is intended to close the biggest remaining strategic gap in the European railway network. Given the fragility of the region, it is likely to cost no more than $170 million per mile.

California has not been so frugal or smart about its rebuffs of railways or use of DMU equipment. Although both Northern San Diego County’s Sprinter and Sonoma Marin’s SMART took over old rail grades and rebuilt track, neither got lightweight equipment or cost-effective platforms.

Largely due to freight accommodation, average cost per mile on Sprinter was $22 million. SMART’s board bailed at the price tag for a more lavish system and chopped expenditure down to a 38-mile line. In California the region is likely to cost more than $40 million per mile. California has never been so frugal or smart about its rebuffs of railways or use of DMU equipment.

The investment of capital for a HSR system has virtually been proposed as State bonds (debt), Federal grants or loans (debt), direct tax revenues, or private investment (often provided through debt). With no firm grasp of whose money was involved, the state’s HSR effort has been dramatically, the lead consulting engineers, were often paid but indicated that investments must justly themselves.

The competing forms of transportation infrastructure have been studied by additional means, with every single vehicle (or vehicle group) having new costs, but near-term generation of new vehicles, with adjacent need for investment to the investor who provide the capital._

Although the overall analysis that the sum of the incremental cost of any common mode yields more than any alternative transportation mode. The new step is self justified and attractive enough to investors and tax payers that the investment is simply too big an investment to do in one increment; none of the benefits are attained until the whole system is in operation.

Perhaps we have lipped too far down the California slope, but for the moment we were not supposed to question exactly whose money was going to be used. To the extent that thinking is found in the intellectually simple, but very expensive designs adopted by the author-

We need regional and local lines throughout the state that take passengers as if they were people. The new infrastructure will greatly increase the value of public transportation and will feed riders to the future HSR core routes and each has value on its own.

By Michael McGlinsey, P.E.

First, a confession: I was an early advocate for high-speed rail (HSR). I had ridden several lines in Europe, I embraced the overall calculus of the efficiency of transportation, I was bored driving I-5, I deplore the current regimen of commercial aviation, and I deeply suspect that California would soon develop a world-class system. Things have gone terribly wrong.

The fukrum of my about-face is capital investment, as is true of all national public or private enterprise. In the 1980’s, as the banking industry was becoming more skeptical of investments in railroads, A.M. Weil wrote a comprehensive book, The Economic Theory of the Location of Railways, covering both the technical design of railroads and the markets that justify their construction. His preamble reads: “An examination of the conditions controlling the laying out of railways to effect the maximum economic profit. What a good idea!”

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We need regional and local lines throughout the state that take passengers as if they were people. The new infrastructure will greatly increase the value of public transportation and will feed riders to the future HSR core routes and each has value on its own.
Express freight, a category of traffic largely handled by railroads worldwide, is not quite dead in the United States, but has received only scant investment and little strategic study. Its surprising survival is due to demands by express companies, shippers, and freight forwarders that railroads provide the service. America’s USPS, UPS and FedEx still want faster deliveries. One repeated problem is that certain American railroads, unless they receive constant pressure from customers, tend to degrade any given service product to the point that no longer attracts a market.

This was the fate of earlier West Coast experiments with intermodal rail traffic including overnight delivery between Los Angeles and the Bay Area. Individual shippers weren’t powerful enough to insist on reliable service, so the overnight traffic gravitated back to truck haulage.

These days, only pirate firms like Kansas City Southern and Florida East Coast respect small shippers. Fast freight trains on Class I carriers exist but only on long hauls. The fastest train on the BNSF and Union Pacific in terms of elapsed time are not passenger trains but unit trains of express operated for UPS and FedEx, who apparently have the political clout to get what they need from the railroads.

Why is this? Passengers no longer seem to have the political clout to obtain speed improvements, and even high-speed rail projects have been perverted by politicians and land speculators into pork barrels for particular districts, spending the billions but forgetting about speed improvements.

This is exactly what happened to the Illinois high-speed rail project on Union Pacific tracks, when UP informed public agencies after a decade of progress that they would allow their track to be upgraded to 110 mph but not to expect faster Amtrak trains. Even dedicated high-speed lines here no longer seem able to deliver.

The European case is typically opposite. Miniscule public investments brought great speed gains. The original TGV-South in France, built to serve the needs of the French National Railway needing additional freight capacity, available most economically by rail. Only France and Germany have the political clout to create the conditions for a 190 mph line that elevated highways would.

After years of decline in the express freight sector in Europe, an association of shippers has emerged to propose a network of high-speed freight trains linking primary international airports. Euro Carex (Cargo Rail Express) has tried to outline market opportunities and needs for high-speed rail freight, and initiate debate with potential rail operators including SNCF, SNCB, DB, Eurostar, and Deutsche Bahn.

Carex consists of Air France-KLM Cargo, FedEx, the French Post, Dutch express company TNT, UPS and the logistics company World Freight Systems. The French rail manufacturer Alstom is also associated with the group. On March 20, the group conducted a first demonstration of the concept, using a TGV postal set film-coated in the colors of Euro Carex.

TGV Euro Carex No. 272/4, loaded pallets of air freight at SNCF’s Lyon-Saint Exupery airport TGV station, and departed at 4:42 pm, running at 160 mph to arrive less than two hours later at Charles de Gaulle Airport. The next day it proceeded at 62 mph to Eurostar’s downtown London St Pancras station via the Channel Tunnel. Heathrow was the preferred destination, but there are many obstacles.

The idea was to prove high-speed rail can carry express freight packages and pallets currently shipped by road and air. A workable system requires design of new trains capable of loading and unloading in 20 to 30 minutes, and running at speeds up to 186 mph. Alstom and Siemens have done preliminary engineering on high-speed freight trains as well as support systems.

Siemens has designed an automated loading system involving flip-top versions of its ICE trains that could handle a variety of loads including pallets and certain containers. Alstom proposes purpose-built single-level versions of its tall TGV Duplex, with floors at the level of wheelestrans, providing capacity for the majority of shipment types that currently fly. If the project launches, Alstom will likely create a new train, because there is pressure to increase storage space on longer-distance TGVs.

The Carex association aims to connect major European airports by rail, beginning on short 200 to 400 mile segments to replace highway and air shipments. The idea is certainly attractive, but lining up investors is where challenges remain.

Carex estimates an initial network with Paris-CDG, Amsterdam, Lyon-St. Exupery, London, Cologne and Liege requires eight trainsets, costing a total of about $300 million. Eventually, 26 trainsets costing about $1 billion would be needed for a larger network including Bordeaux, Marseilles, and Frankfurt, then Italy and Spain.

“It’s a great idea, I believe. But I do not know when,” Guillaume Pepy, SNCF president told a European trade publication. He added, “everything will depend on the European regulatory environment.”

No EU policy clearly supports alternative modes by reducing congestion or carbon offsets, so high-tech fast freight will have trouble paying for its advantages. This may change. Carbon offset taxes, delayed for a decade, are now expected in 2013 in France. Fuel prices, air traffic restrictions, and heavy truck legislation imply a rising price for the alternatives to using rail.
SUMMARY OF SIMITIAN TESTIMONY

Before the Senate vote, Simitian listed the actions he took as a legislator in support of high-speed rail, saying he still believes in the vision of a statewide network of high-speed rail that pointed out, “even though I am against this project today. We’re being asked to vote on a particular plan. So the question we have to ask ourselves today is, even if you support the vision, is this the plan that is worthy of our support?” Simitian also focused on jobs, “This isn’t a lot about public transportation. This is a question about whether or not we generate good jobs with the right plan or the wrong plan. So let’s not say this is a choice of jobs or no jobs when it’s really about whether or not we’re going to use the right plan and make the And, even more disconcerting is to realize the vision in order to produce those jobs.”

[Unedited testimony from here:] There’s another good reason that this bill doesn’t get my vote. It’s a very small number of people, mostly — much to vote for high-speed rail. The voters went to the polls and approved it, Madam President. And for an investment that’s overestimated the consequences. When the public tells us this is our responsibility to listen.

But—vote sentencing has undeniably changed in the intervening years. And, even if the voter sentience has changed, it remains the case that the project stays on budget. We are expected to put up 20 times that amount over the course of who knows how many years? The dollar amounts do change in perspective. Even at our level, $3.3 billion is no small number. But it pales in comparison to the 60-plus bil- lion the state of California is then obliged to find in order to access those dollars. $3.3 billion — according to me, as we cast an anxious eye on the $3.3 billion, is the result of the polling we saw just this week — but you didn’t have to read the results of the polling. Any of us who talk to our folks know that they’re asking the same ques- tions. They’re saying, “Resemblance to these cuts, we’re threatened with, and more, you want to build a high-speed rail track.”

And I think you can make a very good argument that in the past 10 years I’ve heard the right, but the hard political reality is that’s the way folks are going to vote. And I think you can make a very good argument that even if we do see them and can use them, then by definition they will have to be paid for out of the expense of programs and services where those dollars might have gone. And it’s always possible, of course, that 2, 5, or 10 years from now additional federal funding will be forthcoming. But as the High Speed Rail Authority acknowledged in its briefing last December, it is hard to see that time on any reasonable horizon given the current lay of the land. And, of course, we could go back to the voters with yet another $10 billion plan for more bonds for next year, but it seems to me a little like a case of the taxpayers that the taxpayers would be so inclined. In fact the Authority has said they have no plans to do so. Now, of course, where all of the dol- lars come from is important, because if you can’t find any more money, then you have to ask yourself: what is it you get for that $3.3 billion? In transportation bar- gan, the question is asked, “Well, if we don’t have $3.3 billion, what have we done? If we can’t do more, what’s the independent utility of the thing we’re going to build? I think plain folks would say, “What’s the ‘stand-alone value of that investment?’”

And so, when we asked the High Speed Rail Authority what their estimated cost was, it’s $1.35 miles of track. And we said, “Is it high-speed rail?” the answer was “no.” Is it electrified? “No.” Does it have positive train control? “No.” Are you going to run high-speed rail cars on it? “No.” So the question that we have before us today, the legislature.

There will of course be a variety of food and beverages available with the whole affair focused on a day of community fun and celebration.

True to its heritage, the Western Pacific Railroad Museum will be open for train riders, and there will be regular shuttle service between venues and downtown businesses.

Sunday morning will feature the Willie Tate Memorial Run/Walk to bring this year’s Railroad Days to a close.

Mark your calendars and plan to enjoy this historical and fun event during the heart of the summer.

Come celebrate the 30th Anniversary of Portola Railroad Days! I think it’s a pretty good deal.

For additional information visit www.PortolaRailRoadDays.com

Despite rumors to the contrary, Portola Railroad Days will return to Portola this summer.

Kickoff for the 30th annual Portola Railroad Days begins on Friday night, August 17 with a barbecue and concert thanks to the Feather River Community Partnership and their Consort in the Park series.

Railroad Days returns to our roots with most events centered in Portola City Park with a “Parade” in the Park.

The public is invited to enjoy a FREE venue of music, craft vendors, car shows, and other activities including the ever popular Portola Parade and the Portola Pre- School Lucky Duck Race.

There will of course be a variety of food and beverages available with the whole affair focused on a day of community fun and celebration.

True to its heritage, the Western Pacific Railroad Museum will be open for train riders, and there will be regular shuttle service between venues and downtown businesses.

Sunday morning will feature the Willie Tate Memorial Run/Walk to bring this year’s Railroad Days to a close.

Mark your calendars and plan to enjoy this historical and fun event during the heart of the summer.

Come celebrate the 30th Anniversary of Portola Railroad Days! I think it’s a pretty good deal.

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California Rail News July-September 2012
Please join TRAC and the California Rail Foundation for our annual California Rail 2020 conference, this time scheduled in Berkeley October 26, 27 and 28, at perfectly accessible Ed Roberts Center, just up the elevator from the Ashby BART Station. This year’s agenda will include:

**FRIDAY, October 26:** 7 PM-10 PM Champagne and hors d’oeuvres meet and greet (address provided with confirmation). Come get to know your fellow travelers.

**SATURDAY, October 27:** 9 AM (registration), Meeting 10 AM to 5 PM with the following sessions:

- **High Speed Spending on Unlikely Projects** - Elizabeth Alexis, a researcher for CARRD and David Schonbrunn of TRANSDEF dissect how the $8 billion of high-speed rail funds released by SB 1029 is actually likely to be used.
- **Unifying Bay Cities this Decade** - How to break down barriers between Caltrain, Amtrak, BART, ACE, ferry and bus operators to improve regional mobility by transit.
- **Caltrain, ACE and SMART Plan New Service** - Our panel will include experts on Peninsula, Altamont and Marin-Sonoma progress at dealing with the commute.
- **Diesel Multiple Units Get Mainline** - Siemens, Alstom, Bombardier and Stadler offer new lighter cars. Our panel will highlight FRA safety progress and new technologies.

We picked Ed Roberts Center for the event because Ed (b.1939, d.1995) was one of the key activists who worked his whole life to give us fully accessible transit as we now know it. The Saturday conference includes a generous lunch. Vegetarian options available (indicate on form if you have special needs).

**Saturday Conference Rates (includes continental breakfast and luncheon):** Day-of-event rates for members will be $100, but you can save significantly by being an early bird! Mail us your check before September 15 and pay only $69. Before October 15 the rate will be $85. (Non-members pay a $25 surcharge and get TRAC membership at a promotional rate). Make your checks out to TRAC.

**Saturday 7 PM** A no-host dinner is planned at a small cafe about a block from our conference site. We will provide more information with your confirmation.

**SUNDAY, October 28:** 9:00 AM–4:00 PM We are planning an excursion on BART, Muni Metro, Caltrain, and historic streetcars of the Market Street Railway that will add to your knowledge of great places to go by transit in San Francisco. A $35 donation to TRAC will cover all fares and get you an outstanding picnic lunch. We hope to arrange a tour of new maintenance facilities and other spots of transit interest. (More information to be provided with your confirmation.)

**On-Line Reservation Option:** EventBrite is a way to reserve right away and get the best deal. https://trac.eventbrite.com

**Sign mE up nOw!**

Rate       x       number of persons    = Total Enclosed

Name(s)
Street
City       State  Zip
Telephone        E-mail

**REJOIN TRAC TODAY!**

* PLUS $25 NON-MEMBER SURCHARGE

NOTE: For TRAC membership, please use separate check and separate page 2 form!

**$35 SUNDAY TOUR**

Number     Tot. Enclosed