

DesertXpress Aims to be First US High Speed Rail Line

By Pete Goldin

DesertXpress, a rail line linking Las Vegas, Nevada and Southern California, could break ground in 2012, due to recent decisions by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA).

“With the continued support of Federal, State and local leaders, DesertXpress is committed to becoming our country’s first true high speed rail line,” said Rachel Wilkinson of Rogich Communications Group, a spokesperson for DesertXpress.

DesertXpress will provide non-stop service on 190 miles between Victorville, California and Las Vegas, Nevada. The purpose of the \$6 billion project is to bypass traffic on I-15, the only freeway between Los Angeles and Las Vegas. The preferred rail alignment would be almost entirely located within the existing I-15 corridor, with all-new exclusive double tracks running alongside the freeway.

Trains running in 20- to 60-minute intervals will initially reach speeds of 150 mph on the 80-minute trip, reducing travel times 50% or more when compared with vehicles.

In the first year of operation, DesertXpress is expected to carry approximately 5 million people. Over the long term, DesertXpress is expected to handle up to 60 million passengers per year – more than the current capacity of I-15.

A future link between Victorville and Palmdale, California will connect Las Vegas and the California High Speed Rail network with planned Southern California stations in Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, and San Bernardino Counties.

The FRA issued a Record of Decision (ROD) on DesertXpress in July, a major milestone that will enable the FRA to

continued on page 3

California Moves Forward with High Speed Rail Plans

By Dave Goldin, with Pete Goldin and Richard Harnish

This spring the California Legislature will decide whether to begin construction on the nation’s first 220-mph high-speed rail line. The goal of the project is to link Los Angeles with San Francisco in 2 hours 40 minutes.

The Legislature must include high-speed rail construction funds in its FY2013 budget (which begins July 1, 2012) in order to take advantage of federal high speed rail funds.

California High Speed Rail has become a pivotal project for the future of national passenger rail policy. Its success will make it easier to gain support for other passenger rail projects across the country, ranging from local streetcars to

high-speed rail. Its failure will be a setback for everyone.

The California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA), a state agency, calls the 800-mile system “the largest infrastructure project in the nation.” Indeed, it is the only high-speed rail project in the U.S. ready to break ground, and has the potential to ignite a nationwide revolution in new passenger rail projects.

The State of California is committed to high-speed rail out of necessity. Experts estimate that without high-speed rail, California will need as much as \$171 billion – for an additional 2,300 lane-miles of highways, 4 runways, and 115

continued on page 4

SAVE THE DATE

MAY 5, 2012

9AM-3PM

**Dank Haus
4740 N. Western Avenue
Chicago IL 60625**

MHSRA’s 2012 Annual Meeting will be held at the historic Dank Haus (www.dankhaus.com) in Chicago’s Lincoln Square neighborhood. The meeting will be an opportunity to meet rail advocates and learn what is happening and how you can make a difference.

Our keynote speaker will be Matt Dellinger, author of “INTERSTATE 69: The Unfinished History of the Last Great American Highway” www.matt Dellinger.com/i69

Register at MidwestHSR.org/events

Stand Up for Trains!

ASK YOUR ELECTED LEADERS TO STAND UP AND FIGHT FOR FAST TRAINS.

This spring the California Legislature will decide whether to begin construction on the nation’s first 220-mph high-speed rail line.

It is critical that California residents who support high-speed rail, or any other passenger rail project, let their legislators know. Take action and email your California friends about this issue at:

StandUpForTrains.org

Richard Harnish

Looking Forward to 2012



Thank you for your generous support over the past year. Together, we have made huge strides toward developing high-speed rail in the Midwest.

2011 was a big year for us. Although recent events have shown that we still have a lot of work to do, together, we will move forward with determination. Your generous contributions will continue to help make us successful.

Last year, President Obama outlined an excellent vision for an integrated network of bullet trains and modernized Amtrak trains linking 80% of the population. The Midwest is off to a good start with critical Amtrak upgrades already underway

between Kansas City, St. Louis, Chicago and Detroit.

The stage is set for even better things in the future. Illinois Governor Quinn launched a bullet train study in June and the State of Minnesota began a study of a bullet train linking Minneapolis/St. Paul and Rochester, MN in November. This project, branded the Zip Line, could be the first step toward a high-speed line to Chicago.

We partnered with Siemens Industries to release a major feasibility and economic benefits study of a Midwest bullet train network in May. This study was a major step towards building a strong case for this critical investment. The next phase is almost complete and will be released soon. Our Stand Up for Trains website – www.StandUpForTrains.org – played an important role in the appropriations debate and is poised to expand its role in 2012.

We have grown as an organization as well, adding full-time education & outreach and member services managers.

As you may know, I travel nearly every week meeting with stakeholders across the Midwest. I am the quintessential business traveler, and frequently experience just how broken and expensive our current system is. The bi-partisan stakeholders I meet with understand and value the far-reaching benefits of high-speed rail because they know that passenger trains can make travel more efficient and cost-effective.

And it isn't just about business travel. Trains have an important role to play in making personal trips easier and less-expensive as well.

Our opponents have claimed that high-speed rail is dead. If they are right, the price (both financially and mentally) of travel will continue to rise with no relief anywhere on the horizon. Our region will continue to be less and less competitive.

But our opponents are wrong. High-speed rail is anything but dead. Congress appropriates funds every twelve months. The high-speed rail program has seen growing support. It can, and will, return in another budget.

If this region is going to be serious about demonstrating true leadership, high-speed rail is essential, and long overdue. It's a proven worldwide commodity, it utilizes existing technologies, it will create thousands of American jobs, it will bolster economic growth, and it fosters cleaner travel. High-speed rail is a valuable tool for travelers who rely on fast, safe and affordable mobility.

We understand that this debate is not a sprint, and with your support, we are in it for the long haul. Continuing our work is critical to the future success of the region. We look forward to your continued support and another great year in 2012.

MIDWEST RAIL REPORT

MIDWEST HIGH SPEED RAIL
ASSOCIATION
773.334.6758
MIDWESTHSR.ORG

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Dave Goldin

NEWS EDITOR

Pete Goldin

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Richard Harnish

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Joseph P. Schwieterman
PRESIDENT
Director
Chaddick Institute - DePaul University

Dennis Minichello, Esq.
VICE PRESIDENT
Shareholder
Marwedel, Minichello & Reeb

Keith Kalinowski
SECRETARY
Attaché Commercial
Quebec Trade Office

Ira Silver
TREASURER
Accountant

Elizabeth Coulson
Retired
Illinois General Assembly

William Moore
President
Moore Consulting Group

John Paige
Retired
Chicago Metropolitan
Agency for Planning

Keith Plasterer
Retired
Wisconsin Dept. of Transportation

Nicolai Schousboe
Retired
Mitsui OSK Lines

GENERAL COUNSEL

Stan Miller, Esq.
Partner
Schwartz & Freeman

Union Station Master Plan Process Starts

The City of Chicago has begun a Master Plan process for Union Station. Improvements are considered necessary due to continuing growth in commuter rail service, Amtrak service, and the potential for future growth in high-speed intercity passenger rail. A public meeting was held on December 15 to discuss options.

Union Station is the third-busiest railroad terminal in the United States, serving over 300 trains per weekday carrying more than 120,000 arriving and departing passengers – a level of passenger traffic that would rank it among the ten busiest airports in the US.

Most travelers at Union Station take Metra commuter trains. The station is also the hub of Amtrak's network of regional trains serving the Midwest and most of the nation's overnight trains. Amtrak gained ownership of Union Station in 1984.

The Chicago DOT is assisting Amtrak by driving the development of the Union Station Master Plan. Other stakeholders involved in the planning are a Technical Committee that includes Amtrak and Metra and a Civic Advisory Committee run by the Metropolitan Planning Council.

The existing configuration of the passenger and commuter concourse beneath a major high-rise office building makes it difficult for the terminal to accommodate future passenger growth, while the operational capacity for trains is constrained by the current number

and size of platforms and track configuration.

The Master Plan Study has identified potential ideas for adding tracks and platforms, as well as possible opportunities for improving passenger flows.

Short, medium, and long-term opportunities have been identified ranging from re-purposing platforms originally designed for handling mail, to better connections to other rail and transit services, to the construction of new multi-level subways.

Two upcoming CDOT projects – the Central Area East-West Bus Rapid Transit project, which provides improved bus lanes, and the Union Station Transportation Center, an off-street bus terminal – are expected to improve local street traffic flow and curb access.

The proposed medium and long-term options include:

- Reconstructing some of the platforms, using the mail platforms located under Chicago's old Main Post Office. This would involve providing a connection to the main station via an underground corridor. The waiting lounge for these platforms would be located in a large space under the tracks that was formerly used for mail handling.

- Rebuilding the Canal Street "bridge," with an island in the middle of Canal Street, providing stairway access into Union Station.



- Using the open space between Van Buren and Jackson to build a new concourse area.

- Tearing down or modifying 222 South Riverside, which currently sits on top of the current passenger concourse, in order to build the new concourse and new through tracks.

No dates have been set for any of the improvement projects.

The next stages will be to create computer model simulations of train, traffic and people flows.



Downtown Airport

Visit DowntownAirport.com for more information and to show your support for expanding and modernizing Union Station.

DowntownAirport.com

XPRESS continued from page 1

complete its review of the project's plan of finance and loan application. DesertXpress Enterprises, LLC (DXE), a group of companies from California and Nevada, has applied for a \$4.9 billion loan through the Railroad Rehabilitation & Improvement

Financing program, which finances railroad infrastructure. According to Wilkinson, DesertXpress is currently engaged in discussions with the FRA about project financing.

"DesertXpress expects the process will progress and conclude in a reasonable time frame established by the Federal Railroad

Administration and other governing agencies," Wilkinson adds. "Forecasts indicate that DesertXpress will create approximately 32,000 jobs in Clark County and 50,000 in San Bernardino County."

If construction begins next year, test operations could begin in 2014, with full service commencing by the end of 2016.

airline gates – to meet the state’s transportation needs.

“It is critical California residents who support high-speed rail, or any other passenger rail project, let their legislators know,” said Richard Harnish, Executive Director of the Midwest High Speed Rail Association

Governor Brown is a strong champion of the project. He is working to create a package of investments that will bring benefits to the majority of Californians quickly.

“California’s population will grow by 60 percent over the next 40 years,” said U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood. “Investing in a green, job-creating high-speed rail network is less expensive and more practical than paying for all of the expansions to already congested highways and airports that would be necessary to accommodate the state’s projected population boom.”

The project is expected to generate 1.25 million job-years of employment and as many as 400,000 permanent new jobs as a result of economic growth over the next 25 years. It is projected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 3 million tons per year.

The state plans to launch this transformational initiative this fall with \$6 billion in state and federal funds to build an all-new high-speed rail corridor between Fresno and Bakersfield. This segment will form the core trunk line of the system, capable of supporting top speeds of 220 mph.

Like other successful high-speed rail networks around the world, the initial



phases of California’s system will be built with public sector funds. When the system is operational, ridership will drive revenues that, in turn, will attract further private-sector investment. Projected ridership and revenue are considered sufficient for the initial system to operate at break even or better.

In terms of construction cost, the full California High Speed Rail system – built out as proposed from San Francisco Transbay Terminal to Los Angeles Union Station and Anaheim – is estimated to be completed in 2033 for \$65 billion in 2010 dollars. When adjusted for inflation in 2033, the cost is \$98 billion.

Background

Jerry Brown has been a proponent of high-speed rail for over three decades. When he was first Governor of California, from 1975-1983, Brown signed legislation to study high-speed rail. During his 1992 presidential campaign, he vigorously promoted high-speed rail in nationally

televised Democratic debates.

In 1993, California created the Intercity High-Speed Rail Commission to conduct studies and to prepare a high-speed rail plan for the state. In 1996, the state created the California High Speed Rail Authority, a state agency to oversee design and construction of a statewide high-speed rail system. The legislation to create the authority was introduced by State Senators Quentin L. Kopp and Jim Costa, who is now a U.S. Representative. Kopp went on to serve as Chairman of the CHSRA.

In 2008, California voters approved Proposition 1A – the Safe, Reliable High-Speed Passenger Train Bond Act for the 21st Century – a law championed by Kopp that allocated \$9.95 billion to the CHSRA. \$9 billion is available for planning and construction of a high-speed rail system and the remaining \$950 million would be used for capital projects on other passenger rail lines to improve connectivity with the high-speed rail network. The statute requires a one-to-one match from federal funds.

In January 2010, the federal government announced that California would receive \$2.25 billion for high-speed rail from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Another \$715 million was awarded in October 2010. In December 2010, the Department of Transportation awarded \$624 million to California from high-speed rail funds that were rejected by the governors of Wisconsin and Ohio. In May 2011, the DOT awarded California another \$300 million from funds rejected by the governor of Florida.

In November, the U.S. Department of

continued on next page



continued from prior page

Transportation obligated the first \$928.6 million grant to the California High-Speed Rail Authority for initial construction of the network.

In January 2012, however, the *San Francisco Examiner* reported that a ballot initiative submitted by Peter Seidel of Beverly Hills would “eliminate the California High Speed Rail Authority, and prohibit any state funding for the project.” He needs to collect 807,615 signatures by June 21, 2012 to qualify for the ballot in November.

Potential Phasing

The CHSRA plans to construct the network in phases, building outward from an Initial Construction Section (ICS) in the state’s Central Valley, progressively connecting major population centers to the north and south. The business plan is currently being revised to incorporate potential enhancements to existing passenger rail infrastructure.

The challenge of crossing several mountain ranges is a major factor in determining project phasing.

Each new section, as it is built, can be integrated with existing track to provide new services not available today. For instance, new high-performance trains could travel at 125 mph or above from Bakersfield on the ICS and then use upgraded tracks at conventional speeds to reach Sacramento and the Bay Area (called blended service by CHSRA).

Initial Construction Section

The first section of the network to be constructed, the ICS, is the key to the system’s success. It will comprise a new 130-mile trunk line in the Central Valley running from Chowchilla to Bakersfield. Chowchilla was chosen because it is the best point to connect the new tracks to the existing BNSF tracks that Amtrak uses. Bakersfield is the southern-most city in the Central Valley. This project will result in all-new right-of-way and track design for 220-mph operations. Express trains running at planned top speed would cover this section in only 40 minutes.

While the ICS will not initially link the state’s larger cities, it will provide the foundation that makes the rest of the network possible. The relatively flat, uninterrupted terrain of the Central Valley will also allow the state to make the greatest

initial infrastructure advance in terms of miles per dollar expended.

The ICS will cost \$6 billion and is expected to generate 20,000 direct and indirect jobs annually over five years. State and federal funds for this section have already been identified. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2012, after the Final Environmental Impact Report and Environmental Impact Statement are deliv-

A mountain range separates the Central Valley from the important Silicon Valley and beyond to San Francisco. The ultimate plan is to build a new line west through the Pacheco Pass. There is no railroad across this pass today. The northern point of this construction section would be San Jose.

Showcasing the ICS as soon as possible with new intercity services running to



ered in March or April. The use of ARRA funds on the project requires this section to be fully completed by September 30, 2017.

There are two options for the second phase of construction: north from Chowchilla to San Jose or south from Bakersfield to the San Fernando Valley. These sections are more challenging capital projects, involving tunneling through mountain ranges on the perimeter of the Central Valley. Both would create new passenger rail routes and direct connections between the Bay Area and Southern California, where none exist today.

North to the Bay

Sacramento and the Bay Area will be critical to demonstrating the viability of public investment in the project. So, an interim step is needed prior to the construction of the new crossing over the Pacheco Pass. This could be achieved by upgrading the Amtrak San Joaquin service from Chowchilla to Stockton and the Altamont Commuter Express line from Stockton to San Jose.

North of San Jose, the long-term vision is to completely reconstruct the Caltrain tracks to high-speed standards with two express tracks and two local tracks. Most likely, however, the Caltrain

continued on page 7

Thank You to Our Supporters!

LEADERSHIP CIRCLE PLATINUM \$25,000 AND ABOVE

Alphawood Foundation Chicago

Lewis Manilow

Siemens Transportation Systems

LEADERSHIP CIRCLE GOLD \$10,000 - \$24,999

Darling Family Foundation

LEADERSHIP CIRCLE \$5,000 - \$9,999

AECOM
Alstom Transportation, Inc.

Sally Mead Hands Foundation
Southeast Minnesota Rail Alliance

PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE \$2,500 - \$4,999

ARUP
Lance Erickson

Sumitomo Corporation of America/
Nippon Sharyo U.S.A

Talgo, Inc.

SPONSOR \$1,000 - \$2,499

Glenn Ahrenholz
Jim Dixon
www.freedmanseating.com
HOK, Inc
Invensys Rail Corp.

Mayo Clinic
William B. Moore
Quebec Delegation Chicago
Joe Schwieterman
R & W Machine Division

Steel Dynamics, Inc.
STV Incorporated
TranSystems

PATRON \$500 - \$999

Anonymous
America By Rail, Inc.
Tod Bassler
BNSF Railway Company
Champaign-Urbana MTD
City of Bloomington, IL
Aaron Collard
Beth Coulson

James Coxworth
Philip Darling
Harley Esposito
Ben Galewsky
Gardner Denver, Inc.
Allan C. Hauth
Hanson Professional Services,
Inc.

InterMeet
Iowa Association of Railroad
Passengers
Jeffrey Kahn
Kustom Seating Unlimited
Clark Maxfield
David May
Robert & Rita Menzies

John H. Paige
City of Quincy, IL
Portec Rail Products, Inc.
Jeffrey Rennert
Rockford MPO
Village of Schaumburg, IL
US Railcar Company, LLC
William Weiss Jr.

ADVOCATE \$250 - \$499

Anonymous
Anonymous
Ross Altman
Ms. Forough Minou Archer
Canadian Consulate General
Dan Clarahan
D'Escoto Inc
David William Davis, President,
Simmons Machine Tool
Corporation
Design Nine Inc.
Frank DiNovo

Stefan Feyen
Fort Wayne Metals
Charles Green
Sam Harnish & Mary Jo
Wenckus
Richard Holt, DDS
George Johannesen
Michael G. Johnson
David Jourdan
Laurence J. Krieg
Greater Lafayette Commerce
Robert Madison

Philip Martin
Ramsey County Regional
Railroad Authority
Stan Miller
Michel Pierce
Prorail - Madison, WI
Edward A. Robinson
Michael Rosenberg
RPC Publications
Alan Sanchez
William Scott
Philip Seyd

Karen Shinnors
David Shreiner
Joyce Solberg
St Louis Regional Chamber &
Growth Association
R. Paul Steffens
Mike Weber
Lawrence Wilkinson
Foundation
Jon N. Will & Assoc.Inc.
Shirley Weese Young

- Send me more information
- I have enclosed a check made out to:
Midwest High Speed Rail Association
4765 N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago, IL 60625
- Patron \$500
- Advocate \$250
- Benefactor \$100
send me a mug or water bottle
- Supporter \$50
 send me a hat
- Associate \$25
 send me a poster – circle one
Chicago skyline, Cleveland skyline, Transit Riders
- Senior/Student \$15

NAME _____

COMPANY _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

EMAIL _____ PHONE _____

Please add me to the email news list

mrr20n1 02/12

CALIFORNIA *continued from page 5*

tracks would be upgraded and electrified with high-speed trains operating over those tracks at conventional speeds.

South to the Los Angeles Basin

South of Bakersfield, the Tehachapi Mountains are a major barrier to creating a north-south passenger rail connection. The Union Pacific's crossing of these mountains contains the famed Tehachapi Loop, a slow, but busy single-track railroad without the capacity for passenger trains. Today, Amtrak passengers use connecting buses between Bakersfield and Los Angeles.

Many rail advocates have correctly noted that filling this gap should be a top priority for investment. However, the engineering and environmental work could not be completed in time to meet the strict deadline needed to qualify for ARRA funds. It is likely to be the next section of 220-mph track constructed.

Just south of the Tehachapi crossing is Lancaster, the northernmost point for Metrolink, the Los Angeles area commuter railroad. Today, there are nine daily roundtrips to Los Angeles Union Station. Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael Antonovich is working to secure funding to upgrade this track for 110-mph speeds, which would provide a high-quality interim connection from the Central Valley into Los Angeles once the Tehachapi crossing is completed.

Connection to DesertXpress

At Palmdale, just south of Lancaster, the proposed 63-mile High Desert Corridor freeway would link Palmdale with Victorville, the southern terminus of another planned high-speed rail proj-



ect for the region: the DesertXpress line to Las Vegas, Nevada. The expressway right-of-way could include high-speed rail tracks linking the DesertXpress with California's main high-speed rail system. The DesertXpress has received full environmental clearance and the developers are working to assemble financing.

Extension to San Diego

Ultimately, the high-speed track will

be extended to San Diego. In the interim, the existing Amtrak Surfliner service can be upgraded. The California Department of Transportation has received \$55 million in federal funds from the High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail program for the Surfliner. The funds will reduce delays by adding tracks in Fullerton and Oceanside and adding Positive Train Control to the route.



4765 N. Lincoln Avenue, Chicago, IL 60625
773-334-6758
MidwestHSR.org

Advocating for fast, frequent, and dependable trains connecting the entire Midwest.
Learn more at MidwestHSR.org or call 773-334-6758

High Speed Rail Comes to...Uzbekistan?

By Pete Goldin

Uzbekistan Railways has started regular high-speed rail service between Tashkent and Samarkand.

The train, called *Afrosiyob*, will run between the two cities twice per week, and the number is expected to increase in the future, depending on growth of demand.

The line's Talgo 250 high-speed train-sets were manufactured in Spain by Talgo, and can reach top speeds of 155 mph. Travel times on the 211-mile route are expected to be reduced from 3.5 hours down to 2 hours, although some reports in Uzbekistan's media dispute the consistency of the speed.

The train consists of two head locomotives, eight passenger cars and one restaurant car; offers VIP, first class and economy class; and has capacity for more than 200 passengers. According to Uzbekistan Railways, all tickets were sold out for the first trip, which took place on October 8, 2011.

Railway company Uzbekistan Temir Yollari financed 50% of the 38 million Euro Talgo train purchase, and the other half was paid for by a loan from the Fund for Reconstruction and Development of Uzbekistan.

The Republic of Uzbekistan, a former Soviet republic, is located in Central Asia, north of Afghanistan.

