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HEADLIGHTS

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On the Cover

Federal funds were obtained for the extension of San Francisco's J–Church line to Balboa Park. This provides a faster, more direct route for streetcars and LRVs going to and from the depot. Two PCCs obtained from SEPTA for use on the new F–Market Street line are shown posing for photos on the J–Church line during the 1996 E.R.A. Convention. Car 1058 sports the orange and yellow colors of the Los Angeles Railway Company while Car 1061 follows in the red Pacific Electric paint scheme. Photograph by Frank S. Miklos.

Corrections

Long–time member Jean de Meurs of Brussels informs us that the caption under one of the photos on page 2 in the March–April 1995 issue of HEADLIGHTS was incorrect. The old Parisian car shown next to the low–floor car at Bobigny Picasso in Paris doesn't belong to the "Paris Transport Museum", but to the Belgian museum group "AUMTRA."

RAIL TRANSIT News

STEVE SIEGERIST

▲ **An outbound Red/Blue line LRV on the new Dallas light rail system approaches 8th Street.**

DALLAS

June 14: The 11.2–mile light rail line opened June 14. In its first week of revenue service, June 24–28, 1996, it carried a daily average of 18,900 riders, about 25% more than the forecast 15,000. The line cost $860 million, with 80% of the funding coming from a 1% local sales tax. In December, 1996, a six–mile line – including a three–mile tunnel – will open from central Dallas along the North Central Expressway to Park Lane. The ten–mile Trinity Express commuter rail service between Union Station and the Medical–Mark Center and South Irving Transit Center will begin operation at the same time. In May, 1997, the South Oak Cliff line will be extended to serve three more stations.

CHICAGO

May 12: The Green elevated line (Lake Street/Jackson Park/ Englewood) returned to service May 12, 1996, after more than two years of reconstruction. The $350 million project saw the replacement of 7,500 tons of structural steel, 46 miles of running rail, and 33 miles of third rail. Seventeen stations were, or will be, rebuilt or replaced, and six were renovated. At the reopening, 22 of the 23 stations were in service. End to end running times were reduced by as much as 20 minutes because trains can now run up to 55 mph compared to 40 mph prior to January, 1994. On the Jackson Park branch, trains now terminate at Cottage Grove Avenue. A CTA brochure shows a dotted line continuing east to Dorchester Avenue, but with no text or legend explanation.

LOS ANGELES

July 13: On July 13, 1996, the 4.4–mile, five–station Red Line was extended two miles west along Wilshire Boulevard with stations at Vermont, Normandie and Western Avenues. The extension is expected to increase daily ridership from 22,000 to 40,000. Rides on the entire Red Line were free the first two days. The regular cash fare is $1.35 and the discounted token fare is 90¢. Red Line extensions under construction are Vermont Avenue north to Hollywood Boulevard and west to Vine Street, scheduled to open late 1998; North Hollywood (6.3 miles), planned to open 2001; Mid–City (2.3 miles); and East Side (3.7 miles). When the Red Line is complete, it will be 23.4 miles long with 22 stations, at a cost of $5.8 billion.

NEW JERSEY/ NEW YORK

June 10: Direct service to Penn Station in New York from the former Lackawanna Railroad's Morris and Essex (M&E) lines began on June 10, 1996. Weekday service is provided by 21 trains in each direction operating over new connecting ramps to the Amtrak Northeast Corridor Line in Kearny, New Jersey. Weekend service starts September 7, 1996. About 16,500 passengers rode the M&E trains on weekdays prior to the start of New York service, dubbed Midtown Direct by NJ Transit. In its first week of service 5,700 passengers were using the service, with 4,000 riders reported during rush hour. Service is provided by push–pull trains powered by electric locomotives which operate on 25,000 volt AC, 60 cycle current on the M&E and 11,000 volt AC on Amtrak's Northeast Corridor. In many stations ticket vending machines were installed that accept cash and credit cards, and give change. Still, many M&E riders were frustrated by the new service. Passengers to lower Manhattan using Hoboken trains, for instance, complained of fewer trains (87 instead of 103 a day) and slower service.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority awarded a contract for the purchase of 1,000 MetroCard vending machines and 400 automatic gates for subway stations without full–time token clerks. Cubic Automatic Revenue Collection will be paid $66–million for this equipment, which will go into service without a testing period. The MTA noted that Cubic had installed similar equipment in Chicago, Washington and elsewhere and expressed confidence that it will work properly. The machines accept cash, credit and bank debit cards, and communicate in several languages. After more than two years, Metro Card is accepted at fewer than half of all subway stations, and is used by only 8% of subway and bus riders. To boost its use, the MTA will pay 3.5% commission on MetroCard sales over the next six months and 2% thereafter, compared to a 1% commission on token sales.

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey authorized a $1–billion, 8.4–mile light rail line to John F. Kennedy International Airport. The proposed line will consist of 3.4 miles from the Howard Beach subway station on

RAIL TRANSIT News

FRANK S. MIKLOS

▸ **Last runs of the Toronto PCCs.**

service. Toronto boasted North America's largest fleet of PCCs with 745 of these units purchased new and second hand. Pictured above is a PCC pausing for passengers at King and Yonge Streets.

HAROLD C. GOLK

▲ **An LRV heads east to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame from the East 9th Street station of the two-mile Cleveland Waterfront light rail line extension.**

CLEVELAND

July 10: The two-mile Waterfront line, an extension of the Shaker Heights light rail line, entered service July 10, 1996, between Tower City (formerly Union Terminal) and the Municipal Parking lot. Eastbound riders pay no fare; westbound riders pay $1.50 (50¢ for Seniors). There are four stations along the line. Two more stations are planned, at the Port Authority and at West Third Street. Construction began in September 1994 at a cost of $55.25 million.

PORTLAND, ORE.

December 29: On December 29, 1995, the westbound three-mile tunnel through the West Hills was bored through. The parallel two-mile eastbound tunnel is now to be excavated. The tunnels will carry light rail cars on the 18-mile Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District's Westside Corridor line, a $944 million project. The tunnels will include the Washington Park station which, at 260 feet below the surface will be the deepest underground transit station in the United States. Four elevators will carry passengers between the station and the surface in 39 seconds.

SAN FRANCISCO

A seven-year, $330 million program to renovate BART's rail car fleet has begun in Adtranz's Pittsburg, California plant. Adtranz is a joint venture of AEG Daimler-Benz and ABB Asea Brown Boveri. The cars will be stripped to the shell and components will be rebuilt or replaced as needed.

52 cars built by Breda (Italy) are to go into service in the fall of 1996. The cars, being assembled in the city, are 75′ long, 8′8″ wide and 11′6″ tall. They are two-section cars with three trucks and four doors on each side and seat 60. They will be assigned first to the J-Church line.

OFFENBACH

June 1: The German city of Offenbach once had a local tram and trolley-bus system. After these services were abandoned more than 25 years ago, one tram service survived in the form of Route 16 of the neighboring Frankfurt on Main tramway system. Separate fares were charged for the portion of that route within Offenbach since it was still technically considered part of the local transit system. That unusual arrangement ended on June 1, 1996, when Route 16 was cut back to the Frankfurt/Offenbach city line.

TORONTO

December 8: On December 8, 1995, the Toronto Transit Commission removed its remaining PCCs from revenue the 'A' line, through parking and auto rental lots to JFK; 2 miles around the central terminal area at JFK; and 3 miles north to the Jamaica Long Island Rail Road, subway and bus transportation center. The light rail line is supposed to be self-sufficient, with operating costs to be covered mostly by fares.

FRANK S. MIKLOS

◂ **Frankfurt car No. 690 operating through the Offenbach business district.**

Part 3: A Retrospective of RAIL TRANSIT FINANCING VOTES IN THE UNITED STATES

FRANK S. MIKLOS

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FRANK S. MIKLOS

BY LEROY W. DEMERY JR.

The record of successes and failures of previous rail transit financing proposals is of particular importance today. Many cities have rail plans at some stage of development, and nearly all would require significant amounts of federal funding. But federal officials want to see local voters demonstrate support before any funds are committed. There is no clear-cut formula for a successful rail financing plan, but past experience provides useful insight into "what works" – and what doesn't.

"All-at-once" proposals for large, high-cost regional networks do not fare well at the ballot box. No such plan has been approved anywhere in the United States since the early 1970s (Los Angeles and Dallas are the proverbial exceptions which prove the rule). Today, there is little chance that voters in any U.S. metropolitan area would

FRANK S. MIKLOS

A Sampling of Transit Financing Triumphs

◂ **Los Angeles (Green Line)**
Previous page, clockwise from top: The Aviation Blvd. station of the L.A.'s new Green Line has a provision for a branch to the airport, but concerns about the light rail catenary interfering with approaching aircraft has held up the construction of this spur. Shuttle buses presently link the two facilities.

The Redondo Beach terminal of the Green Line is on an aerial structure. Proposals for operating this service as a fully automated line precluded the use of a surface alignment with grade crossings.

San Franciso (J-Church Line)
California has been a leader in funding public transit projects. PCC cars were purchased from Philadelphia for the the restoration of streetcar service on the surface of Market Street in San Franciso. This view shows one of these cars in Los Angeles Railway colors operating on a J-Church line fantrip during the 1996 E.R.A. convention.

▲ **San Diego (East Line)**
Above: The most recent order of LRVs for San Diego features a new design. Car 2035 is shown above at the Santee Town Center terminal of the East Line. Despite its name, the facility is located in the middle of open fields, but plans are afoot for a major development on the site, spurred on by the presence of the rail line.

approve such projects given the current political, social and economic climate. Hence today's interest in "incremental" rail development.

Most "regional" rail plans which did succeed, managed to attract only small majorities of "yes" votes. Lack of significant opposition was characteristic of most successful plans. But this alone did not ensure approval, as Los Angeles learned in 1968 and 1974. Any significant opposition or controversy has usually tipped the balance toward rejection, as demonstrated most recently in Phoenix.

Part of the "conventional wisdom" in some cities (including Phoenix, Salt Lake City and Seattle) is that rail-financing proposals are rejected "the first time around." This is an unfortunate misconception. Among "new-start" cities, only Atlanta and Los Angeles have managed to recover from initial setbacks at the polls – and only Los Angeles has managed to overcome successive rejections. Seattle learned that ballot-box rejections send messages which may linger long afterward. As recently as 1993, federal officials cited the 1968 and 1970 votes as evidence that transit does not enjoy local support in Seattle.

Portland, Sacramento and San Diego are the "model" cities for "incremental" rail development. Each built a single low-cost "starter" line with available funding, made it work, developed public support, and then sought voter approval for expansion. Results so far indicate a promising pattern of successes. Recent elections have demonstrated a remarkable trend, at least in a few locations: voters approved financing for LRT expansion but rejected other tax proposals, or imposed limits on taxation and spending. However, the "incremental" approach is not without problems. Some proposals for expansion of existing systems have been rejected. Many cities do not have a base of available local or state financing for a starter line. It is difficult to persuade a majority of regional voters to approve financing for a single-corridor starter project. Only Salt Lake City has yet tried, and was not successful.

California's record of incremental rail successes reflects several factors which other states may not enjoy. California was one of the first states to develop dedicated funding sources for transit capital projects and operations. Since the mid-1980s, local ballot measures have combined highway and transit projects – with the majority share usually allocated to highways. Transportation-financing proposals on local and state ballots have far outnumbered those submitted elsewhere. Results of these measures between 1980 and the onset of the state's prolonged recession in the early 1990s suggested a very interesting trend: lack of support for large-scale freeway expansion and willingness to approve major new funding for urban and intercity rail projects, but not for most other government services.

Rail transit would be a "difficult sell" under the best of circumstances. Its high capital cost requires "regional" strategies, and these are difficult to implement owing to the traditional conflict between urban and suburban interests. The majority of public transit ridership comes from established central cities whose residents generally support rapid transit

plans, but this is not enough. Suburbs house a large and growing share of population in most U.S. metropolitan areas. Hence, prospects for voter approval of rail financing are slender unless substantial numbers of suburban residents can be persuaded to vote "yes."

Rail proposals submitted during the '60s and '70s enjoyed an unusually favorable climate. The economy was strong, and personal incomes were rising rapidly. Large government programs were in vogue and technological solutions attracted much less skepticism than today. Public disaffection for autos grew along with private preference for them as Lang and Soberman wrote more than thirty years ago. Plans for rapid transit, monorails and people-movers exuded a futuristic cachet untarnished by actual operating experience and captured attention across the nation. "Advanced technology" systems were proposed in a number of cities, and actually won approval in Denver and Miami – results difficult to imagine today. Another factor not likely to be repeated today were the prospects for large amounts of federal funds

Things are different today. The population shift from older central cities to suburbs and Sunbelt took off after 1970. By 1980 suburban employment was mushrooming as shopping malls and office parks proliferated. Meanwhile, inner cities continued to lose population and jobs.

"Transit" writes George M. Smerk, "has become irrelevant to the lives of most Americans who reside in parts of metropolitan areas outside of central cities… [It] is identified as the transportation of the poor, the black and the Hispanic. Transit is not part of the American dream: it is not viewed as the transportation for the upwardly mobile." (*The Federal Role in Urban Mass Transportation*, Indiana University Press, 1991).

Plans for rail transit or for restoration of commuter rail services tend to draw strong opposition from the suburbs. Residents voice concerns about traffic congestion at stations, noise, visual impacts and other "environmental degradation." Suburban retailers and other interest groups view rail as something which benefits downtown businesses and landowners at suburban expense. Many suburbanites have become concerned about the negative impacts of continued "development" and "urban sprawl," and slow-growth movements have become politically potent in a number of communities. Rail transit is not the only target of concern: some suburban communities have fought plans for retail centers, entertainment facilities and even churches. Nor are the "NIMBY"-type sentiments confined to the suburbs.

Some rail plans have drawn opposition from environmentalists who are generally supportive (if passively) of transit improvements. Environmentalists and slow-growth activists played a major role in the 1990 rejection of rail plans in two San Francisco Bay Area counties.

Suburban fears of an influx of crime and "undesirables" (low-income and minority urban residents) brought by rail raise a complex matter which, however unpleasant, cannot be ignored by transit planners and supporters.

"Any real attempt to change the transportation situation that now prevails in American metropolitan areas" writes Smerk (q.v.), "would challenge the housing decisions of millions of people who like low-density, segmented and segregated suburban or exurban living."

The very mix of people in central cities, Smerk writes, "flies in the face of the popular wish so successfully carried out in suburbia for the segmentation of different groups into relatively homogenous enclosures." This, he notes is new both to suburban and U.S. experience. Travel within and between suburban areas moves almost entirely by private auto. "Except in the most casual, fitful or unusual instances," writes Smerk, "there may be but little personal relationship" between central city residents and those who live in the rest of the metropolitan area.

It is neither accurate nor fair to attribute all this to racial antagonism alone. The desire to leave urban problems behind is not confined to any particular ethnic group. Nor is fear of crime, which whether supported by statistics or not, periodically becomes a major political issue. The economic segmentation of suburban housing is maintained far more stringently than racial segregation is today. However, the fact remains that racial tensions have generated opposition to rail construction or expansion in cities across the U.S. from Buffalo to Seattle, with the most substantial impact in Atlanta. "Resistance to new taxes" is the reason most commonly cited for rejection of rail plans. Suburban voters are often described as "fiscally conservative," but urban residents also want taxes kept low. Other commonly-cited reasons are lack of public participation in the planning process, and failure to convince voters of the need for better transit. Transportation planning has traditionally been conducted in a "top-down" fashion with relatively little community or "grass-roots" input. Low-key publicity efforts by transit agencies may not generate rousing support, but avoid the appearance of misusing public funds: public funds may be used to "educate" voters, but not to "sway" them.

There is no clear and simple prescription for a successful rail-financing proposal. Atlanta and Los Angeles combined long-term rail development with short-term benefits for current bus riders, and managed to win approval. An essential element – perhaps the most essential – is public participation and involvement. This was notably lacking in cities where voter have rejected rail plans. Salt Lake City learned recently that support from local, state and federal officials, and an unusual degree of cooperation between highway and transit officials, was not enough. Popular interest and support must also be built.

Developing a public consensus in favor of rail takes patience, effort – and time, measured in years. Portland and Sacramento canceled freeway projects in response to public pressure, creating the potential for LRT development using interstate transfer funds. But broad support for the rail alternative did not follow automatically. Building a consensus for LRT took four years in Portland and eight years in Sacramento. Such efforts are to a large extent beyond the scope of transportation authorities, but their support and cooperation is essential.

Communities where transit advocates work patiently and tirelessly, lining up support from neighborhoods, community and civic organizations, business leaders and elected officials, are likely to join the ranks of America's "rail" cities. Those where interest, determination, cooperation and consensus are lacking will probably not.