in the San Fernando Valley, along with minor upgrades to existing track could immediately demonstrate the California market for fast trains. It also has genuine independent utility, even if a statewide high-speed rail network is never built, by speeding Bakersfield–Los Angeles travel, cutting hours from current schedules.

At present, it takes an average of 3-1/2 hours from arrival at Los Angeles Union Station on a Pacific Surfliner to departure from Bakersfield. A direct train could reduce that to a 1 hour trip, saving 2-1/2 hours each direction.

A direct train would also save rail passengers the current long Union Station walk to an uncomfortable bus connection and likely attract 200 new riders per departure, most of them going far past Bakersfield.

The strength of Southern California traffic to the north is currently crippled by the interminable transfers, bad-smelling buses and an un-airconditioned wait on the spartan Bakersfield platform. Converting the segment from bus to rail would turn the 12 daily San Joaquin trains from money-losers into cash cows. If San Joaquin trains ran through Los Angeles to San Bernardino and/or San Diego, it is likely that a 16 to 20 daily train service would be self-supporting.

California rail passengers would be best served by completing a modern north-south line. An 80 mile segment from near Bakersfield to Sylmar could unite the California rail network, and produce a flood of new passengers.

Map © 2010 by Richard Tolmach
Providing direct Los Angeles trains in the first stage is a more attractive project with far broader public support than the HSRA’s ill-fated Borden-Corcoran idea. Vast areas in Southern California and the Bay Area have little affection for public works in the Central Valley, but they understand projects which could finally bridge the rail gap between the two regions.

Stubborn insistence by the HSRA on a wasteful project that doesn’t have a near-term benefit could take down the whole California high speed rail enterprise. This would be a needless tragedy, and set back the cause of rail for decades.

On the other hand, quick action to redirect the funds for a link between the Central Valley and Los Angeles has winnable economics and statewide political appeal. It may take hard work, a new reform-minded Governor and increased participation by private capital to turn HSRA’s lemon into a workable plan, but we believe the effort is well worth it.

**LOSSAN: BREAKING DOWN WALLS CONSTRUCTING NEW BARRIERS**

By Paul Dyson

I have written over the years about the mess at Oceanside, and how three different passenger rail agencies manage to confuse and misinform passengers about train service from that station. Now the situation is and will go from bad to worse.

In spite of a bid from Metrolink that would have saved about $2.5 million over 10 years (the two agencies are still arguing about the sums involved) the North County Transit District, operator of the Coaster and Sprinter passenger rail services in San Diego County, has opted to set up its own dispatching center for its two rail lines.

Among other implications, this arrangement will mean that an Amtrak train from Los Angeles to San Diego will now have yet another hand off between dispatch offices, (Metrolink – BNSF – Metrolink – NCTD) with further loss of reliability. No doubt the NCTD dispatch will take care of “its” trains, often to the detriment of the integrity service and reactive delays all along the line. NCTD seems to be of the opinion that since we already have hand offs with BNSF another one won’t matter.

However, the NCTD Board should opt to spend more money during these times where all public transit agencies are struggling to fund service is nothing short of reprehensible. That the NCTD has so little regard for its responsibility to Amtrak passengers and the wider regional rail network is a sad reflection of their parochialism. This is all the more interesting given an empire building gambit by the NCTD staff.

In a rational world we would not divide up passenger rail service provision in the country’s second busiest rail corridor between so many agencies.

The LOSSAN Board recently engaged consultants HNTB and Gene Skoropowski to try and make sense of this situation and recommend ways for the agencies to work together to make improvements. NCTD has decided to march to a different drum.

Seemingly based on the premise that the most important part of the corridor lies within the borders of San Diego County, NCTD has opted for the parochial approach, in spite of having at least a moral obligation to passengers traveling across the county boundary.

Was NCTD motivated to rush this decision through before Skoropowski could report and most likely highlight the failings of the current arrangement and recommend regional rather than county-level control? In the opinion of this writer, the NCTD has no business in running passenger trains at all and their organization should be dissolved, with responsibility handed over to an expanded SCRA organization. We need regional, not county, solutions to regional mobility needs.

**Dyson and Ames Join TRAC Board**

Two experienced professionals, Paul Dyson and Lewis Ames, each with decades of rail industry experience, have joined the TRAC Board. Dyson drew up in Surrey, southeast of London, in 1968 joining the Southern Pacific Railroad.

Dyson came to the US in 1980 and has had a varied career in the warehouse, trucking and intermodal businesses including owning his own trucking company. He worked for Southern Pacific railroad until 1995, GATX leasing, and Wabash RoadRailster, and for the past 8 years an independent consultant.

Dyson has also been President of RailPAC since 2006. He resides in Burbank and is chairman of the City of Burbank Transportation Commission.

Lewis Ames was President of San Jose’s Modern Transit Society for 10 years, was the dinner speaker at TRAC’s 2nd annual conference and was active in two alternatives including bicycling, carpooling, and use of intercity rail. He started his career working on implementation of the first San Jose light rail line as the Senior Transit Analyst for Supervisor Rod Diridon. Ames played an active role in successful federal, state and regional grants initiatives, consulted and skilled craftsmen in a $5 million restoration of six vintage streetcars.

He subsequently worked for Metro North Railroad leading the capital planning, site planning and environmental clearances on its first new extension as well as leading integration of business planning with its operating budget of a $600 million. Ames practiced as a consultant with King and Dyson Engineering including work on the start up of the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Board integrated program where all of the recommend actions were fully implemented. His work also included Project Manager of the first Joint Culmtran PCPB and Amtrak System Safety Program Plan that was fully implemented.

He has authored papers for the TRB on the history and renaissance for success of light rail start up, is a member of the TRB Light Rail Committee and is an expert on shared use and on-train leasing, and Wabash RoadRailer, and for the past 8 years an independent consultant.

Ames is currently the New Starts / Financial Manager of the Central Subway project for the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency. He lives in San Francisco.

**Join TRAC and Help Fight for Improved Trains**

Clip & mail with your check or money order payable to: Train Riders Association of California (TRAC)

1025 Ninth St. #223 Sacramento, CA 95814-3516 (916) 557-1667

Please fill out the following, or attach address label:

| Regular member | $40-69 |
| Contributing member | $70-124 |
| Sustaining member | $250-499 |
| Benefactor | $500-2000 |

To help TRAC regain paid full-time staff I am enclosing a special donation to TRAC’s Legislative Action Fund in the amount of $?

Enclosed is a donation to TRAC’s Legislative Action Fund in the amount of $?

I want to support the Rail News. Enclosed is a tax-deductible donation to the California Rail Foundation in the amount of $?

You may also join by going to the TRAC website (trainriders.org) and clicking on the PayPal tab.

California Rail News

October 2010–January 2011