

Denton Takes the A-Train to Carrollton



Denton Mayor Mark Burroughs addresses the opening day crowd for Denton's A-Train regional rail service.

North Texas welcomed its first regional rail operation with the debut of the A-Train on June 18. Operated by the Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA), the A-Train connects downtown Denton with the Trinity Mills station in Carrollton on the recently-opened Green Line of Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART). The service utilizes rehabilitated freight rail line and Budd Rail Diesel Cars (RDCs) on loan from the nearby Trinity Railway Express commuter rail service between Dallas and Fort Worth. The A-Train will operate more modern Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) vehicles from Stadler

Bussnag AG once fleet has been delivered and tested on the line.

The A-Train serves six stations – including those in Denton and Trinity Mills – on a 21-mile corridor. Riders easily connect between the A-Train and DART Green Line trains on the same platform at the Trinity Mills station. The system has averaged more than 2,500 daily riders since its opening, beating projects of 1,200 to 1,500 passengers each day.



Amtrak to Exceed 30 Million Annual Passengers

For the 2011 Fiscal Year ending on September 30, Amtrak projects it will carry more than 30 million annual riders for the first time. The nation's intercity passenger railroad is making the prediction of its highest-ever passenger counts for June 2011, and 20 consecutive months of ridership growth compared to the previous year. Additionally, Amtrak has set ridership records in seven of the last eight fiscal years, including in FY 2010, when more than 28.7 million riders boarded Amtrak trains. All three of its business categories – the Northeast Corridor, state and regional corridor trans and long-distance trains – all have experienced ridership growth to date in FY 2011.

“We are having a very strong year because people around the country are choosing the convenience, efficiency and hassle-free environment of Amtrak to meet their travel needs,” said President and CEO Joe Boardman. “Amtrak has wisely invested the federal funding we have received to improve infrastructure and equipment. Continued investment in Amtrak and passenger rail will support the further growth of this increasingly vital transportation option.”

Norfolk Prepares for Opening of Tide Light Rail

As final testing continues on Virginia's first light-rail



system, Hampton Roads Transit officials recently announced the service would begin operations on August 19. The 7.4-mile Tide light rail will connect the Eastern Virginia Medical Center through downtown Norfolk to the city line at Newtown Road. The region will welcome the new operation with three days of free rides and a series of public events. The route's right-of-way continues directly into neighboring Virginia Beach, where an extension is being considered.

"This has been a long time coming – the first new means of transportation the region has seen in generations. It's an investment in the economy. It's an investment in the environment. It's an investment in the future," said Norfolk Mayor Paul Fraim. "We're the smallest community to attempt this and we're proud of that."

(For more information on the Norfolk Tide, see RAIL #26 – ed)

Amtrak Orders New Locomotives from Siemens

The recent order of 70 new electric locomotives from Siemens Industry USA will not only improve operations on the high-traffic Northeast Corridor, but also create hundreds of American manufacturing jobs in the process. Amtrak is purchasing the engines \$562.9 million loan through the U.S. Department of Transportation's Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing program. Work on the locomotives will create jobs at Siemens' main U.S. manufacturing plant in Sacramen-



to, Calif., as well as sustained business throughout the supply chain of parts and equipment, and are expected to be delivered beginning in 2013.

"The Obama administration is committed to making strategic, long-term investments that create jobs and boost the economy now," said Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood in announcing the loan. "This financing plan is already putting Americans back to work at assembly plants and supply companies in Ohio, Pennsylvania, California and Georgia."

Phoenix's Valley Metro Unveils Solar-Cooled Light-Rail Station

Responding to the region's often oppressive heat, Valley Metro – the public transportation provider in the Phoenix metropolitan area – unveiled the nation's first light-rail station cooled by solar power. The installation – provided by NRG Thermal – utilizes the city's underground chilled water cooling system to provide riders at the Third and Washington Streets station with added comfort during summer months. The project was completed in time for Major League Baseball's All-Star game, which was held at Phoenix's nearby Chase Field.

"The more we can continue to make Phoenix light rail more friendly, the more people will use it," said Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon. "We think it's a cool idea."



(For more on Phoenix's Valley Metro Light Rail, see RAIL #17 – ed.)

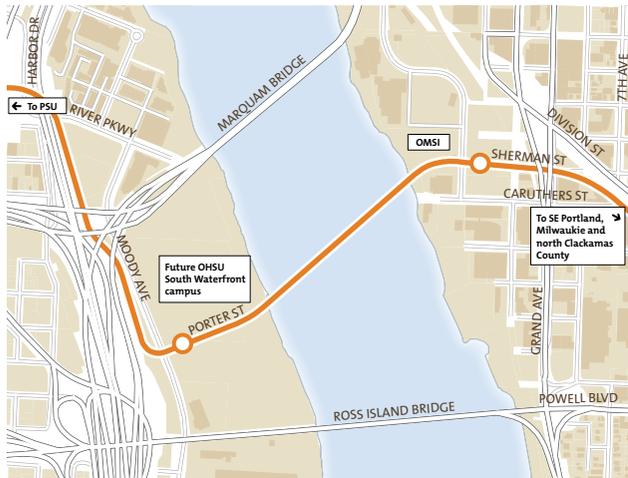
San Francisco Awards Construction Contract for Central Subway

A \$233.6 million contract recently awarded by the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (MUNI) transportation authority will allow the tunnel boring machines to begin work on the city's massive Central Subway project. The tunnels will be bored under Fourth and Stockton streets in downtown San Francisco, and carry MUNI's T-Third light-rail trains from their current terminus near the Caltrain station and the San Francisco Giants' AT&T Park underneath the SOMA, Union Square and Chinatown districts. The tunnel will serve as downtown's first crosstown tunnel route, running perpendicular to the existing BART and MUNI subway



underneath Market Street.

“This tunneling contract is a major part of opening a dynamic, new era in rapid transit for the people of San Francisco, and especially for those traveling along the congested Stockton corridor,” said Nathaniel Ford, MUNI Executive Director.



Portland Breaks Ground on Light Rail Bridge

Marking the key element in the future Orange Line light-rail route between Portland, Ore. and neighboring Milwaukee, area officials broke ground on the new bridge over the Willamette River that will carry not only the region's MAX light-rail trains, but also buses, pedestrians and bicyclists. No automobile traffic will be allowed on the bridge. The bridge will span 1,720 feet and is expected to be completed by 2014. The MAX Orange Line is scheduled to be in operation in 2015.

“Hopefully this is the type of project that will show the rest of the country that infrastructure spending isn't, quote, 'just spending,'” said U.S. Representative Kurt Schrader said. “It's actually building the future.”

Raleigh Eyes Old Warehouse for Intermodal Center

A former steel fabrication plant is under consideration by local leaders in Raleigh, N.C., not just for its historic look, but also due to its position at the crossroads of



the city's rail lines. The city's transit agency – Triangle Transit – purchased the former Dillon Supply building in 2005, primarily for its location in the center of the Boylan Wye, where three different rail lines converge in a Y-shaped pattern. If approved, the \$20 million project would host Amtrak trains on the busy route between Raleigh and Charlotte, which is owned by the state of North Carolina.

In 2010, more than 164,000 Amtrak riders traveled through the current Raleigh station – about two blocks away from the Dillon Supply building – which is too small for the level of passenger traffic and often causes backups on Cabarrus Street when a train is servicing the station. More passengers traveled through Raleigh than any other train station between Richmond and Amtrak's *AutoTrain* station in Sanford, Fla. In addition to an Amtrak facility, the site would also serve as an intermodal hub for Triangle Transit's bus routes, taxis and, eventually, local rail transit and high-speed rail options.

“It's not hard to put on your creative glasses and think, in the hands of the right people, this building could really be something,” said David King, Chief Executive Officer of Triangle Transit. “The opportunity is there.”

(For more on passenger rail in North Carolina, see RAIL #6 – ed.)



Final Route Selected for Detroit Light Rail

By advancing a hybrid option utilizing both street center and curbside lanes, the U.S. Department of Transportation and the city of Detroit reached an agreement to proceed on a \$500 million light-rail project. Transit advocates had favored running light-rail trains in center medians to improve overall trip times, while business groups preferred curbside rails to deliver passengers directly to their doorsteps. The route will operate between downtown Detroit to the old State Fairgrounds at Eight Mile Road and also serve the city's Rosa Parks Transit Center, making a total of 19 stops. The project will be supported by a mix of public and private investment, including federal, state and local sources, along with \$100 million from the private M-1 Rail group.

“This is a landmark moment in Detroit's journey to make light rail a reality in our city,” said Detroit Mayor Dave Bing. “With the support of FTA staff, we have reached this target faster than many believed was possible.”

Music City Star Eyes Next Train to Clarksville

With ridership on its existing route between Nashville and Lebanon, Tenn., recording all-time highs due to

higher gas prices, local leaders are studying a second Music City Star commuter rail line to Clarksville. Having already built a working relationship with the short line railroad the current trains operate over, leaders at the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) – which oversees the Music City Star – have identified Clarksville due to population and increasing congestion on local roadways. Although most of the rail line between Nashville and Clarksville is well-preserved, much of the track would need to be rebuilt and new rolling stock and locomotives acquired. Additionally, Clarksville and Montgomery County would need to become members of the RTA. However, the agency has already received interest from developers in Montgomery County seeking to locate near future stations.

(For more information on the Music City Star, see RAIL #17 – ed.)



GUESS THE STATION

We'll give you some leeway here, as this issue's station has something in common with Einstein, Pujols and a certain Canadian providence, but in name only. This community's historic red brick depot no longer serves passenger trains, but adult beverages and drive-through window bank customers. It's still a well-preserved reminder of a vibrant passenger rail network throughout the Midwest. Also, last edition's winner – Lou Martin – was the first to correctly identified the former Buffalo & Pittsburgh depot in Orchard Park, N.Y. – only a wide right field goal away from Ralph Wilson Stadium, home to the NFL's Buffalo Bills and RAIL Editor Rich Sampson's hometown in Western New York. Also guessing correctly were Jim Mielke, Tom Radak and David Sampson.

