

# UNITED RAIL PASSENGER ALLIANCE, INC.

America's foremost passenger rail policy institute

1526 University Boulevard, West, PMB 203 • Jacksonville, Florida 32217-2006 USA  
Telephone 904-636-7739 • Electronic Mail [info@unitedrail.org](mailto:info@unitedrail.org) • <http://www.unitedrail.org>

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Founded over three decades ago in 1976, URPA is a nationally known policy institute which focuses on solutions and plans for passenger rail systems in North America. Headquartered in Jacksonville, Florida, URPA has professional associates in Minnesota, California, Arizona, New Mexico, the District of Columbia, Texas, New York, and other cities. For more detailed information, along with a variety of position papers and other documents, visit the URPA web site at <http://www.unitedrail.org>.

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## **This Week at Amtrak; May 4, 2009**

Volume 6, Number 13

1) It looks like the Sunset Limited, as we know it today – and, since 1993 – is about to be dead and gone, hacked into at least two, probably three pieces as reported in the last issue of This Week at Amtrak. The full story is below, after an account of Florida's SunRail debacle in the Florida Senate. See item number 3, below.

2) SunRail, apparently for all practical purposes is yesterday's news, leaving behind a bewildered constituency trying to pick up the pieces. The demise of SunRail late last week in the Florida Senate came after a long and torturous journey, and the end was due to a lethal combination of revenge, ignorance, and plain stupidity. The last cause – stupidity – shouldn't be too shocking, as it was the stupidity of elected officials who didn't bother to do their homework, and the current state of Florida's Republican Party which has become populated with elected officials who are less than stellar and have only been elected because they pledge allegiance to the Republican label.

Yes, it happened here in Florida, and it could happen to you, too.

First, some background. Florida is a huge state, from the extreme northeast corner just north of here in Jacksonville at the Georgia line, it's over 300 miles due south to the bottom of the peninsula, south of Miami. Going due west from the Atlantic Ocean here at Jacksonville, it's over 300 miles to just west of Pensacola to the Alabama state line. Florida has three distinct coasts, the east coast, west coast, and gulf

coast. Our current population estimate is over 18 million souls. Politically, we are divided into seven distinct parts: South Florida, which encompasses Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, and Palm Beach; Southwest Florida which encompasses Naples, Fort Myers, and Sarasota; Tampa Bay, which includes Tampa, St. Petersburg, and Clearwater; the Interstate 4 Corridor of Central Florida which includes Lakeland, Orlando, and Daytona Beach; Northeast Florida which includes St. Augustine and Jacksonville; North Central Florida which encompasses Ocala, Gainesville, and Lake City; and West Florida/the Panhandle, which includes all of the gulf coast areas including Tallahassee, Panama City, and Pensacola.

Republicans for the past 20 years have controlled Florida; we have our second Republican governor in a row (first, Jeb Bush, now, Charlie Crist), and both houses of the Florida legislature have been controlled by Republicans since the 1980s.

South Florida and Gainesville in North Central Florida are the liberal hot spots in the state; most other areas have a mix of Republicans and moderate Democrats running the big cities.

SunRail was a plan to bring commuter rail to Central Florida, starting about 20 miles inland from the east coast in DeLand, on the extreme western edge of Volusia County (Daytona Beach is the most famous city in Volusia County), and traveling southwest to Sanford, Winter Park, Orlando, and Kissimmee, and ending eventually in Poinciana, on the outskirts of what

is today the Central Florida theme park area, consisting of Walt Disney World, Universal Studios, and SeaWorld, and everything that goes with those three giants of entertainment and vacation nirvana.

Florida, like so many other states, was a creature of railroad development in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, but, railroad development, via the Florida Land Boom in the 1920s, kept going until after 1925.

Eventually, through the usual mergers, Florida ended up with three major railroads, with CSX having the most trackage and claim to the majority of Florida. CSX has two Florida main lines, the old Seaboard Air Line main line via Ocala in the center of the state, and the old Atlantic Coast Line, via Orlando, which runs to the east of the Seaboard main line.

It was the old ACL main line CSX was willing to sell to the State of Florida to commence SunRail.

The deal was a commuter railroad developer's dream. A well maintained, vital piece of track starting on the far outskirts of Florida's major metropolitan area in the middle of the peninsular, and hitting every bedroom community along the way, while paralleling Interstate 4. DeLand, Sanford, Longwood, Castleberry, Winter Park, downtown Orlando, Kissimmee, and Poinciana were all planned SunRail stops, with another dozen thrown in for good measure. Some of the track was already double tracked, and several stations were already in place and currently used by Amtrak. Putting SunRail into operation would be relatively easy as opposed to so many other new commuter rail projects which require huge infrastructure upgrades and major building projects. SunRail could be up and running on its first segment in a measurement in months, not years.

Florida already has Tri-Rail in South Florida, which runs from north of Palm Beach to Miami, hugging Interstate 95, and using the old Seaboard main line which was completed during the Florida land boom in the 1920s. Tri-Rail has been in operation for 20 years, and by all transit measurements is a success on a daily basis. It was robust service every day of the week, and is popular in all segments of South Florida society.

Two other areas of Florida are actively looking at creating commuter rail; Jacksonville and Tampa Bay both are putting together long range plans which

include major commuter rail components. The Tampa area system will run over existing CSX tracks; the Jacksonville system will use a combination of CSX, Norfolk Southern, and Florida East Coast tracks, all of which radiate like spokes on a wheel from downtown Jacksonville.

CSX, like all railroads, was made the whipping boy of this project because it sought to maintain its risk position, by asking the State of Florida to limit how it can be sued by commuter rail passengers, and be held harmless under any circumstances, no matter who was a fault (including CSX) for the accident.

This is an interesting place to stop, because it involves so much of the convoluted thinking of today's society, where private property rights seem to be disappearing in favor of what some think are overpowering rights for the greater good of society. Of course, we fought a war against the Mother Country of England to get away from such tyranny, but, in light of the shabby job done today by alleged educators in America, no one seems to remember this morsel of history.

CSX, like all railroads, is a private company, owned by stockholders and investors. People buy and maintain shares of CSX stock because they believe it is a well-run company and a good investment, on which there will be a return in the form of dividends. In addition to the widows and orphans which own this stock, there are retirement systems, individual retirees, mutual funds, hedge funds, and a wide variety of other types of stockholders, all who depend on CSX to provide income based on their investment. For those in the back of the class sleeping, this is called capitalism, and it is what makes our country go forward.

CSX has what is called a fiduciary responsibility to its owners/shareholders to run the company as well as possible, and provide a return on investment. If the CSX managers do not do this, they can be held liable in a number of ways, under a variety of laws and regulations. When this does not happen, we have situations like Enron, where everyone is a loser.

So, CSX wants to protect its interests and the interests of its investors/shareholders by asking to be protected against lawsuits in case of accident. Railroading, as everyone knows, is one of the most dangerous activities on Earth, and accidents, under the

very best of circumstances, are prone to happen.

We have seen in recent years insane decisions by judges and juries against railroads because it is presumed all railroads have deep pockets, and any time someone gets a hangnail when near a train, it is cause for the railroads to pay big bucks for any pain and suffering as a result of said hangnail. Amtrak in the past couple of years has had more than one lawsuit where scrapings from the bottom of the human gene pool have trespassed on Amtrak property (which was plainly marked as no trespassing areas or fenced in areas to keep the public out), but, judges have said Amtrak didn't do enough to stop dumb people from harming themselves.

CSX, rightly so, wants to avoid this situation in Florida, and, in Massachusetts, too, where it is negotiating to turn over some trackage for commuter use around Boston.

The public and public officials somehow seem to continually think railroad property is public property, and should be available to everyone for any use. It's only when an accident occurs (that hangnail, again), that suddenly the mean, rich, railroad should have been more careful to protect those who use private railroad property for public purposes.

The revenge piece of this saga goes back almost a full decade. Back in 2000, the general electorate of Florida, not realizing what a silly mistake they were making, actually added an amendment to the Florida constitution requiring a high speed rail system be built in Florida. No funding mechanism was added at the time, and the amendment was worded and promoted without benefit of an actual cost to taxpayers. The "gee whiz" factor of the thing, along with total ambivalence by many facets in the state (including this writer), allowed the amendment to be passed and ratified in Florida's general election in 2000. The morning after election day, many rational people woke up and were stunned to learn we actually had a mandate to build a high speed rail system in Florida, even though there was no way to pay for it, nor a rational plan for it.

The amendment was the work of a Florida millionaire, C.C. "Doc" Dockery, who had nothing better to do than push for his dream and spend his money on the constitutional amendment.

Jeb Bush, Florida's Republican governor, two years into his first term, was appalled. Governor Bush, a fiscal conservative grappling with a number of issues and trying to get a handle on a bloated state budget and tax system he inherited from his predecessor, knew a bad amendment when he saw one. Additionally, one of his first acts when he took office in 1999 was to kill another Florida high speed rail project, the Florida Overland Xpress, which was the product of a reputable firm in California. The concept of the FOX project was good, but many felt it had the inherent problems many of today's proposed high speed corridor have; it was a stand-alone system, had inadequate feeder systems, and was too expensive for what Florida needed to spend at the time.

Even though Governor Bush's Florida Department of Transportation had a solid policy to develop rail before developing major new highways in a booming state where 800+ people a day were moving to, Mr. Bush knew both FOX and Mr. Dockery's plans were flawed and had the potential to cost Florida taxpayers a ton of money without much return on investment/sustainable ridership.

Subsequently, in 2004, Florida voters, under the leadership of Governor Bush, wisely got rid of the amendment to Florida's constitution and high speed rail went away.

This annoyed Doc Dockery, a millionaire who was accustomed to getting his way. As a result, Mrs. Millionaire, Paula Dockery, got herself elected to the Florida Senate from the Dockery's hometown of Lakeland, one county over to the east from Tampa on Florida's west coast.

Senator Dockery started ingratiating herself in the Florida Senate, collecting chits and swapping votes she would hoard and use later against SunRail.

Towards the end of his second and final term in office (We have term limits on practically everyone in state office here in Florida.), Governor Bush made a surprise announcement and said a much needed commuter rail system would be created in Central Florida, using the existing CSX/old ACL tracks to the northeast and southwest of Orlando.

It was a great bargain in many respects. In exchange for CSX selling the 61 miles of track for the

future SunRail to the State of Florida, the state would provide hundreds of millions of dollars for CSX to upgrade the old SAL main line in Central Florida which runs through Ocala, allowing CSX to move all but local freight service from the ACL line to the SAL line. Additionally, local communities along the SAL line would receive huge amounts of dollars to upgrade and bridge over grade crossings, eliminating traffic congestion and making sure the doubling of freight trains would not be an inconvenience to local residents.

CSX would also move the primary operations from its Taft yards in Southwest Orlando to further south in Winter Haven, and build an entirely new yard and intermodal facility which would be closer to the old SAL main line and still maintain a presence near all of Florida's major Interstate highways.

Senator Dockery found her chance for revenge against Jeb Bush. She flung herself into action, convincing the downtown merchants of Lakeland all of the new trains coming down the SAL line would ruin business in Historic Downtown Lakeland (One man's definition of historic, of course, is another man's definition of blighted and/or old.). She also started a campaign against CSX, and gathered up lots of allies along the way like the trial lawyers, calling the deal a "giveaway" for corporate monolith CSX, unfair because of the limited liability portion of the deal, and pretty much also managed to blame tooth decay in every citizen of Florida because of the overall meanness of CSX.

As a result, the Florida Senate defeated the plan in 2008. But, wait! supporters said, we have a two year deal with CSX, not scheduled to expire before June 30, 2009, so we can win this thing again when the legislature goes into its 2009 session.

And, Senator Dockery did it again, finishing off SunRail last Friday, the final scheduled day of the legislative year. Even though the legislature automatically went into a week's overtime to finish the budget, only budgetary matters are being considered, not new programs.

Republican Senator Dockery used every trick in the book. She scared the unions into going along with her by exclaiming union jobs would be lost if SunRail became reality. The truth is, eight – yes, 8 – CSX union jobs for signalmen would be abolished along the 61

mile SunRail route, but all eight of the workers would be offered their same job on another part of the CSX division which encompasses SunRail.

She also convinced many of Florida's minorities to back her, falsely claiming that money for SunRail would take away money from education and community program accounts. Never mind the majority of the money was coming from the federal government in special earmarked accounts which could only be used for transportation, and never mind what little state money being used was also barred from being used for projects other than transportation.

The trial lawyers the second go-round gave up the fight and endorsed SunRail, as did the downtown merchants of Lakeland. Dockery still fought on, because her goal was revenge on Jeb Bush's system, not what was best for Florida.

Tri-Rail, in South Florida, while a continual success, has been hampered by money for its entire 20 year history. It is currently supported by farebox revenue and the three county government of Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade counties. The county governments, while simultaneously pushing for expansion of Tri-Rail by encompassing the parallel Florida East Coast Railway main line to create a giant "U" shaped system (An excellent idea; the possibilities are endless if this goes through.), constantly threaten to cripple Tri-Rail by slowing down basic funding for the system.

Legislators from the other six parts of Florida are generally non-plussed by the hard-and-fast pleas of South Florida politicians to allow them to levy a \$2 per day sales tax on rental cars in Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade counties only, claiming it would hurt tourism. They would not even allow a proposed bill this session in the legislature for two things to happen: first, by a super majority, county commissioners would have to approve the \$2 rental car tax, and, second, the tax would have to have voter approval in a general election. Despite constant pleas from Tri-Rail supporters, house and senate members from other parts of the state are tone-deaf, and refused to even consider such a measure. And, since many of the South Florida senators refused to back SunRail because of misinformation and threats from Senator Dockery, Central Florida senators essentially said, "too bad, so sad," and turned their

backs on Tri-Rail, leaving the three counties to fend for themselves for funding.

Obviously, the politicians from the other six political divisions in Florida want the fruits of expansion and commerce in South Florida, so they will have the sales taxes and property taxes generated in South Florida to spend all over the state, but they refuse to understand how much an efficient commuter rail system contributes to the economic well-being of an area, which ultimately increases tax revenues. They want their cake, and want to eat it, too, but still cling to a silly “no new taxes under any circumstances” mantra in a state which has grown so rapidly it’s impossible to keep up with infrastructure needs and expansion solely based on current income.

This story could go on for another 2,000 words to get in all of the details, but, at this point you get the drift. SunRail was killed not for the public good, but for political revenge and intrigue, swapped votes and payback, misinformation, and outright lies.

Congressman John Mica, who represents much of the SunRail area in Congress, was a strong supporter of SunRail, and tried to convince his colleagues on the state level \$100 million has already been spent on SunRail, and a quarter of a billion dollars allocated for SunRail on the federal level would forever disappear if the Senate failed to act. Likewise, Congresswoman Corrine Brown of Jacksonville, whose district also includes some of the SunRail territory, and is the most powerful Democrat in Congress controlling railroad money to be spent, couldn’t convince her colleagues on the state level, either. It was if all of this federal money didn’t matter; political intrigue and revenge mattered more.

Today, as this is being written, defeated SunRail proponents – Republicans and Democrats alike – are meeting in Orlando and trying to figure out what to do. The State of Florida will most likely move ahead with its plans to expand Interstate 4 to its maximum width, and, without the benefit of SunRail to help local commuters, it’s going to be very messy driving through Central Florida for the next few years.

The Florida Republican Party has demonstrated what happens when one party stays in power too long. All of the initial visionary stars which got things going and brought the party to power have been replaced by

political hacks who win elections only because of their party affiliation. Leadership has been replaced by rote process.

The fun part of this concerns CSX. While CSX will continue to pay property taxes and run trains on the old ACL main line through Orlando and Central Florida, it will proceed to build its new yard and intermodal facility in Winter Haven, and most likely reroute more trains down the old SAL mail line. All of those cities and town along the way which would have received state help for traffic mitigation due to increased train traffic are now on their own. Likewise, the City of Lakeland will see increased train traffic, but now that SunRail is gone, so is the part of the package which would have paid to move the CSX line out of downtown Lakeland. The worst fears of the merchants will come true, but no one will be there to help them solve the problem.

Senator Paula Dockery and her husband, C.C. “Doc” Dockery have their revenge against Jeb Bush, three years after he left office and is a private citizen living in Miami. Just as talk has started again about high speed rail in Florida from the federal level, Doc Dockery resigned his position on Florida’s High Speed Rail Commission a few weeks ago. That probably doesn’t matter much. Some of the federal criteria for high speed rail, such as having a feeder system like SunRail, won’t be met, and most likely federal money will go anywhere but Florida.

The new efforts of TBART, the Tampa Bay area’s metropolitan planning organization, to get a commuter rail system organized on CSX tracks just took a major hit. If you were a CSX executive, would you put much time and effort into a project like that so your company can become a whipping boy for a vengeful woman? All of this was not just a slap in the face to CSX, it was a slap in the face in the company’s home state.

And, don’t forget about us here in Jacksonville. We’ve been slowly but surely putting together a pretty good commuter rail plan, which not only will help Jacksonville, but provide benefits for Amtrak, too. Don’t get too excited about that; Senator Paula Dockery started driving a pretty heavy stake through the heart of our plan, too, for all of the same reasons as with Tampa’s system.

Could this happen to you in your state? You betcha.

This is why many of us for years have been saying any rail plan must be the best plan, not just any plan. Any time politicians are involved with commuter rail – or, any type of passenger rail – there is a potential for trouble. We’ve just proved that here in Florida; we have a dead system, \$100 million spent on something that doesn’t look like it’s having any immediate prospects, and one of our best corporate citizens has a black eye through no fault of its own.

One telling result of all of this is the public’s (and politicians’) love for the automobile. Because this is such a deep and abiding love, no one is willing to look at reasonable alternatives. It’s one thing to talk about banning automobiles and forcing everyone onto public transit or commuter rail. It’s quite another thing to provide reasonable choices as long as the public budget stays balanced and there is a large enough segment of the population which wishes to use those choices. Those who dearly love automobiles need to understand not everyone have the same deep feelings about spending hours each day in a car, along with hundreds of thousands of your new best friends, all creeping along at minimum speeds, just hoping you can move over four lanes to the right before you reach your exit.

3) William Lindley of Scottsdale, Arizona attended the joint RailPAC/NARP meeting in Los Angeles and files this report and personal observations.

By William Lindley

Saturday, May 2, 2009 in Los Angeles, Amtrak Interim President and CEO Joseph Boardman and longtime and well-respected Vice President Brian Rosenwald laid out the company's new direction. The scene was an auditorium in the office tower adjoining Los Angeles Union Station, at the well-attended joint membership meeting of the Rail Passenger Association of California and Nevada (RailPAC) and the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP).

Amtrak has had some good leaders before; and on occasion there has even been money enough to work with; but like the Chicago Cubs where everything so promising in Spring seems to not quite come together by the end of the baseball season, there has always been a missing link. On Saturday, though, one received the impression that – with folks like the determined and visionary, yet, realistic Mr. Boardman, and the experienced and capable Mr. Rosenwald – there might,

this year, be a World Series to be had for Amtrak.

In a letter to Amtrak employees shortly after he arrived in his new position, Mr. Boardman wrote, "In my view, a national intercity, interconnected passenger rail service is critically important for the mobility and energy independence of the United States." Saturday's presentation was consistent with realistically expanding passenger trains' role across the country.

Mr. Boardman spoke of Amtrak as momentarily feeling like "the dog that caught the car" with the recent stimulus funds – "What do you do now?" Yet, plans are moving quickly, with the \$1.3 billion already 70% obligated. He said "a healthier Amtrak includes a better relationship with employees" and the May 1st employee appreciation day included due back pay.

Touching on the Obama Administration's high speed rail plans, he explained systems like the French TGV only occurred after the existing networks were at capacity. America does not yet have a "high speed rail culture ... we are not ready for orphan systems" that do not have appropriate feeder networks including bus, streetcar, subway, and commuter trains. Boardman described a high speed network emerging through incremental improvements, using improved track such as "Class 6 at 110 MPH," and even using (relatively common) Class 5 mainline freight tracks at 90 MPH. And, "I don't buy the argument you can't mix passenger trains and freight at 110 MPH." This from the man whose immediate previous job as Amtrak's interim president and CEO was the administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration, whose primary role is that of the safety of America's railroads.

Concluding his remarks, Boardman characterized the discussion of revising the existing Sunset route as representing a "new way of thinking, not an announcement" and continued, "We recognize the need to reconnect Florida (to the West)."

Replying to questions from the audience, Mr. Boardman indicated there would be a Viewliner (single-level, as used on eastern trains) equipment order, of all types (Coach, Sleeper, and Diner); that "Diner Lite" never worked, and it would be eliminated this year; and that "we will have a long distance fleet plan." He said Amtrak had begun to study new options for serving Phoenix, but that Las Vegas service would be further in the future.

Later, VP Brian Rosenwald spoke of several issues; of particular interest was the Sunset Route realignment proposal which is "within range of demonstrating that added revenue from daily service will offset the additional costs. Our only bias in developing this proposal is that there be daily service" with a primary factor being the highest projected revenue segment via Dallas to Chicago. He was clear this is all still a proposal, subject to further input, not an announcement.

As the proposal stands now, there would be a daily train operating from Los Angeles via San Antonio and Dallas to Chicago, with a cross-platform transfer to a daily train operating from San Antonio via Houston to New Orleans. Running time between Los Angeles and Chicago may be up to eight hours less than today's Sunset Limited/Texas Eagle schedule. There would be daily through-car service with sleepers and full diner between Los Angeles and Chicago by extending the daily service between Chicago and San Antonio and tri-weekly service west of San Antonio of the Texas Eagle on the Sunset Limited route to a single train on the full Los Angeles-Chicago route, and dropping the two existing names of the Texas Eagle and Sunset Limited.

Departure from Los Angeles under this scenario would be closer to the Sunset Limited's traditional one, perhaps 10:30 P.M., in order to offer better times at Maricopa (for Phoenix) and San Antonio. The desert Maricopa station "will do for the moment" until a better plan for serving Phoenix can be devised. Estimate a 9:30 P.M. arrival at New Orleans from the west. Also, by moving to the traditional departure time of the Sunset Limited in Los Angeles eastbound, this re-establishes the connection with the Coast Starlight with its "strong revenue potential" because of the matrix effect. Further, a single onboard services crew could operate between LA and Chicago, thus simplifying operations.

To describe this new service, the "Sunset Limited" name might be shelved in favor of, potentially, the "Golden State." When equipment permits, Mr. Rosenwald was hopeful through cars between New Orleans and Los Angeles could be added.

In my opinion, the Sunset restructuring could bring a far stronger, functional passenger train presence to

America's entire south and west. Coupled with new and developing commuter-rail and light-rail projects widely perceived as successes in Sunbelt cities like Phoenix, Dallas, and Houston, the seeds of a "rail culture" could well germinate.

My impression was that Joseph Boardman knows when to be specific, when to be delicate, and when to be bold. Mr. Rosenwald has demonstrated ability to manage a train and work with the parties involved. Together, Mr. Rosenwald and Mr. Boardman represent an Amtrak that may at last find its balance.

4) Other interesting facts reported by Mr. Lindley from the meeting include a continuing emphasis by Amtrak on the Route Performance Improvement program, which moves each route more towards product-line management "ownership." Hmmmm ... Amtrak had this as a well-working program in the 1990s, and it was thrown out by former Amtrak President and CEO David Gunn in favor of traditional freight railroad management style. Now, the future is the past; at least it's back to a program which proved to be one of Amtrak's best management innovations.

There is also work afoot for restoring higher level of coach attendant staffing, dining car staffing, and restoration of regional dishes in dining cars. Gee, all of those Amtrak employees who were let go or otherwise forced out when onboard staff downsizing took place must be thrilled to know losing their jobs could have/should have been avoided.

Other than Auto Train, the Palmetto leads all trains in cost recovery, with a 96% ratio. This ratio correctly excludes allocated system costs (such as corporate overhead) and depreciation. Auto Train has a 121% ratio (that translates to profit), followed by the Empire Builder at 76%, and the Southwest Chief at 74%. the lowest long distance train ratios are the Cardinal at 52%, and the Sunset Limited at 33%. The common factor of the two lowest ratios is both trains are tri-weekly trains. The Empire Builder contributes over \$5,000 per coach per day of revenue, and the Sunset Limited coach daily revenue is \$1,990; again a victim of tri-weekly service.

5) Mr. Lindley's report offers a mixture of hope and anticipation.

While the elimination of the Sunset Limited as a

separate train – and, America’s oldest, continuously operating named passenger train – at least some attempt seems to be made to improve the financial performance of the route, even with a less than perfect replacement. If, as indicated, as soon as possible some necessary equipment comes out of the shops to provide through-car service from Los Angeles to New Orleans (An adequate supply of Superliner transition cars seems to be the hold-up.), then a reasonable substitute for the Sunset will have been accomplished. Later, hopefully, a second frequency on this route will be provided, and the honorable Sunset Limited name can be used, again.

For a number of years, the Sunset Limited has been made a mockery by uninformed politicians and uncaring Amtrak senior management. The move from tri-weekly to daily could have been accomplished long before this, and, even with all of the on time performance problems of the Southern Pacific and later Union Pacific railroads, the train would have had better numbers if it was daily and not tri-weekly. Finally, an answer seems at hand, even if the “chicken” way is being taken, and the equally honorable name of the Golden State for a time rides on the Sunset Limited’s rails. No more will ignorant politicians be able to point to the hapless Sunset as the route/root of all evil of Amtrak. So, what will be the solution for the tri-weekly Cardinal between Chicago and Washington/New York?

Mr. Lindley aptly points out what Amtrak Vice

President, the father of the Pacific Parlour Car for sleeping car passengers on the modern day Coast Starlight, can accomplish when he’s allowed to flourish. Here’s hoping now that he’s firmly embedded in Washington and apparently has been given room to dream, he can push through more changes for Amtrak passengers and crews and help push the company to viability.

As for Interim President and CEO Joseph Boardman, while he received high marks from Mr. Lindley, others were not as fascinated with her performance in Los Angeles. While he receives credit for allowing Mr. Rosenwald to “do his thing,” and starting to make other inroads in the Amtrak bureaucracy, it’s still questionable if he is the man who ultimately has the type of vision luminaries such as Gil Carmichael and Andrew Selden have for the future of passenger rail. Mr. Boardman has shown us results, and has shown us good starting plans for the future, but, close to six months into his stewardship of Amtrak, we still have not seem a long term plan for Amtrak, nor have we seen any type of meaningful housecleaning in Amtrak’s management cadre. We will wait and see what Mr. Boardman next has to say and what he will do about a serious equipment order for the bi-level car long distance route system, which should be one of the highest priorities on anyone’s list for the stabilization and future growth of Amtrak.