

**FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK**

**BY TONY TRIFILETTI**

**JANUARY 31, 2020**

**Goals:**

- Build support for Amtrak to include a Phoenix-Tucson link as part of its state-supported short-range corridor system.
- Work for daily service on the *Sunset Limited*.
- Build credibility among regional politicians, managers and organizations as the critical organization with expertise in rail.
- Recruit new members and raise funds.

**Rail Passengers Association Route & Services Committee**

This committee sent us a questionnaire about both a daily *Sunset Limited* and the return of Amtrak service to Phoenix. The questions were comprehensive, centering on frequencies, schedules and the condition of the UP line between Picacho Junction and Wellton. I wrote a 5-page response that was just as comprehensive as the questionnaire. The key item gained from the questionnaire was that the members of the committee had no idea of conditions in Arizona with respect to Union Pacific, Amtrak and state government. Our response was good enough for the Route & Services Committee to forward to the RPA Board of Directors. The report is available on our website.

**Meeting with Phoenix Revitalization Corp.**

I met with Eva Olivas and Jessica Bueno, two officers of the organization who are also part of the Transportation Choices Coalition. The meeting was about Phoenix Union Station and the history of passenger rail service at the station.

I gave them a 100-year history of rail service in Phoenix, and how and why it came to an end. We discussed the future of the station, commuter rail and intercity rail. I asked both ladies to join our organization. I left them with a copy of the Routes & Services report because it contained so much good information.

Two interesting notes: Eva toured Europe by train last year, and Eva's father was a telegrapher on the Missouri Pacific.

## Valley Partnership Breakfast

I exchanged business cards and our new brochures with the following:

- Molly Carson, SVP Market Leader, Ryan Companies (home builders);
- Mary McGowan, Ryan Companies;
- Ali Fakh, SEG (civil engineering smart projects);
- Shane Gutknecht, Traffic Engineer, Southwest Traffic Engineering;
- Bill Headley, SVP, Holder Construction Co.;
- Kirby Korth, C. Sean & Assoc. (custom home builders);
- Melinda Korth, EVP, Colliers International (investment services).

Everyone I spoke to liked our Phoenix-Tucson intercity rail idea lest we become a drier version of Los Angeles.

The speaker was Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey.

- He was more comfortable speaking before a business group than legislators.
- He spoke of the “Arizona way” in terms of people fleeing California and Illinois; Arizona is the top inbound state; Maricopa County is the fastest growing county in the nation; Phoenix is the fastest growing city in the nation; 70% of Arizona residents were born outside the state.
- In terms of policy, he defined Arizona’s success as “lower taxes, lighter regulation and greater opportunities”; he took the state from a \$1 billion deficit to a \$1 billion surplus.
- Arizona is one of only two states that show a gain in education; Arizona State University is the greatest innovator in the nation, eclipsing MIT.
- To suggestions of an income tax hike, he said, “Don’t go down the path of California.”
- In terms of water, Arizona is planning a century in advance; Israel is the only other entity that has planned as successfully; 70% of Arizona’s water goes to agriculture; the state uses less water today than it did in 1959 due to conservation measures; “There is no western water crisis, there is only a California water crisis.”
- In terms of transportation, the highest priority is the widening of I-10 and I-19, and the building of I-11; more federal money is needed to make I-11 a possibility; Mexico is the state’s top trading partner.
- In terms of land, the state owns land worth \$6.23 trillion.
- “Beware of overconfidence. Remember 2009!”
- I think that Gov. Ducey is positioning himself for a presidential run in 2024.

## **Transportation Choices Coalition**

There was a new face at the meeting:

- JoAnna Strother, Regional Director of Public Policy, American Lung Association.

The Proposition 400 Extension will be written by the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) and consist of a referendum to raise the county sales tax for new transportation projects, which may include more freeways, more light rail lines, bus rapid transit and commuter rail. It looks like 2024 will be the year for the vote.

There are three principles that will define the response to the Prop 400 Extension:

- Ensure public transit decisions are equitable and accommodate the greatest ridership;
- Ensure the economic and public health benefits of public transit are realized;
- Ensure the public has ample opportunities to provide input.

I cautioned that the emphasis on electric rail transit outside of light rail could cause a problem in that electrification can double the cost of a new project.

The participants liked our brochures, and they are considering something similar for the coalition as a whole.

There is a belief that the widening of I-10 should be placed on hold and replaced with high-speed intercity rail between Phoenix and Tucson. I pointed out the huge cost differential that would make the widening a more popular project.

### **FROM PRESIDENT CHUCK MOTT**

- Your Executive Director has personally visited most of the mayors, council members and civic organizations in cities Amtrak serves, providing information and offering specific proposals how to save these passenger train.
- He has been on radio, TV and written up in major newspapers in Arizona. As a result, hundreds of letters, emails and phone call have been made to Arizona US Senators and our Arizona congressional delegation asking for legislation to preserve, sustain and fund new equipment for interstate passenger trains serving Arizona.
- Tony's efforts, as a full time, modestly paid Executive Director, have made the difference in moving Arizona forward for more rail passenger service in Arizona. However, our dues alone cannot fully support him. As a result, we have had to temporarily pull him back from his full-time duties.
- Therefore, we are asking that you consider increasing your annual renewal membership dues to get him back on board full-time in January 2020.
- We want to thank many of you, who have already paid your 2020 memberships dues, and particularly those who have already given above the Regular Membership Dues of \$35.00. Here is our expense budget for 2020

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ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES AND CORPORATE GIVING GOAL FOR 2020 is: \$32,000

ALL ABOARD DUES PAYING MEMBERS: 200

INDIVIDUAL/CORPORATE GIVING BUCKETS THAT WILL MEET THE BUDGET FOR 2020

- 80 MEMBERS Regular/Spouse/Family: \$ 35.00 \$ 2800
- 50 MEMBERS Copper Spike \$ 50.00 \$ 2500
- 35 MEMBERS Silver Spike \$ 100.00 \$ 3500
- 20 MEMBERS Gold Spike \$ 500.00 \$ 10,000
- 5 MEMBERS Platinum Spike \$ 1000.00 \$ 5,000
- 5 CORPORATE MEMBERS \$ 8,200.00 \$ 8,200

TOTAL BUDGET GIVING: ..... \$ 32,000

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS GIVING TO ALL ABOARD ARIZONA.