Introduction

Answering the “All Aboard” Call: Will Passenger Rail Survive and Succeed?
John C. Tone

With Amtrak struggling to achieve self-sufficiency after more than 30 years of operation and federal support, U.S. passenger rail service has arrived at a critical juncture, this author observes. Yet the success and rapid progress of regional initiatives, along with new strategies to connect with other modes and to share freight track, new proposals to restructure, and the application of lessons from abroad—all presented in this issue—are laying the tracks for passenger rail to survive and thrive in the United States.

Developing the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor: Vision Gains Momentum Through Technology, Service, Partnerships
Ronald C. Sheck

Starting with a vision shared by staff of the Washington State and Oregon departments of transportation, the 466-mile Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor has developed incrementally through partnerships, notably with Amtrak, technological innovations such as high-speed trains; and customer-oriented services. Significant increases in ridership, a burgeoning rail transit network, connecting bus services, as well as new and rebuilt stations, are part of the success story traced by a participant, who also looks at the budget challenges ahead.

Keeping California Mobile with High-Speed Rail: Megaproject Arrives at Critical Stage
Albert C. Witzig

Planning and environmental analysis for a 700-mile high-speed rail system linking San Francisco and Sacramento with Los Angeles and San Diego are in the final stages; but, according to this consultant, implementation will require citizens and decision makers to see California’s newest megaproject as adding valuable capacity to a multimodal transportation environment. The proposed system will free up other capacity-challenged modes for continued use, catalyzing growth and development, while preserving a Californian value—freedom of mobility.

High-Speed Rail Authority Readies the Plan
Dan Leavitt

High-Speed Rail in Florida: On Track To Meet a Popular Mandate
Nazih K. Haddad

Charged by a Florida constitutional amendment—approved by voters in 2000—to plan a high-speed rail network linking the state’s five largest cities, with construction to start in November 2003, the Florida High-Speed Rail Authority is keeping on track through innovation, reports the staff director. Integrating the request for proposals into environmental impact study procedures and developing a new method to validate ridership estimates for investors, the Authority is proceeding toward selection of a contractor to design, build, operate, maintain, and finance the first segment, from Tampa to Orlando.

Maximizing the Capacity of Shared-Use Rail Corridors
John A. Harrison
Point of View

Intercity Passenger Rail That Works: You’ve Got To Have Connections!
George Haikalis

Developing an intercity passenger rail network requires interfacing with other modes—but the task will be difficult without public investment, according to this consultant, who also notes the importance of intramodal connections via hubs. Metropolitan planning organizations also will have to play a role in facilitating cooperation among freight, transit, and intercity rail, and in developing the strategic potential of the air–rail interface.

Point of View

Improving U.S. Passenger Train Performance: Three Challenges and Two Questions That Must Be Resolved
Anthony Perl

Decision makers must go back to the drawing board to devise a new passenger rail policy, which should harmonize with the models for other transportation modes, this author maintains. The new policy would end Amtrak’s institutional isolation from federal-state fiscal partnerships, repair a flawed corporate structure that inhibits competitiveness, and rebuild supporting industry, as well as define federal and state responsibilities for passenger rail and the system’s relationships with the private sector.

Research Pays Off

Limiting the Effects of High-Speed Dynamic Forces on Track Structure: New Method for Evaluating Equipment
Allan M. Zarembski and John G. Bell

Researchers have developed a method to evaluate potential damage and to avoid dramatic increases in track damage, degradation, and maintenance expenses under high-speed train operations in the Northeast Corridor—but the method also can be used for evaluating other proposed high-speed rail corridors and equipment.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Special Feature

Countering Terrorism in Transportation: National Academies Panel Examines the “New Transportation Security Imperative”
Mortimer L. Downey and Thomas R. Menzies

A specially appointed panel that contributed to a National Academies study assessing the role of science and technology in counterterrorism advocates a transportation security system with multiple layers of protection, each safeguard reinforcing the others. The panel also calls on the Transportation Security Administration to work collaboratively to build security into transportation operations; to conduct and marshal research and development with a systems perspective; and to provide technology guidance, dissemination, and evaluation.

New TRB Special Report

Jill Wilson

A TRB study, requested by the U.S. Congress, has investigated the potential role of vehicle characteristics and related consumer information in reducing the number of rollover crashes. Among the recommendations are that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration should refine its rating system for rollover resistance, continue dynamic testing to complement the static measures now in use, and provide consumers with more information placing rollover risk in the context of motor vehicle safety.