

What, You Spent How Much on That? Far Freaking Out, Man! It's the Dubious Rail Achievements 2001

UP Throws Stations a Curve

In Sacramento, Union Pacific says it wants to move the Amtrak station because trains (only ones longer than 13 cars) have to let the baggage cars stay on a piece of curve. Huge, scary safety problem, according to their flak. Funny thing, just 14 miles west in Davis, the weather is different or something and no one at UP seems concerned about safety on one of the curviest stations in the West with a hidden inside track. In fact, UP removed Davis station-occupied signals and more than once has terrified passengers by forgetting to slow down their freight trains as a *Capitol* was letting out students on the hidden south track. Funny, also, how UP has built bigger curves at new stations in Martinez and Richmond, adding new blind spots and a unique unprotected Richmond grade crossing for wheelchair passengers. Yeah, it must be the weather.

Kopp Under Cover of Gown

Undaunted by the loss of legislative power and his prized Senate Transportation Chair, former Senator Quentin Kopp is reportedly having the time of his life as a San Mateo County Superior Court judge. Judges can't endorse candidates, but previously quiet Mrs. Kopp has started doing the honors. Da Judge can tool down the (not Memorial yet) Quentin Kopp Freeway (Interstate 380) to SFO where so many projects he helped arrange are still moving, years and years after he got them going. Some of them are not going too well, like the little old 8.7 mile \$1.5 billion BART SFO extension, 3 years late and facing more overruns, or the SFO expansion contracts, under scrutiny by S.F.'s new City Attorney (not endorsed by Mrs. K). Best thing of all about his new job: judges get to wear black, not dayglow orange.

What Exactly Does Caltrans Get Out of the Raiders?

Repeated Caltrans promotions featuring the Oakland Raiders have struck many Capitol observers as an odd purchase. The usual logic in a team deal is you want the market that identifies with the team. Team tie-ins do sell beer and sports shoes, but how many train tickets? Lack of a Coliseum station means Caltrans has to pay for buses to games, and barely a dozen trains a year get a boost in riders. The worst aspect may be the variety of Raider fans attracted, primarily young, loud types who plan to arrive hours early and party hard at tailgate



I like your team. Do you like my train?



parties. Typical AM cafe order: hard liquor. Attracting this sub-market has the definite effect of driving away loyal passengers. *Capitol* conductors recently were heard discussing how bad the Raiders fans car smelled following a return trip; fans drink copiously but don't exactly hold it. So, it wouldn't be the revenue, it's not the sub-market and it can't be the prestige. What does Caltrans see in the Raiders? Season tickets? Hospitality suite? Raiderettes?

Sorry, we haven't tried that since the 60's. It gave us headaches. But aren't you the guys building trains to Folsom and Elk Grove? Here's a far out idea: Put your product, instead of your last acid trip, on your \$15,000 billboards!

Please send transportation items of humorous interest care of D.J. Russell, TRAC, 926 J St. Suite 612, Sacramento CA 95814

2001: Not a Smart Time for Cute Terrorism References

RT riders at a Sacramento state office near the Capitol noticed something distinctly disturbing about the June 17 RT Timetable cover (right). It shows a driver's eye view of the south Capitol facade, the same one that was hit by a suicidal trucker with a full load of fuel January 16. The facade had \$18 million of damage, was scorched black by the fire and was under wraps all the way to summer, so this picture had to be a file photo. By the way, RT doesn't run buses on the street shown, so the bus may have been pasted into the shot; the train definitely was, and that took a bit of time and thought. What an interesting subliminal reminder of a not-very-nice event! What an dumb way to position transit in the market!



Designing an Earthquake That Won't Upset the Bridge

The fatal flaw in the Bay Bridge East Span replacement design according to the Army Corps of Engineers is that Caltrans and bridge designers have rejected their own highest earthquake standard and have substituted a less stressful virtual quake. The Army Corps is concerned that the bridge is not being designed to withstand the Maximum Credible Earthquake as Caltrans once boasted. Instead, the Corps says, a gentler model is being developed to assess the bridge. (Oops, not that strong.) No excuse has been offered to legislators, the press, or the public. No one, least of all Bay Area politicians, wants to believe that Caltrans' design is faulty. However, a leading seismic geologist independent of the project recently said, "maybe they'll believe it when the new bridge falls into the Bay."

Just Don't Call It Abandoned

The *Sacramento Bee* reported December 12 that the Sacramento City Council voted to change the name of the Sacramento Amtrak station to "Sacramento Valley Station" or SVS. Councilman Jimmie Yee objected, saying "the SP Depot will always be the SP Depot." Walter Gray, archivist at the Golden State Museum points out that with a vague name, folks may wonder what city to find it in. He may have some direct experience. SVS also got an immediate thumbs down from another prominent Sacramento transportation advertiser, the Sacramento Volvo Service. They also are called SVS.