



## **PM3: Rail in California: Improving Quality of Life for Generations to Come**

### **Moderator**

Lou Thompson, Principal, Thompson, Galenson and Associates, LLC

### **Panelists (in order of their presentation)**

- Bryan Pennington, Executive Director, Engineering & Construction, Metro
- Art Leahy, CEO, Metrolink and Chair, Mobility 21
- Jennifer Bergener, Managing Director, LOSSAN
- Jeff Morales, CEO, California High-Speed Rail Authority
- Brad Cox, Sr. Managing Director, Trammell Crow Company

## **Summary**

This session provided a discussion on how our current and future rail systems in Southern California contribute to enhancing our quality of life. Panelists discussed the technical, operational and institutional improvements underway or planned that will ensure that mobility, safety, convenience, comfort and prosperity are achieved in future decades. The panelists presented perspectives covering station site development, local transit, regional commuter rail, intercity rail and statewide high-speed rail. For California to remain competitive, our various rail systems must work together to achieve a world class transportation system.

## **Takeaways**

Countries, including the US, must live within an increasingly competitive world economy. One of the most critical determinants of competitiveness is the ability of a country, state or urban area to transport people, goods and services to places of work and production. California is not exempt from the laws of competitiveness and by many measures it does not do as well as it should. This may be particularly true of passenger transportation because California's dependence on services (rather than industry) places emphasis on personal interactions.

Four of California's major urban areas (Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Jose and San Diego) rank among the world's 100 most congested: significantly for this conference, in all four cities, congestion on non-highway modes is even higher than on highways. Of the 11 California urban areas surveyed annually by the Texas Transportation Institute, three (Los Angeles/Long Beach, San Francisco and San Jose) rank among the most congested transportation networks in the nation. In total, congestion in these 11 urban areas adds an extra \$20 billion annually to passenger transport costs and causes an extra 3.2 million tons of CO2 to be emitted. If we want to maintain or increase California's competitive position in the nation and the world, transportation is clearly one place to focus attention.

Rail passengers would like to see seamless, end-to-end service, but historically, operators tend to be fragmented and focused on their own turf and operating issues (sometimes called "stovepipes"). The net result is that passengers have to navigate confusing systems with uncoordinated services, often without integrated service and schedule information while operators make little effort to view passengers as customers rather than primarily as occupants of seats on trains. The multitude of rail operators in Southern California is a clear example of both the problem and the opportunity. However, all of the operators have acknowledged the direct correlation between seamless service and customer satisfaction, and have made great progress in collaborating towards this goal.

The discussion also highlighted the potential for change represented by the advent of High-Speed Rail to be developed by the California High-Speed Rail Authority (HSRA). HSRA's arrival offers the opportunity to do a number of things for all rail passenger operators and passengers: 1) extend the market range of all operators through connections with HSRA services; 2) rapidly improve some existing services (i.e. provide a better service from LA to San Diego via Anaheim or faster Palmdale to LA service by common track usage by HSRA and Metrolink as in the San Jose to San Francisco corridor); 3) save costs by elimination of duplicative services; and 4) generate added values for the systems and communities by common developments of facilities such as station areas. It may also help all parties to justify higher and more stable public funding if the public understands the added overall benefits that the future system can generate.

Lastly, it is understood that Los Angeles in and around Union Station is becoming a major rail hub for all categories of passenger rail with anticipated future daily commuter traffic of 100,000 per day. Serving as the connecting point for Metro bus and rail lines, Metrolink commuter, Amtrak long distance, future high-speed rail and numerous municipal carriers and shuttles, the area provides a case study that's an example of forward thinking ideas around connectivity and development at major rail stops in the state. Connect US is an action plan to create linkages to the local community by improving historical, cultural and community connectivity. The goal is to create pedestrian, bicycle and pedestrian connections and pathways between and through downtown LA to connect communities. The plan will impact 10 million annual visitors and over 50,000 downtown LA residences. The plan celebrates greater accessibility to Union Station while creating improvements that promote the unique identity of their neighbors. Connect US improves the passenger experience while creating a great destination that honors the site's history with linkages to the communities surrounding the transportation hub.