

RAIL PASSENGER SERVICE HISTORY  
OF  
PACIFIC ELECTRIC RAILWAY COMPANY

## CONTENTS

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
FOREWORD .....	1
INTRODUCTION .....	1
THE PREDECESSOR INTERURBANS WERE CONSOLIDATED INTO PACIFIC ELECTRIC RAILWAY COMPANY .....	2
THE VARIOUS PASSENGER CAR LINES OR ROUTES.....	3
THE EARLY PLANS FOR RAPID TRANSIT DID NOT MATERIALIZE .....	5
THE PASSENGER DEFICIT UP TO 1940.....	7
LONGITUDINAL STREET USE OF PRIVATE RIGHTS-OF-WAY.	8
THE EXISTING GRADE CROSSINGS.....	9
NEW CROSSINGS.....	10
THE PROBLEMS AT CROSSINGS.....	11
SPEED RESTRICTIONS.....	12
COMPARISON OF SCHEDULED RUNNING TIMES .....	13
THE COST OF FRANCHISES.....	13
A SUMMARY OF THE OPERATIONS OF PACIFIC ELECTRIC..	14
THE RAIL PASSENGER SERVICE DISCONTINUANCE.....	17
THE DISPOSITION OF THE PRIVATE RIGHTS-OF-WAY WHERE PASSENGER SERVICE WAS DISCONTINUED.....	17
CONCLUSION .....	22
APPENDIX A (MAP)	
APPENDIX B (STATISTICS)	

A NOTE ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This paper was prepared in 1973 by Randolph Karr, who retired as General Attorney of Southern Pacific Transportation Company on December 31, 1969 after almost 34 years of service -- 23 in Los Angeles with both Pacific Electric and Southern Pacific, and over 10 at Southern Pacific headquarters in San Francisco. His father, Frank Karr, was Vice President and Chief Counsel of Pacific Electric Railway Company until retirement in 1944 after 42 years of service.

Frank Karr's railroad career began prior to the mergers of 1911 which formed the Pacific Electric Railway Company. Randolph Karr was General Attorney of Pacific Electric when it was merged with Southern Pacific and passed out of existence in 1965.

In preparing this paper Mr. Karr used company and official government records as well as secondary sources. As a native son and long-time resident of Southern California, and a keen student of local history, he also has had the advantage of personal recollection of the subject matter both as a company legal officer and as a citizen who closely observed many of the changes he describes.

November, 1973

RAIL PASSENGER SERVICE HISTORY  
OF  
PACIFIC ELECTRIC RAILWAY COMPANY

FOREWORD

Generally the period discussed here begins with 1911, when the original Pacific Electric and seven other electric lines were consolidated into a new Pacific Electric Railway Company which was to operate in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties in Southern California. The period ends with 1953, when the remaining passenger operations were sold to the Metropolitan Coach Lines, although passenger trains were handled for the account of it or its successor by Pacific Electric until 1961.

INTRODUCTION

The electric interurban railroad was a hybrid. Its characteristics were partly those of a steam railroad in its operations on private rights-of-way and partly a street car in its operations on public streets. The chief advantage over steam trains was that either single or multiple cars could operate on a more frequent schedule than a steam train of cars coupled to a locomotive. As said in City of Santa Monica v. Jones 104 C.A. 2d 463, 469 (1951) where the Pacific Electric operated an electric train:

"Moreover, it may be added that the train stops at almost every street crossing to enable passengers to board or disembark from the trains . . . Steam trains during the period in question stopped only at one depot in each town."

On the other hand, the many stops either to pick up or deliver passengers at various street crossings lengthened running time. As the automobile age developed, the elapsed time of a rail trip appeared to be an important competitive matter, although from the beginning the running time was always a matter of concern.

There is appended as Appendix A a map that shows the extent of Pacific Electric operations at their peak in 1914, as well as the abandoned rail line.

THE PREDECESSOR INTERURBANS WERE CONSOLIDATED INTO  
PACIFIC ELECTRIC RAILWAY COMPANY

In 1890 the City of Los Angeles had a population of slightly over 50,000. The principal occupations in Southern California were cattle raising and agriculture. As noted by Spencer Crump in Henry Huntington and the Pacific Electric (Trans-Anglo Books, First Edition, 1970, p. 8):

"The coming of the transcontinental Southern Pacific and Santa Fe railroads produced booms in the 1870's and 1880's, but the cities founded during these decades remained little more than villages. Part of their problem was relative isolation from Los Angeles, the area's center of culture, commerce, and job opportunities. The railroads ran only limited daily passenger service between the villages and Los Angeles because the traffic hardly warranted frequent trains.

"The electric interurban changed the picture."

In the late nineties, the advantages of the frequent service that could be provided by an electric interurban railway, together with the ability to commute and travel when desired, were the background of the rapid development of this service. One of the many facets of what happened is described in a book review in Fortune by Walter McQuade (July, 1973, p. 163), as follows:

"One thing kept leading to another. Trolley lines made it possible for large central department stores to take customers away from village storekeepers."

(Note that today these large central department stores have moved into the suburban areas and are usually located in shopping centers).

The Pacific Electric Railway Company was a consolidation of eight electric railroads in 1911. By that time the electric rail lines were owned or controlled by two competing interests, that is, Henry E. Huntington and Southern Pacific. It was at this time that Henry E. Huntington traded and disposed of his interests in the various interurban lines to Pacific Electric (Southern Pacific Company), and the Southern Pacific Company in turn disposed of its interests in the local lines to Henry E. Huntington (Los Angeles Railway Company). Originally the interurban lines, as well as the local lines, had generally been built by promoters or developers of real estate (in those days called speculators). That is, in order to sell land it was helpful to have transportation, and the developers of such property financed and built (often as cheaply as possible) the various rail lines to the property that was to be developed, and, after the property was sold, the electric lines were sold.

Henry E. Huntington was one of this group. Because it was desirable for any electric railroad which was to be built to be as self-sustaining as possible, it developed that the railroads Mr. Huntington built were not only to develop new areas, but also served cities and areas which had been developed, or were adjacent to the steam lines. Huntington was developing freight as well as passenger service, and the Pacific Electric had freight cars.

## II

### THE VARIOUS PASSENGER CAR LINES OR ROUTES

The center of the Pacific Electric System was Los Angeles. Lines radiated in all directions (see Appendix A).

The Pacific Electric of 1911 had two Los Angeles terminals. One terminal was the Pacific Electric Building at Sixth and Main Streets. Main Street was used to reach this station from Seventh (and later Ninth) on the south, and from First on the north. Later, in 1916, a viaduct was built from Main to San Pedro Street, and the rails in San Pedro Street were used by a good proportion, but not all, of the trains to reach the routes in the streets at Ninth & Hooper Streets (Southern District) and at Aliso Street (Northern District).

The other terminal or depot was on Hill Street between Fourth and Fifth, later the site of the Subway Terminal. The electric trains operated both south and north on Hill Street. Also, the Glendale Line operated on Sixth Street alongside of the Pacific Electric Building, and ran on Sixth Street to Figueroa Street, thence on various streets to private rights-of-way and on north to Glendale. This route was used for the Glendale cars until the Subway Terminal was constructed, and also was used by the Edendale local line that ran to Arcade Station in Los Angeles. It was considered part of the Western District.

North from the depot on Hill Street, between Fourth and Fifth Streets, operated the lines to Hollywood, to Santa Monica (via Hollywood and Beverly Hills) and to the San Fernando Valley. After the subway was built many lines operated through it and Glendale Boulevard to Hollywood, Glendale, Burbank and the San Fernando Valley.

South from the depot on Hill Street, between Fourth and Fifth Streets, operated the service to and on West Sixteenth Street to Vineyard, Santa Monica (via Vineyard and Beverly Hills), the Venice Short Line, the Brentwood Line (earlier called Westgate Line) and Redondo Beach (via Del Rey) Line. There were other services, such as infrequent service out of the Pacific Electric Building on the Air Line via Amoco Junction.

Local and little-used services are not mentioned above.

The Pacific Electric System was organized by districts, and the principal lines were as follows, from Los Angeles:

### NORTHERN DISTRICT

The main stem of this operation was the Pasadena Short Line, which was 4-tracked between Indian Village and El Molino. Off from this line branched the lines going to Pasadena, San Bernardino (including El Monte, Covina, Pomona and Riverside), Alhambra-San Gabriel, Glendora, Oak Knoll and Sierra Madre.

This district often included the so-called Eastern District, which involved operations in San Bernardino, Redlands, Riverside and to Corona.

### SOUTHERN DISTRICT

The main stem of this operation was the Long Beach Line, which was 4-tracked between Ninth Street and Watts. Off from this line branched the lines to La Habra, Stern, Fullerton, Santa Ana, Redondo Beach (via Gardena), San Pedro and Newport Beach, as well as the old Long Line to Torrance and San Pedro.

### WESTERN DISTRICT

This was really a 3-part operation. The Glendale (and Burbank) Line originated in Los Angeles and ran on Sixth and Figueroa Streets until the subway was constructed. The line going north on Hill Street served Hollywood, Beverly Hills and Santa Monica. The line going south on Hill served Redondo (via Del Rey), Venice and Beverly Hills (via Vineyard).

Some idea of the service afforded when many passenger cars to different destinations used the same route or lines can be had from an advertisement in the Los Angeles Times of March 19, 1922 by the developers of Oneonta Park in South Pasadena. This ad stated that "750 PACIFIC ELECTRIC CARS DAILY" passed the real estate subdivision.

### LOCAL LINES

There were three kinds of local lines. The first type was in the nature of a feeder of the interurbans, although these lines did a substantial local business and in some cases ran on the same rails as the interurban lines. Such communities where local services were performed are Pasadena, Pomona, Redlands, San Bernardino, Riverside, San Pedro, Long Beach, Santa Monica and Hollywood, as well as Los Angeles (Echo Park Line).

The second type of local service was performed on the interurban lines; that is, local trains served the area and eliminated the need of interurban trains to stop at crossings or stations for that purpose.

There was also a third type of service on small volume

lines which were really local in nature and are not discussed herein.

The coming of the local bus lines, and even the jitneys, sounded the early death knell of most truly local services. The flexibility of bus routes could not be matched by fixed rails; the private automobile also had its effect. In other words, when people did not have to use the local street cars to get about, they went to other forms of transportation, which often were cheaper forms.

### III

#### THE EARLY PLANS FOR RAPID TRANSIT DID NOT MATERIALIZE

##### A. THE LOS ANGELES-TO-VINEYARD PRIVATE RIGHT-OF-WAY

At the time of the consolidation of the various railroads into the Pacific Electric Railway Company in 1911, the Los Angeles Pacific owned an 8-mile private right-of-way from the Subway Terminal Building between Fourth, Fifth and Hill Streets in downtown Los Angeles to Vineyard (near Sixteenth Street and West Boulevard in the City of Los Angeles). In 1907 plans were made to construct a subway westerly to Vermont Avenue, or a bit west thereof, and then complete the railroad with an open cut or other utilization of the right-of-way that would have given a grade-separated right-of-way all the way to Vineyard. At least twice in 1907 the newspapers advised the public that the subway construction on a railroad-owned (Los Angeles Pacific) right-of-way was to start in 30 days. Spencer Crump in Ride the Big Red Cars (Crest Publications, Los Angeles, First Edition, 1962) writes about this matter (p. 149):

"An immense subway carrying trolleys beneath downtown Los Angeles streets until they reached the countryside was among the improvements proposed by the Southern Pacific's E. H. Harriman following his 1906 purchase of the Los Angeles Pacific Railway.

"The project actually called for twin subways, each containing two tracks and running from Hill Street in downtown Los Angeles beneath Fourth Street to Vermont Avenue. From here the tracks would surface and continue to Venice and Santa Monica. Harriman's plan was praised as an ideal means for the trolleys to circumvent traffic, even then growing heavier as Los Angeles swelled and automobiles became popular. The Los Angeles City Council issued a permit for the construction and preliminary work started in 1907 only to be stopped by a business recession."

In any event, nothing happened, although the railroad (Pacific Electric after the merger in 1911) continued to own this right-of-way for this purpose for many years. Thereafter through the years steps were taken to protect this right-of-way by giving up parts of the right-of-way for storm drain or



sewer use, so that the balance of the right-of-way would not be blocked by underground structures. After 1911 informal studies showed that, due to the low density of potential passenger use, it was not financially feasible to construct the subway on a separated grade right-of-way to Vineyard (or Vermont Avenue). If such a construction had taken place, one line would have run from Vineyard via Beverly Hills to Santa Monica; another line would have run from Vineyard to Venice and Santa Monica; another as far south from Culver City (via Del Rey) as Redondo Beach, and another line could have utilized the then-existing old Cahuenga Valley Line (owned by Los Angeles Pacific) from Fourth & Virgil (near the proposed Vermont Station of the proposed subway) to Western Avenue and Hollywood Boulevard.

This right-of-way was severed in 1913 when the City of Los Angeles condemned a portion thereof in the reported case of Los Angeles v. Los Angeles Pacific Co. 31 C.A. 100, 103 (1916):

"Parcels 87, 93 and 94 were prior to the commencement of this action acquired for the purpose of constructing and operating an electric railroad subway from defendant's Hill Street station, Los Angeles, to its Vineyard station at the westerly city limits. The subway has not been actually constructed, and the court found that these parcels of land, which form but part of a long strip of land, acquired and held as a right-of-way for electric railroad subway purposes, had not been devoted to public use."

Later, the right-of-way was disposed of in a piecemeal fashion, although a small portion is still company-owned.

#### B. THE GLENDALE SUBWAY

As a result of the conditions attached to the granting of a rate increase, the Pacific Electric Railway Company was required to construct a mile and a quarter-long subway from the Hill Street Station, which area later became the Subway Terminal Building, to Second Street at Glendale Boulevard. This subway, opened in 1925, removed interurban operations from the surface of some of the downtown streets and cut down some running time. It was built for about one-quarter mile on the old Vineyard right-of-way, and the balance on other right-of-way acquired for this purpose. Some of the cars going to Hollywood and the San Fernando Valley, as well as all cars to Glendale, used this subway. However, the subway really was not long enough to accomplish any great saving in time, and business generally declined. The subway was conveyed to the City of Los Angeles when the storm drain constructed on Figueroa Street required its removal, and thus it is no longer available for transit operation.

C. RAPID TRANSIT RIGHTS-OF-WAY WERE NOT PROVIDED AS PART OF FREEWAY RIGHTS-OF-WAY

In 1947 it was realized by many planners in the Los Angeles area that there was a need for rapid transit and the only way, at that time, that rapid transit facilities could be provided would be to incorporate rail facilities as part of the overall freeway system that was developing -- it being felt that, with a relatively small additional expense, rapid transit facilities could be provided, either in the center or at the side of the developing freeways. A very strong attempt was made by leading groups of Los Angeles citizens to have a plan such as this incorporated in the freeway planning and design. However, for numerous reasons the State Legislature did not concur in this view and apparently felt it more important that available money should be spent exclusively for highway purposes.

Again, when the Hollywood Freeway was planned officials of the Pacific Electric urged the State Highway Department to acquire enough additional land so a high-speed, grade-separated, electric, passenger railway could be constructed in the freeway corridor. This plan was turned down by the State, and that ended any early hope for rapid transit to Hollywood and the San Fernando Valley.

D. VIADUCT TO THE EAST BANK OF THE LOS ANGELES RIVER

The weakness of the interurban rail system was recognized in 1909 and 1910 in contemporary newspaper accounts; that is, running times should be reduced. To eliminate the 15-minute delay then being caused by congestion in operating from Sixth Street to First Street on Main Street in downtown Los Angeles, an elevated rail line to the east bank of the river and then north to the private right-of-way of the Northern District of Pacific Electric was suggested, apparently by railroad people. Lack of money always held up this project, until finally turned down by the voters in the Union Station litigation.

IV

THE PASSENGER DEFICIT UP TO 1940

After 1913, the only years the passenger operations showed a profit were 1923 and some years during World War II. The business was increasing every year until the peak was reached in 1923 -- over 100,000,000 revenue passengers. By 1940 the rail revenue passenger business was down to 42,775,806 passengers handled.

The deficit was increasing every year, and by 1939 the Interstate Commerce Commission in Finance Docket No. 12643 found the Pacific Electric was indebted \$50,000,000 for advances made by Southern Pacific to Pacific Electric for capital additions and betterments, for operating expenses not earned, and for the payment of interest on the outstanding bonds held by the public.

LONGITUDINAL STREET USE OF PRIVATE RIGHTS-OF-WAY

On many of the old maps the railroad tracks appear on private rights-of-way which somehow later became public streets with the railroad tracks running longitudinally in the same place as they had existed on private right-of-way. Some examples follow:

1. West 16th Street, Los Angeles

This was part of the Los Angeles Pacific Railroad Company's original line to Vineyard. Most of the line on the present 16th Street was on private right-of-way. At various times the City of Los Angeles condemned this private right-of-way for a street, reserving to the railroad the right to operate longitudinally on the street.

2. American Avenue, Long Beach

As illustrative of the fact that the railroad did everything it could to protect its rights-of-way, attention is directed to the Long Beach problem on American Avenue which Spencer Crump described in his Ride the Big Red Cars (op. cit., pp. 146-147):

"Construction of the line to Long Beach in 1902 included laying the tracks down American Avenue (Long Beach Boulevard) in a private right-of-way with the public thoroughfare on either side so that vehicles would not interfere with the electric cars.

"Eyeing the prosperous times of the 1920's, property owners demanded that the street be widened by abolishing the private right-of-way and paving around the rails. David W. Pontius, then general manager of the Pacific Electric, correctly prophesied that the action 'would mean congestion like in Los Angeles.'

"'If the tracks were paved in on all American Avenue between Anaheim Street and North Long Beach,' he told the Long Beach City Council in 1925, 'there would be no reason why all the tracks between Los Angeles and Long Beach should not be paved in as the country settles up along the line. It would only be a matter of time until the tracks of the Pacific Electric would be of little use to the public and of no value to the owners (the Southern Pacific) of the property.'

"Pontius' prophetic words were of no avail, for the pressures in Long Beach, as elsewhere, were for street improvement programs. The right-of-way was paved and the result, duplicated on other interurban lines throughout Southern California, was a thirty percent increase in the traveling time for trolleys in the area involved because of automotive traffic on the tracks."

The railroad's resistance resulted in the city's filing a condemnation action, where, on appeal, the court recognized the problem in this language:

"That the additional use proposed by the City of Long Beach will to some extent slow up the running time of the respondent railway company's cars ... already slowed up to some degree, no doubt, by the existing crossings ... must be conceded."

### 3. The Glendale Line

When this line was built by Huntington it was generally in open or farming territory. A private right-of-way was secured from the Los Angeles River to Glendale. The line was constructed on a fill two to four feet above the surrounding land. Generally there was a public street paralleling the right-of-way and on both sides. As the countryside filled up, the residents or businesses wanted the grade lowered and the private right-of-way paved, allowing the railroad to operate longitudinally on a public street. To accomplish its purpose, the city commenced condemnation actions which led to the elimination of the private right-of-way.

### 4. Sunset Boulevard Line to Hollywood

This line ran from Los Angeles to Hollywood, via Sunset Boulevard (including the Melrose cut-off discontinued in 1913). It apparently ran on private right-of-way all the way to Vermont Avenue but, in the absence of early records, we cannot be positive, although it does appear probable from the records available.

## VI

### THE EXISTING GRADE CROSSINGS

The Pacific Electric from the beginning was faced with a growth of crossing use by vehicles. The number of new crossings opened is discussed elsewhere. However, the use of existing crossings when the railroad was built, as well as the new crossings, changed from intermittent or even nonexistent use by vehicles to one approaching heavy congestion. For instance, Spencer Crump in Ride the Big Red Cars (op. cit., p. 61) states regarding the building of the Long Beach Line in 1902 by Huntington:

"Work on the construction of the tracks from Los Angeles to Long Beach started almost as soon as the franchise was awarded to the Huntington-Hellman syndicate. Gangs of laborers using teams of work horses built the interurban right-of-way over 'The Plains,' the name familiarly given to the flat and almost uninhabited area stretching from Los Angeles to the ocean. The biggest town along the way was Compton, which had 452 people. Sheep pastures, farms, and a few cattle ranches stretched over the land."

In 1911 many, if not most, of the streets that crossed the railroad were dirt, many crossings had cattle guards, and the visibility was often wide open, across vacant or farming areas. Generally the crossings were narrow, obviously with little or no vehicular use in areas that later became heavily settled with improved wide streets. It is more than difficult to imagine the change that has taken place. What appeared to be private rights-of-way in the early days later became streets, and today we can find few records of how the change transpired.

Accidents were a serious problem, not only dollar-wise but also public relations-wise. The Pacific Electric developed the first wigwag crossing signals to be used by railroads.

Speed limits were imposed in various areas by ordinance, as well as company restrictions.

There was no money for grade separations. Passenger business was falling off, and it seemed every step taken to speed up service met with increasing delays at crossings due to increased vehicular traffic.

Another problem was that when highways were built by the public authorities, many of the new highways followed the travel routes already in existence as the result of the electric interurban. To restate the matter, in many areas the principal automobile arteries directly paralleled the railway tracks. Thus, with the increased number of vehicles in the area, demand was pressing for more crossings, and there was increased use of the existing crossings.

## VII

### NEW CROSSINGS

The opening of new crossings is another aspect of understanding the conditions that existed when the lines were constructed, and how the conditions changed down to the present. The records are not complete, and today the company cannot always ascertain why a particular crossing was opened or even when it was opened. Any analysis of the problem will include one or more of the following items:

- (1) Deed conditions often required public streets to be opened when needed or required by the grantor (usually a subdivider).
- (2) Deeds often required the railroad to open farm or other road crossings when needed. Somehow or other these private road crossings often developed into public streets. After all, the railroads wanted passengers, and cross streets in the early days helped toward this purpose.

- (3) Threats of assessment districts that consisted only of railroad property, to accomplish and pay for the cities' proposed condemnation and acquisition of railroad private right-of-way for longitudinal street use.
- (4) The railroad was often built along or across "paper" streets that were later opened.
- (5) Until the decision in the Northwestern Pacific Railroad case 34 Cal. 2d 254 (1949) the opening of a street was considered a municipal affair and did not need the California Public Utilities Commission's prior consent. If a railroad resisted, the usual way to open a street across a railroad right-of-way was for the city or county to file a condemnation action, and the railroad received \$1.00.
- (6) The withholding of needed franchises until the railroad agreed to open other streets.
- (7) Before 1911, the railroad was subject to the adverse possession doctrine, and it could not prevent use of a street once the use had commenced and existed for the statutory period.

With the explosive growth of Southern California, and considering the fact that many of the electric interurban railroad rights-of-way were located in areas of homes and small cities, there was a greater need or demand for access across the electric interurban railroads as compared with the earlier-built steam lines, where much of the adjacent property was industrial or somewhat static.

## VIII

### THE PROBLEMS AT CROSSINGS

When the railroad lines were built, there were few good -- that is, paved -- road crossings. The problem at crossings was mostly with horse-drawn buggies and vans. There were few, if any, automobiles. Between 1910 and 1915 the automobile problem was beginning to assert itself. The vast network of paved roads was emerging in a piecemeal fashion, due to the increased street use of the ever-increasing number of automobiles. Demand intensified for paving and widening of existing crossings or for new crossings, and the railroad had no means ultimately to resist. Then the increased automobile use of the increased crossings brought on the need to slow down the electric interurban trains for safety's sake. It was usually the position of the public bodies that they did not have money for sharing the cost of a grade separation, and that the cost of grade separations should be -- at least to a substantial portion -- borne by the railroad. The losing passenger service of Pacific Electric simply could not support any great amount of such expenditures.

As an indication of the crossing problems on some of the main routes, the following statistics are representative of the number of crossings traversed by trains serving the various areas. New crossings are considered as those opened across private rights-of-way, or in cases where a private right-of-way was paved in for longitudinal street use upon the existing rails and tracks, the crossings located adjacent thereto that could be used to cross the railroad tracks are listed as new crossings.

#### SOUTHERN DISTRICT

On the Long Beach Line there were 37 grade crossings when the line was built, and 78 grade crossings when the rail passenger service was discontinued. In the seven important areas to which passenger service was operated, there were 411 grade crossings when the various passenger services were commenced, and 616 grade crossings when passenger services were discontinued.

#### WESTERN DISTRICT

On the Venice Short Line there were 50 grade crossings when the line was constructed, and 100 grade crossings when that passenger service was discontinued. In the nine important areas to which passenger service was operated, there were 697 grade crossings when the various passenger services were commenced, and 1133 grade crossings when passenger service was ended.

#### NORTHERN DISTRICT

In the seven important areas to which passenger service was operated, there were 381 grade crossings when the various passenger services were commenced, and 539 crossings when passenger service was ended.

The great number of grade crossings is disclosed in the California Railroad Commission's Accident Report of 1935, wherein it was pointed out there were 2506 grade crossings across which the Pacific Electric conducted its operations.

### IX

#### SPEED RESTRICTIONS

Some of the Pacific Electric speed restrictions were operational, due to sharp curves, steam railroad crossings, viaducts, bridges, junctions, the need to throw switches, etc.

City ordinances were of two types: one a flat restriction of so many miles per hour, and the other a prima facia restriction similar to many of the present vehicle code provisions. Only in later years was the railroad able to have some ordinances amended to provide for prima facia restrictions. The difficulty of the flat restriction was that violation was negligence as a matter of law, which meant that the railroad did

not dare exceed the limit, regardless of circumstances, because of the legal liability implications in case of accident.

## X

### COMPARISON OF SCHEDULED RUNNING TIMES

Typical of schedules are those for the Long Beach Line between Los Angeles and Long Beach, showing that the running time of comparable trains increased through the years. In 1910 the running time was 36 minutes for Flyers and 40 minutes for regular trains. In 1937 the running time was 43-44 minutes for Limiteds and 49 minutes for regular trains, even though other trains were handling the local or intermediate business all the way from Los Angeles to Compton to relieve the Long Beach trains of time-consuming stops.

In 1960 schedules had lengthened to 61 minutes for Express and 64-67 minutes for regular trains, or almost double the running times of 50 years earlier.

When one looks at the early pictures and sees vast areas of open land and the dirt cross streets, many with cattle guards, it appears there were few actual passenger stops in those days compared with the many passenger stops in the later days.

Until the multiple car trains became feasible shortly before 1910, single cars would probably stop even less often. When multiple cars were run, particularly in peak hours, the chances of having a passenger for every stop seemed to increase in proportion to the number of cars, which usually were two or three cars but sometimes as many as five cars.

## XI

### THE COST OF FRANCHISES

In the beginning the cost of a franchise was rather nominal, as everyone in the city wanted rail transportation service. Then various promoters (speculators) and developers began competing with each other. The reason was obvious; you could not sell your land unless you had some sort of railroad transportation to the outlying areas. About that time the city officials discovered this was a good source of revenue, so the bidding system was introduced and there were some rather high sums of money paid for the franchises.

Originally, constructing a railroad in the street was not a very difficult operation, as the early streets were dirt and rather rough. Pictures show that the men took picks and dug out sufficient dirt to place the ties, and the rails then were placed on top of the ties and dirt was dumped back up to the top of rail. The newspapers at the turn of the century have



article after article about the problem of dust from the street cars, and everyone was after the railroads to sprinkle the streets to settle the dust, and the railroads responded that this should not be their obligation as others also used the streets. This controversy continued until about the time the streets began to be paved, and the dust problem was ended.

The city fathers were quick to seize upon the premise that if the railroad is using the streets, it should pave the portion of the street it is using (between the rails and two feet outside of each rail), even though vehicles are allowed to operate on that portion of the street and on top of the rails.

As years went by, this became a heavy cost. First came the requirement of girder rail, then the requirement of meeting the standard of adjacent pavement, and the pavement standards became greater and more expensive as time passed, since the early pavement did not have very lasting qualities compared with the later pavement, nor could the earlier pavement handle the heavier vehicles which came into use on city streets.

Also concurrently with the requirement of paving costs, the cities began to impose a "gross receipts" tax requirement for the commercial use of the streets. This finally resulted in the Broughton Act, which imposed a 2% levy upon gross receipts for the use of the streets, and the subsequent franchise provision in Los Angeles was 2% for rail service (and 2 1/2% for motor coaches).

Once the streets were paved and in operation under these franchises, the pavement would last about 20 years, but at the end of the period the railroad was faced with substantial costs for reconstructing the streets in question. This was often the final blow that brought on abandonment of the rail service. Even that step did not end the expense to the railroad, since the franchises usually required the railroad to remove the rails and restore the streets upon abandonment.

Looking back, there can be no doubt that it was a very unfortunate thing that public policy allowed the cost of using the streets to become so high. This cost was quite burdensome on the interurban railroads which had been built on streets within cities to serve the public, and the high cost that had to be passed on to the rail passengers certainly was one of the substantial contributing factors that led to the demise of the interurban electric rail lines.

## XII

### A SUMMARY OF THE OPERATIONS OF PACIFIC ELECTRIC

In the 1920's the operations of Pacific Electric were conducted over nearly 1200 miles of electric railroad. Approximately 600 miles represented (route) miles of first

track, and the remaining 600 miles were made up of second track, in some places four tracks (Long Beach and Pasadena Short Line), and necessary yards, sidings, etc. By the time of the discontinuance of the rail passenger service in 1953, the route miles had shrunk to 315 miles, with approximately 210 miles of other supporting tracks, or a total of 525 miles. At the time of the merger of Pacific Electric into Southern Pacific in 1965, there were 266 route miles and 180 miles of supporting track, or a total of 446 miles of railroad trackage.

To illustrate the volume of passenger business of Pacific Electric there is attached as Appendix B a tabulation extracted from the annual reports of Pacific Electric as submitted to the Interstate Commerce Commission.

## 1. PASSENGER SERVICE

### (a) Rail

The number of rail passengers carried by the Pacific Electric is, in retrospect, astounding. In 1923 the population in the four counties served by the Pacific Electric was estimated at 1,650,000. The two peak years are 1923 and 1945, when over 100,000,000 revenue passengers were carried each year, or an average of about 275,000 people a day. Leaving out the war years, the net effect was that as the population increased the rail business declined. This was due not only to the increase in roads, the use of the private automobile, the increased use of buses or motor coaches, the loss of Saturday's business on the adoption of the five-day business week, the loss of Sunday business, the development of numerous shopping centers or areas, and the development of the freeways, but it was due also to the fact that the tremendous growth of population did not develop close to the existing rail lines of Pacific Electric, but rather developed where vacant property was available and around the major highways. Whereas alongside and tributary to the railroad right-of-way in many areas there had been residences and people, much of that land is now devoted to industry or commercial use, with little possibility of originating passengers.

### (b) Bus or Motor Coach

Buses could be operated more economically, and they also could be routed much more flexibly to areas where people wanted the service. The growth of the motor bus operations is shown in Appendix B. The staggering rail passenger losses brought on a conversion to bus or motor coach in the hope that a profit would be shown that would justify a continuance of the service. Yet this did not develop.

### (c) War Years of 1943-1946

The substitution of motor coaches was interrupted at the

onset of World War II, due to the severe shortages of private automobiles, gasoline and rubber products. There was a great upsurge of rail passengers and rail passenger mileage. Immediately following the end of the war and the return of automobiles, gasoline and tires, there again was a tremendous decrease in rail passengers handled (see Appendix B). Most of the heavily traveled rail routes of the war period are no longer in existence; that is, the rights-of-way have been broken up and the property is mainly in the hands of the various cities through which the railroad had operated. When people did not have to use the rail passenger service, most of them left the rails. As the rail equipment grew old, the situation was not improved.

(d) The Rail Passenger Losses

The rail passenger operations were never profitable with the exception of the year 1923 and the war years of 1943 and 1944. During those two war years rail passenger service was profitable; however, by 1946 the annual loss was \$2,200,000. In 1947 the loss climbed to \$3,426,000, and this loss was incurred on a gross rail passenger revenue of approximately \$10.5 million. If these amounts are converted into today's costs, the amount of loss is not only substantial but simply impossible for private enterprise to bear.

2. FREIGHT SERVICE

Many of the remaining rail lines (Appendix A) are handling the substantial freight business (150,000 to 200,000 loaded cars a year).

The handling of freight is very different from the serving of passengers. There is not an even flow of business of so many carloads each day at each industry, for an industry has its own schedule of operations and deals with peaks, the availability of raw material such as seasonal agricultural crops, different points of origin and destination, shipping schedules, or tramp ship arrivals carrying cargo, the needs of the consumers as related to the timing of deliveries, and a hundred other problems of production. Thus the railroad business, by its nature, is handled when offered.

The loaded box car is delivered from, or when empty has to be hauled to, a railroad yard for distribution. When an industry orders an empty car, this car must be hauled from the yard and spotted at the industry for loading. Switching is involved in both operations, and at both ends of the operation. Cars are hauled to or from yards where they are classified and placed in either local or long-distance trains.

Today, when many industries do not choose to maintain costly warehouses but take the rail shipments direct to or from production lines, freight cars must be spotted at just the

right time (and usually as quickly as possible) to insure that the industry will suffer no economic loss and that its employees are not out of work for a particular scheduled shift.

### XIII

#### THE RAIL PASSENGER SERVICE DISCONTINUANCE

Down through the years, increases in rates did not bring sufficient income improvement to overcome the diminishing volume of passengers and the rising costs which combined to result in the substantial passenger service losses. There was the practical problem of diminishing total revenues even while the rates increased and passenger volume rapidly decreased.

Up to 1938 discontinuance of passenger rail service had been on a piecemeal basis to suit specific situations.

By 1938, and after the experience of the Depression years, it was not only realized that rail passenger use was in a steady decline but also that something had to be done to reduce or eliminate the substantial rail passenger service loss.

By 1938 and 1939 intensive studies were undertaken to see what could be done. Thereafter, in 1939 and 1940, line abandonment proceedings resulted in Interstate Commerce Commission approval of discontinuance of various rail lines. Similarly, necessary regulatory approval was secured from the California Public Utilities Commission. Generally, the abandonment of lines that handled passengers was accomplished by motor coach substitution. After World War II it again appeared impossible to continue the passenger rail lines on a profitable basis. Again, detailed studies were undertaken to see whether the passenger lines could be economically rehabilitated, or if they should be phased out. Decision was made to try to discontinue them in the face of mounting losses and no real hope of halting or reversing the trend.

The Public Utilities Commission authorized the company to discontinue rail passenger service on certain lines by the substitution of motor coaches for railroad passenger routes. Under these and other decisions of the commission several rail abandonments were carried out in 1950. In 1953 the remaining rail passenger lines (and the by-then substantial motor coach operations) were sold to the Metropolitan Coach Lines. The passenger rail service was later entirely discontinued either by Metropolitan Coach Lines or by its successor.

### XIV

#### THE DISPOSITION OF THE PRIVATE RIGHTS-OF-WAY WHERE PASSENGER SERVICE WAS DISCONTINUED

Where only rail passenger service was discontinued, many of the private rights-of-way were kept and maintained for the

continuing freight service. Where passenger rail service was discontinued, such discontinuance was accomplished by one of two means. The first was by State Public Utilities Commission order, permitting discontinuance of the rail passenger service. This order did not permit abandonment of the actual railroad line, although such could be accomplished later by permission of the Federal Interstate Commerce Commission. The second was by an order of the Interstate Commerce Commission to abandon all rail service, in which case approval of abandonment would include the passenger as well as the freight rail service.

Both procedures were variously used on the Pacific Electric to fit varying situations. Until abandonment of the rail line itself was approved by the Interstate Commerce Commission, there could be no disposition of the private rights-of-way.

Rail lines that were located longitudinally in public streets are not being considered in this discussion, since the operating franchises usually expired on abandonment, or else the railroad easement may have expired on abandonment. Likewise, the reversionary property interests of railroads in a few public streets are not considered here.

The basic California Public Utilities Commission decision in 1950, authorizing abandonment of various rail passenger services, provided in Paragraph 10 thereof:

"That none of the existing rights-of-way shall be alienated for a period of one year from the effective date of this order, except upon further order of this Commission."

and this was later amended to provide:

"(1) That the Pacific Electric Railway Company be, and it hereby is, authorized to abandon the rights-of-way on the following listed lines, or parts of lines, and dispose of them to the city or county wherein the right-of-way is located, or to other public agencies concerned, or, where there are reversionary clauses, to allow them to revert to the owners thereof: Oak Knoll, Sierra Madre, Echo Park Avenue, Fourth and Hill Streets to Park Avenue, Fourth and Hill Streets to Vineyard, Vineyard to Culver City, Vineyard to Beverly Hills, Culver City to Santa Monica, Ninth and San Pedro Streets to Aliso and San Pedro Streets, Alhambra-San Gabriel Line."

The City of Los Angeles Ordinance No. 109340 attempted to control the disposition of the abandoned rail rights-of-way for two years after abandonment. In 1957 another ordinance extended the period to six years from the date of the enactment of the original ordinance, and a third ordinance enacted in 1960 extended the period to 1966.

Generally public bodies used the former private rights-of-way they acquired for streets, parkways or open space. The following is a summary of what happened to the major abandoned rights-of-way.

#### NORTHERN DISTRICT

##### PASADENA SHORT LINE

Eight miles of this right-of-way was either condemned by the cities of Los Angeles, Alhambra and South Pasadena, or reverted. The area north of Mission Road has been taken over by the public authorities. The old 4-track grade separation at Huntington Drive is now a highway overpass; a major highway exists on the old right-of-way for several thousand feet.

##### ALHAMBRA-SAN GABRIEL LINE

In six separate transactions the City of Alhambra, County of Los Angeles and the City of San Gabriel acquired most of this right-of-way.

##### OAK KNOLL LINE

This right-of-way reverted to the underlying property owner.

##### SIERRA MADRE LINE

This right-of-way was acquired by the cities of San Marino, Pasadena and Sierra Madre.

##### MONROVIA LINE

About seven miles of this right-of-way was acquired by the cities of South Pasadena, San Marino, Arcadia and Monrovia, and over a mile reverted.

##### AZUSA-TO-GLENDORA LINE

Some of the right-of-way was acquired by the cities of Glendora and Monrovia, and in four areas the property reverted.

##### COVINA-SAN DIMAS LINE

The County of Los Angeles condemned five miles of this land, and the Metropolitan Water District acquired .4 of a mile.

#### WESTERN DISTRICT

##### HOLLYWOOD-VAN NUYS LINE (TO SAN FERNANDO)

The former railroad right-of-way through the Cahuenga Pass is now occupied by the Hollywood Freeway; there remains no space on which a surface railroad could operate.

Thirteen miles of the right-of-way was acquired by the City of Los Angeles or the State of California.

OWENSMOUTH LINE

The City of Los Angeles acquired nine miles of the right-of-way.

SAN FERNANDO LINE

The City of Los Angeles, or the State of California, acquired most of the right-of-way, with three other parcels being acquired by private corporations.

GLENDALE LINE

The subway between the Subway Terminal Building and Second Street in Los Angeles, a mile and a quarter in length, was conveyed to the City of Los Angeles on June 24, 1966 after a new storm drain in Figueroa Street cut across and through the subway so as to require the removal of the subway under Figueroa Street. Thus the subway could not be used for future rail operations.

The former railroad right-of-way through the Ivanhoe Hills is now fully occupied by a freeway; no room remains for a surface railroad.

Six separate deeds disposed of the right-of-way -- three deeds to the City of Los Angeles, one to the Los Angeles County Flood Control District and two to private parties.

BURBANK LINE

The cities of Glendale and Burbank acquired this right-of-way.

WEST 16th STREET LINE

The City of Los Angeles and the City of Beverly Hills acquired nearly five miles of this right-of-way.

VENICE SHORT LINE

In four transactions the City of Los Angeles acquired nearly nine miles of this right-of-way, while .2 mile reverted.

WESTGATE (BRENTWOOD) LINE

The cities of Los Angeles and Santa Monica acquired over four miles of this right-of-way; the other areas reverted.

LAGOON LINE

About two miles of this line reverted, and the City of Los Angeles acquired about two miles.

DEL REY-REDONDO LINE

Some of this right-of-way reverted, but most of it was acquired by the cities of Los Angeles and Hermosa Beach, the County of Los Angeles and the State of California.

SOUTHERN DISTRICT

SAN PEDRO MAIN LINE

The City of Los Angeles condemned part of this line.

SAN PEDRO LINE (VIA GARDENA)

About two miles of this line reverted.

NEWPORT BEACH LINE

Exclusive of five miles that involved reversion problems, the cities of Long Beach and Newport Beach, the County of Orange and the State of California acquired twelve miles of this right-of-way.

YORBA LINDA BRANCH

This right-of-way reverted.

LA HABRA-FULLERTON LINE

The City of Fullerton acquired over seven miles, and three other areas were otherwise disposed of.

REDONDO LINE (VIA GARDENA)

Reversion problems accounted for most of the nineteen parcels of land no longer owned by the railroad.

HAWTHORNE-EL NIDO LINE

The City of Hawthorne acquired three miles of the right-of-way, and three other areas were otherwise disposed of by the railroad.

The above listings of disposals of various portions of the private rights-of-way of Pacific Electric are not exhaustive, but the most significant acquisitions by the various public bodies are shown. Some branch lines of small mileage have not been included, while some reversionary problems are only touched upon, due to the present difficulty of searching files.

When the railroad tracks had existed in public streets, no present study was made of this situation, since the tracks were either removed or were out of operation long ago.



## CONCLUSION

In the earlier days of the interurban railways, residents of Southern California were almost entirely dependent (outside of using horses and poor roads) upon the railroads as a means of moving from one section of the area to another. The same was true elsewhere about the country.

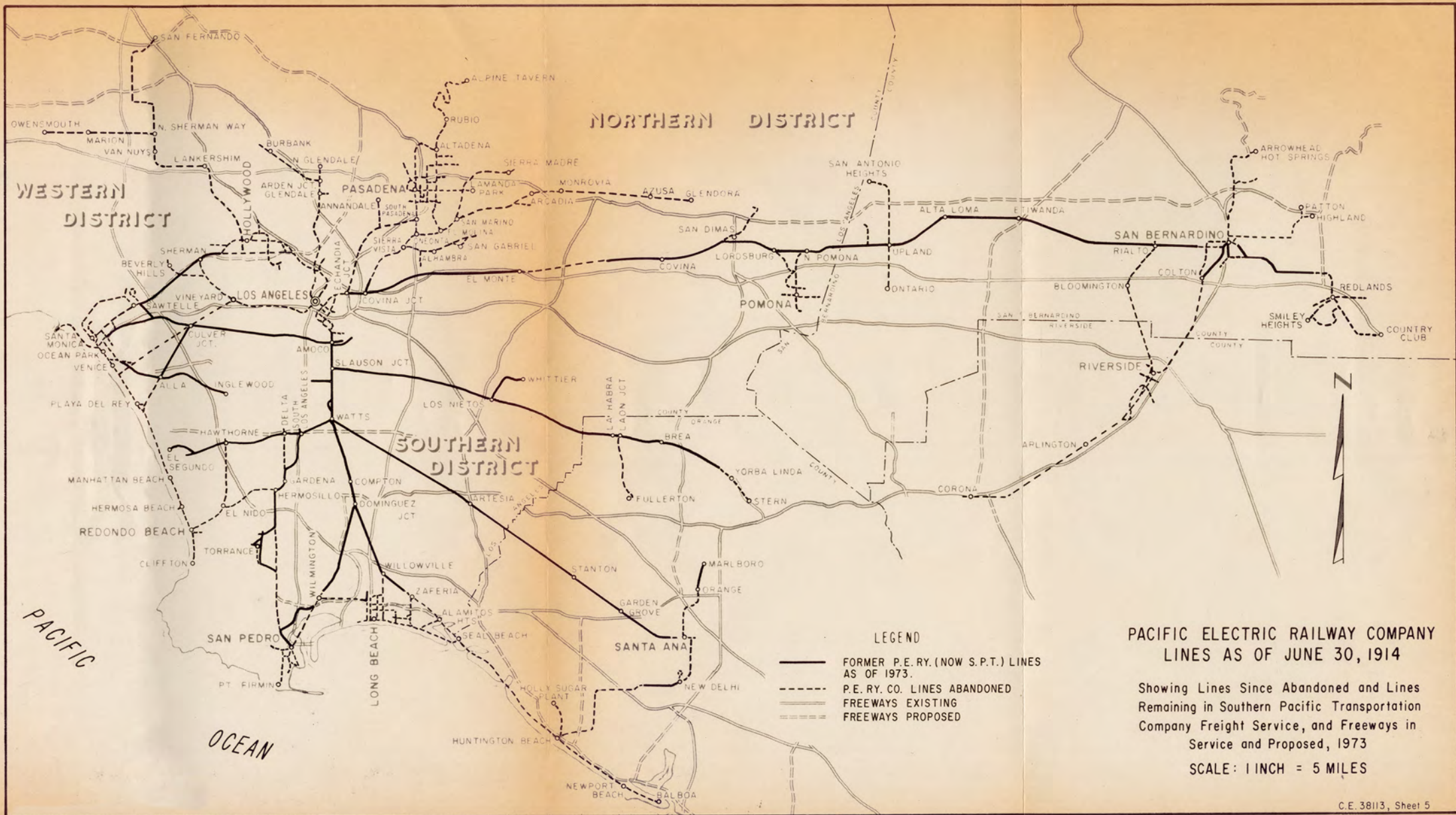
With the advent of the relatively low-priced automobile about 1914-1915, there began a transition from public carriers to private automobiles that continued to advance with ever-increasing impetus. The year-round good weather in Southern California was effective in reducing the former dependency on public transportation. This transition was not peculiar to Southern California, but, by the very nature of the sprawling City of Los Angeles and its environs, it probably has been more pronounced here than elsewhere. It is evident that in recent years most people have settled on vacant land far removed from the interurban electric railways, and that they gave little thought to such transportation as long as they were relatively near main highways.

What happened to Pacific Electric was part of the general problem summed up in a pamphlet dated December, 1969 and entitled Busway-Freeway Rapid Transit and which is an extract of the summary section of a report entitled The Potential for Bus Rapid Transit prepared by Wilbur Smith and Associates, transportation engineering consultants for the Automobile Manufacturers Association, as follows:

"Before motor vehicles came into wide use, urban population, business and industry were necessarily concentrated along fixed transportation routes. Cities expanded within the limitations of feasible distances and alignments of public transit routes and rail and waterway freight-hauling facilities. Universal use of public transit, in turn, produced volumes of patronage that supported frequent service at low cost.

"Motor vehicles -- automobiles, motor trucks and motor buses -- removed many of the locational restraints on urban growth. Along with other technological developments and rising family incomes, they made possible widespread low-density activity areas where neither population nor employment are sufficiently concentrated to generate heavy mass movements of people along well-defined travel corridors.

"The new patterns of urban land development, in turn, created new and diffused patterns of urban travel, difficult to serve by conventional transit systems. At the same time, the shift of most urban trips to private automobiles reduced the volume of



**PACIFIC ELECTRIC RAILWAY COMPANY  
LINES AS OF JUNE 30, 1914**

Showing Lines Since Abandoned and Lines  
Remaining in Southern Pacific Transportation  
Company Freight Service, and Freeways in  
Service and Proposed, 1973

SCALE: 1 INCH = 5 MILES

- LEGEND**
- FORMER P.E. RY. (NOW S.P.T.) LINES AS OF 1973.
  - - - P.E. RY. CO. LINES ABANDONED
  - == FREEWAYS EXISTING
  - - - FREEWAYS PROPOSED

transit riding in older established travel corridors, making it financially difficult to maintain attractive frequency of service or acceptable levels of transit fares.

"The result has been a substantial decline, over the last quarter-century, in the quality and amount of public transit service in cities, and a growing isolation of those urban residents who do not have access to private transportation or who prefer not to drive.

"Today, 96 percent of all daily passenger trips in large urban areas (those over 50,000 population) are made by automobile. Three percent of such trips are by motor bus, and the remaining one percent are by rail transit. New York City alone accounts for nearly one-third of all public transit riding in the nation, and for 81 percent of rail transit patronage."

The Annual Reports of Pacific Electric Railway Company to the Interstate Commerce Commission disclose:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Rail Passenger Car Mileage</u>	<u>Bus Passenger Car Mileage</u>	<u>Rail Regular (Revenue) Fare Passengers Carried</u>	<u>Bus Regular (Revenue) Fare Passengers Carried</u>
1912	23,780,821		60,841,521	
1913	26,169,388		68,686,203	
1914	26,553,127		70,678,719	
1915	26,362,589		64,719,754	
1916	24,955,904		61,861,184	
1917	26,898,331		65,028,315	
1918	28,284,419		67,915,099	
1919	25,609,350		68,379,676	
1920	28,382,145		84,492,579	
1921	29,091,665		88,639,486	
1922	29,082,672		88,124,305	
1923	31,411,249		100,073,544	
1924	(not available)			
1925	*32,367,443		94,752,809	
1926	26,789,569	5,202,340	81,068,586	11,769,140
1927	26,136,561	5,285,979	79,623,715	11,804,369
1928	26,130,925	5,882,024	80,495,543	13,268,712
1929	26,017,479	6,468,170	81,979,005	15,038,146
1930	24,889,540	7,008,129	75,558,601	14,978,119
1931	22,892,890	6,736,051	66,280,179	13,850,399
1932	20,774,941	6,751,226	54,884,879	12,210,097

\* - includes bus mileage

<u>Year</u>	<u>Rail Passenger Car Mileage</u>	<u>Bus Passenger Car Mileage</u>	<u>Rail Regular (Revenue) Fare Passengers Carried</u>	<u>Bus Regular (Revenue) Fare Passengers Carried</u>
1933	19,010,216	5,471,094	48,220,484	11,515,556
1934	18,521,999	6,461,657	48,195,003	11,918,615
1935	17,271,073	6,711,249	50,709,751	13,403,669
1936	18,276,962	7,569,770	53,804,445	16,312,577
1937	18,299,843	8,308,072	54,273,253	19,484,914
1938	16,571,868	8,113,729	47,905,815	19,472,696
1939	15,554,208	9,287,231	44,439,391	20,692,228
1940	13,486,593	13,515,593	42,775,806	26,294,142
1941	11,834,791	12,196,202	44,593,877	24,289,232
1942	12,778,267	13,854,560	54,141,211	34,088,942
1943	17,147,747	16,501,342	77,027,803	48,106,374
1944	18,887,728	18,441,759	95,862,031	59,298,693
1945	19,424,202	19,149,839	100,415,373	63,898,311
1946	17,979,187	19,504,188	94,903,950	64,578,331
1947	15,765,586	20,366,301	82,231,465	64,731,952
1948	14,538,444	20,945,078	65,343,800	58,611,360
1949	12,959,062	20,101,769	56,098,063	51,163,961
1950	10,702,957	19,266,931	45,194,817	47,982,376
1951	7,192,378	21,841,031	29,500,623	55,953,158
1952	(not available)			
1953	3,340,807	17,042,849	13,878,346	42,326,361