

Double tracking Donner Summit

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[georgeh](#)

Double tracking Donner Summit

Posted by [georgeh](#) on Tuesday, September 30, 2008 5:57 PM

I see that Union Pacific is working very hard at track work over Donner Summit. Talk is that they are going to double track Donner Summit again and undercut the snow sheds and tunnels to accomodate double stack cars. What is the time table for this work? Does that mean they are giving up on the Feather River Route? How many trains do they project for Donner vs The Feather River Route?

George Halstead ghalstead@surewest.net

- Member since May, 2007
- From: Rocklin, California  
- 11 posts

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[cacole](#)

Posted by [cacole](#) on Tuesday, September 30, 2008 6:04 PM

I'm surprised to hear that they're going to double track Donner again because their current project of double tracking the Sunset Route across the southern part of the country is so they can route more traffic away from Donner's steep grades and heavy snows.

- Member since July, 2003  
- From: Sierra Vista, Arizona
- 13,757 posts

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Posted by [caldreamer](#) on Tuesday, September 30, 2008 6:21 PM

The Donner Pass route is the direct route into northern California. According to an article in Trains Magazine and on the web, UP is going to undercut the snowsheds



and tunnels to allow for double stacks. I have seen auto rack trains running over Donner Summit. They are only about 17 feet tall. The standard for double stacks clearance is 21'6". The Feather River Route (Ex WP) is longer and is prone to slides. The UP can keep Donner open all year around, in the worst storms they use big Leslie rotary plows.

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[caldreamer](#)

- Member since September, 2013
- 1,314 posts



Posted by [timz](#) on Tuesday, September 30, 2008 9:15 PM

SP removed two pieces of double track, one maybe 4-or-5 mile piece over the summit and another 7?-mile piece a ways down the west slope. There have been constant rumors about that second piece being replaced, especially when state money was in prospect, but nothing definite there yet. As for the stretch over the summit, don't hold your breath.

[timz](#)

- Member since February, 2005
 - 1,527 posts
- (The westward grade in the 1.95-mile tunnel just east of the summit is 1.47%, which is less than on the line around the mountain (the one now removed), but a maximum-tonnage train may have a better chance going around the mountain considering cooling problems in the tunnel.)

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Posted by [twhite](#) on Wednesday, October 01, 2008 12:43 PM

I have heard that some of the major tunnel clearance problems on Donner Pass are not around Donner Summit as much as they are further down the Hill where the original and Harriman 'rebuild' lines both parallel and criss-cross each other between Rocklin and Colfax. I have seen double-stackers over the Donner Pass line, but not as many as travel up the single-track Feather River Route. To re-double track the section between Emigrant Gap and Crystal Lake, it seems as if all UP has to do is move the single track back to its original alignment and relay the second track. From Norden east over the Summit to Lakeview--the original alignment of the Pass--the snowsheds are still in place, though right now the right-of-way is being used as a scenic trail.

[twhite](#)

- Member since July, 2004
 - From: Carmichael, CA
 - 8,030 posts
- I think that Union Pacific is finally realizing that even though the grades are stiffer over the Sierra on the Donner Pass route, it is also a more direct route into and out of Northern California than the Feather River Canyon, and despite the grades, does not have the 25mph speed limit of the Canyon. Plus, shipping in the Port of Oakland has risen the past few years, certainly enough to warrant

decreasing rail transport time east as much as possible. The UP double-tracking its Sunset Route is to alleviate traffic stagnation from ports in Southern California, not draw traffic from Northern California, which is establishing its own heavy traffic patterns east. And possibly cut into BNSF's own lucrative Richmond/Oakland/Barstow traffic. The old Overland Route from Northern California east is still one of the best. It just needs to prove it.

Tom

Tom [View my layout photos!](#)
<http://s299.photobucket.com/albums/mm310/TWhite-014/Rio%20Grande%20Yuba%20River%20Sub> One can NEVER have too many Articulateds!

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[georgeh](#)

Posted by [georgeh](#) on Wednesday, October 01, 2008 5:15 PM
I have been told that the Union Pacific is getting financing from prop 1A or 1B transportation bonds. It would be nice to see more traffic over donner for sure. The Feather River route with its speed restrictions limits their capacity. I was even more surprised to see that they are reactivating the Mococo line. It is a good time to be a realroader.

George Halstead ghalstead@surewest.net

- Member since May, 2007
- From: Rocklin, California
- 11 posts

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[CShaveRR](#)

Posted by [CShaveRR](#) on Wednesday, October 01, 2008 6:49 PM
George, the UP turned down the state money for this work, saying they'd rather do it on their own. Reason: too many strings attached, apparently requiring the use of the line for additional passenger traffic.

Carl

- Member since June, 2001
- From: Lombard (west of Chicago), Illinois
- 12,487 posts

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Posted by [nanaimo73](#) on Thursday, October 02, 2008 1:20 AM



[nanaimo73](#)

- Member since April, 2005
- From: Nanaimo BC Canada
- 4,076 posts

I'd love to see some of the Capitols extended to Reno.
 Sounds like it is not going to happen for some time.

Date

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