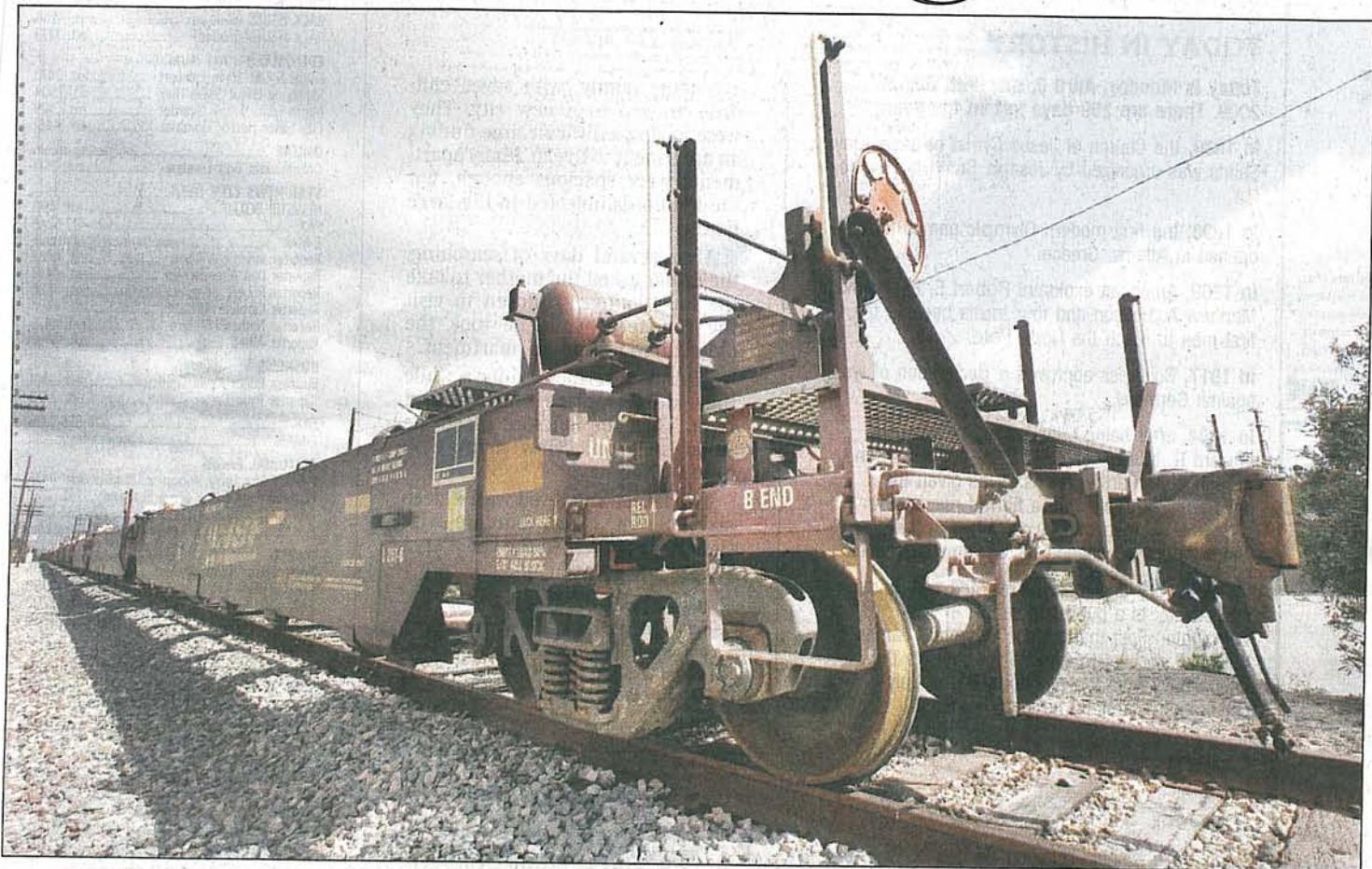


6 April 2009

On the wrong track



Railroad cars sit idle in Monrovia near Duarte Road and California Avenue on Friday. Unused railroad cars are being stored on train tracks throughout local neighborhoods. The railroad cars have become targets for graffiti. **Walt Mancini** Staff Photographer

Officials: Unused rail cars create blight

'The problem is they are an attractive nuisance for taggers and for vagrants.'

SCOTT OCHOA,
Monrovia city manager

By Nathan McIntire Staff Writer

MONROVIA — The recession has forced a railroad company to park its unused cars along the Gold Line right-of-way, where the cars have become targets for taggers, San Gabriel Valley city officials said.

A 3-mile stretch of track from Monrovia to Irwindale is lined with rail cars owned by the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway. Declining shipping volumes have rendered the cars unusable until business picks up, BNSF offi-

cial said.

"It's really based on the economy," spokeswoman Lena Kent said. "We're utilizing any and all available rail space that we have."

The Metro Gold Line Construction Authority brokered a meeting last week between BNSF and city leaders from Irwindale, Arcadia and Monrovia, who say the empty rail cars attract graffiti and other blight. Rail officials promised during the meeting to work on finding a solution.

"The problem is they are an

attractive nuisance for taggers and for vagrants," Monrovia City Manager Scott Ochoa said.

Since the cars are not owned by the cities, local officials have no authority to clean up graffiti as they normally would.

"We don't have any jurisdiction over the right-of-way," Arcadia City Manager Don Penman said. "We're not permitted to go on there to abate it."

BNSF is using the track under an agreement with Metrolink,

RAILROAD CARS A4

RAILROAD CARS

From A1

which owns the rails. Cities are asking BNSF to either put together a graffiti abatement program or allow them to send in their own cleaning crews.

"We want either the right to take down the graffiti or their commitment to do it in the same manner that Monrovia does," Ochoa said.

Monrovia usually cleans up graffiti within 48 hours of it being reported, he added.

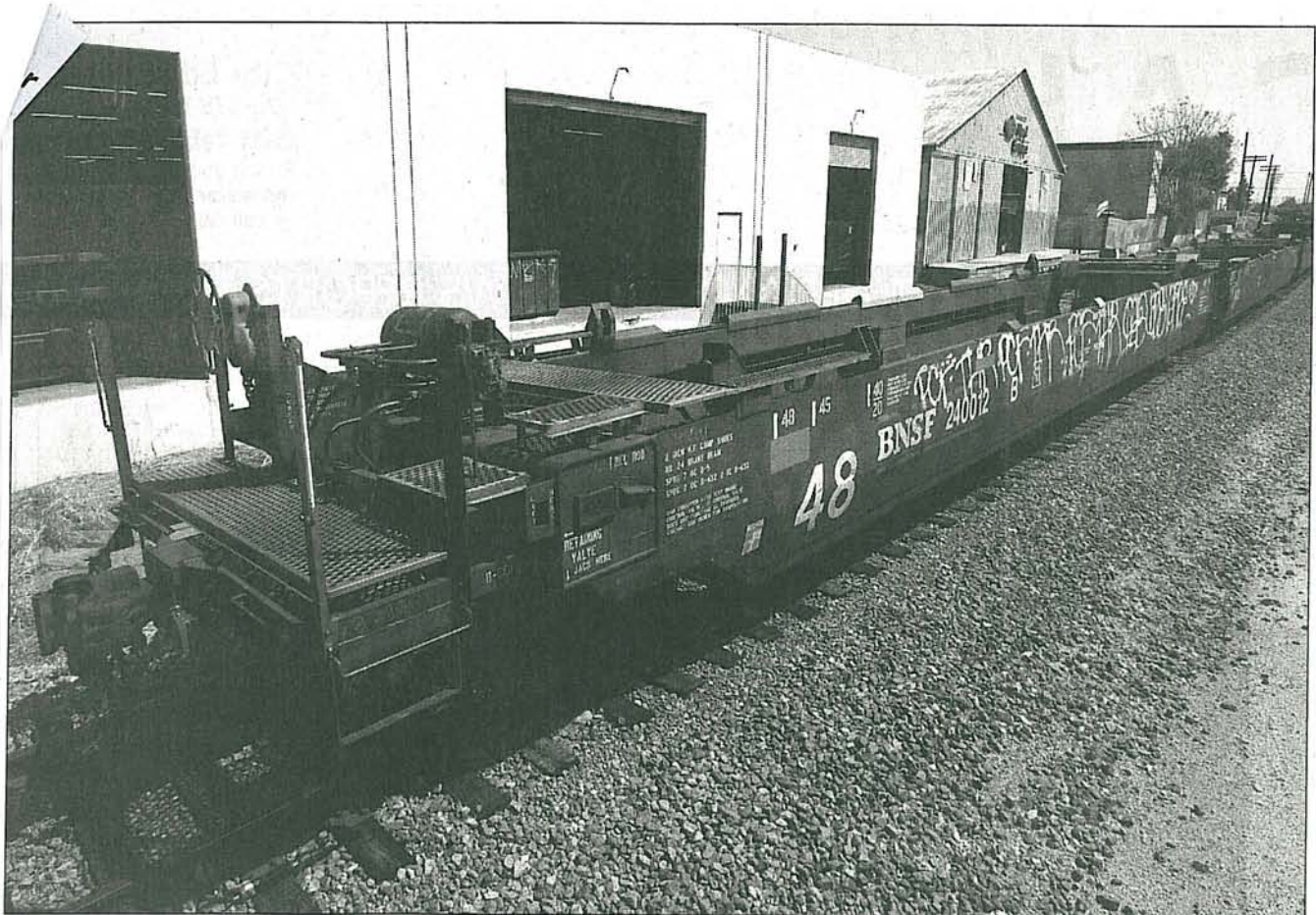
Though he is resigned to the fact that the cars will likely remain idle on the tracks as long as the recession lingers, Ochoa said he was pleased that

BNSF was eager to develop a solution to the graffiti problem.

"Of course they want to get these things out of the way," he said.

How graffiti would be removed from rail cars may be an issue, Kent said. If cities paint over taggings, BNSF is concerned that identification information could be accidentally covered. The company would prefer cleaning crews use pressure washers. BNSF expects to have an answer for cities by next week, Kent said.

nathan.mcintire@sgvn.com
(626) 578-6300, Ext. 4475



Walt Mancini Staff Photographer

Rail cars sit empty in Monrovia near Duarte Road and Myrtle Avenue on Friday. Residents along the proposed Gold Line extension are complaining about unused railroad cars being stored on train tracks throughout their neighborhoods.