



American Southwest Convention

August 31–September 3, 2019

For its 2019 Annual Convention, the Electric Railroaders' Association resumes visiting new light rail and streetcar systems that have opened since the turn of the millennium. We will visit three transit hotspots of the Southwestern U.S. for the first time — Tucson and Phoenix, Arizona, and El Paso, Texas — all lauded by acclaimed urban planner Christof Spieler in his book *Trains, Buses, People: An Opinionated Atlas of U.S. Transit*.

Tucson, Phoenix and El Paso designed their urban rail systems as integral parts of their regional surface transit, linking each city's major business, retail, educational and entertainment districts. The ridership of Tucson's vibrant transit system approaches that of bigger cities such as Miami, Pittsburgh and Denver; ridership of both El Paso and Phoenix exceed that of bigger cities such as Atlanta and Dallas. Clearly, these exciting new systems are not mere tourist curiosities.

For August 31 through the morning of September 2, our convention will be based in **Tucson**, a picturesque, mid-size city. Tucson features restorations of historic Old West buildings as well as innovative new districts inspired by the Old West which have sprung up along the 3.9-mile Sun Link streetcar line.

Sun Link, also known as the Tucson Streetcar, is a single-line streetcar system that began service in July 2014. The line connects the emerging **Mercado District** shopping district [<https://bit.ly/2D2qDzc>], **Historic Fourth Avenue** [<https://bit.ly/1H6aJzW>] and the historic downtown with the University of Arizona and the **Main Gate Square** shopping and entertainment district [<https://bit.ly/2OdKkXU>]. The Tucson Streetcar, University of Arizona and Main Gate Square are all just steps from our headquarters at the Tucson Marriott University Park Hotel.

Our Arizona schedule features a visit to Tucson's **Old Pueblo Trolley Museum** [<https://bit.ly/2RjLPJy>], spread among a trolley barn, transit museum and historic railroad depot, as well as a day trip to Phoenix, Arizona's state capital and the nation's 11th largest metro area. We will visit the **Arizona Railway Museum** in Chandler [<https://bit.ly/2QGthxY>] and view their collection of Arizona-based railroad rolling stock and artifacts.

You will also have an ERA-provided day pass and free time to ride and photograph **Valley Metro Rail**, a 26.3-mile light rail line that began operations in December 2008. It serves the cities of Phoenix, Tempe and Mesa with 35 stations, including one at 44th and Washington Streets that features a free connection to Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport on the **PHX Sky Train** people mover [<https://bit.ly/2DQVPPg>].

September 2 features a trip on Amtrak's **Sunset Limited** from Tucson to El Paso, Texas. We have chartered a train car primarily for members. Your booking will include bus transfers between hotels and train stations both in Tucson and El Paso. We will arrive in El Paso in the afternoon of September 2 and stay through September 3.



El Paso, Texas's fifth largest city, is our final destination. Members will receive an ERA-provided day pass to ride at-will on Sun Metro's **El Paso Streetcar**. The new system, which opened on November 9, is a 4.8-mile line with upper and lower loops. It connects the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) with Downtown El Paso and the lower Second Ward with convenient connections to Sun Metro's bus network. We will also visit the **El Paso Streetcar shops**.

The El Paso operation is unique in employing the only rebuilt pre-war PCC streetcars anywhere in the world. These are the same streetcars which provided service on the only North American international streetcar line between El Paso and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, from 1902 until its 1974 system closure. For more information, see "El Paso Returns to its PCC Roots" by John Pappas in the **2018 issue of Headlights** [<https://bit.ly/2AFDXlc>].

For those who want to take a break from riding streetcars, downtown El Paso features three districts of interest: **Union Plaza**, with bars, restaurants and other nightlife near the historic 1906 train station [<https://bit.ly/2TKoT33>]; the **Las Plazas Arts District** [<https://bit.ly/2CeSoCR>]; and **El Centro**, El Paso's original shopping district [<https://bit.ly/2FqL9uT>]. Stretching all the way to the Mexican border, **El Paso Street** is the heart and soul of El Centro. With its rich history and open-air shops, the street is well known as a vibrant, multi-cultural shopping area serving both Mexican and United States shoppers.

We close our visit with the **Annual Banquet** at the DoubleTree by Hilton, Downtown El Paso hotel, our El Paso Headquarters. **Carl Jackson**, who managed the construction and launch of the El Paso Streetcar, will be our keynote speaker.

The American Southwest is new territory for ERA annual conventions. And it is only our third convention featuring Amtrak intercity travel. You will not want to miss this special convention, so book today!

Tucson Convention Headquarters

Tucson Marriott University Park Hotel

880 E. 2nd Street, Tucson, AZ 85719
520-792-4100

The centrally located Tucson Marriott University Park Hotel [<https://bit.ly/2QF5wq4>] is a 1-minute walk from the nearest Tucson Streetcar stop, and adjacent to both the University of Arizona and the Main Gate Square entertainment, shopping and restaurant district. From the streetcar stop, restaurants and shopping in both Downtown Tucson and the historic 4th Avenue district are no more than a 5- to 10-minute streetcar ride away.

The ERA has secured a block of rooms at the discounted rate of only \$120 plus 12.05% occupancy tax and \$4 tourism fee per room per night (either one king bed or two queen beds for up to two guests) available for the nights of August 31, September 1 and 2 with checkout on September 3 (plus three days **before and after** these dates, at hotel's discretion based on availability).



Hotel amenities in our ERA package include:

- Hotel check-in at 3:00 PM; checkout at 12:00 noon
- Hot buffet breakfast for up to two guests in the room
- On-site Saguaro Grill dining for lunch or dinner
- Complimentary Wi-Fi in guestrooms, in the lobby and public areas
- Outdoor pool, whirlpool and fitness center

El Paso Convention Headquarters

DoubleTree by Hilton El Paso Downtown

600 North El Paso Street, El Paso, TX 79901
915-532-8733

The high-rise DoubleTree El Paso Downtown [<https://bit.ly/2Pzg8dl>] is conveniently located to the local Sun Link Streetcar, less than five minutes to either the southbound Oregon or northbound Stanton Street service. The streetcar serves major downtown destinations and also the University of Texas at El Paso. Significant local dining opportunities are offered both at the hotel and within a 10-minute walk.

The ERA has secured a block of rooms at the discounted rate of only \$115 plus 17.5% sales and occupancy tax per room per night (either one king bed or two queen beds for up to two guests, \$120 for three guests) available for the nights of September 2 and 3, with checkout on September 4 (plus three days **after** these dates, at hotel's discretion based on availability).

Hotel amenities in our ERA package include:

- Hotel check-in at 3:00 PM; checkout is 12:00 noon
- Hot buffet breakfast for each guest
- On-site restaurant, terrace bar and grill, café and bar
- Complimentary airport shuttle (reservations required at 915-532-8733) and hotel parking
- Complimentary shuttle to El Paso destinations within three miles of the hotel
- Complimentary basic Wi-Fi in guestrooms, in the lobby and public areas
- Fully equipped fitness center and outdoor pool
- Signature DoubleTree cookie upon arrival

For non-streetcar activities, the DoubleTree hotel offers additional transportation and tour services:

1. **Prisma Tours** departs from the DoubleTree Hotel and offers customized individual or group tours of Downtown El Paso at daytime or evening, Juarez (Mexico) as well as nearby scenic Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Carlsbad, New Mexico (by request). Email Prisma Tours at prismatours/juarezelpaso@gmail.com or call 915-343-4744 for additional information.
1. **The Outlet Shoppes of El Paso** mall is 13.5 miles away and can be reached by the free Outlet Shoppes shuttle. See <https://bit.ly/2sphOt7> for more information.

Reservation instructions for both hotels are later in this flyer under **Making Your Hotel Reservations.**



Itinerary

Saturday, August 31: Phoenix

Our chartered motor coaches leave the Tucson Marriott University Park hotel at 8:00 AM for the approximate two-hour drive to Phoenix, Arizona's state capital. Our first stop is in suburban Chandler, home of the Arizona Railway Museum. This museum restores and displays equipment of the Southwest and has more than 30 pieces of equipment including locomotives, freight cars, passenger cars and a PCC trolley. Note: the museum is an open-air facility with little sun protection. Bring a hat, sun block and water. Your hotel is next to a major shopping district where all this is available.

Following our visit, sufficient time and a day pass will be provided by the ERA for members to have lunch and ride Valley Metro Rail, a 26.3-mile light rail line serving Phoenix, Tempe and Mesa with a one-way travel time of over an hour. We will reconvene at a convenient meeting point by 5 PM for the return trip to our Tucson hotel. Enjoy Tucson restaurants and nightlife on your own, either immediately adjacent to the hotel or along the Sun Link streetcar line. Sun Link operates until midnight on Saturday.

Sunday, September 1: Tucson

Our chartered motor coaches will leave the hotel at 9 AM to visit the three separate facilities managed by Old Pueblo Trolley. The tour includes:

- Trolley barn, 90 feet of operating track, and streetcar collection.
- The Southern Arizona Transportation Museum at the restored Southern Pacific depot downtown, which also functions as the Amtrak depot from which we depart for El Paso on Monday. This facility focuses on railroad history and has the SP locomotive 1673 on display which was built in 1900.
- The new Transit Museum and shops that feature streetcars and buses, with a focus on the types of transit vehicles used in Arizona. The balance of the streetcars is displayed there.

Our chartered motor coaches will drop members off in one of the numerous restaurant hubs along the Sun Link Streetcar. Members can ride and photograph the streetcar with an ERA-provided day pass.

At 7 PM at our Tucson hotel, we will enjoy a program of Arizona traction presented by **Gene Caywood**, president of Old Pueblo Trolley. Mr. Caywood's slideshow will cover a history of streetcar lines in the five major Arizona cities, focusing on the two largest operations in Tucson and Phoenix. He will also discuss the history of Old Pueblo Trolley, including their startup, how they operated for 17 years, and future plans.

Monday, September 2: Amtrak to El Paso

A bright and early start this morning! We have arranged for our **breakfast to be served at 5:30 AM**. Allow time to check out and board one of our two chartered buses to the Tucson Amtrak station. **Make sure you are on one of these two buses!** The first bus trip departs at **6:45 AM**, the second at **7:15 AM**. We've budgeted extra time to allow for orderly check-in of our group. For maximum room in our chartered train car, we urge checking of all large pieces of luggage to the baggage car (included in your fare). While our double-deck Superliner coach has a baggage compartment on the lower level, they are unlikely to have space to store all our luggage. If you cannot ascend the steps to the upper level and require lower level accommodation, please indicate that in your order form. The balance of the group will be seated on the upper level of the train car.



Our train will be Amtrak's train no. 2, the Sunset Limited, which departs Tucson at 8:15 AM and arrives at El Paso Union Depot at 3:15 PM.

Members may enjoy meals in the dining car (with on-board reservations on a space available basis) or snacks and sandwiches in the café car. On-board meals and snacks are at your own expense. In El Paso, a chartered bus will make two trips to transport members from Union Depot to the DoubleTree by Hilton Downtown El Paso Hotel. Your ERA booking includes Amtrak train fare, all bus transfers and all tips. Bus transfers and luggage handling account for the fare being higher than basic Amtrak fare. If you do not book the ERA chartered car and later change your mind, you will pay a surcharge to cover bus transfers and luggage handling. Make sure to read the Logistics section on instructions for traveling by Amtrak.

The ERA will distribute the El Paso day passes on the train, which you can then use as your ride around El Paso on September 3. Use your extra time in El Paso on September 2 to ride the El Paso Streetcar (until 7 PM closure) or enjoy the shopping and dining opportunities in downtown El Paso's El Centro or Union Plaza districts.

Tuesday, September 3: El Paso

Last day, El Paso daytime. Ride and photograph at will around El Paso with your ERA-provided Sun Metro day pass for the 4.8-mile El Paso Streetcar. We will arrange a meeting time for a tour of the shops where these rebuilt pre-war PCC streetcars are maintained.

If you still have time and energy in the afternoon, feel free to walk over on your own to El Paso Union Station (also the Amtrak depot). The station is a 12-15-minute walk from the hotel. The early 1900s station was designed by the great American architect Daniel Burnham, who also designed Washington Union Station. Two blocks away is restored Locomotive No. 1, a classic American 4-4-0, and a dozen exhibits on El Paso railroading and urban traction. Eight railroads operated into El Paso in the 19th century.

El Paso evening. ERA's Annual Banquet will be held at the DoubleTree Hotel. The cash bar will open at 6:30 PM in the 17th floor rooftop Sky Lounge. Dinner will be served beginning at 7 PM in the rooftop Franklin Ballroom. Both rooms feature breathtaking views of the El Paso skyline. Texas hospitality and the lower prices of this region allow ERA to offer filet mignon as a dinner entrée option for the first time.

Our guest speaker will be Sun Metro's Carl Jackson, Assistant Director of Streetcar Operations for Sun Metro, which operates the El Paso Streetcar. Mr. Jackson was in charge of construction, testing and launching of the streetcar line.

Logistics

Traveling with the Group by Amtrak:

If you choose to travel independently, you will be responsible for purchasing a ticket on your own through Amtrak and arrange for transportation to and from the train stations, or travel on the ERA buses at an extra charge. Alternatives to Amtrak include Greyhound, driving or flying. As with airline travel, **Amtrak requires each passenger to carry government-issued photo ID such as a driver's license or passport and present it on demand. Don't forget to take this with you.**



Carry-on Baggage: Identification must be securely attached to each item. Carry-on baggage is limited to two pieces of luggage per passenger. No item of carry-on baggage may exceed the following limits:

- Size: 28" x 22" x 14" (70 cm x 55 cm x 35cm)
- Weight: 50 lbs. (23 kg)

Checked Baggage: A maximum of four checked items are allowed per passenger as shown below:

- The first two items are free
- The third and fourth items will be assessed a charge of \$20 per item
- Any additional items over the four-item limit may be accepted as Amtrak Express
- Weight and size of checked baggage must not exceed 50 lbs. (23 kg) or outside linear dimensions (length + width + height) of 75 inches (190 cm)

Reaching the Tucson Marriott University Park Hotel

From Tucson International Airport: The airport is 8.5 miles from the hotel. A taxi or ride-hail trip can be completed in 15-30 minutes. The hotel can be reached in under 90 minutes using Sun Tran bus route 25 and transferring to routes 1 or 6 at Broadway and Euclid. Take either bus routes 1 or 6 to Euclid and University and walk one short block east to the hotel.

From Tucson Amtrak Station: Walk about 5 minutes southeast along Toole Ave. (the street in front of the depot) to the Plaza Centro streetcar stop. Then take the Sun Link Streetcar to University/Tyndal Station. Hotel is one block away. Total trip requires less than 20 minutes.

Note: *If you have large or heavy luggage, ERA recommends taking taxi or ride-hail services from either the Amtrak station or Tucson International Airport.*

Reaching El Paso International Airport or Amtrak Union Depot

The DoubleTree hotel offers complimentary shuttle service to El Paso International Airport or the Amtrak Depot. Reservations are required (call 915-532-8733).

Please Note

Scheduled ERA event times and Amtrak service shown in this flyer are subject to change in the final itinerary or during the trip without prior notice. Daily trip itineraries may be changed without prior notice to ensure on-time return at the end of each day. Announcements will be made each day to update guests on essential information during all ERA events. **Providing your phone number (and email address) on your registration form is critical.** If you have questions regarding the itinerary or accommodations, please e-mail **Bob Newhouser** at bnnyc1955@aol.com or call/text him at **917-482-4235**. E-mail is preferred.



Making Your Hotel Reservations

Tucson Marriott University Park Hotel

Nights of August 30, August 31 and September 1

Booking Rooms: The Tucson Marriott University Park Hotel's ERA discounted rate is \$120 per night plus 12.05% occupancy tax and \$4 tourism fee per room per night (either one king bed or two queen beds for up to two guests, with hot breakfast). This hotel is a member of Marriott Rewards points program. There are two ways to book your reservation:

1. **Use this hotel's special ERA link** [<https://bit.ly/2H4kDKc>] **to book your room:** Using this URL will automatically bring up the discounted rates of \$120 per night (plus tax) for rooms with one king bed or two queen beds. To obtain these discounted rates, please book as soon as possible. You may pay with Marriott Reward points. The room rates are available for the nights of August 30, August 31 and September 1 with checkout on September 2 (plus three days prior and after these dates, depending on availability).
2. **Phone:** Book your reservation either by calling Marriott national reservations at 800-453-0309 or directly with hotel at 520-792-4100 (ask for "reservations"). Mention the "group reservation under the Electric Railroaders' Association" rate when calling to get the \$120 per night room rate.
3. **Cut-off date for discount rate:** These discounted rates expire after July 30, 2019. Further offers of the discount rate after July 30 are at hotel's discretion on a space available basis.

DoubleTree by Hilton Downtown El Paso Hotel

Nights of September 2 and September 3

Booking Rooms: The DoubleTree Hotel's ERA discounted rate is \$115 per night plus 17.5% sales and occupancy tax (with hot breakfast) for rooms with one king bed or two queen beds. The DoubleTree is member of the Hilton Honors rewards program. There are two ways to book your reservation:

1. **Use this hotel's special ERA link** [<https://bit.ly/2VHlu5l>] **to book your room:** Using this URL will bring up the discounted rates of \$115 per night (plus tax) for rooms with one king bed or two queen beds. To obtain these discounted rates, please book as soon as possible. You may pay with Hilton Honors points. The room rates are available for the nights of September 2 and 3, checkout on September 4 (plus up to three nights to September 7, depending on availability).
2. **Phone:** You can also book your reservation either by calling DoubleTree reservations at 800-445-8667, or directly with the Event Manager at 915-532-8733. **Mention the three-letter reservation code "ERA" or "group reservation under the Electric Railroaders' Association" room block when calling to get the \$115 per night room rate.**
3. **Cut-off date for discounted reservations:** The cut-off date for reservations is Friday, August 3, 2019, OR when our room block has been fully booked, whichever occurs earlier. Reservations booked after August 3, will be accepted by the DoubleTree at the hotel's discretion based on availability and rate.

Don't miss out! Book early and get the discounts at each hotel.



Check-in, Check-out and Cancellation Policies at Both Hotels

Check-in Time:

3 PM on day of arrival.

Check-out Time:

12 noon on day of departure.

Room Cancellations:

Room cancellations must be received no later than 48 hours prior to check-in (6 PM) for refund at either hotel. Your cancellation number **MUST** be obtained to ensure refund. All succeeding reservations will be automatically cancelled by the system if guests fail to check-in on the first arrival date and the first night will be charged on the credit card provided with no refund.

Note: *If you can't make the first night of your visit, but can make the other nights, call the hotel immediately to preserve the rest of your reservation.*

