

A hot spot that's a bed of roses

This busy northern California hub is a great place to watch Union Pacific action



A Union Pacific manifest is about to pass the viewing platform in Roseville, Calif. Dick Dorn

CITY: Roseville, Calif., is home to Union Pacific's J.R. Davis Yard, named in 1999 for the company's vice chairman. UP says 98 percent of its northern California traffic moves through here. Roseville is located 16 miles east of Sacramento on Interstate 80. At the east end of the yard, the Roseville Subdivision begins its climb over 7,085-foot Donner Pass to Sparks, Nev. The Valley Subdivision heads north up the Sacramento Valley on the way to Oregon. To the west is the Martinez Subdivision, fondly known by old heads as the "Cal P," which runs to Oakland. Branching off the Cal P at Elvas, just east of Sacramento is the Fresno Subdivision that heads for Bakersfield toward Southern California. Amtrak's *California Zephyr* and one Auburn-Oakland Capitol Corridor train serve Roseville. Buses connect with six other Capitol trains in Sacramento.

YARD: Davis Yard encompasses 915 acres that include 55 bowl tracks. The yard has 50 miles of track for manifest, unit, and intermodal trains; 247 switches; and capacity for 6,500 freight cars. The yard is capable of classifying 1,800-2,300 cars per day and has eight receiving and departure tracks.

RAILROAD FREQUENCIES: Dispatcher 57 in Omaha, 160.875, controls all movements in and out of the yard. The yard and switching radios are on 161.400.

TRAIN-WATCHING SPOTS: The east end of the yard is the most accessible area from which to photograph and watch trains. On the south side, Atlantic Street is next to the yard across from the diesel shops with no fence so photos can be made there. On the north side, Atkinson Street parallels the servicing area and the diesel shops. You can easily photograph over a low fence that provides a view of the east end of the shops. The shops

are home to three former Southern Pacific rotary snowplows that have been unused since 1998, but kept as protection in case snow accumulations become too great. The Amtrak depot is located on Pacific Street just east of the shops with an open view into the yard. Pacific Street has a viewing platform where you can watch trains arrive and depart both east to Donner Pass and north to Oregon. At the west end of the yard, the only public access is Old North Antelope Road, which runs along the tracks at the yard's west end.

FOR YOUR FAMILY: In Roseville, Golf Land-Sun Splash is located at the Eureka exit off I-80 on Taylor Road. Railroad Hobbies is at 119 Vernon St. Nearby in Sacramento, be sure to see the State Capitol Building, the California State Railroad Museum, Old Town Sacramento, Sutter's Fort, and the State Indian Museum, among others. The American River Parkway offers beaches and a 15-mile biking and hiking path.

NEARBY: Drive east on I-80 and follow the original transcontinental railroad for the Central Pacific, today UP, over Donner Pass to the town of Truckee and Donner Lake about 85 miles away. During the non-winter months you can get off I-80 near the summit at the Soda Springs exit and take U.S. 40 east. Watch for the snowsheds at Norden on your right not long after you leave I-80. After you top Donner Summit, watch for the scenic stop when you cross the bridge. Stop to look down on Donner Lake and view the original right-of-way above, including the "Great Wall" made out of stone by Chinese laborers in the 1860s. Also view the extensive Southern Pacific snowsheds that are now unused.

DICK DORN is a retired school teacher and photographer who lives in Yuba City, Calif.

