In the middle 1920's, the Southern Pacific built two new lines to replace the Maricopa & Phoenix Railroad (1887), which was a branch off the SP Sunset Route (1881) and the SP's only access to Phoenix. One of the SP's new lines was a connection completed in 1926 west of Phoenix, from the SP mainline near Yuma to Phoenix using the Arizona Eastern (1910) line for the part near Phoenix. The second of the SP's new lines was a connection completed in 1924 east of Phoenix from the Phoenix & Eastern (1904) at Magma, Arizona, to this location at Picacho on the SP Sunset Route mainline. The two new SP lines built in the middle 1920's constitute a second mainline parallel to the Sunset Route via Phoenix.

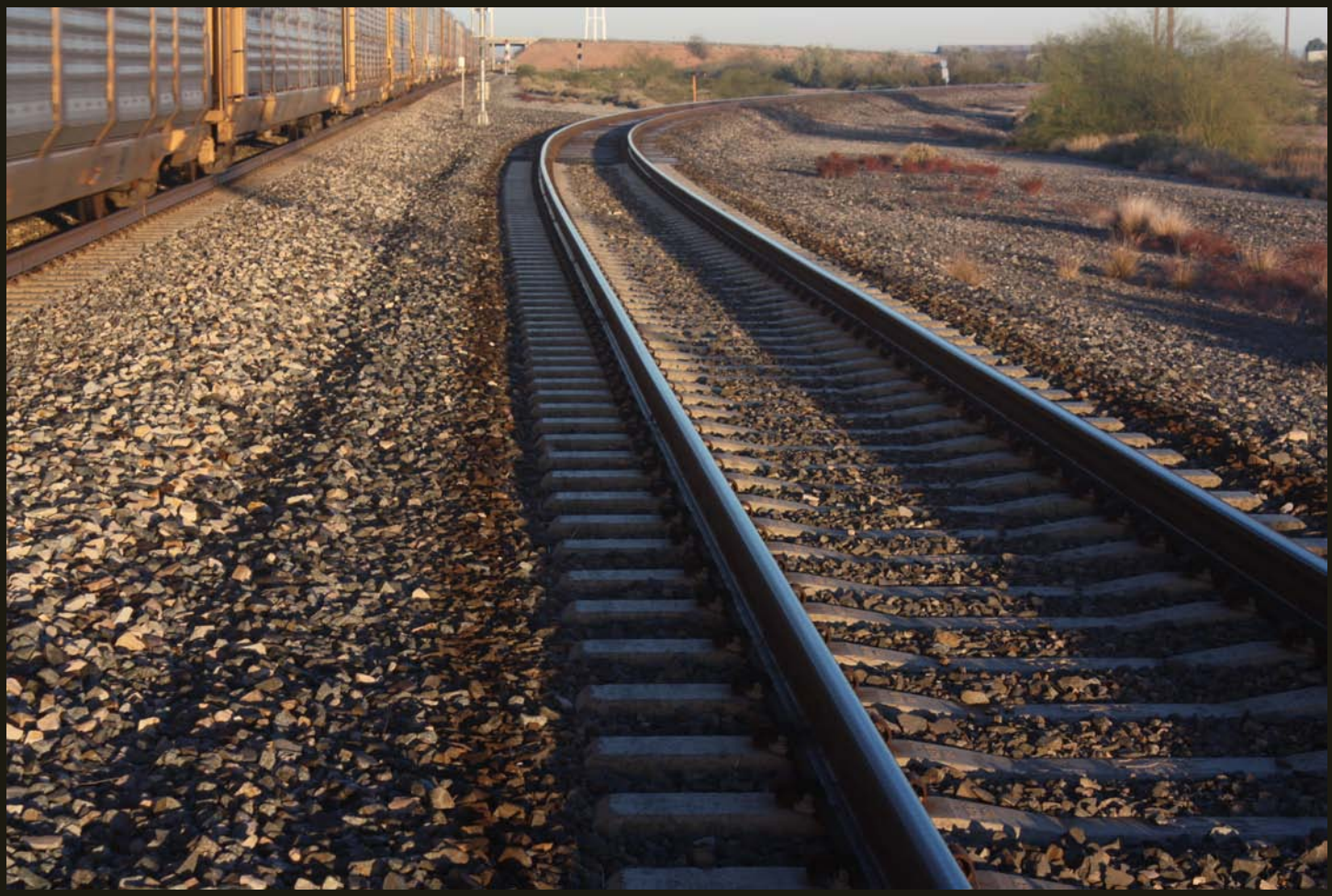
The connection between the SP Sunset Route (1881) and the 1924 Phoenix cut-off is a large asymmetric wye at Picacho, Arizona. In this southeastward view, the track in the foreground is the eastern branch of the Picacho wye, the train catching the dawn's early light in the distance is a westbound train on the Sunset Route (now Union Pacific), and the jagged mountain beyond is Picacho Peak, a southern Arizona landmark.

Southward view of the eastern branch of the Picacho wye for the SP (1924) Phoenix cut-off; the train is on the SP Sunset Route (1881).

Northward view of the eastern branch of the Picacho wye, same location as previous; the train is on the SP mainline.

A minor crossing of the eastern branch of the Picacho wye. Picacho Peak is in the far left distance.

Southward view of the junction of the eastern branch of the Picacho wye for the SP (1924) Phoenix cut-off; the train is on the SP Sunset Route (1881).



Northwestward view of the junction of the eastern branch of the Picacho wye. The junction for the western branch of the wye is barely visible in front of the bridge in the distance, which carries Arizona Highway 87 over the UP (former SP) mainline.

Another northwestward view of the junction of the eastern branch of the Picacho wye. Note the double-track mainline with concrete ties and a crossover track.

An eastbound train on the mainline and signals for the west branch of the wye, the tracks of which are visible between the two signals.

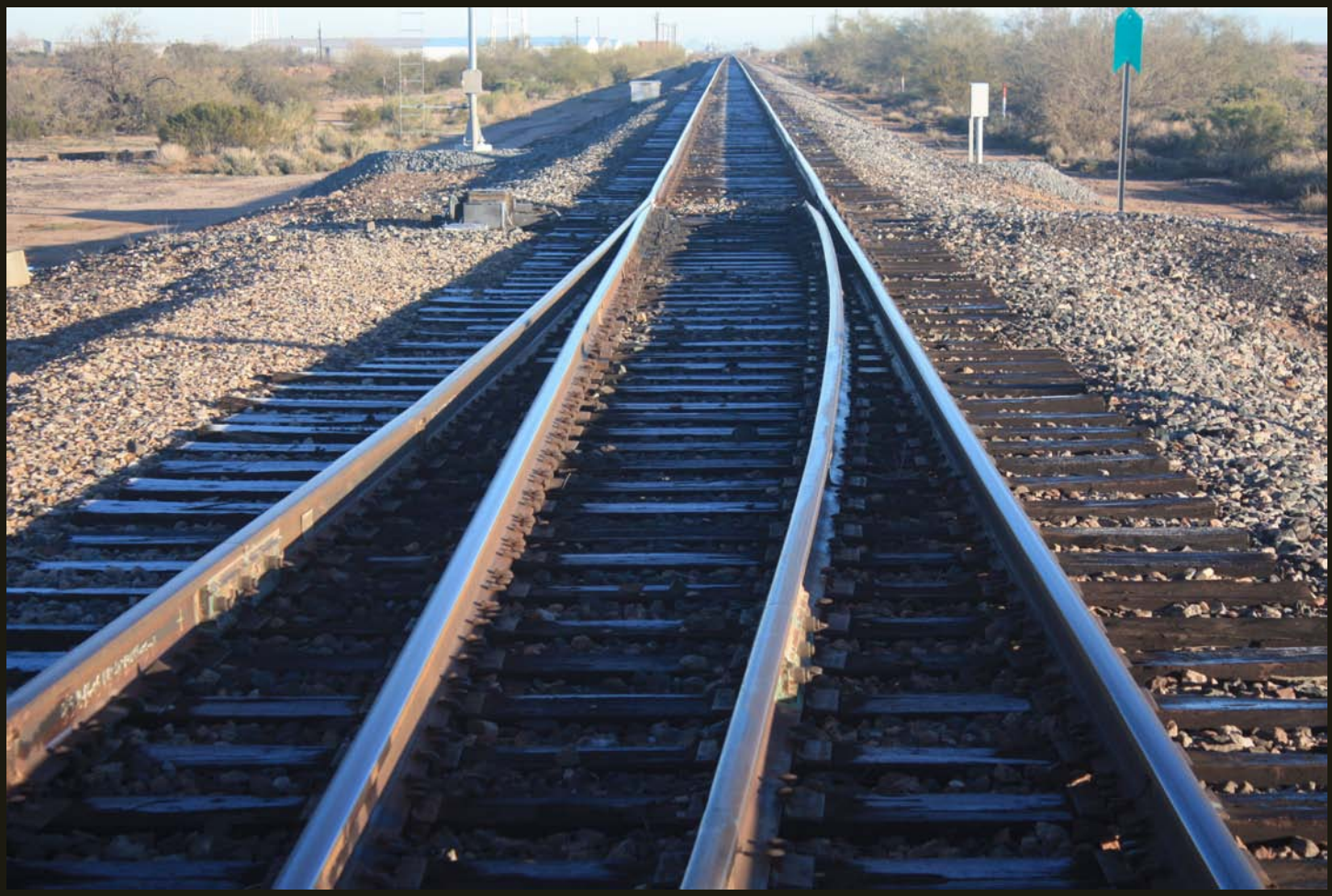
Southward view of the west branch of the Picacho wye, with yet another train speeding by on the busy mainline.

Westward view of the west branch of the wye. Frost on the tracks is visible as the sun rises. Note the flat topography and standing water; this area is part of a huge ancient lake bed that extends from Phoenix to Tucson.

Northward view of the north tip of the of the Picacho wye, where the two branches of the wye converge to one track.

Northward view of the north tip of the Picacho wye. Note that the east (right) branch is straight, needing only to make a long 45° curve to head southeast on the mainline behind the viewer. By contrast, the west (left) branch makes a short 135° turn to head northwest.

Southward view of the Picacho wye, the train is on the mainline.



Northward view of the north tip of the of the Picacho wye.

Northward view of the SP (1924), north of the Picacho wye. Note the irrigated fields on the flat lakebed. Note also the very straight track and easy build afforded by the flat topography, which continues north to Magma and Phoenix.