



## Va. Gov. Kaine Delivers New Train

The commitment of Gov. Tim Kaine (D) and good cooperation among the Commonwealth of Virginia, Amtrak and Norfolk Southern Railway resulted in the 173-mile, Washington-Lynchburg extension of a *Northeast Regional* train beginning Oct. 1.

This gives travelers new schedule choices and a better chance of getting a reservation, as the *Crescent* often sells out. A lengthening of the Lynchburg platform means *Crescent* does not waste time any more on double- and triple-stopping.

Under the governor's leadership, Virginia

has invested significant funds in state-supported Amtrak service, including the Lynchburg train and an additional Washington-Richmond run slated to begin in December.

Amtrak ran a special inaugural train  
*(continued on p. 4)*



Gov. Tim Kaine speaking at Lynchburg, backed by Norfolk Southern CEO Wick Moorman, center, and Amtrak CEO Joseph Boardman, right. (Photo: Amtrak/Riddell)

## 19 Groups Challenge Plan for Hudson Tunnels

NARP's longstanding, oft-stated concern about failure of planned New Jersey Transit (NJT) Hudson River rail tunnels to connect to New York's Penn Station was repeated in a Sept. 30 letter to Federal Transit Administrator Peter Rogoff.

NARP Chairman George Chilson and President Ross Capon signed the letter—available at [www.bit.ly/badtunnel](http://www.bit.ly/badtunnel)—which listed endorsements from 18 other organizations including the Sierra Club's Connecticut and New Jersey Chapters and Midwest High Speed Rail Association.

NARP Vice Chair Al Papp, Council Member George Haikalis and Communications Director Sean Jeans-Gail discussed the issue with Rogoff in his office August 21.

Unfortunately for both New Jersey commuters and East Coast Amtrak passengers, the project's current plans call for the new tunnels to run only to a new,

"deep cavern" station under 34th Street to be used exclusively by NJT trains. A connection to New York's Penn Station was dropped from the project.

The letter says that, as planned, the Mass Transit Tunnel (formerly Trans-Hudson Express and ARC [Access to the Region's Core]) "will probably go down as one of the greatest wastes of taxpayer money in history...[The] decision to eliminate the connection [with] Penn Station has put the entire region at risk."

The 19 organizations ask the FTA to act to restore the connection to Penn Station and eliminate the dead-end station below 34th Street, saving \$3 billion. The savings should be invested to increase capacity at the nation's busiest train station by adding new tracks and platforms.

A June 8 ceremonial groundbreaking related to work in New Jersey that is needed in any event. ■

## NARP, MHSRA Press for New Railcars, Locomotives

NARP and the Midwest High Speed Rail Association jointly wrote to appropriations leaders Sept. 23 urging funding high speed rail at the House-passed \$4 billion level, and Amtrak at the authorized \$1.8 billion.

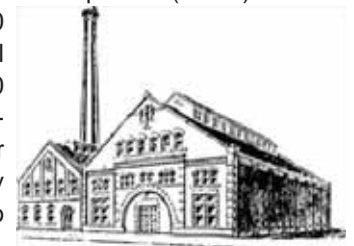
The letter, which also covered Amtrak's gun policy (see page 3), asked that \$2 billion be designated for new rolling stock. NARP simultaneously released an equipment proposal outlining immediate and short-term passenger train equipment needs for the national system. This is at [www.bit.ly/newcars](http://www.bit.ly/newcars).

Procuring the capital needed to increase capacity on existing trains and add new trains to the national network will take dedication from both lawmakers and Amtrak. NARP sent a parallel letter to Amtrak Chairman Thomas Carper on Sept. 25 ([www.bit.ly/carper](http://www.bit.ly/carper)).

Procuring new locomotives and railcars to provide faster, more reliable and more comfortable rides for a growing number of Americans is the next step towards fulfilling NARP's 40-year vision ([www.narprail.org/vision](http://www.narprail.org/vision)) for what the passenger train can and should be in the US.

Because engineering, design, and construction of new equipment can take several years, we cannot wait any longer before implementing a forward-thinking strategy to grow the Amtrak system into something more than 'skeletal.'

The Associations called for issuance of Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for 750 cars (400 bilevel and 350 single-level) for delivery in three to five years.



This fleet would replace 50-60 year old dining and baggage cars, increase capacity on existing trains, replace Amfleet II coaches and further expand eastern

*(continued on p. 4)*

# Pioneer Restoration Enjoys Wide Support

Of the routes Amtrak was mandated to review by last year's reauthorization, the *Pioneer* is notable for its strong political support, led by Sens. Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Michael Crapo (R-ID).

Amtrak thus gave a draft report to public officials, setting Oct. 2 as the due date for comments. Sen. Crapo put the draft on his web site.

Discontinued in 1997, *Pioneer* linked



Painting by Marc Desobeau

was not explained.

the Pacific Northwest with eastern Oregon, southern Idaho and—at different times—Salt Lake City or Wyoming-Denver, with Chicago through-cars on *Cal. Zephyr*.

NARP and others criticized Amtrak's ridership estimates as being too low compared to when the train last ran. NARP complained that the methodology

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# HSR Applications Flood US DOT; Awards Delayed

The good news is that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) received 259 applications totaling about \$57 billion from 34 states for the high-speed rail funds provided in the Recovery Act (ARRA). This gives a strong indication of the pent-up demand for better trains.

These are mostly serious applications and compare with \$102 billion in requests during the pre-application process. That process allowed the FRA to help states focus on refining applications for their most competitive projects.

The not-so-good news relates to timing: Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph Szabo said in an Oct. 6 statement that, "Due to the overwhelming response and our desire to lay the groundwork for a truly national high-speed and intercity passenger rail program, we will be announcing all awards this winter."

Deputy Federal Railroad Administrator Karen Rae told NARP that, "with so much at stake, it makes sense to take a few extra months to get it right."

Nonetheless, this disappointed small state rail staffs that worked hard in the summer to meet deadlines. States, railroads and workers had expected projects to be under way by now.

Reassuringly, Szabo also said, "Our selections will be merit-based and will reflect President Obama's vision to remake America's transportation landscape."

State rail agencies met two deadlines. The first, August 24, was for individual projects, corridor planning, and—sepa-

rate from ARRA—fiscal 2009 appropriations projects (labeled Track 1, Track 3, and Track 4, respectively). There were 214 of these applications from 34 states totaling \$7 billion. Track 4 awards, which require at least 50% non-federal funds will *not* be delayed to winter.

An Oct. 2 deadline covered projects to advance high-speed and intercity passenger rail corridor development programs ("Track 2") and yielded 45 applications from 24 states totaling about \$50 billion.

It is not clear how much of the \$8 billion will go to very high speed lines such as California and Florida plan, and how much for incremental improvements to existing lines. ARRA clearly envisions an

(continued on p. 3)

**UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)**

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

For the month of October 2009

1. Publication Title: *NARP News*

2. Issue Date: October 2009

3. Issue Frequency: Monthly

4. Issue Month/Year: October 2009

5. Annual Subscription Price: \$12.00

6. Annual Circulation: 1000

7. Total Number of Copies: 1000

8. Total Number of Copies (Net of 7): 1000

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# TIGER Rail Grant Applications: \$5.6 billion

The Recovery Act included \$1.5 billion for competitive, merit-based grants for surface transportation investments. This was in addition to the well-publicized \$9.3 billion for intercity passenger trains and \$27.5 billion for highways (which can also be used for rail projects). The program is dubbed "TIGER," for Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery.

By the September 15 deadline, U.S. DOT had received 1,381 TIGER grant applications worth \$57 billion, including 125 rail-related projects worth \$5.6 billion. Thus rail represents 10% of the total; transit was 19%, highways 56% and ports 6%.

Some key railroad applications with obvious passenger train benefits:

- \$300 million to advance the CREATE project to modernize Chicago-area railroads ([www.createprogram.org](http://www.createprogram.org))
- \$61 million towards grade separation of Fort Worth's rail/rail (Tower 55, *NARP News*, Sept. 2006, pg. 3)
- \$44 million for grade-separating east-west and north-south lines at the Colton Crossing north of Riverside, CA, to enhance safety, reliability of *Southwest Chief*, *Sunset Ltd.* and Metrolink trains and add more of the latter.

## Thanks for Going Green!

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1. Publication Title: *NARP News*

2. Issue Date: October 2009

3. Issue Frequency: Monthly

4. Issue Month/Year: October 2009

5. Annual Subscription Price: \$12.00

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The draft study (64 pages, PDF) is at [www.bit.ly/trnstudy](http://www.bit.ly/trnstudy), but the final report should be out by mid-October.

Wyden aptly calls it “a passenger rail line that should never have been closed in the first place,” harking back to ex-Amtrak Chairman Tommy Thompson’s Senate testimony supporting that contention.

On Sept. 30, after receiving the draft, Sen. Crapo wrote to Amtrak President Joseph Boardman, requesting “a written response explaining the ridership modeling and the assumptions used to obtain the estimates in the study.”

NARP, quoting Crapo, cited Amtrak ridership estimates “nearly 30% below the actual 1992 level while population growth in the states along the route has increased by 41%”; weaker non-rail alternatives than existed 15 years ago; development and expansion of rail transit in Denver, Salt Lake City and Portland, increasing residents’ familiarity with train travel; and the greater nationwide popularity of train travel in general.

On the latter point, NARP said *Southwest Chief* ridership “in Fiscal 2007 and 2008, respectively, was 34% and 40% higher than in...1996, the last full year the *Pioneer* ran. Comparable percentage changes for passenger revenues were astounding: 58% and 71%...which doubtless reflects ridership constrained by limited capacity.”

“The estimated revenue-to-cost ratios appear low and may not have been calculated appropriately for a train that combines with another train.”

NARP also urged study of a Seattle-Los Angeles service via Eastern Oregon/Boise/Salt Lake City/Las Vegas. ■

## Washington: Endless Highway Subsidies

One might suppose that energy/national security and environmental considerations—especially those related to climate change—would lead to federal policy strongly supportive of transit and rail. While there have been some moves in that direction, the most striking feature of current policy is massive, new subsidies to the highway industry.

This has included “cash for clunkers” (\$3 billion), state and local tax deductibility for new cars purchased through December 31, 2009, and \$81 billion in federal aid to automakers (the U.S. owns 61% of General Motors, 10% of Chrysler). But it has also included massive infusions of general funds into the Highway

important role for the latter.

California is the only state with a voter-approved very high speed train program, and submitted applications totaling \$5.8 billion.

Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) said, “California voters approved a \$9.95 billion bond for high-speed rail, and our state’s support for high-speed rail is unrivaled in the nation.”

*Financial Times*, in one of three Oct. 7 high speed rail reports, said opposition to California HSR “was increasing from residents in towns along the proposed route, who do not want disruption from a massive, long-term construction project.” ■

## Obama Nominates Two to Amtrak Board of Directors

President Barack Obama nominated, subject to Senate confirmation:

**Bert DiClemente.** Since 2003, he has been Vice President of CB Richard Ellis, Inc., the world’s largest commercial real estate company. From 1977 to 1997, he was then-Senator Biden’s State Director in Wilmington.

**Anthony R. Coscia.** In April, 2003, he was appointed Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. He is a partner at Windels Marx Lane & Mittendorf, LLP. His specialties include redevelopment finance and corporate governance.

Confirmation of these nominees would leave President Obama two more nominations to make. The law calls for seven Presidential appointees plus the DOT Secretary and Amtrak President. ■

Trust Fund (HTF).

For years, highway spending increased while the federal gasoline tax/user fee did not; HTF revenues fell in recent years. Thus, on September 15, 2008, President Bush signed into law HR 6532 with an \$8 billion general-fund gift to the HTF. Less than a year later, on August 10, 2009, President Obama signed HR 3357, transferring another \$7 billion.

A third transfer is likely in the near future, as no one expects a user fee solution this year, particularly given the Obama Administration’s opposition to either a gasoline tax increase or imposition of a vehicle-miles traveled tax.

(continued on p. 4)

## GUN CARRIAGE MANDATED

The Senate voted 68-30 to quit funding—that is, shut down—Amtrak March 31, 2010, unless it resumed accepting guns as checked baggage by then. All 40 Republicans, 27 Democrats and one Independent voted for the measure.

The Sept. 16 vote was on a Roger Wicker (R-MS) amendment to the Fiscal 2010 transportation/housing appropriations bill.

A similar amendment to a budget bill was dropped in conference last spring, but the new provision may have more staying power.

The NARP/MHSRA Sept. 23 letter to appropriations leaders urged converting the provision into “a study by Amtrak and the Secretaries of Transportation, Homeland Security and Justice, identifying full costs of requiring Amtrak to accept guns as checked baggage...”

“[We] believe consideration of any mandate to accept guns as checked baggage should await full determination of the relevant costs and logistical issues.”

Currently, the Pacific Northwest Talgo trains are the only Amtrak trains with locked baggage cars.

A House-Senate conference committee could act any time, or possibly not until late November.

## Think Tank Briefs

On Oct. 1, the conservative Heritage Foundation issued a ‘Web memo’ ([www.bit.ly/OJDIIf](http://www.bit.ly/OJDIIf)) calling federal high-speed rail investment a hidden subsidy for private freight railroads. NARP thinks sound passenger train investments should not be sidelined because private railroads also benefit. Indeed, the public interest demands more investments in freight rail than the railroads can generate or get from investors.

An Oct. 8 Brookings report ([www.bit.ly/fV8Xp](http://www.bit.ly/fV8Xp)) attributes commercial air congestion in part to an overabundance of [highly subsidized] short-haul flights (half of the country’s flights are less than 500 miles) whose routes would be better served by fast trains.



George Chilson, Chairman; James Churchill, John DeLora, Albert L. Papp, Jr., Arthur Poole, David Randall, Robert J. Stewart, Vice Chairs; Nicholas Noe, Secretary; Kenneth T. Clifford, Treasurer

Ross B. Capon, President & CEO; Sean Jeans-Gail, Communications Director; Tiffanie H. Childs, Coordinator of Resource Development; Malcolm M. Kenton, Transportation Assistant

National Association of Railroad Passengers NARP News (ISSN 0739-3490), published monthly (except Nov.) by NARP; 900 2nd St., NE, Suite 308; Washington, DC 20002-3557; 202/408-8362, fax 202/408-8287, <narp@narprail.org>, <www.narprail.org>. ©2009 National Assoc. of Railroad Passengers. All rights reserved. Membership dues \$35/year (\$20/under 21, \$25/over 65), of which \$5 is a subscription to NARP News. Periodicals Postage Paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to National Association of Railroad Passengers NARP News; 900 Second St., NE, Suite 308; Washington, DC 20002-3557.

(This has news through October 9. Vol. 44, No. 8 was mailed August 19.)

our mission: a modern, customer-focused national passenger train network that provides a travel choice americans want.

## National Rail Plan

The rail reauthorization enacted last year required the Secretary of Transportation to develop a national rail plan within one year, that is, by October 16.

At a September 10 stakeholders meeting, FRA officials indicated that the document we can expect this month will be very general, reflecting in part the huge workload of dealing with applications for the \$8 billion in high speed rail funds, but also the need to see how rail activity unfolds before doing a more specific plan. That more detailed plan may appear in late 2010.

NARP is one of a handful of organizations that have been asked by FRA to be an active partner in developing the rail plan, building on successes achieved from FRA's outreach efforts during the summer. ■

## Equipment

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long distance trains. The bilevel cars can replace deteriorating Horizon cars in the midwest, meet California's immediate needs, add national network service and new regional services, and increase frequencies on key short-distance routes.

NARP/MHSRA also urged procuring **new motive power** (300 locomotives) to replace existing diesels and provide for new services. Finally, we urged a start on **design and engineering** of train sets for delivery starting in five years to create a vibrant, domestic passenger train building industry for new high-speed service, regional higher-speed trains, and additional national services. ■

## Highway Subsidies

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The prospect of endless general fund "subsidies" to the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) makes it important to apply more generally a principle established in the Recovery Act: to the extent that HTF

funds come from general funds, states should have the right to spend the money on railroad projects. Many legislators, however, favor limiting these funds just as if they were paid by motorists. ■



A large crowd, complete with marching band, at Lynchburg's Kemper Street Station during the ceremony after inaugural train's afternoon arrival on Sept. 30. - Photo by Ross Capon

## Kaine

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from Washington to Lynchburg on Wednesday, September 30. Crowds gathered for ceremonies at each station along the route. Amtrak President and CEO Joseph Boardman and Norfolk Southern Chairman, President and CEO Wick Moorman spoke at each station.

Gov. Kaine spoke at Charlottesville and Lynchburg. Virginia Transportation Secretary Pierce Homer represented him at the earlier stations.

Hailing *Forbes'* ranking of Virginia as "Best State to do Business" for the

fourth consecutive year, Kaine said "the expanded service will support economic growth and benefit the environment by taking more cars off the road, improving air quality, and saving fuel."

Moorman and Boardman each praised the other's cooperation. Boardman applauded Norfolk Southern's work on improving the on-time performance of Amtrak trains on its tracks, and Moorman expressed his company's pride in helping to provide the new service. ■

