



New Threat: “Crumbling Edge of Quality”

Debt Ceiling Law and Senate Committee Action Preserve Amtrak, But Just Barely

If all goes smoothly on Capitol Hill Oct. 4, Amtrak will be funded at \$1.461 billion for the first 49 days of Fiscal 2012 (Oct. 1-Nov. 18). This is \$23 million below the 2011 level and consistent with the bipartisan August debt-ceiling agreement.

But 2011 already was too low and the

new funding is \$104 million below the 2010 level.

The Oct.-Nov. “continuing resolution” could set the pattern for the rest of the fiscal year, but Tea Partiers are pushing for still deeper cuts, so the Nov. 18 deadline could see another major funding battle.

Anticipating a freestanding transportation/housing spending bill, the Senate Appropriations Committee on Sept. 21 ap-

STAND UP FOR TRAINS!

Visit <http://act.narprail.org> to easily email your Representative, or call 202-224-3121 and ask for your Representative’s office.

Federal Grant Jumpstarts Southeast HSR

110-mph Washington-Richmond-Raleigh Service Closer to Reality

A \$48.3 million grant to Virginia and North Carolina, announced Sept. 27 by US Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, will let environmental and engineering work begin towards frequent, reliable train service connecting both state capitals to the nation’s capital. The grant requires a 20% state match and comes from the fiscal 2010 appropriation for the High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail program.

North Carolina’s \$4 million plus \$3.9

million in state funds, allows work to begin towards rebuilding the abandoned, direct Petersburg-Raleigh line that Amtrak stopped using in October, 1986.

Virginia’s \$44.3 million plus the state’s \$11.1 million will fund preparations for building a Richmond-Washington high-speed line roughly parallel to the existing CSX mainline that hosts 22 daily Amtrak trains and 14 weekday Virginia Railway Express commuter trains.

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proved an Amtrak level \$20 million above the continuing resolution plus \$100 million for the state capital grants program.

But, apparently due to a \$15 million capital set-aside for the vital NJ-NY Gateway project (Feb. News), the Senate’s operating grant is even smaller (\$544m vs. \$552m in the continuing resolution).

Amtrak’s “barebones” capital and debt service needs (in millions):

- \$271 debt service to avoid default;
- \$250 for rolling stock good repair;
- \$175 for ADA station compliance;
- \$350 to keep the Northeast Corridor (NEC) running (engineering dept.)

Even ending work on the backlog of NEC deferred investment (another \$350m), the above is \$109 million over the continuing resolution level. Service cuts are avoided, but not layoffs, and service quality declines. The fate of already-placed new equipment orders is uncertain. ■

\$291.4 Million in New Passenger Train Capital

More Reliable Service for Northeast, Pacific Northwest States

US Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood recently announced awards of \$291.35 million in High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) grants from the 2009 Recovery Act to six northeastern states and Washington state. The grants will mean much greater reliability on five popular Amtrak routes.

The **Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority**, which is responsible for Amtrak’s *Downeaster*, gets \$20.8 million to double-track the Wilmington-Ballardvale, MA, segment, rebuild three grade crossings on the Wildcat Branch and replace rail between on the Western Route between Lawrence and the MA/NH state line. The latter segment is shared with Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) commuter trains and has become a bottleneck resulting in frequent delays.

Washington state gets \$31.1 mil-

lion: \$16.1 million to stabilize and improve BNSF track structure on the *Cascades* route between Blaine and Vancouver, WA (making it less vulnerable to weather-related disruptions), plus the \$15 million for a Port of Vancouver flyover reported in

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FEDERAL FUNDING FOR INTERCITY PASSENGER TRAINS

<i>Figures are Appropriations in millions of dollars</i>	2010 Enacted	2011 Enacted	2012 Amtrak Request	2012 Obama Request	2012 House Approps Subcom.	2012 Senate Approps Approved
Operations	563	561	616	659	227	544
General Capital incl. Fleet	594	337	1,150	2,278	628	
ADA Compliance	144	281	175	1,184		
Debt Service	264	305	271	280	271	
Capital & Debt Service Total	1,002	923	1,556	3,742	899	937
AMTRAK SUBTOTAL	1,565	1,484	2,212	4,401	1,126	1,481
High-Speed & Intercity Rail	2,500	0		3,645	0	100
PASSENGER RAIL TOTAL	4,066	1,484		8,046	1,126	1,581

NARP at AARP's Big "Life at 50+ National Event" in Los Angeles

NARP had an exhibitor table at the American Association of Retired Persons' (AARP) *Life at 50+* National Event, September 20-22. About 800 people visited the NARP table, many of whom took brochures, newsletters and bookmarks and signed up for NARP's email list.

NARP Resource Development Coordinator Mary Beth McCall, Special Assistant to the Chairman Larry Scott, and NARP Members (and former Directors) Carl Schiermeyer and Pat Montague represented the Association.

Schiermeyer said we attracted "a steady stream of visitors including several who were motivated to donate money

or volunteer...

"My approach was to say to visitors, 'So, you like passenger trains? Well, so do we and that's why we're here.' ... I could then ... talk to them a little about what our organization did. During each

encounter it was important to maintain friendly eye contact with the guest and to gauge whether I needed to adjust the spiel based upon [their feedback].

"After making clear that our organization is non-profit and describing our goals, [I stressed] that—if they really felt it was a priority to keep passenger trains—we needed them in our organization. I would stress the strength in numbers argument and generally speaking they were with me."

Georgia Seeks New Atlanta Station

The State of Georgia wants to build a train station at a good location along the Norfolk Southern mainline in the City of Atlanta.

Peachtree Station, originally a suburban stop, is inadequate to the needs of over 109,000 passengers a year. The waiting and ticketing areas are cramped. Access to the platform is by a slow elevator or a long flight of stairs.

The short-term parking lot—a former highway bridge—has been condemned, though Georgia DOT is contemplating repairs. There is no long-term parking.

The State Road and Tollway Authority owns one of the parcels contemplated for the new station. This is on 17th Street, which has a MARTA bus route and where long-term plans call for a light rail line.

GDOT applied for a federal High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail grant to cover construction costs of the new station, but the request was denied in June.

Long term, GDOT wants to put Amtrak in a major downtown intermodal terminal, which won't be built for at least ten years. But Amtrak has resisted this because it would be impractical for the New York-New Orleans *Crescent* to serve such a station.



NARP's Mary McCall at the AARP event

- Larry Scott

Upgraded Amtrak Stations for the Gulf Coast

Brookhaven, Mississippi: A former city physical plant became an attractive waiting area with restrooms. It was rededicated as the Godbold Transportation Center and opened Aug. 17. Planning for the Center began nearly 10 years ago under Bill Godbold, Brookhaven's late former mayor.

Beaumont, Texas should have a new ADA-compliant 550-foot platform and brick shelter by the end of November. The design is based on a nationwide Amtrak prototype for unstaffed stations, and is similar to ones recently built in Connellsville, PA and Okeechobee, FL. All three were funded through Amtrak's \$1.3 billion Recovery Act grant.



- Amtrak/John Bender

New ADA-accessible platform at Hammond, LA serves the Chicago-New Orleans City.

Birmingham, Alabama: Construction should begin late this year or early next on a modern multi-modal station on the site of the former Louisville & Nashville Railroad depot, but occupying the entire city block along Morris Avenue. It also will serve intercity and local transit buses.

Anniston, Alabama: Renovations on the 1925-built Southern Railway station are nearly complete.

Hammond, Louisiana: A new ADA-compliant 550-foot platform was added to the staffed, 1912-built Illinois Central station.



: Amtrak/Todd Stennis

The Godbold Transportation Center's new shelter and platform greet the southbound *City of New Orleans* in Brookhaven on Aug. 17, 2011.



- Katchoo on Flickr

Front of Atlanta's Peachtree Station. Short-term parking area (shown) is now off-limits to autos. The old road bridge on which it sits has been condemned.



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Ross B. Capon, President & CEO; Sean Jeans-Gail, Vice President; Malcolm M. Kenton, Director of Outreach & Engagement; Mary Beth McCall, Coordinator of Resource Development; Lawrence E. Scott, Special Assistant to the Chairman.

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OUR MISSION: A MODERN, CUSTOMER-FOCUSED NATIONAL PASSENGER TRAIN NETWORK THAT PROVIDES A TRAVEL CHOICE AMERICANS WANT.

TRAVELER'S ADVISORY

Amtrak unaccompanied minor policy from Nov. 1: Children 12 years and under must travel with a companion 18 or over. Youths 16+ are treated as adults—have unlimited solo travel.

Children 13-15 may travel alone if accompanied to the boarding station by a companion 18 or older. Boarding and arriving stations must be staffed. Travel must be involve scheduled departures and arrivals between 5:30 AM and 9:05 PM and may not involve transfers, Thruway buses or international border crossings. Station personnel interview the child to determine

suitability for travel. The child must wear a wristband.

Vermontor was to resume normal operation Oct. 1. A substitute bus had run north of Springfield during a federally-funded track replacement project on the New England Central Railroad. Continuous welded rail installation will be completed in October.

Minot, ND, service resumes Oct. 22, after station flood damage.

New Wisconsin Thruway bus route: A Lamers Bus Lines "Lamers Connect" route between Green Bay, Appleton, Columbus and Madison is

available through Amtrak as a Thruway connection with Amtrak's Empire Builder at Columbus, for passengers traveling between Green Bay, intermediate points, and Builder points west. The bus also connects Madison passengers to the westbound Builder, but not from the eastbound.

A second Lamers route connects Wausau and intermediate points with points west on the Builder through Portage. Connections between Chicago and Green Bay, Wausau and intermediate points are available at Milwaukee.

NARP on Campus, on the Air, in the Community

Oberlin, OH: NARP State Representative Philip Copeland and his wife Lois hosted an outreach table at Oberlin College's Community Connection Fair. Several students signed up for NARP's email list, and one expressed interest in volunteering for us during winter term.

Washington, DC: NARP co-sponsored the District DOT's annual observance of Car Free Day and hosted a table

at the evening's outdoor party Sept. 22. About 150 people visited our table, 93 of whom signed up for the email list and got a bumper sticker and bookmark.

Greensboro, NC: NARP Outreach Director Malcolm Kenton on September 24 was one of two featured speakers at the annual meeting of the North Carolina Alliance for Transportation Reform. This advocacy group works to refocus the state's transport investments on public transportation, including intercity rail. Kenton emphasized the importance of public involvement in the political process.

Baltimore: NARP Pres. Ross Capon appeared Sept. 28 on the hour-long call-in "Midday with Dan Rodricks" on WYPR-FM. Capon discussed Amtrak's inadequate federal funding vs. the public's demand for more trains. Petra Todorovich on the phone discussed her new report,

High-Speed Rail: International Lessons for U.S. Policy Makers, which says California and the Northeast Corridor are the strongest U.S. candidates for service "that meets the international definition of high-speed rail." Listen at www.bit.ly/narpwypr (also has May 17 program with Capon).

The report is at www.lincolninst.edu

Southeast High-Speed from page 1

Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph Szabo praised the level of cooperation between the two states and his agency. He also noted, "The population growth we have seen over the last decade in the Southeast is just the tip of the iceberg compared to what we will see by the middle of the century."

Plans are to extend the Southeast High-Speed Rail Corridor (SEHSR) through Charlotte to Atlanta, through Columbia and Savannah to Jacksonville, and from Richmond to Newport News.



Phil & Lois Copeland at Oberlin College Sept. 14. - Courtesy: The Copelands