

December 2014

Vol. 48, No. 12



NARPnews

"If Congress wants to do something now, build this bridge. It's ready to be done. It's been ready for two years. Build it. It's tangible evidence that they can really get something done."

AMTRAK CEO JOE BOARDMAN, DISCUSSING THE PORTAL BRIDGE ON 60 MINUTES

Elections Create New Landscape for Passenger Trains

The election results are in, and it's official: the Senate now belongs to the Republicans, granting the GOP full control of Congress.

So what does this mean for trains?

Make no mistake: there are still individual Republican voices calling for deep cuts to Amtrak. Some of these voices, such as House Budget Chairman Paul Ryan (R-WI), are as powerful as they are dangerous. And while there are many individual Republican members of Congress who support a strong Amtrak, the party's focus on achieving smaller budgets through cuts to discretionary spending leaves programs such as passenger rail in a murky position.

However, passengers should also realize there is a new bipartisan consensus forming that passenger rail service is a national necessity. In the House, we've seen a Republican majority translate to a rail reauthorization that actually provides a slight increase in funding for Amtrak. While this increase is nowhere near sufficient — especially for national network trains — the fact that we're moving beyond "kill Amtrak" tells us that our work is having an effect.

Passengers must double down on our efforts to educate policy makers. There's a whole new crop (*continued on Page 4*)

NARP's Brief Gets its Day in Supreme Court Hearing

The Supreme Court met on December 8th to hear oral arguments in the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) vs. the Association of American Railroads (AAR), a case that will determine whether Amtrak can legally co-author regulations establishing minimum standards for performance and service quality for passenger trains operating on host railroads.

The case revolves around a provision of the 2008 federal passenger rail authorization law, which allowed Amtrak to work with the U.S. DOT—in consultation with the Surface Transportation Board (STB), freight railroads, states, rail labor, and rail passenger organizations—to develop metrics and standards for Amtrak's performance on tracks owned by freight railroads. Among other things, the metrics and standards determined whether the Surface Transportation Board (STB) would investigate a host railroad for failing to provide Amtrak trains the preferential dispatching required by law. Policymakers drafted the language to ensure that passengers have access to quality passenger rail service.

The AAR challenged the legality of this provision and, after a series of appeals, eventually got the section struck by the U.S. Court of Appeals - D.C. Circuit in July 2013. The U.S. DOT appealed that decision, and the Supreme Court announced

this summer that it would consider the merits of the case.

NARP joined with the Environmental Law and Policy Center, All Aboard Ohio, and Virginians for High Speed Rail to file a "Friend of the Court" in the case. The brief begins by pointing out two flaws in the appellate court ruling: the mistaken conclusion that Amtrak is a private entity, and a disregard for the evidence establishing sufficient governmental control over the development and implementation of the metrics and standards.

However, NARP has dedicated the time and resources of its 28,000 members for one central reason: the appellate court ruling invalidates Amtrak's on-time performance measures, thwarting the intent of Congress and threatening the future of passenger rail service in the U.S. Since the metrics were struck down by the court of appeals, total minutes of freight interference have grown by 68 percent and Amtrak's on-time performance plummeted to 42 percent. The long distance trains have been the most hard-hit, with OTP down 21 percent when compared to the same period last year. Amtrak reported in April 2014 that, in response to these skyrocketing delays, ridership and revenue had fallen by 15 percent year over year to date.

The Supreme Court isn't expected to make a decision (*continued on Page 4*)

Texas Students Call for High-Speed Rail

Encouraged by the National Association of Railroad Passenger's campaign to recruit the next generation of transportation leaders, student government associations at Sam Houston State University and the University of North Texas issued resolutions this month in support of Texas Central Railway's privately funded high-speed rail project to connect Dallas and Houston.

Both resolutions emphasize that mobility is a vital component of a successful academic experience, allowing students to commute to campus, participate fully in college programs and activities on offer, and access professional development opportunities in urban centers. UNT's resolution stated that passenger trains are a vital element in Texas' development strategy; therefore they "support State and Federal support for the continued expansion of local passenger train service."

This recognizes that Millennials are moving away from automotive dependence, showing an increased preference to stay connected through electronic devices while traveling.

The student government associations also argued that HSR will be a critical factor in remaining internationally competitive. International students and faculty expect the mobility and quality of life that come with well-developed rail and transit systems. To remain a global thought leader, American universities will need to develop modern campuses capable of attracting the best talent.

"There's been a lot of criticism about a lack of engagement among people under 30. But when we give young people a reason to become part of the conversation, we've seen the kind of enthusiasm and drive on display in the work done by these students," said

NARP President Jim Mathews. "What TCR has done is provide a compelling vision of the future. NARP is committed to carrying that vision to other parts of the country and building a coalition of Millennials to demand the world class rail system Americans deserve."

"We are so grateful to have the support of these Texas Universities. As a parent of a college freshman, I understand that this system has to work for Texans now and for generations to come. We appreciate the significant input of these college students and all other stakeholders as TCR continues its work to make this transformational project a reality," said Robert Eckels, TCR President.

Read the students' resolutions at <http://ow.ly/FnP1S> or find them on the NARP website!

High-Speed Spurs Transit Growth in Lone Star State

Part of the rationale for Millennial support of TCR is that, by providing a convenient alternative to automotive travel, the project will boost demand for mass transit use, creating incentives to provide additional transit service. This argument has been borne out by the Dallas City Council's November 10th decision to move forward with an ambitious Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) plan to expand connections around TCR stations.

The \$983.4 million expansion will push a three-prong approach: expanding rail lines, streetcar routes and downtown train capacity. DART aims to complete the project by 2021, the year that TCR is scheduled to begin running between Dallas and Houston. DART will coordinate with the high speed railroad to ensure that passengers have a smooth transition from intercity to intraurban rail systems.

DART officials provided council members a financing plan for the expansion. Though it cites several funding sources, the plan relies on \$400 million in federal funds for "core capacity" projects. This proves that while TCR may be privately-led, there is still a need for public investment if the train is to succeed.



NARPnews

© National Association of Railroad Passengers
 505 Capitol Court, NE, Suite 300
 Washington, DC 20002-7706
 202-408-8362 / 202-408-8287 (fax)
www.narprail.org
narp@narprail.org

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This issue has news through November 6, 2014.
 Vol. 48, No.11 was mailed November 26, 2014.

With Four Alternatives on the Table, Officials Mull Benefits & Costs for Northeast Corridor

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) continued its public outreach tour to solicit feedback as it finalizes an alternatives analysis and service development plan for the Northeast Corridor by 2016.

Part of the NEC FUTURE initiative, the FRA is traveling up and down the East Coast this fall to present four preliminary alternatives for passenger rail investment on the 457-mile corridor that stretches between Washington, D.C. and Boston, Massachusetts.

NARP members and staff were able to participate at a number of locations, acting as voice of the riding public. There have been questions among regular users of the NEC about what this means for future service, particularly along the New Haven-Providence shoreline route, where two alternatives propose a second

spine (see map insert). However, FRA engineering consultants are quick to point out that, in all alternatives, communities currently served in Connecticut and Rhode Island (including Bridgeport and New Haven) will see improved service and additional train frequencies.

The following is a brief overview of the alternatives described. A detailed analysis can be found at NECFuture.com.

Program Level A: The bare minimum of improvements for the NEC, this alternative would provide only a modest expansion of intercity rail service. Increases the carrying capacity of trains by adding seats; fills passenger train slots that are currently unfilled due to equipment shortages; expands the number of stations served, and builds new Hudson River rail tunnels. The minimum needed

to meet projected regional travel demand, but does not grow rail's share of the travel market, and provides no spare capacity beyond 2040.

Program Level B: All improvements described in Program Level A, and expands the entire NEC to four tracks, adding as many as six tracks in the busiest sections of New Jersey and Connecticut; expand the right-of-way to bypass chokepoints at key locations (Wilmington DE, Trenton NJ and New Rochelle NY); and expand Washington Union Station, New York Penn Station, and Boston South Station. Doubles the number of intercity trains with modest improvement in travel times, enabling rail to capture a larger share of the travel market. Most that can be done within the current NEC right-of-way.

Program Level C: Includes all the improvements in Program Level A and B, and adds a second spine at key points along the corridor to expand into new markets and improve travel time. Includes new downtown stations in Baltimore and Philadelphia; a new 60-mile supplemental two-track route between Old Saybrook and Kenyon, addressing capacity constraints over five movable bridges along the existing New Haven-Providence shoreline route; additional track and right-of-way between New Haven and New Rochelle; two additional tracks under the East River in New York; and additional regional trains into New York Penn from surrounding suburbs.

Program Level D: Adds a second spine and improvements included in Program Level B, transforming the role passenger rail plays in the region. Trains would reach speeds allowing travel times between D.C. – NYC and NYC – Boston in under 100 minutes. Nine intercity trains per hour in each direction paired with dramatic increase in regional rail ridership.



Amtrak Ridership & Revenue Up, But Investment Lags

Amtrak revealed that it had another record-breaking year in FY 2014, setting a new ridership record as Americans continue to flock to trains. The railroad also brought in a record \$3.2 billion in revenue, with the company's cost recovery for operations rising to 93 percent.

NARP applauded the fact that, despite acute ridership declines on individual routes stemming from freight interference, Amtrak carried a best-ever 30.9 million riders (up 0.2 percent over the previous year). Ridership on the Northeast Corridor rose to 11.6 million (up 3.3 percent), and eight other routes also experienced record-setting years for ridership—the *Adirondack*, *Auto Train*, *Albany-Niagara Falls-Toronto*, *Blue Water*, *Capitol Limited*, *Empire Service*, *Piedmont*, and *Washington-Lynchburg*.

However, the broader takeaway was one of insufficient infrastructure investment. Poor National Network On-Time Performance (OTP), caused by too many freight trains on too few railroad lines, has led to severe congestion on the national train system. As result, we've seen a 0.6 percent ridership decline on state-supported routes, and a precipitous 4.5 percent drop on the long-distance lines.

The Surface Transportation Board (STB) has taken notice, and Chairman Dan Elliott wrote a public letter to host railroad Norfolk Southern (NS) asking for an explanation of severe delays and requesting the company to detail planned solutions. Despite cautionary statements by NS that improvements will take time, the travelling public saw improvements

in OTP within days of the STB's letter, indicating that there are immediate operational steps that can be taken.

NARP President Jim Mathews wrote a letter thanking Chairman Elliott for these efforts.

"Many irreplaceable personal moments have been disrupted by these delays, with weddings and funerals missed and rare home visits by deployed service members cut short or even cancelled altogether," wrote Mathews. "Each of these hundreds of stories add up to more than mere temporary inconvenience. And coming at a time of record ridership, these chronic delays on freight railroads nationwide may well permanently discourage new and first-time riders from exercising their choice to travel by rail, a choice more Americans each year say that they want."

Indiana Fumbles Handoff of Hoosier State Operations

In a startling move, the state of Indiana announced in November that it would terminate contract negotiations with Corridor Capital to take over operation of the *Hoosier State* service. The handoff was scheduled for January 31, and leaves the Indiana Department of Transportation with a short window to reach an agreement with Amtrak—or another rail operator—to continue the Indianapolis – Chicago train.

A public statement issued by Corridor Capital indicated that the company found out about the state's decision through the press. Corridor called the decision "a mystery," stressing that it has "complied with all applicable state and federal regulations, has met all the terms and specifications set forth by INDOT in its bid document and its award, and has met all state and federal deadlines governing the service startup."

However, the Lafayette Journal & Courier revealed that a former executive at Corridor Capital believes that

the company was neither prepared nor able to follow through on the bid they submitted to take over the *Hoosier*. Mark Singer, who served as Corridor's vice president of strategic planning, told the paper that the company "lacked financing, experience and didn't have rail cars ready to go." Singer also alleged that Corridor was essentially using the state's fund as a startup fund, and that INDOT ignored warning signals.

Transportation advocates have responded to the news by encouraging INDOT to work more closely with the riding public to craft a solution that provides reliable and frequent service to Hoosiers.

"We know two things: time is running short and the people of Indiana depend on this train. It is essential that we get it right this time," said Steve Coxhead, a NARP Representative for Indiana and President of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance. "Whether it's Amtrak or some other operator, we are looking for more transparency in INDOT's work to keep this train running."

Elections (from Page 1)

...of incoming lawmakers who will be formulating positions on transportation in the coming months. If we want to get new equipment, more frequencies, and critical capital funds, they need to hear from us right away!

That's especially true at the state and local level, where Amtrak serves Red and Blue towns equally. When you're on the frontlines of making sure people can commute to work, travel for business, and take a trip to see family, you can't help but be aware of a simple truth: Americans want more and better trains.

Read our full passenger rail election debrief here: <http://ow.ly/Fmmb> or on the NARP website.

Supreme Court (from Page 1)

...until early 2015. In the meantime, NARP is working to educate members of Congress on this issue. Check out NARPrail.org for news on how the oral arguments went.

Please Volunteer!

Whether you're looking to build your resume, add to your creative portfolio, develop new expertise for a career change, or just looking to make a difference, NARP now has dozens of immediate volunteer openings available nationwide. These are meaningful, ongoing roles which you can use to jump-start your professional life or to contribute your proven talents in a hands-on way to our work for more and better trains. We need administrative, communications, advocacy/programs and technology volunteers. You'll make a difference while generating work products, references and networking opportunities. Read more on each role on the Volunteer menu of the www.narprail.org website. If you think you're up to the challenge, apply by sending your resume and a cover letter by email to volunteer@narprail.org.

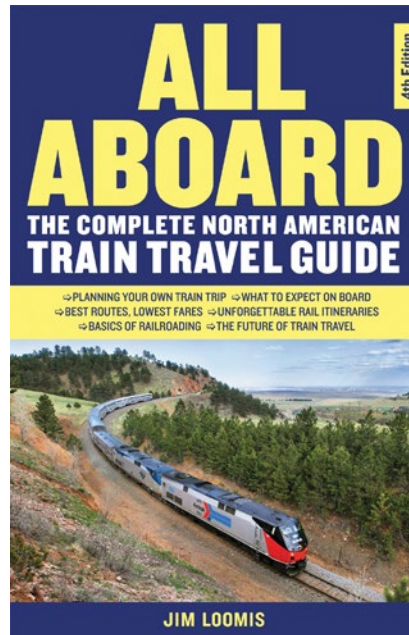
YOU, PLUS ONE

If you're reading this, you already know how hard NARP works every day to amplify your voice supporting intercity rail and commuter options Americans want. In the wake of the midterm elections and tremendous change in the transportation landscape, now more than ever, we need every American rail passenger to stand up and be counted. And we're counting on YOU to help us find every one of them! During the holidays, we're challenging each of our members to recruit just one more person to join them in supporting NARP. It's easy: simply ask your brother, sister, son, daughter, cousin, friend or neighbor to go to the top of our www.narprail.org website and click the red Join Now button, today. You, plus one, can make twice the impact!

FOLLOW US FOR THE LATEST:



Exclusive Gift Offer for NARP Members



"Crammed with excellent ideas for booking, preparing for and enjoying your next rail journey." --Railfan & Railroad

Looking for the perfect holiday gift?

Donate \$60 or more to NARP and we'll send you a gift copy of All Aboard: the Complete North American Train Travel Guide (4th Edition) by Jim Loomis.

This book is more than the ordinary travel guide; it's the ultimate guide to American train travel and its unique history and culture. Written both for veteran train travelers and those considering their first rail journey, All Aboard tells readers everything they need to know for smooth and enjoyable train travel throughout the U.S. and Canada.

The book won't hit the shelves until mid-January, but through this exclusive NARP offer, you can get your copy ahead of time!

Go to tinyurl.com/HolidayGiftOffer or the NARP website and make a donation of \$60 or more.

Thank you for supporting NARP!

Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation (Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685). 1. Publication title: National Association of Railroad Passenger News; 2. Publication Number 0739-3490; 3. Filing date: 11-11-14; 4. Issue frequency: Monthly; 5. No. of issues published annually: 11; 6. Annual subscription price: \$35; 7. Complete mailing address of known alliance of publication: 550 Capitol Court Suite 300, Washington, DC 20002-7706; 8. Complete mailing address of headquarters or General Business Office: Same address; 9. Full names and complete mailing addresses of publisher, editor, and managing editor: Jim Mathews, 505 Capitol Court NE Suite 300 Washington, DC 20002-7706; 10. Owner: National Association of Railroad Passengers, 505 Capitol Court NE Suite 300, Washington, DC 20002-7706; 11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None; 12. Tax Status: Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months; 13. National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) News 14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: October 2014. 15. Extent and nature of circulation:

A. Total Number of Copies		Average No. Copies During Preceding 12 Mo.s	No. Copies of Single issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
B. Paid Circulation			
a.	Total Number of Copies	10519	8881
b.	Paid Circulation		
i.	Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions State on PS Form 3541	8243	7870
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c.	Total Paid Distribution	9239	8868
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iv.	Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail	1280	1500
e.	Free or Nominal Rate Distribution	10519	10368
f.	Total Distribution	0	0
g.	Copies not Distributed	0	0
h.	Total	10519	10368
i.	Percent Paid	88%	86%
16. Electronic Copy Circulation			
A.	Paid Electronic Copies	6696	7312
B.	Total Paid Print Copies + Paid Electronic Copies	15935	16180
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D.	Percent Paid	93%	92%

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Jim Mathews, NARP President and CEO

NARP Tests Bike Racks on the Capitol Limited

In late November, NARP's Abe Zumwalt and Jenna Jablonski were invited to bring their bikes on board the Capitol Limited to test the latest incarnation of an Amtrak long distance bicycle car. This long anticipated development would theoretically bring non-folding bicycles to stations with no checked baggage service, and fewer passengers would be subject to the cumbersome task of boxing their bikes.

The prototype sampled this time differed greatly from what NARP's Malcolm Kenton tested last year. Nestled in the baggage section of a Superliner coach/baggage car, the new design can accommodate just about any kind of bicycle-- including space for recumbents and tricycles. This versatility comes with a price of restricted capacity: equipped with a car such as the one toured, the Capitol Limited would carry nine bicycles. This compares to the 10 bicycles that are carried aboard Amtrak's Cascades service in the Pacific Northwest, and isn't terribly far behind Amtrak California's capacity of six per coach. However, it is also worthwhile to note that the latter's service has become somewhat of a victim of its own success, with bicyclists being turned away at various station stops, the trains often running at capacity.



Aboard the Capitol Limited, such a capacity constraint would rarely be so visible with a proposed bicycle reservation system being implemented, but that's not at all to say that it wouldn't exist. The Cap carried well over 225,000 passengers in 2013. With daily service between an impressive number of interregional trails, it is not hard at all to conceive that the mere 3,000 trips by cyclists required to fill the car all year is very attainable.

AMERICA'S PASSENGERS THANK YOU

As 2014 comes to a close, NARP would like to thank its members for volunteering their time, money, and talent.

Whether you expressed your support through a contribution of a vehicle, a donation of stock, an estate gift, monthly donation, or a yearly membership purchase it provided NARP the resources to advocate for improved passenger services around the country. We will stay committed to the mission and look to accomplish even more in 2015.

From all of us at the DC NARP office Merry Christmas and have a happy New Year!

NARP TRAVELER'S ADVISORY

- The Parlour Car on Coast Starlight Trains 11 and 14 will be removed for maintenance from January 12 through March 12, 2015. The Dining Car and Sightseer Lounge Car will continue to be available.

- Both east and westbound *Capitol Limited* and *Lake Shore Limited* passengers should expect delays of varying length due to heavy freight congestion.

Delayed? Don't forget to tell us about it, and we'll make sure your story is heard by the people who matter. Go to the NARP website or visit <http://tinyurl.com/FixtCongress> to use our Fixt! online tool!