

President Wants \$2.5 Billion for Passenger Trains in Fiscal 2013

The Obama Administration has reaffirmed its commitment to a new approach to transportation policy. The President’s fiscal 2013 budget request again is strong on trains.

Answering a question about intercity and high speed rail March 12 at the American Public Transportation Association’s Legislative Conference, Secretary LaHood said, “It’s the Presi-

dent’s vision, but the people get it...It’s not just the President and me. The people want it. Whenever you do something big, some people will be against it. This is not for Ray LaHood but for my grandchildren...I spent a week in California to make sure there is support for high speed rail. There is.”

As a year ago, this request combines Amtrak grants and the High-Speed and

Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) program. There are two accounts: network development (\$1 billion, primarily grants to states and Amtrak for capital projects) and system preservation and renewal (\$1.55 billion, for Amtrak operations and to restore equipment and enhance stations, facilities, and technology).

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Senate Surface Transportation Bill Set to Move; House Plan Unclear

The current federal highway/transit reauthorization expires March 31. The controversial H.R. 7 (Feb. *News* lead story) was pulled for lack of votes. What the House will do next is unclear. Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) has said that the House might take up the bipartisan Senate bill.

Another short-term extension also is possible.

Meanwhile, the Senate is advancing “MAP-21” (S. 1813, “Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century”). It maintains dedicated transit funding and boosts authorized levels for Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER), a popular grant program that crosses modal boundaries and has benefitted many train projects.

MAP-21 has language from an earlier bill, the National Rail System Preservation, Expansion and Development Act of 2012 (NRSPEDA), that would make positive changes to the legal framework for federal passenger train programs. These include:

- Letting Amtrak apply for and receive

Federal Railroad Administration grants for any type of service;

- A new grant program at 100% federal cost for Amtrak & states to improve or preserve routes longer than 750 miles.
- Letting Amtrak use its own revenues to provide the required 20% match for

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110-mph Top Speed Reached in Michigan

Thanks to an overhaul of the signal system governing the Amtrak-owned line between Porter, IN and Kalamazoo, MI, Amtrak trains were cleared to operate at a top speed of 110 mph—up from 95—over portions of the line beginning Feb. 16.

This will take 10 minutes off schedules of the Chicago-Detroit-Pontiac *Wolverines* and Chicago-Lansing-Port Huron *Blue Water*, effective with the spring timetable. This is a 20-minute savings compared to the 2001 timetable, when the top speed was 79 mph.

This marks the first clearance for op-



-Michigan DOT Photography Unit

A special train carrying dignitaries and officials from Chicago to Kalamazoo blasts through a grade crossing in Gallen, MI, (between New Buffalo and Niles) on Feb. 16. New signs indicate the faster speeds now permitted on this Amtrak-owned segment.

eration above 95 mph granted by the Federal Railroad Administration for any route outside Boston-Washington, Philadelphia-Harrisburg, and Poughkeepsie-Albany. (Other routes had higher speeds in pre-Amtrak days.)

Federal, state and local leaders

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CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

We Mean "National" by ROBERT J. STEWART

What's in a name? The word "National" in ours is important. We do not represent just one part of the country.

As a matter of fact, only four NARP Board members (out of 15) come from our Northeast and Mid-Atlantic divisions. 75% of our over 100 council members live and work on train issues outside the Northeast. I have lived in Fort Myers, Florida, now for 10 years and all we have is a connecting bus to Tampa and Orlando. But let's not forget that the Northeast Corridor is a very important part of our national system.

As an example, NARP continues to

Obama FY2013 Budget

For intercity passenger trains, the White House proposes \$2.5 billion in fiscal 2013 and \$47 billion over six years. At the same time, the President proposed \$50 billion in "Immediate Transportation Investments" for this year (2012), including—for intercity passenger trains—\$4 billion for network development and \$2 billion for system preservation.

The Network Development fund "provides grants to plan and develop the infrastructure, stations, equipment, and capacity necessary for a U.S. high-

fight hard for the reinstatement of the *Sunset Limited* east of New Orleans. We have had great grassroots efforts (see page 5) and wrote a rebuttal to Amtrak's terrible report to Congress on restoring the train, which really stated why they felt it should *not* be done.

We believe our position on the national system is in alignment with local organizations and we will vigorously oppose any reductions in the services currently provided on all national network routes.

We strongly support implementation
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speed rail system with a goal to offer fast and convenient passenger rail access to 80 percent of Americans within 25 years," according to DOT. The System Preservation account funds "Amtrak's National network operating, capital and debt service requirements, and ... competitive grant programs to ensure passenger rail assets are maintained safely and reliably in the future."

A chart "crosswalking" the fiscal 2013 proposal from existing Amtrak and HSIPR accounts is at 1.usa.gov/fy-13dot (computer page 69). DOT's *Bud-*

NARP News

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This has news through March 13.
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get Highlights is at 1.usa.gov/dot13bgt (intercity passenger rail is at page 32).

The 2013 transit request is for a slight increase above this year's actual level. There are two new programs: Bus and Rail State of Good Repair (\$31.6 billion over six years); Transit Expansion & Livable Communities (\$21 billion over 6 years). These are in addition to the existing Transit Formula Program, at \$4.76 billion for 2013.

The budget says transportation will be "paid for" from the trust funds plus money that previously paid for Iraq and Afghanistan.

Critics say advocates for many other programs want "peace dividend" funds. Secretary LaHood responds that the President wants to spend it on transportation. Also, the transportation return on investment is big enough to justify borrowing. ■

Exhaustive fiscal 2013 budget details for US DOT are at 1.usa.gov/fy13be. Amtrak is on computer pp. 1014-1018; grants to states—pp. 1019-1021.

<i>Appropriations (including obligation limitations, for highway & transit) in millions of dollars</i>	2010 Enacted	2011 Enacted	2012 Obama Request	2012 Enacted	2013 Amtrak Request	2013 Obama Request
Operations	563	562		466	450	
General Capital incl. Fleet	594	658		617	1,470	
ADA Compliance	144			50		
NEC Gateway Project				15	35	
Debt Service	264	264		271	212	
Capital & Debt Service Total	1,002	922		952	1,717	
AMTRAK SUBTOTAL	1,565	1,484		1,418	2,167	
Network Development			8,000 ¹			1,000
System Preservation			6,046 ¹			1,546
High-Speed & Intercity Rail	2,500	0		0		
PASSENGER RAIL TOTAL	4,066	1,413	14,046¹	1,418		2,546
Federal Highway	41,376	41,846	70,414	41,545		42,569
Federal Transit	12,143	10,284	22,351	10,603		10,836
Federal Aviation	15,992	15,932	18,657	15,902		15,172
National Infrastructure Bank			5,000	0		0

Notes: 1) Includes supplemental FY 2012 funds contained in the FY 2013 request (\$4 billion for Network Dev., \$2 billion for System Pres.)

federal grants (currently, one or more states must fund the match).

- FRA is directed to achieve a balance between growing the system and maintaining/improving existing service.
- A new program of 100% federal grants to states to help defray the cost of fully supporting short-distance trains' operation in compliance with Section 209 of PRIIA. (Section 209 will increase what many states must pay Amtrak to keep their trains running.)
- Stronger requirements for national and regional rail plans

• Streamlining of Northeast Corridor planning

Senate leaders reached agreement on 22 amendments to will vote on March 6 on a motion to begin streamlined debate on MAP-21.

Back to the House: H.R. 7, the six-year reauthorization bill, did not make it to the floor. The bill was caught between Tea Party opposition to its pricetag and overwhelming Democratic opposition to the lower spending levels and the energy policy changes proposed for funding.

Also, the transit industry worked hard to kill the bill because it removed transit from the Highway Trust Fund.

Reportedly, the preliminary vote count was the worst for this Congress, with all Democrats and many conservative Republicans opposed.

H.R. 7 would not have reauthorized passenger train development grants to states and had other troubling, Amtrak-related provisions. ■

A good summary of MAP-21 is at www.bit.ly/map21. Full text and status of all legislation: thomas.loc.gov.

We Mean 'National'

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of the performance improvement programs that Amtrak has developed for national network routes.

We strongly support the purchase of new cars that will increase capacity on trains all across the nation and begin replacing equipment as it reaches the end of its useful life. Increased capacity does not have to be approved by the freight railroads. It also provides needed additional revenue.

We believe that increased frequencies on most (if not all) existing national

network routes will make trains a more heavily used and economically efficient mobility choice.

As one of our board members recently said: Long distance trains are the glue that holds the national system together and feed lots of passengers to corridor trains.

We know that our members are out there every day working for better trains all across our great nation. We are united in developing a truly national network of passenger trains. ■

CORRECTION: PTC ON TIH LINES

H.R. 7, the House surface reauthorization, would not require positive train control on a non-passenger-carrying line with toxic-by-inhalation (TIH) traffic. But a railroad would need to show achievement of equivalent safety by other means. Opinions vary on whether equivalency is possible, but we erred by failing to report the equivalency requirement (Feb. *News*).

Amtrak Shops Rebuilt 334 Cars, 22 Locomotives, in 2011

With help from American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grants, Amtrak rebuilt 334 railcars in 2011, as reported in the January *Railway Age*.

Here is the breakdown:

Amfleet: 168 cars, 23 of which were ARRA-funded

Superliner: 103, 10 ARRA

Horizon: 27, zero ARRA

Viewliner: 13 (including the only Viewliner diner, the only ARRA-funded one)

Surfliner: 11, zero ARRA.

Heritage baggage cars: 12, zero ARRA.

Superliner, Viewliner, and Horizon rebuilds took place at the company's Beech Grove, IN shops. Amfleet coaches and cafe cars were rebuilt in Bear, DE. The ARRA-funded cars display the TIGER (Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery) plate though technically not funded by

that program. Amtrak also rebuilt 22 locomotives—four diesels (all ARRA) and 18 electrics (zero ARRA). It also rebuilt one non-powered control unit.

New cars: In 2011, 235 regional or intercity railcars were delivered to U.S. and Canadian carriers, plus 113 rapid transit vehicles and 149 streetcars and light-rail vehicles.

Outside of Amtrak, the largest numbers of new and rebuilt cars went to the Southeast Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (60 Silverliner V cars from Hyundai-Rotem for Regional Rail service out of Philadelphia), the Toronto Transit Commission (69 new subway cars from Bombardier), southern California's Metrolink (47 bilevel commuter coaches from Hyundai-Rotem), the Chicago Transit Authority

(44 new subway cars from Bombardier) and New York's Metro-North Railroad (40 M-8 electric multiple-unit cars for the New Haven Line from Kawasaki).

The Utah Transit Authority took delivery of 34 new light-rail vehicles from Siemens and 2 bilevel commuter coaches from Bombardier for Front-Runner service. Its system is rapidly expanding. ■



The TIGER rehabilitation insignia, seen on a Viewliner sleeper on the southbound *Silver Meteor* Feb. 8.

- Ross Capon

Recovery Act-Funded BNSF Work in Iowa to Boost *Zephyr* Reliability

Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF) has begun installing the first of four, powered, double crossovers between Creston and Ottumwa, IA. These will replace hand-thrown, single crossovers. All crossovers should be

installed by late May or June.

Then, Amtrak's Chicago-Denver-Bay Area *California Zephyr* will be able to weave around slower coal trains, so *Zephyr* performance will improve along with the line's overall efficiency.

Today, crossover moves at these locations require an employee on the ground to throw manual switches, and some rarely used track changes require back-up moves. The new switches will be controlled by dispatchers in Fort Worth and will enable forward moves in all directions at track speed.

The new crossovers will be at Afton, Osceola, Chillicothe and Beckworth. This will alleviate a significant bottleneck on the Chicago-Omaha-Denver line. ■

Talgo Finishes Work on Wisconsin Trains

Workers at Spanish train-maker Talgo's plant in Milwaukee are proceeding on schedule with construction of two new trainsets for the state-supported Chicago-Milwaukee *Hiawatha* corridor. Each 14-car train will have a seating capacity of 397. They will enter service later this year, pulled by existing Amtrak locomotives.

Wisconsin entered into a purchasing agreement with Talgo. Oregon piggy-backed on that order, and is separately ordering two trainsets to augment the existing Talgo fleet in service between Eugene, Portland, Seattle and Vancouver, BC. Wisconsin's order includes a Bistro car in each trainset.

The Talgo cars are 43 feet long, shorter than the average Amtrak car, and nine feet wide, and are fully wheelchair-accessible. They feature automatic doors, fully accessible toilets, an under-floor

air conditioning system, ergonomic reclining seats, individual reading lights, at-seat power outlets and customizable audio channels, and WiFi. They are made of aluminum alloys, reducing the weight per axle and the train's energy consumption.

Each trainset has a new Talgo-made cab car to allow for push-pull operation, also housing the train's electric power generator system, meaning one less locomotive is needed per train. They are designed to handle Wisconsin winters, and can operate within a temperature range of 120° to -40°F. ■



- BNSF Railway
Sample universal crossover, at CP Congo on BNSF east of Kansas City, used by Amtrak's *Southwest Chief*. Trains traveling in either direction can move from any track to any other without backing up.

Another \$2 Billion for HSIPR Projects

Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood announced Feb. 27 the awarding of \$2 billion in High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) grants. The Federal Railroad Administration received 90 applications for this money, seeking a total of \$10 billion.

The largest share, nearly \$800 million, will go to Amtrak for use on the Northeast Corridor. Part will be used to raise top Acela Express speeds to 160 mph over a segment of the Northeast Corridor from just south of Trenton to New Brunswick, NJ. Another part will greatly enhance Harold Interlocking in Queens, NY, untangling Amtrak from Long Island Rail Road traffic and improving reliability for both.

At a news conference Feb. 27 at New York's Penn Station, U.S. Sen. Chuck Schumer and Rep. Louise Slaughter (both D-NY) praised the Amtrak grants.

\$404 million goes to Midwestern states to pursue further track upgrades, including extending 110-mph top speeds on the Chicago-Detroit-Pontiac corridor.

Nearly \$340 million will be used to buy state-of-the-art locomotives and rail cars for corridor services in the Midwest and California. \$300 million goes to the California high-speed rail project to build the initial Central Valley segment.

This is money that was originally awarded to Florida for high-speed rail between Tampa and Orlando. ■

REGISTER NOW FOR NARP SPRING COUNCIL MEETING

NARP's Council of Representatives meets **Mon., Apr. 23 and Wed., Apr. 25.**

Confirmed speakers: Federal Railroad Administration Exec. Dir. Stacy Cummings; Amtrak VP—Gov. Affairs & Corporate Communications Joseph McHugh, Chief—Sales Distribution & Customer Service Matthew Hardison and Chief Mechanical Officer Mario Bergeron; and Transportation for America Director James Corless (www.t4america.org)

Day on the Hill (**Tues., Apr. 24**) is your chance to meet legislators and their staffs. Attendance is free. Our Capitol Hill Reception is 5:30-7:30 at Room 1300, Longworth House Office Building. Reception-only cost: \$40.

Full meeting registration: \$225 through April 9, then \$245. Register for meeting, Hill Day, and/or the Reception at www.narprail.org/meeting or call 202-408-8362.

Prince, WV, Depot to be Saved, Restored

The West Virginia General Assembly passed legislation creating a commission tasked with acquiring, rehabilitating and maintaining the Prince Amtrak station. A tiny community nestled in the heart of the New River Gorge about 12 miles from Beckley. Amtrak's New York-Chicago *Cardinal* serves Prince in both directions on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

The passage, on unanimous votes in both chambers, is a big victory for the grassroots organization Friends of the *Cardinal*. Its chairman, NARP Council member J. Charles (Chuck) Riecks,



- J. Charles Riecks

The Prince depot in 2011.

and longtime NARP member David Gay worked hard over five years for it.

The art-deco depot, built in 1953 by the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Railroad, is unique. Declining ridership forced C&O to scrap plans for others. Owned by CSX, it has an Amtrak ticket agent and checked baggage service.

The depot shows signs of wear, though its framework is sound. This summer's opening of the Bechtel National Boy Scout Reserve, 10 miles away, is expected to nearly double Prince's ridership.

The Prince Rail Depot Authority will have nine members appointed by the Fayette and Raleigh County Commissions. The bill's passage got good media coverage, including in *USA Today*. Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin (D) is expected to hold a bill signing ceremony soon. ■



- Melina Vastola/Tallahassee Democrat

NARP Chairman Bob Stewart was among the speakers at well-attended Feb. 27 news conference in the former Amtrak station in Tallahassee.

Floridians Organize to Restore Gulf Coast Train

Thanks to the leadership of the Tallahassee City Commission and local advocates, over 15 local governments in Florida's panhandle passed resolutions urging restoration of New Orleans-Florida Amtrak service, "suspended" since 2005.

Tallahassee resident Bart Bibler—an environmental engineer working for the State Health Department—used to ride the *Sunset Limited* regularly to New Orleans. He contacted Tallahassee City Commissioner Nancy Miller and got her interested in restoring the train. They persuaded Mayor John Marks (D) to assign two of his staff to help out.

NARP Chair Bob Stewart, a Floridian, spoke at a Feb. 27 news conference in Tallahassee's former Amtrak station, calling on citizens to press federal and state elected officials to pursue and fund the return of service. Other speakers: County Commissioner Akin Akinyemi, City Commissioner Nancy Miller, Madison Mayor Jim Catron, Tallahassee Women's Club President Donna Peacock; and Mayor Marks.

The mayor said, "Reestablishing Amtrak passenger service...will strengthen our local economies and offer new opportunities for our citizens" (www.bit.ly/gulfres). City Commissioner Nancy Miller added, "As gasoline prices reach \$4 a gallon, North Florida residents are seeking alternative modes of transportation."

Many local citizens attended the gathering, along with representatives of Sen. Bill Nelson (D-FL) and Rep. Steve Southerland (R-FL).

Bibler is continuing his campaign to get the train restored. ■

CONSIDER ATTENDING A NARP MEMBERSHIP MEETING

These meetings are a good chance to hear informative speakers and meet fellow NARP members. More info on upcoming events of interest is at www.narprail.org/calendar

Sat., Mar. 24, 10:00-4:30, Philadelphia: Joint meeting with Delaware Valley Assoc. of Rail Passengers in Room 320 at Temple University's Center City Campus, 1515 Market St. (convenient to SEPTA's Suburban Station). Details & registration info from DVARP's Andy Sharpe (215-RAILWAY, sharpe@dvarp.org)

Sat., Mar. 31, 11:30-3:15, New London, CT: New London Plaza Hotel, 35 Governor Winthrop Blvd (five blocks from Amtrak station).

Registration required: Download & print form at www.bit.ly/nlcreg & follow instructions, or mail a check payable to Steven H. Musen/P.O. Box 8645/Warwick, RI 02888-8645.

Cost: \$36 per person postmarked by Mar. 24; \$40 afterward until Mar. 28 postmark deadline. **Speakers:** John Bernick, Connecticut Dept. of Transportation, a Massachusetts DOT representative, NARP Chairman Bob Stewart.

SYMPOSIUM IN KANSAS CITY

Fri., Apr. 6, 11:00-3:00: Northern Flyer Alliance Symposium at Union Station, 30 W. Pershing Rd., Kansas City, MO. Free, but limited seating. **Request an invite** from NFA President Deborah Fischer-Stout (northernflyeralliance@gmail.com or 913-523-5371). **Speakers:** FRA Admin. Szabo, KS & IA state legislators, KS DOT planner Dennis Slimmer, Amtrak's Derrick James, NARP's Capon, Midwest HSR Association's Rick Harnish.

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

110 mph in Michigan, Indiana

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boarded a special round-trip train between Chicago and Kalamazoo on Feb. 15, hosted by Amtrak and the Michigan Dept. of Transportation (MDOT), to celebrate the occasion. Also aboard

was Midwest High-Speed Rail Association President and NARP Board member Rick Harnish.

Amtrak Board Chairman Tom Carper, Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph Szabo and MDOT Director Kirk Steudle all expressed confidence that this is only the beginning for bringing higher-speed service to the Chicago hub network of corridor trains.

By the end of this year, 110-mph operations should be cleared over Union Pacific, which owns most of the Chicago-St. Louis route, thanks to work funded by the State of Illinois with assistance from Recovery Act grants. Michigan's impending purchase of the line between Kalamazoo and Detroit from Norfolk Southern makes possible further speed boosts for *Wolverine* trains.

The Michigan speed increase was

made possible by the installation of an Incremental Train Control System developed by General Electric with assistance from Amtrak, MDOT and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA).

Amtrak Chairman Carper said, "By operating at higher speeds, our passengers can reach their destinations sooner, our trains and our crews can be more productive by covering more ground in less time and we are showing how incremental improvements to Amtrak service can be achieved with new technology."

"This sets the stage for expansion of accelerated service from Kalamazoo to Dearborn by 2015, helping us meet the demands of the next generation of passengers," said Director Steudle.

"With projects coming to fruition this year and new ones breaking ground, 2012 promises to be the High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program's best year yet," added FRA's Szabo. ■



A radar gun indicates that a Wolverine train is doing the new top speed.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Check with Amtrak on temporary changes to service between New York, Richmond, the Carolinas and Florida between Feb. 26 and Mar. 29.

Superliners replace Talgo equipment on a pair of Amtrak Seattle-Vancouver, BC trains Mar. 16-May 24, due to equipment maintenance. Thus, the AM north and PM south trains will lack Business Class service these days.

NARP Chairman Speaks at NYT Travel Show

The *New York Times'* annual travel show was March 2-4 at New York City's Javits Convention Center.

Over 15,000 people attended. Exhibits from countries and companies from all over the world filled the exhibit hall.

Travel seminars were held Saturday & Sunday. NARP Chairman Bob Stewart spoke Sunday to an au-

dience of over 300 on train travel in the United States. Amtrak timetables and NARP brochures were gobbled up very quickly.

Stewart said everyone was very interested in American train travel. Many were unaware of the opportunities available for train travel in our country. ■