

RAILPASSENGERS



WEEKLY HOTLINE

Issue #1,377–December 13, 2024

Share your thoughts, feelings, and reactions to issues you may have had on a recent Amtrak trip. Thanks to your support and participation in previous surveys, we have been able to take the passenger's voice straight to Congress and Amtrak Executives. Help us keep hammering the message home by sharing this survey with other passengers!



Association News

Mark Your Calendars For March And April

by Jim Mathews, President & CEO

A lot of emails have come my way asking about dates for the Spring Council meeting in Washington, D.C., and my short answer is: probably sometime in late April, but we're still working on a venue.

That's because our multi-year contract with the Alexandria hotel property across the street from the King Street Metro is finished, and that's a good opening for us to look for ways to respond to some of the concerns many members have shared with us about everything from the location to the costs to participate.

Bottom line is that there will be a Spring Council Business Meeting, and if you're looking to block out dates, I'd block out the last week of April to attend because that's when Congress will return to Washington. However, I would not -- just yet -- make nonrefundable bookings, either for travel or places to stay.

But as all of you reading this know, we have a new House, a new Senate, and a new Administration coming to town next month. Our advocacy will take on new urgency, and our strategy for telling the story of passenger rail and how it can bring prosperity to every corner of our country is going to have to adjust.

That's why we've decided to dramatically expand the idea of Day on the Hill, hosting two weeks' worth of workshops for our members, donors, and supporters at our DC offices and conducting four separate rounds of visits with congressional delegations over that two-week span.

[\[Click Here To Continue Jim Blog + More Meeting Info\]](#)

RAILNATION: DC 2025

Regional Summits & Day on the Hill

March 24th - April 3rd, 2025

Rail Passengers Office & Conference Room

If you have any questions regarding the event, please email [Joe Aiello](#), Director of Community Engagement & Organizing

Kansas Delivers Update on Heartland Flyer Extension

The Kansas Department of Transportation reported that it will cost a minimum of \$311 million to extend Amtrak's *Heartland Flyer* service from Oklahoma City, OK to Newton, KS.

Currently, the train operates between Fort Worth, TX, and Oklahoma City, with five intermediate stops. In a public call held Wednesday, KDOT outlined a plan to extend the service north to Wichita with a new terminus in Newton, where passengers would be able to connect to the *Southwest Chief*.

"The full reconnection of this corridor, which was discontinued in 1979, will provide increased transportation choices and economic opportunity for rural and urban residents and businesses," said Martin Alvarez, KDOT's rail project coordinator.

[\[Continue Reading\]](#)

Field Notes

Thessaloniki, Greece, Opens New Metro System With Stations Adorned With Archaeological Finds

Hotline Exclusive

By Philip Mayer, Rail Passengers Volunteer

Thessaloniki, Greece, opened a new 9.6 mile, 13 station subway system on November 30, 2024. The city of 319,000 people, with a metropolitan area of just over one million people is the second-largest city in Greece, after Athens, and was one of the largest cities in Europe without a mass transit system.

The system, which is fully automated and driverless, cost an estimated 3 billion euros, or \$3.24 billion, including \$649 million in future interest payments. The system was highly anticipated and is expected to service 256,000 passengers daily while removing close to 60,000 cars from the congested roads of Thessaloniki per day. This transit system is estimated to reduce the area's CO2 emissions by 212 tons per day.

The system is expected to expand to five new stations by 2025, but it will likely not be until 2040 when the line reaches the city's Macedonia Airport.

First proposed in the 1910s, ground only broke on the transit system in 2006. While initially scheduled to open in 2012, the Greek financial crisis of the 2010s postponed its opening. Construction of the subway system also led to the continued excavation of historic archaeological artifacts. "Archaeologically, it has been an extremely complex and difficult endeavour," said the culture minister, Lina Mendoni, of the more than 300,000 finds made since construction began. "To get here required a battle on many fronts."

The excavation to construct the system yielded the discovery of over 3,000 archaeological artifacts from the ancient Greek, Roman, and Byzantine empires. This led to a requirement that the tunnels be constructed at a minimum of 20 meters below surface level. Construction was halted on several occasions while historians and archaeologists recovered new finds. After touring the Venizelou station, Greek prime minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, said: "I think that when the people of Thessaloniki have the chance, tomorrow, to see this station they will recognise the huge effort that has been put in so that the city could have antiquities and a metro." This new transit system will help rehabilitate the image that the central government has neglected the nation's northern region.

Among the artifacts recovered are two marble squares, an early Christian basilica, a Roman-era thoroughfare, water and drainage systems, and ancient Greek burial sites replete with jewellery and gold.

Representative artifacts are featured among the 13 stations on the new metro station, and more will be represented when new stations are added next year.

Please email [Joe Aiello](#) if you have any local, state or regional stories that you would like to share.

What's Your Story?

We want to hear from you

What does passenger rail mean to you and your community?

2025 is going to be a big year for passenger rail advocacy, and we want to know why it matters to you. If passenger rail helps you commute to work, see family, get services you need, or anything else, please tell us.



We're gearing up for a big year of advocacy in 2025, and we want your stories to help us connect to elected officials, government agencies, and local advocates on why passenger rail matters.

We want you to tell us what passenger rail means to you and your community. Whether it helps you commute to work, see family and friends, get services you need, or anything else, please tell us.

Tell Us Your Story!

Hotline Links

A curated selection of passenger rail and transportation stories from this week. Check out our social media feeds on [Twitter](#) & [Facebook](#) to read breaking news and join the conversation!

- [Amtrak's new Acela trains to enter service by spring 2025](#), The Points Guy

Is the wait finally over?

- [Legal holdup to Gulf Coast train service? It's not Mobile](#), Fox 10

It's all about crossing the i's and dotting the t's

- [Utah Transit Authority marks 25 years of light-rail service](#), Progressive Railroading

Happy Anniversary to our friends at the UTA!

- [Johnson County board set to advance battery-powered commuter trains along CRANDIC line](#), CBS 2 Iowa

As an alternative to an expanded BRT route (which would tear up & pave over the current tracks), the Johnson County (Iowa) Board of Supervisors looks to support Pennsylvania based Pop-Up Metro to run a battery-powered regional commuter rail line.

- [Metro GM proposes extending weekend hours in new budget](#), DC News Now

Could late night DC Metro rides be a thing in the new year? WMATA General Manager and CEO Randy Clarke certainly hopes so.

- [ADOT forms panel to guide study of potential Phoenix-Tucson rail line](#), Progressive Railroading

The Phoenix to Tucson corridor was a major topic of conversation by a number of presenters over the course of our two-day RailNation conference in Oct. We are pleased to see the conversations taking a serious note by state officials.

• **[Alstom to become contract operator for LA's Metrolink](#), Trains**

Alstom will replace Amtrak, who has been running the LA commuter rail line since 2010. The 5-year deal, beginning 1/1/25, has an option for a 3-year extension - with the overall contract potentially being worth over \$850 million.

• **[Caltrain to move HQ to Millbrae](#), Progressive Railroading**

Caltrain is moving 20 mins up the road (17 if you go by train), along with SamTrans to a new shared HQ

• **[MTA reveals final commemorative MetroCards in Instagram collaboration](#), Pix 11**

These are sure to be a collector's item for fans of the MTA



[WE ARE NOW ON BLUE SKY!](#)

If you aren't following Rail Passengers on social media, you should be! We are covering all the breaking news America's passengers need to stay informed on local, regional, and national issues.

Upcoming Events

Please contact Joe Aiello (jaiello@narprail.org) to have a local, state or regional meeting added to the Rail Passengers calendar (print and on-line) of upcoming events!

Staff Updates

Your staff is at the table, in the field, having the conversations that make a difference for passengers across the country. Learn what they're up to each week and how you can support your Association's key missions!

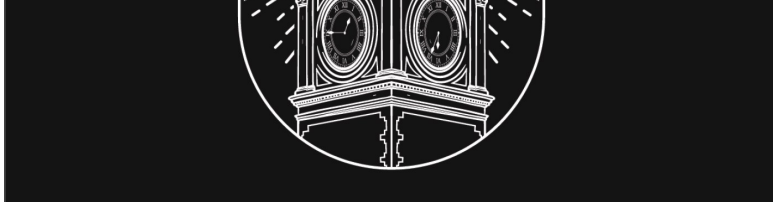
- **Jim Mathews, President & CEO**, worked with allies to complete support letters for Fed-State Partnership grant applications while also responding to requests for help and advice from congressional offices and business partners.
- **Sean Jeans Gail, Vice President of Policy**, spent the week preparing for the 119th Congress and our 2025 advocacy calendar, meeting with RPA staff and outside stakeholder groups to identify opportunities for collaboration.
- **Jonsie Stone, Chief of Staff**, worked on end of year solicitation messaging, processed membership dues and donations sent to the DC Office and tended to the operational and administrative needs of the Association.
- **Joe Aiello, Director of Community Engagement & Organizing**, worked on a number of internal and external communication projects this week as we head towards wrapping up 2024 and entering '25.



Rail Passengers Webinar Series

Miss out on our past events? You can watch them on our [YouTube channel](#) or through our website at railpassengers.org/webinars





Holiday Merch Drop!

OUR ICONIC STATEMENT

For years, the “I’d Rather Be On The Train” bumper sticker was a favorite among our members, with many requesting extras, so they could share with their family & friends. Over time, one of the most asked questions whenever we are in the field has been if we are ever going to bring that sticker back (one day!).

We are, **ONCE AGAIN**, dusting off this classic statement for our holiday merch drop - and this year, with a well known historic twist,

Just as with past holiday designs, this offering is limited, so get your orders in now!

****Do you own Association gear? Show us your selfies and let us know what products you want to see next! Contact [Joe Aiello](#) for merch information and questions about our products.****



Rail Passengers Timetables

Updated 12/02/2024

Thanks to a collaborative effort between Rail Passengers NYS Council Member Nathanael Nerode & [juckins.net](#)'s Chris Juckins, we have been able to completely update our timetables resource page.

[CLICK HERE](#)



Do more with your donations. If you have questions about employer match, gifting a membership, or other questions about how to make a bigger impact, let us know! Your staff is here to help with:

- Online Donations
- Donor Advised Funds
- Employer Match
- RPA Signature Visa Card
- Gift of Membership
- and More!

With multiple secure, protected methods of payment, you have more flexibility in the way dues are paid. Skip the hassle and [contact us](#) today for help setting up automatic or online payments.

- Setup ACH or E-Check with your bank of choice
- Use a Debit or Credit Card to pay online, or
- Send a check to 1200 G Street NW Suite 520 Washington, DC 20005

Other Ways to Make an Impact this Holiday Season

Did you know that individual donors make up more than two-thirds (67%) of charitable giving in the U.S., and that many of those donations are made in the last two months of the year? As you make your year-end giving plans, please consider a contribution to Rail Passengers Association using the methods below – making a meaningful difference for passenger rail in the U.S. while maximizing your tax advantages and fulfilling minimum retirement withdrawal requirements.

Donor Advised Fund (DAF)

Donor-advised funds are the fastest-growing charitable giving vehicle in the United States because they are one of the easiest and most tax-advantageous ways to give to charity. [Click here](#) to learn more and consult with your financial advisor to determine if establishing a Donor Advised Fund is right for you.

Required Minimum Distribution (RMD)

Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) are minimum amounts that IRA and retirement plan account owners generally must withdraw annually starting with the year they reach age 73. [Click here](#) to learn more about RMDs and consult with your financial advisor to determine if an RMD is right for you.

Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD)

A Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) is a direct transfer of assets from an IRA to a qualified charity. QCDs are a popular way for Americans 70 ½ years or older to donate to charity while also satisfying their RMDs. [Click here](#) to learn more about QCDs and consult with your financial advisor to determine if a QCD is right for you.

Member & Donor Notices

- **The Rail Passengers Association is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. Our federal tax identification number is 36-2615221**
- **To help facilitate dissemination of electronic thank you receipts,** please make sure your contact information, **specifically your email address,** is up-to-date in your Neon profile.
- **If you need assistance with your membership,** please call the Office at 202-408-8362.
- **While our staff continues to work remotely, we are unable to provide permanent membership cards.** You can print a temporary membership card by creating an account at www.railpassengers.org (select "My Account" on the homepage).
- **Complete all information!** -- Before sealing your envelope, PLEASE double-check the credit card information on the buck slip!
 - Print credit card information clearly.
 - **Include an expiration date, month and year, as well as the CVV number.**
 - Without **COMPLETE** information, your membership renewal or donation can't be processed.
- **If you have your financial institution send a check on your behalf,** without a buckslip, PLEASE instruct them to add:
 - a notation in the memo field if the payment is for membership dues or a donation, AND,
 - your Rail Passengers Association member ID. If we have multiple members with the same name, i.e., John Smith, it can be hard to identify the correct member to attribute the payment, without the member ID.



Rail Passengers Association members have access to a full service, nationwide federal credit

Charity ✨
Navigator



✨ **FOUR-STAR** ✨

union with extensive product and service offerings. Signature FCU is the exclusive provider of the [Rail Passengers Association-branded Visa credit card](#) with our logo, which supports our work by giving back to our organization, and gives you 1 point for every \$1 you spend to redeem for travel and merchandise. The card has no annual fee, no balance transfer fees, no foreign transaction fees, and has a very low interest rate.

Rail Passengers Association Earns Coveted 4-Star Rating from Charity Navigator

Rail Passengers Association's strong financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency have earned it a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator, America's largest independent charity evaluator. Our Charity Navigator profile can be found by clicking [here](#).

If you have questions, feedback, or submissions for next week's hotline, send us your thoughts! Help us spread the word about your local, regional, and national passenger rail wins.



THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS:



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