



PASSENGERS Voice

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CONGRESS DELAYS BUDGET ACTION

Having exhausted the legislative calendar passing the Republican tax bill, congressional leaders passed yet another short-term budget extension to head off a government shutdown ahead of the holiday break.

The Continuing Resolution will fund the government at approved Fiscal Year 2017 levels through January 19, 2018. This will delay the implementation of higher passenger rail funding levels secured by advocates in the House and Senate transportation bills. However, the short-term nature of this bill is arguably preferable to the longer CR that was under discussion, which could have frozen transportation funding levels anywhere from four months to the remainder of FY2018.

SENATORS SAY NO MORE DELAYS FOR PTC

Leaders on Capitol Hill also responded to the Amtrak derailment in Washington State, calling for immediate oversight and condemning the inaction of the federal government in the face of such a widely-acknowledged safety problem.

"The new deadline is now one year away, and if we do nothing else in this Congress, let us insist that that deadline be met without additional delay. Our failure to do so would be a moral failure," said Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) on the Senate floor Dec. 19. "The resources aren't preventing its installation. It is the will to do so, and determination. The failure of federal authorities to require and provide support for positive train control is a moral choice this nation has made."

Senator Blumenthal was joined by GOP leaders in demanding action.

"These trains both on the freight and the passenger side know that they've got only so many months now to comply," said Senator Chairman John Thune (R-S.D.), chairman of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee. "We expect that those deadlines are going to be met."

Chairman Thune also announced the Commerce Committee will hold a hearing when Congress reconvenes in 2018 to evaluate the progress railroads are making on implementing PTC.

Congress extended the PTC deadline in 2015 after railroads warned they would not be able to overcome the technical and financial burdens. (For RPA's take on this issue, see Jim Mathews editorial on Page 3.)

A TRIBUTE TO JIM AND ZACK

RAIL PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION LOSES TWO OF ITS BEST IN THE WRECK OF AMTRAK CASCADES TRAIN 501

By Carl Fowler - RPA Council Member for Vermont

The derailment of Amtrak Cascades Train 501 in Washington State on December 18 was incredibly tragic. Nearly a hundred were injured; and



Jim Hamre (left) and Zack Willhoite (right). Photo Credit: The Daily Herald

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“They were near if not best friends. They would participate together in a lot of the work we do to help bring better passenger trains to Washington. The train that they were riding on was an example of the work that they had been doing.”

Harvey Bowen, president of All Aboard Washington in regards to Jim Hamre and Zack Willhoite



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TRIBUTE, FROM P. 1

two of the three who died, Jim Hamre (61) and Zack Willhoite (35), were Rail Passenger Association giants and best friends. Later we can review how/why this accident occurred. For now, we mourn that they were taken from us and that we cannot easily replace them.

Jim came from a railroad family. His parents worked for the Milwaukee Road, as did Jim during school vacations. Professionally he was a Washington State Department of Transportation highway engineer/IT specialist, retiring in 2011 on an early buy-out to devote time to his many interests. As RPA President James Mathews said, "Jim combined personality and kindness, and paired it with an intricate and detailed knowledge of public transit policy. This made him an extremely powerful advocate and an inspiration for others." He wrote with great clarity; took eloquent photos; and had a true passion for family and friends, travel and trains. Through his travels he experienced rail worldwide. Visiting Switzerland, he embraced the model of what a truly integrated public transportation network could be. Jim was never just a "pavement" guy!

When we met in 1981, Jim already was an activist in what today is All Aboard Washington (AAW). He has been AAW Vice President continuously since 1988 and editor of its newsletter. Nationally, he was a devoted RPA member, serving for decades on the original NARP Board (which became the RPA Council) and he was on the new RPA Board of Directors at his death. He worked for over 35 years to expand intercity rail in the Pacific Northwest.

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AMTRAK TRAIN 501 DERAILS ON FIRST TRIP

On the morning of December 18, 2017, westbound Amtrak train 501 derailed at milepost 19.8 on the Lakewood subdivision from a bridge near Dupont, Washington. The Amtrak Cascades service train, consisting of 12 passenger cars and 2 locomotives, was on its first revenue service run on single main track from Tacoma when it derailed. Several passenger cars fell onto Interstate 5, hitting several vehicles. Tragically, there were three fatalities, all Amtrak passengers, along with dozens of injuries. Two of the deceased passengers were RPA members: Board Member Jim Hamre and member Zack Willhoite. (For our tribute to Jim and Zack, see Page 1.)



Amtrak Cascades Train 501 derailed on December 18, 2017.

(Photo Credit: The Seattle Times)

The National Transportation Safety Board dispatched

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investigators immediately, issuing the following facts:

- The authorized track speed in the area of the accident was 79-

mph on approach to the 30-mph curve just before the bridge. A speed board (sign) was located about 2-miles before the curve.

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MOVING FORWARD FROM AMTRAK DERAILMENT

By Harvey Bowen, Board President
- All Aboard Washington

Other writers in this issue have spoken about what has happened with the Amtrak Cascades Derailment and what we know about it. I am writing today about what I think Jim and Zack would want us to do in the wake of this tragedy.

The first steps, already in progress as I write this, are to support the people who have been injured and the families of all who have been impacted by this incident—including the passengers, crew, first responders, healthcare professionals, and roadway users. I think we all know what Jim and Zack

would want us to do next. They would be very disappointed if their deaths caused anyone to avoid or oppose passenger rail services, and they would want us to move forward with the work we shared with them. Jim and Zack both gave great gifts of their volunteer time to expand and support passenger rail. It would be a disservice to their legacy to do anything other than pursue our work to improve and expand passenger rail in the United States. This means to not only continue our missions but step up our efforts as much as we can to work through this tragedy and emerge from it stronger and better able to advance our goals of safer, more, and better passenger rail services.

Specifically to the Amtrak Cascades corridor, we need to work to support operations at the planned levels and continuation of services expansion along the Vancouver, BC to Eugene, OR line. We would further honor them by continuing the work advanced by Jim and Zack with AAWA, Central Washington University, and the Washington State Legislative Rail Caucus on a proposal for East-West passenger service between Seattle, WA and Pasco, WA.

While we ache for the loss of our friends, let us be inspired to honor them through our work toward the goals they cherished and lived for.

EDITORIAL: PTC NEEDS COMMITMENT, DIRECTION AND DOLLARS

By Jim Mathews

Details are the lifeblood of policymaking. Especially in an era of “alternative facts,” command of the details is crucial to ensuring that we make good decisions, uncolored by emotion or partisanship. But sometimes submerging in details is a way to avoid uncomfortable facts. In the case of implementing Positive Train Control, U.S. policy is so diffuse, the details so mind-numbing and contradictory, and the funding so vaporous, that we’ve erected barriers to common-sense policy.

With the latest incident near Tacoma, Wash., since 2008 at least 40 Americans have paid for this unnecessarily complex state of affairs with their lives. Some 250 others have endured broken limbs and spilled blood, a death and injury toll that was largely preventable.

In the immediate aftermath of

the DuPont, Wash., derailment that claimed three lives – two of who were active members of this Association and one, Jim Hamre, who was on our Board – I talked to a lot of experts whose opinions I respect. I went on to read the work of others whose insights I use every day in my job. But I found no consistency and little agreement, and that, I believe, is where much of the real problem lies.

As a former volunteer firefighter/paramedic, I’ve worked crash scenes and mass-casualty incidents, and I’m familiar with the very human need to affix blame, to know why there is tragedy, to understand how ordinary life can become carnage in the blink of an eye. My brother and sister firefighters were still on-scene on Interstate 5 that Monday



A close up look at Amtrak Cascades Train 501.

morning when the finger-pointing began: it’s Amtrak’s fault, because it was their train; it’s the state’s fault, because trains shouldn’t have been rolling through there at all; it’s SoundTransit’s fault, it’s Washington’s Department of Transportation, it’s Sen. Chuck Schumer (for holding up the confirmation of Federal Railroad Administration nominee Ron Batory), it’s the engineer, it’s terrorists.

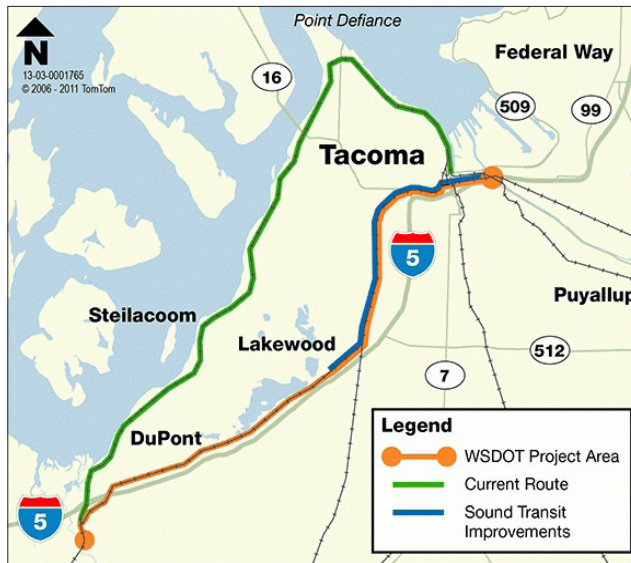
The National Transportation Safety Board’s investigators will pick

“JUST 10 MINUTES?”

By Abe Zumwalt

More trains running more frequently? Better On Time Performance? Higher average speed? What improvement makes the biggest impact on a given passenger rail corridor? The United States has taken an extremely incremental approach to improving passenger rail service, and when relatively small investments are made, good evidence exists pointing to frequency and reliability as among the most impactful improvements, and not speed. In California, the Capitol Corridor's expanded frequencies attracted exponential ridership increases. Virginia's more recent addition of two North East Regional trains attracted enough ridership and revenue to cover operational expenses for all eight of the service's round trips into that state. Neither of these substantial improvements were won with faster schedules as centerpieces.

However, there is something about



Caption: The Point Defiance Bypass route of Amtrak Cascades Train 501. (Photo Credit: WSDOT)

speed that makes for irresistible copy. In the Northwest, one couldn't be blamed for thinking that the Point Defiance Bypass was a \$180 million exercise in saving 10 minutes on the old schedule while robbing passengers of a famously beautiful ride; it's what local headlines have read for the duration of the project. In fair perspective, many multiples of that has been spent saving drivers mere seconds on cloverleaf highway intersections—however, this saved

time is almost an externality when compared to everything else the Point Defiance Bypass accomplishes.

A rail corridor dating back to 1891, the bypass was acquired from BNSF Railway in 2004 by a local transit agency, Sound Transit, for shared use with Sounder commuter trains and Amtrak Cascades corridor service. Originally slated to be opened as part of an improved Amtrak Cascades corridor in 2019, the timeline was accelerated thanks to funds

provided through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2008. New track with concrete ties was installed, and curve spirals were reengineered to accommodate faster running. Notably, the bridge at the south end of the bypass, the site of December 18th's tragedy, remained with slow curves on either end. This was because it did not affect the number of planned additional frequencies—which demonstrates the priorities at work.

10 MINUTES, p. 6

ON THE MOVE

Local, state and federal transit agencies, have seen several new hires and appointments in the past month. A few of them include:

- **Wick Moorman** served his last day as co-CEO of Amtrak December 31. On January 1, 2018, Moorman transitioned to senior advisor for the railroad. Under Moorman, the railroad set records for ridership, revenue and earnings.

- **Richard Anderson** transitioned from co-CEO of Amtrak, to CEO and President, taking over full leadership responsibilities of the railroad from Moorman..

- **Shannon Valentine** has been named the new secretary for the Virginia Department of Transportation. Valentine, a Lynchburg-area Commonwealth Transportation Board member, will succeed Transportation Secretary Aubrey Layne.



Wick Moorman transitions from co-CEO to senior advisor.

(Photo Credit: Amtrak)

STATE NEWS

MARYLAND'S PURPLE LINE achieved a new milestone after the U.S. Court of Appeals agreed that the state didn't need to conduct a new environmental study, despite declining ridership for D.C.'s Metro. The judges ruled that the opponents of the Purple Line did not prove that Metro's decline in ridership would affect the Purple Line's ridership projections from its previous environmental study. The ruling reversed a 2016 order by U.S. District Judge Richard J. Leon that agreed with opponents that Maryland did not sufficiently consider Metro's safety and ridership challenges. The 16-mile Purple Line is scheduled to open in 2022.

THE FEDERAL RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION issued a draft environmental impact statement that identified a preferred route for proposed high-speed rail line between Dallas and Houston. The statement took four years to complete and now begins the process of land acquisition for construction of the line, which is being developed by Texas Central Partners. The release of the statement also allows for the public to comment on the project through February, which Texas Central and the FRA will review before making a final statement.

PTC, from p. 3

through this wreckage and decide how best to apportion responsibility in its wake. But let's just cut to the chase: we are likely looking at the fourth incident since 2008 where Americans have died in a derailment that PTC could have prevented. As a nation, we've decided that the \$12 billion project to implement PTC – what the FRA has described as the “most important” change in railroad safety technology in a century – just isn't important enough. So far we've allocated only \$1.2 billion to PTC, mostly to help smaller operators like SoundTransit pay for the implementation. And we've set legislative deadlines, only to blow through them because operators can't

meet the mandate due to real challenges in technology, funding and jurisdictional responsibilities. We've developed no single, uniform standard to help make implementation more efficient. We've found the single most complicated and confusing way to make this “most important” change, and, unsurprisingly, implementation is uneven as a result.

By comparison, to improve airline safety we spend \$1 billion each and every year in research, development and testing to implement the new, and badly needed,

PTC, p. 6

RAIL STATION OF THE MONTH: TUCSON STATION

The Tucson, Arizona Amtrak station is our first Station of the Month for 2018. Tucson's climate is very mild in the winter, so it's a great place to escape the cold. Here are five notable facts about the station:

1 - The station was originally a wooden depot built in 1880 by Southern Pacific, but it was replaced in 1907 by a more modern and larger structure due to increased traffic.

2 - In 1998, the City of Tucson bought the station from the Union Pacific—after its merger with Southern Pacific—and began restorations that were completed in 2004.

3 - The Tucson station complex houses the Southern Arizona Transportation Museum, as well as Maynard's Market & Kitchen, where you can dine on the patio and watch the trains!

4 - Tucson is full of great transit options. Sun Link connects the University of Arizona to downtown and the



A picture of the Tucson Depot from 1907.

(Photo Credit: Terapeak)

convention center. One-way passes are \$1.50, or a one-day pass is \$4.00. More information can be found at www.sunlinkstreetcar.com.

5 - Across the street from the station is the Ronstadt Transit Center, and in 2015, the Mayor and Council approved plans for redevelopment of the center to include a hotel, shops, open-air market, and a pedestrian bridge across the railroad tracks.

NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN FOR 2018 'AT-LARGE' COUNCIL SEATS AND OFFICER & DIRECTOR POSITIONS

RPA/NARP is inviting members in good-standing to consider running for one of the up-to 10 available 'At-Large' positions on the Council of Representatives (the Association's volunteer governing body). These positions are for a two-year term commencing immediately upon election by the State Representatives at the Council of Representatives Annual Business Meeting being held on Wednesday, April 18, 2018 in Alexandria, VA.

Any RPA/NARP member who has paid dues for at least one year, is at least 18 years of age and is a U.S. resident is eligible to self-nominate and run to be elected at the April meeting. The Council consists of 112 elected state representatives, the up-to 10 elected 'At-Large' representatives and the up-to 15 elected Board Officers and Directors.

The Council of Representatives represents the RPA/NARP membership in setting and approving the overall policy and direction for the Association. For more information on these 'At-Large' positions, including the duties, responsibilities and required

qualifications, go to: <http://ow.ly/Yxzs30hxl4P>.

In addition, self-nominations are now being sought from qualified members interested in being elected by the Council of Representatives at the April Council Annual Business Meeting to an Association officer position (Chair of the Board; one of four Vice-Chairs; Treasurer or Secretary) or to one of three available Board Director positions. Board officer positions are for a two-year term and the Board director positions are for a three-year term, both commencing at the conclusion of April's Annual Business Meeting. For complete information on these Board Officer & Director positions, including the duties, responsibilities and required qualifications, go to: <http://ow.ly/LGSj30hxlaf>.

For the required 'At-Large' Representative and Board Officer & Director Candidate Information Statement form, go to: <http://ow.ly/VZvW30hxl7h>.

The deadline to submit Candidate Information Statements is March 31, 2018.

10 MINUTES, from p. 4

The Point Defiance Bypass was acquired and rehabilitated because it travels through the heart of population in the South Sound region, unlike the coastal Seattle Subdivision. It allows for Sound Transit commuter trains to serve as real alternatives for the severe automotive congestion far south of Seattle. It saves Amtrak service from an entirely curvy and mudslide prone subdivision where passenger trains jockey with relentless freight traffic through single track tunnels. It frees the space for at least two more Seattle-Portland round trips tailored to allow same-day business travel

between the two cities. It will improve reliability to the extent that BNSF, still the host railway everywhere outside of the bypass, recently had the confidence of guaranteeing 88 percent on time performance. That's up from around 70 percent today. Finally, because the majority of the bypass is straight and allows for 79 mph running, as opposed to the wandering coast line, about 10 minutes will be shaved from the trip—nice, but hardly the marquee accomplishment, by comparison.

The bypass will be open again for Amtrak passenger traffic once Positive Train Control is fully implemented in 2018.

PTC, from p. 5

NextGen air traffic control system in the U.S., and we'll do so for a few more years yet. As capability becomes available, it rolls out to everyone and is already partly in operation today. Our air traffic system, already the safest in the world, will become safer still. In contrast to PTC, private industry joined forces to develop systems that operate seamlessly with one another, under the direction and guidance of professionals at the Federal Aviation Administration who developed the architecture and requirements and are overseeing this national safety and efficiency project. The predictable, dedicated funding provided by the Airports and Airways Trust Fund (AATF) covers between 87% and 92% of FAA's operating costs

— including the 30,000 federal employees who operate the air traffic control system on behalf of the flying public. The rest comes from the general fund.

As for PTC, Congress created an unfunded mandate, to be carried out independently by a variety of actors of varying resources and capabilities. The plan is years behind schedule, some systems can't afford to move forward at all, and the key players are all squabbling about whose responsibility it is to make rail travel safer. The answer is to set a deadline and stick to it, set a standard and meet it, and set a budget and fund it. The traveling public deserves no less.

TRIBUTE, FROM P. 2

Zack and Jim met through citizen advocacy. Zack was a customer support IT specialist for the Pierce Transit bus service. Like Jim, he saw the value of rail as a central component of balanced transportation. He owned/drove a retired 1990 Pierce Transit bus, loved pepperoni pizza, and went to Star Wars events. Above all he was smart, hard-working, kind and helpful. He could analyze complex problems and solve them effectively. As an IT whiz, he maintained the All Aboard Washington computers. He taught me in five minutes how to use WIFI on my iPhone, even though he didn't then use one. Zach married his wonderful wife Taylor Tomblin barely a year ago.

These men were the best. We can take consolation that they exemplified citizen advocates as professionals. The improved rail system in Washington/Oregon would never have been built without their decades of faithful advocacy. Happily, they witnessed the success of those efforts. More passenger trains run today between Seattle-Tacoma and Portland than ever in history! The Cascades Corridor is their monument!

DERAILMENT, from p. 2

- PTC is not in service on the line the train was operating on. Sound Transit reports that PTC is currently being installed, but installation is not complete.
- Preliminary indications from the rear locomotive's event recorder show the train was traveling at about 80-mph before a sudden reduction in brake-pipe initiated the emergency train brakes. The reduction in the brake pipe does not appear to be engineer induced.
- PTC could have prevented the Amtrak derailment by alerting the engineer or applying the brakes, according to the NTSB's preliminary report.

The NTSB has said it will also:

- Review the event data record from the lead locomotive and the rear engine.
- Review data from inward- and outward-facing on-board cameras, although these were damaged in the crash.
- Speak with Amtrak employees on the train, including the engineer.
- Review the training required of the engineer and other crew members to operate on the new route.

Upcoming Rail Passengers Association Events

Sunday, April 15 - Wednesday, April 18

- **Make plans to attend** RPA's Spring 2018 Advocacy Summit & Day on The Hill & Annual Council Business Meeting Washington, DC
- Host Hotel - Hilton Old Town Alexandria (VA) - **Discounted Group Rate Rooms Are Now Available!**
- RPA's Annual Day on The Hill & Congressional Reception - Tuesday, April 17
- Event Registration Will Open January 22nd.
- Visit The **Event Page** For Complete Information

Upcoming Regional Rail Passengers Association and State Passengers Association Member Meetings & Events

Friday, January 19

- Southwestern Rail Conference - Dallas, TX

Saturday, January 27

- Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers - Haslett, MI

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



PORTRAIT OF A PASSENGER

We want it to be known that U.S. travelers and commuters are frustrated by trains that are late, equipment that is falling apart, and service that is far too skeletal and infrequent.

The Rail Passengers Association is doing its best to advocate for equitable funding to solve these problems that affect millions of people. But, we can't do it alone.

Help us raise awareness for the federal government's lackluster transportation priorities by applying our

"Portrait of a Passenger" Facebook photo frame to your profile photo.

This photo frame is an adaptation of our new window logo and just goes over your current profile photo on Facebook.

To apply this frame to your profile photo is easy, all you need to do is visit this link and it takes you through the process step-by-step: <http://ow.ly/eC2s30hJLcl>.

PASSENGER VOICE: TRAINS OFFER FREEDOM TO MOVE

Marise Reynolds

I have traveled the trains for years because I prefer seeing scenery as opposed to flying above it. But now, I have a disability (IBS) which requires that I have freedom to get up and move at a moment's notice. Obviously, on an airplane, this is not possible as the plane could be either taking off or landing (when one has to be in one's seat), or there could be long lines for the bathroom. I don't feel comfortable traveling by air anymore and I travel cross country six to eight times per year.

I am most grateful that cross country trains are still running, and running with sleepers and dining cars.

If the latter two perks were taken off of cross country trains, it would make cross country travel much more difficult. I appreciate that the trains provide vegetarian and healthy meals as well.

Please do not take money away from Amtrak service. What it needs is more track work and safety - not less.



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