



PASSENGERS Voice

JULY/AUGUST 2018 | VOL. 52, NO. 7

RAIL PASSENGERS ACTS TO PROTECT NATIONAL AND SW CHIEF

With the Passenger Rail Association in full-on campaign mode--working to shore up the long-term outlooks of the National Network--the Senate took up the Fiscal Year 2019 transportation budget in late July. Senators were looking to capitalize on the extra time provided by the Senate GOP's decision to cancel the traditional August recess, while rail advocates were eager to take advantage of the funding bill--not only to lock down increased investment, but as a vehicle for language to ensure that the Southwest Chief route is not severed by a bus substitution proposal advanced by Amtrak.

RAIL PASSENGERS OPPOSE BUSES FOR SOUTHWEST CHIEF

In a meeting in June with all six Senators from Colorado, Kansas, and New Mexico, Amtrak President and CEO, Mr. Richard Anderson, abruptly notified the Senators of Amtrak's plans to discontinue rail service on the Southwest Chief route between Garden City, KS and Albuquerque, NM. Citing the cost of positive train control and maintenance of the "Raton Pass" portion of the route, Mr. Anderson stated Amtrak would substitute bus service as a bridge.

Congress invested in Amtrak and passenger rail last year at a record level because they recognize the importance of growing the National Network of passenger rail as part of a "Connected America" for jobs and economic development.

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Current and Proposed Federal Budgets (In Millions)					
Program	FY2018 Appropriated Levels	FAST Act FY2019 Authorized Levels	RPA FY2019 Request	House THUD FY2019 Budget	Senate THUD FY2019 Budget
Amtrak - National Network	\$1,300.00	\$1,143.00	\$1,400.00	\$1,292.00	\$1,292.00
Amtrak - NEC	\$650.00	\$557.00	\$750.00	\$650.00	\$650.00
Consolidated Rail Infrastructure & Safety Grants	\$593.00	\$255.00	\$600.00	\$300.00	\$255.00
Federal State Partnership For State Of Good Repair	\$250.00	\$300.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$300.00
Restoration & Enhancement Grants	\$20.00	\$20.00	\$20.00	\$0.00	\$10.00
Total	\$2,813.00	\$2,276.50	\$3,270.00	\$2,742.00	\$2,507.00

Building on the success of last year, advocates have been able to secure elevated funding well over authorized levels for Amtrak and transit in both the Senate and the House proposal. While the increased investment levels should give passengers reason to celebrate, a head-scratching decision from Amtrak to walk away from a Southwest Chief preservation project has forced Rail Passengers to organize its council and members--both along the

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“If the Southwest Chief service is curtailed, or somehow lost in this process, I don’t think there’s going to be a strong motivation to run a train from Fort Worth, Texas to Newton, Kansas to connect with anything.”
 Newton City Commissioner
 Barth Hague



RAIL PASSENGERS

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This issue has news through July 20, 2018.

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Amtrak's actions are unacceptable, and America's passengers must speak out in defense of our National Network.

We the people, through our elected representatives in Washington, must now hold Amtrak responsible for safely operating our National Network system of daily, full service trains. Further, we are demanding transparency and open discussion about their plans on how to do this, their primary responsibility, and simultaneously grow passenger rail along established and emerging corridors. This is what the Amtrak Board and Mr. Anderson are charged with doing.

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route, and across the U.S.--in defense of the National Network. (See "Southwest Chief" on page 1 to find out more about this campaign, and how you can get involved.)

RPA is working closely with Members of Congress to track the FY19 transportation appropriations bill, and will work to use it as a vehicle for language to ensure that communities along the Southwest Chief aren't abandoned.

While the Senate will likely work through August, the House of Representatives are still scheduled to return to their districts for the summer recess. With an extremely tight schedule--which includes a

water resources bill, a Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization, and a Supreme Court nomination among other agenda items--the appropriations process will likely play out through the end of September. That means we'll need the full faith and backing of all passengers as we battle to ensure a better future for America's trains.

Do you support the work Rail Passengers Association does on behalf of the National Network? Your **generous donations** help fund advocacy campaigns, such as the one we are launching in response to Amtrak's unacceptable Southwest Chief proposal: www.railpassengers.org/donate.

Amtrak should not consider any of the following, or similar, actions as meeting the intent of Congress:

- Breaking the National Network trains into parts

- Transitioning National Network trains to less than daily service
- Transitioning all or parts of a National Network route to bus service
- Downgrading service standards
- Attempting to shift costs of Amtrak's primary responsibility to the states

The Southwest Chief bus proposal



(Photo Credit: Jim Loomis)

An Amtrak bus that could be used on the Southwest Chief route.

is an existential threat to the National Network. "We are at a most critical junction in our organization and the fate of the National Network hangs in the balance," Peter LeCody wrote to RPA's Council of Representatives. In his letter he explained that he has appointed Mississippi Council Representative, Dr. Paul Nelson, to lead the grassroots efforts from the national perspective and will

FEDERAL COURT ACTS TO PROTECT RAIL PASSENGERS

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit ruled on July 20 that Amtrak and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) have the right to set their own standards for measuring passenger rail service on time performance. This means Amtrak and the FRA can prioritize getting paying customers to and from their destinations on time.

The court's ruling is a major act towards protecting passengers' right on U.S. railways, and the Rail Passengers Association is in full support of the court's decision.

"The appellate decision vindicates the position our Association has taken in numerous court filings,

briefs and letters to regulators over the years," said Jim Mathews, President and CEO of the Rail Passengers Association. "This sets the stage for Amtrak and the FRA to work together to restore on time performance standards that were vacated by previous rulings. With on time performance today at record lows, American passengers have been waiting for years for the courts to step in and protect the rights of the traveling public. The Rail Passengers Association could not be happier with this decision."

A lawsuit was first brought to the court by the Association of American Railroads, who argued

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WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU TRAVEL ACROSS THE COUNTRY BY TRAIN

By Jacob Wallace, Summer By Rail Correspondent

When I was preparing for this trip, one of the first connections I made between baseball and rail travel was the idea of community. Baseball allows people from a town or entire region to unite behind a common cause for a few hours each game, and enjoy food and maybe some beer. Trains, similarly, force people to sit next to each other at meals or on travelling tours, and have conversations with semi-retired square dance callers or chemtrail conspiracy theorists. I can't think of any way to get to know your fellow citizens – all of them.

I've been asked throughout my journey by family, friends and reporters what my favorite part of the trip was, and it's become an almost impossible question to answer, since I had so many unusual moments on this trip. But I think if I had to pick a moment that was most representative of my trip, I'd choose an interview

on the Empire Builder.

My 30 hours travelling that route alone was the longest ride of my trip, and I was curious how I'd handle it. When I woke up in the morning, I felt almost at a loss to figure out how to function in a space that was both small and well-populated with people. Meals ended up providing the bridge I needed to reach out.

At every meal I've had on the train, there's an appetizer of awkward eye contact and cautious verbal handshakes that precede each meal. "Hi, where you headed to?" "Where'd you get on?" "I'll have the risotto." Stuff like that. Each meal slowly warms up from there, but I rarely felt like the conversation triumphed over the food, which for me at this particular dinner was the Thyme Roasted Chicken Breast (I never really worked up the courage to try the Steamed Mussels available on a train in Montana.) However, my time with Rinji and Marlon was



(Photo Credit: Rail Passengers Association)

Jacob concluding Summer by Rail.

an exception.

Both of them came from different upbringings. Rinji was raised in South Korea and came to the US full-time in her 20s. Marlon was Honduran and raised primarily in New Jersey, but during his time in the Marines he traveled all over Asia. They both met in New York, and from there gradually formed a life together, travelling all over Europe and the United States and

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DESTINATION OF THE MONTH: RALEIGH

Raleigh, The City of Oaks and Great Barbecue

Raleigh, the capital of North Carolina, is one of the fastest growing cities in the U.S. with a growth rate of 3.4 percent per year. Part of the reason is that Raleigh, along with Durham and Chapel Hill, has become a major research and development hub known as Research Triangle Park. The area is home to three major universities, Duke University, NC State University, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, as well as 200 companies that are employing more than 50,000 people and boosting economic development in the area. As the city has boomed over the years, so has the city's attractions. Ranging from arts and museums to college sports and restaurants, there's something for everyone to do, see and taste.

When you make your way to Raleigh, keep these five facts in mind:

1 - Barbecue is big in Raleigh, and most people know that North Carolina serves barbecue with a vinegar base that is known as Eastern style. Every now and then, you may also find Western style, which is served in a red sauce. Some of the best places for barbecue in the city include Clyde Cooper's Barbeque, The Pit, and Ole Time Barbecue.

2 - Raleigh is known as the City of Oaks for the vast



(Photo Credit: Visit Raleigh)

A view of Raleigh, NC.

number of oak trees in and out of the city limits. Many of the oak trees line the city's streets.

3 - Staying with the oak theme, if you make your way to Raleigh for New Year's Eve, don't be surprised if a giant acorn makes an appearance. Instead of a ball being dropped at midnight, the city drops an acorn.

4 - Most may not think about the arts in Raleigh, but the city has many performing arts and museum attractions to choose from. The city is home to the North Carolina Symphony, which plays at the Meymandi Concert Hall, the Durham Performing Arts Center, the North Carolina Art Museum, the North Carolina Museum of History, and the North Carolina Museum of Natural Science.

5 - If sports are your thing, Raleigh has plenty of those, too. The city is home to six higher-education institutions, including the universities listed above, as well as professional hockey team Carolina Hurricanes and professional soccer teams North Carolina Football Club (men) and North Carolina Courage (women).

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:

• **Kimberly Farley** — Sound Transit appointed Kimberly Farley as its deputy chief executive officer to work with current Deputy CEO Mike Harbour until he retires in 2019. Farley's previous experience includes founding development firm Volition Group LLC, and working as vice president and chief of staff for global engineering and construction at power utility company AES.

• **Thelda Williams** —The board for Phoenix's Valley Metro has elected Thelda Williams as its new chair. Williams has been serving as the interim mayor of Phoenix since late May 2018.

• **Mike Stolzman** —Trinity Metro in Fort Worth, TX has named Mike Stolzman as its new vice president and chief operating officer for rail. Stolzman's previous experience includes working at Chicago and Northwestern Railway Co. and Anacostia & Pacific over the last 20 years.



(Photo Credit: Sound Transit)

Kimberly Farley was named the deputy CEO of Sound Transit.

STATE NEWS

BRIGHTLINE SERVICE IN FLORIDA IS EXPANDING

the number of weekday round trips for Miami, Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach. On August 6, the company began offering 16 daily round trips in order to provide passengers with more flexibility in their travel options. The earliest train will depart from West Palm Beach at 5:30 a.m. and the last train will leave Miami at 11:10 p.m. on weekdays.

AMTRAK WILL BRING BACK ITS “GREAT DOME” CAR FOR TRAIN RIDES

between Albany, NY and Montreal, running through the Adirondack Mountains. From September 27 to November 2, passengers can enjoy the changing fall scenery as the train has an upper level glass-roofed dome with windows on every side. The dome car is from 1955 and is only in service for a limited time. One-way tickets from Albany to Montreal start at \$53.

THE SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (SEPTA) performed



Brightline will begin offering 16 daily round trips in August.

an inaugural run of its a new ACS-64 locomotive to great success and fanfare. The run highlighted the agency's progress on its modernization program, which includes replacing its aging fleet by purchasing a total of 15 new locomotives from Siemens for \$154 million. The new ACS-64 locomotives are electric powered and are equipped with positive train control (PTC).

RAIL STATION OF THE MONTH: RALEIGH UNION STATION

Raleigh Union Station Ready For Service

Raleigh's new Union Station opened its doors and began Amtrak service on July 10. The start of service was a major celebration for the city and local community members since the station's opening was delayed multiple times since 2017 due to an inaccurate slope of the station's platform. The new station cost more than \$110 million, and local city and transportation officials expect the station to be a major transit hub that will have room to expand with new transit services over the coming years.

If you make your way onto Amtrak's Carolinian, Piedmont or Silver Star, be sure to make a stop at Raleigh Union Station. Here are five facts to know about the station:

1 - The new Union Station is replacing Amtrak's old rail station, which is directly across the railroad tracks. The old station was built in 1950 by Southern Railway and is set to be demolished.

2 - The station is located at the former Dillon Supply Co. warehouse, with a second floor that is home to restaurant and office space. It also has space for a



Raleigh Union Station opened in July.

restaurant with a rooftop patio on the third floor.

3 - As a second phase of the development, GoTriangle plans to build a bus terminal, that will be a mixed-use development with retail, a parking garage, and offices.

4 - About 151,000 people travel by Amtrak through Raleigh. As a result, the station is the second busiest train station in North Carolina after Charlotte.

5 - There's more to the station than just travel. It is next to a large public plaza at the intersection of West Street and Martin Street. This plaza provides space for people to gather and hang out, or host and attend special events.

(Photo Credit: Richard Graulich / The Palm Beach Post)

(Photo Credit: Garry Cohen)

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that Amtrak should not be allowed to determine regulations for other railroads, such as freight. The court ruled 2-1 in favor of Amtrak and the FRA, overturning a previous appellate court decision from 2015 that found a section of a 2008 law unconstitutional and allowed Amtrak to set standards that benefited its own interests.

Arguing that it violated due process, the court also removed a portion of the law allowing Amtrak to create regulations for others in the “market” for rail right of way capacity, effectively viewing Amtrak as a competitor. The Department of Transportation argued earlier this year in March, that removal of the arbitration provision from the

2008 law would alleviate the issue.

RPA has played an active role in this long running battle, including filing an amicus curiae brief along with the Environmental Law & Policy Center in the case.

While the decision may escalate back to the Supreme Court, and the question of which entity enforces on time performance metrics is still open, it nonetheless represents a battle won in the Passenger’s favor.

“We will continue to fight for passengers’ rights in the courts, in Congress, and in the sphere of public opinion,” said Mathews.

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be working with the teams already engaged in the SW Chief corridor.

Paul Nelson, Chair of the Southwest Chief and National Network Campaign explains, “This is an all hands on deck situation. Everyone of our members has a role to play in this campaign, whether you live in Colorado, Florida, on the NEC, or anywhere else.”

He also adds that you can support the SWC+NN

Campaign by first, being an active volunteer in your community and region and second, making a donation to RPA. Your time, energy, and monetary support are all vital pieces to our success!

To get involved, please visit www.railpassengers.org/swc to view a host of materials and participate in the up-to-the-minute needs of the campaign. Otherwise, please send SWC correspondence to Betsy Nelson SWC+NN Campaign at 323 Center Drive, Montgomery, AL 36113.

RAIL PASSENGERS TRAVEL ADVISORY

With new renovation improvements taking place at Mount Joy station in Pennsylvania, Amtrak has made schedule changes to Keystone Service. These changes include:

- Train 661 will operate 5 minutes earlier from Philadelphia to Lancaster, 6 minutes earlier from Lancaster to Middletown and 5 minutes earlier into Harrisburg.
- Train 662 will operate 10 minutes later from Harrisburg to Philadelphia.
- Train 664 will operate 5 minutes later from Harrisburg to Philadelphia.

Amtrak is now allowing passengers to bring bicycles on board for Wolverine Service at all stations. The service, which costs \$10, began on July 26. Bicycle reservations are required, and bike tickets must be presented to the conductor when boarding the train. Passengers can reserve space for their bikes by selecting “add bike” when they book their train travel.

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getting married somewhere along the way.

Through it all Rinji, the woman from South Korea, had come to love train travel. She rode the trains in South Korea all the time almost as a necessity, and now was excited to see where Amtrak could take her in the U.S. After a lot of prodding, she had finally managed to convince her husband, Marlon, to join her on the Empire Builder for his first serious train trip.

Weirdly, Rinji and Marlon were my neighbors across the hall in the sleeper car, but it took me the whole day to finally meet them. At first, Rinji insisted that only Marlon should be interviewed. As Marlon and I sat in my tiny roomette, chatting about his first time on the train and watching the sun slowly set over Glacier National Park, Rinji would listen in and call out a comment here and there. Over time she gave up trying to stay out of the conversation, and we all leaned into the doorways of our roomettes and had a conversation between the three of us about what it was like to travel. Rinji loved trains, and she was confident she could convince Marlon to love them like her.

"At first I was like, 'It's a train, where's the fun in that?'" Marlon told me at one point. "I'm really enjoying the ride."

"See, I told you!" Rinji shot back.

When I think about what I want travel to accomplish, I think about Rinji and Marlon. They would not even have met had they both been afraid to go somewhere new and try something different. I got to do both of those things: prior to the start of my trip, I had been to exactly one of the cities that I visited this summer. I ate cherries in Washington, hot dogs in Chicago and poutine in Toronto. I met veterans of rail advocacy who had been pushing for better service for decades, and young people like me who just needed a better way to get to their college. Rail travel, it's clear to me, benefits the light rail users of the city and the rural towns where trains pull in at odd hours all the same.

I fully plan to go to more baseball games in the future, but that was always a given for me. You haven't lived until you've seen a whole stadium full of Canadian minor-league baseball fans jeer the opposing team's manager off the field, and I want more evenings like that. But I wasn't sure how I'd feel about rail travel. After 37 days, 22 cities, 19 baseball games and about 6,000 miles traveled though, I can confidently say that I'll ride the rails again.

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

Saturday, August 18

- Tennessee Association of Railroad Passengers Meeting - Jackson, TN

Saturday, September 15

- On Track Kentucky Meeting - Bowling Green, KY

Saturday, September 29

- RailPac California 2018 'Steel Wheels' Conference - Sacramento, CA
-

**Friday, October 19 to
Sunday, October 21**

**RPA's RailNation Miami - THE Rail
Passenger Advocacy Event of 2018**

- Three days packed with an exciting array of presentations, speakers, exhibits, tours and events, including an exclusive chartered Brightline trip on Friday.
 - **Event registration is NOW available! Don't delay; space is limited; register TODAY! We look forward to seeing you in Miami!**
 - **Event Host Hotel is Hyatt Regency Miami - 400 SE 2nd Avenue in Downtown Miami. Discounted hotel reservations are now available!**
 - **Visit The RailNation Miami Event Page for complete program, agenda & tour information.**
-

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



#ViewsFromATrain SOCIAL MEDIA CONTEST KICKS OFF

We had so many great submissions for our social media branding contest last year, we decided to open a second round for the summer. The Rail Passengers Association is asking members, friends and family, and the general train-riding public to share their #ViewsFromATrain on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram using the hashtag #RailPassengers and @RailPassengers.

The pictures should be your own, and should depict

what you see outside your train window, whether it's a photo of countryside, oceans, forests or cities. People who submit photos will have an opportunity to win a variety of great prizes, including 10,000 Amtrak Guest Rewards® Points.

So if you're taking a train this summer, take a look out the window and snap a pic or two. We would love to see them!



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