



RAIL PASSENGERS
ASSOCIATION

PASSENGERS Voice

NOVEMBER 2018 | VOL. 52, NO. 10

NATIONAL NETWORK COMES OUT AHEAD ON STALLED BUDGET

Congressional dysfunction once again stalled progress on a transportation funding bill that includes new funding for passenger rail, Amtrak, and transit—including a key provision to require Amtrak to continue to operate passenger rail service on the Southwest Chief. However, in spite of the failure to pass the Chief language into law, Amtrak bowed to congressional pressure and publicly pledged to continue running trains along the full Southwest Chief route through Fiscal Year 2019. Additionally, the stopgap funding measure Congress has passed will include the higher levels of funding for passenger rail secured by advocates over the past year.

"We're disappointed Congress decided to punt when they were so close to final passage on this bill, which has many benefits for passengers," said Rail Passengers President Jim Mathews. "But it highlights the importance of our win during last year's budget cycle. The elevated funding levels are now locked in; that means Amtrak, transit systems, and states can count on elevated levels of investment for these critical transportation systems."

Congress passed a Continuing Resolution on September 28 to continue FY18 funding through December 7th of this year. Rail Passengers will continue to work with our allies on the Hill to secure final passage of the FY 2019 transportation budget in December, which allocates much-needed funding for rail, including \$1.3 billion for Amtrak's National Network, \$650 million for the Northeast Corridor, \$255 million for Consolidated Rail Infrastructure & Safety grants, \$300 million for Federal State Partnership for State of Good Repair grants, and \$10 million for Restoration grants. The bill also includes \$9.9 billion for transit formula grants, \$2.5 billion for rail transit grants, and \$1 billion for BUILD grants.

Amtrak Commits to Continuing Southwest Chief Operations for Another Year

While the Southwest Chief provision was not included in the Continuing Resolution (CR), when directly confronted with tough questions by Senators representing Southwest Chief states, Amtrak confirmed in a hearing on October 3 before the Senate Commerce Committee on Surface Transportation that it will continue to operate train service on the Southwest Chief route.

CONGRESS, p. 2

RPA TO AMTRAK: GROW, DON'T CUT

In an open letter to Amtrak, the Rail Passengers Association (RPA) CEO Jim Mathews called on railroad management to "seize this moment" to shape the future of the National Network to create "A Connected America" that will meet the country's transportation needs well into the future.

Addressed to Amtrak's Board of Directors, Mathews' letter calls on leaders at Amtrak to lead—not follow—in helping to create a real surface-transportation policy for the U.S. Amtrak management needs to look boldly beyond the National Network and riders of today to assess what kind of country we're likely to be in 2040 or 2050, and refuse to degrade services or abandon Amtrak communities.

We believe this is an important letter for all RPA members to read, so we have published the letter in its entirety on Page 3.

"It's time to seize this moment, to shift away from an "operating" culture to an "opportunity" culture."

From Rail Passengers Association
President Jim Mathews'
Open Letter to Amtrak.
(Read the full letter on Page 3).



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This issue has news through October 22, 2018.

Vol. 52, No. 10 was mailed November 5, 2018.

CONGRESS, from p. 1

"This is a huge win for our Association, for passengers, and for the states that rely on the Southwest Chief," said Mathews in response to the pledge from Amtrak. "It shows that advocacy works, and I want to thank every person who took part in our campaign in defense of the National Network. Now, we need to take that energy and turn it towards the coming reauthorization where we can make a positive vision for passenger rail in the U.S.: fast and frequent trains, 21st Century equipment, and on-time service that passengers can count on."

"Will Amtrak commit, publicly, to stop pursuing the proposal of replacing the train with buses for the Southwest Chief for fiscal year 2019," asked Senator Udall.

"We are well aware of the Senate's position as well as the directive that is in the Senate's version of the 2019 appropriations act," Naparstek responded. "We plan on running the Southwest Chief, as is, through fiscal year 2019 and we await the Congress' dealing with the Southwest Chief issue during conference as well as in the final spending bill."

"Thank you very much for that commitment, and I think it will make many of the senators who are here at the dais—Senator [Jerry] Moran and Senator [Cory] Gardner—[happy]" Udall, the Senator from New Mexico, responded. "We've worked in a bipartisan way to keep this going. We intend to obviously go well beyond 2019. But I reiterate the need for Amtrak to work with the communities impacted to create a real plan for the future of the Southwest Chief."

In a social media post after the hearing, Senator Udall thanked Amtrak, but also expressed disappointment that Amtrak still won't release the \$3 million match the railroad had previously committed, which has stranded \$22 million in additional U.S. DOT, local, and private sector funding that has been secured for improvement work on the Southwest Chief.



Amtrak's Southwest Chief in the Apache Canyon.
Photo Credit: Elijah Cross

That idea was also raised in the hearing by Senator Gardner (R-CO), who quoted a letter Amtrak had previously written to Colfax County, New Mexico in support of a Southwest Chief grant application. The letter stated "the advancement of the Southwest Chief improvement project will not only significantly improve our nation's transportation infrastructure but will also contribute to the economic competitiveness of the United States."

The Rail Passengers Association stands in agreement with the senators from New Mexico, Colorado, and Kansas—along with communities all across the Southwest Chief and National Network—and is committed to working in defense of a truly national passenger rail system.

OPEN LETTER TO AMTRAK BY THE RAIL PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION

We at the Rail Passengers Association believe that in the U.S. today we have arrived at a unique moment in passenger rail. Passenger rail generally and Amtrak specifically are enjoying some of their strongest support in decades, reflecting the reality that much of the American public is demanding more and better trains. With sharply increased appropriations in Fiscal 2018 and Fiscal 2019, Congress is demonstrating a willingness to make sensible investments in the future of mobility in the United States.

Amtrak, for its part, is looking to the future with renewed energy, contemplating exciting growth plans that could, for example, expand Amtrak along the Heartland Flyer, the Front Range Corridor, and the Los Angeles – Albuquerque corridor, and bring passenger rail back to the Gulf Coast. New CEO Richard Anderson is committed to improving the safety culture at the railroad, as well as finding ways to satisfy the tastes and demands of a new generation of fare-paying riders with improved rolling stock and on-board amenities.

It's time to seize this moment, to shift away from an "operating" culture to an "opportunity" culture. On behalf of the 40 million Americans who ride intercity and commuter trains, we're calling on leaders at Amtrak to lead—not follow—in helping to create a real surface-transportation policy for the U.S. Amtrak management needs to look boldly beyond the National Network and riders of today to assess what kind of country we're likely to be in 2040

or 2050, to shape the future of the National Network and to use the rail mode to tie other modes seamlessly together.

RPA is today calling on Amtrak's Board, Executive leadership and senior management to support a future with More Trains, Better Trains and A Commitment To Infrastructure Investment.

1. More Trains, Better Trains:

- Move aggressively on your new growth vision, with more frequencies in dense corridors, new rolling stock and modern safety measures—everything from Positive Train Control to GPS-tracking and modernized procedures for train crews. Amtrak's new emphasis on 400- to 500-mile corridors is a good idea, positioning Amtrak to fill a unique role that other travel modes can't fill. By 2045, 89% of Americans are expected to live in urban areas. At the same time, during the next 20 years Baby Boomers are expected to grow the senior population by 30 million people—a demographic that often faces travel challenges from vision, hearing and mobility constraints. Corridors can't supplant Amtrak's congressional mandate to serve all Americans, but RPA believes that the mandate also shouldn't stifle Amtrak from thinking about a robust future, which may look different from today.
- Fully and enthusiastically embrace a customer-centric view of passenger service, ensuring that trains' basic services—like toilets and air-conditioning—are reliable and sound while improving the experience for each and every traveler. It is long past time to replace the rolling museum that is today's Amtrak with modern equipment with lower operating and maintenance costs, which will result in a better deal for the taxpayer as well as the passenger.
- Eliminate, once and for all, the folly of services operating less than daily. Thrice-weekly service is not a meaningful frequency for modern American travelers and guarantees poor financial performance. Amtrak must start laying the groundwork for a rapid return to a Daily Sunset and a Daily Cardinal service.

2. Commitment To Infrastructure Investment:

- Engage creatively and transparently with local communities, state partners, and private industry to find ways to say "Yes" to new service and amenities, rather than "No." This includes pressing forward without delay on the long-awaited link between Mobile and New Orleans, a project which a recent study showed would produce \$216 million in annual economic benefits for Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama despite costing the three states only about \$7 million each year. Despite the urbanization of America, by 2045 we'll still have a significant

DESTINATION OF THE MONTH: PORTLAND, ME

Great Food and Sites in Portland, ME

Compared with some major cities in New England, such as Boston, MA, Hartford, CT, and Providence, RI, Portland, ME is somewhat small – home to a population of only 67,000 and more than 500,000 in the greater metro area. Despite its size, the city boasts a number of great sites, attractions and tastes for local residents, as well as tourists, who might be making their way through New England on Amtrak's Downeaster. So whether you're making your way to Portland, or just passing through to see some great fall foliage or find some winter slopes, here are five unique facts about the Forest City.

1 - Portland likes its beer. As of 2017, with 25.5 breweries per 100,000 people, Portland has more breweries per capita than any other U.S. city. Brewing companies include Shipyard, Rising Tide, Sea Dog, and Peak Organic.

2 - Portland is said to have received its nickname, Forest City, not from surrounding woodlands, but the city's famous grave site. People began referring to Portland as Forest City after the city purchased land to establish the Forest City Cemetery in the 1800s. The



Portland's skyline at dusk.

Photo Credit: iStock

cemetery currently hosts more than 30,000 graves.

3 - Whether you're looking for a burger, lobster roll or mussels and fries, Portland has some of the best food out there. It has become of small town foodie destination, winning Bon Appetit magazine's 2018 Restaurant City of the Year. Some places to try include Woodford F&B, The Highroller Lobster Co., and Fore Street.

4 - Make your way to a small piece of American history by visiting the Harbor Fish Market. Established in 1969, the market is a centerpiece of Portland's waterfront where locals shop for the freshest lobster and seafood.

5 - While in Portland, you can also take in a great deal of American history and education. Portland is home to the Portland Museum of Art, the Portland Head Light, the Wadsworth-Longfellow House, the Portland Observatory, and more.

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:

• **Tracy Butler** — Seattle's Sound Transit has named Tracy Butler as the agency's chief financial officer. Butler first began at Sound Transit in 2007 as its treasurer, and was serving as the interim CFO before being appointed to the role.

• **Dan Richard** — The U.S. High Speed Rail Association (USHSR) selected Dan Richard as its

advisory board's new chairman. Prior to his new role, Richard was selected as the chair of the California High-Speed Rail Authority, a position he has held since 2012. Richard succeeds Rod Diridon Sr. as the chair of USHSR.

• **Patrick Warren** — The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) in New York City has named Patrick Warren its new chief safety officer. Prior to the new role, Warren spent time with the Federal Railroad Administration. Warren succeeds David Mayer.



Tracy Butler was appointed Sound Transit's new CFO.

Photo Credit: Sound Transit

STATE NEWS

NEW YORK GOVERNOR ANDREW CUOMO CALLED ON PRESIDENT TRUMP to fund the new Hudson River tunnel. Cuomo did so as he visited the 100-year-old Hudson River tunnel that was severely corroded and damaged by Hurricane Sandy. His visit was recorded as a direct message to President Trump, in which Cuomo pinpointed areas of the tunnel that are at risk of failing, and if they do, could bring the NEC and U.S. economy to a halt.

THE SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY PLANS TO BEGIN pulling 10 to 20 percent of its energy use from renewable sources such as solar panels and windmills. The transit agency has issued a request for proposals (RFP) that seeks a company to help SEPTA convert to renewable energy sources without spending additional money on energy. As it stands now, only about four percent of the agency's energy comes from a renewable source.



NY Governor Cuomo tours the 100-year-old Hudson River Tunnel.

(Photo Credit: Governor Cuomo's Office)

TEXAS CENTRAL CHOSE CONSTRUCTION AND ENGINEERING FIRM SALINI IMPREGILO to head the civil construction consortium that will build the proposed high-speed train between Houston and Dallas. Salini Impregilo is an Italian firm that is operating in the U.S. with The Lane Construction Corp., and as the lead it will be responsible for all work up to the top of the rail, including viaducts, embankments and drainage.

RAIL STATION OF THE MONTH: BRUNSWICK STATION

Small Town With a Great Station

This is the perfect time of year for checking out the brilliant fall colors through New England. One can hop on the Amtrak Downeaster, taking it through numerous New England towns to see the changing of the leaves up close. The train runs all the way from the busy streets of Boston, MA to the small town of Brunswick, ME, with stops in Portland, ME, Old Orchard Beach, ME and Dover, NH to name a few.

If you take the Downeaster this fall, all the way to Brunswick (considered one of the best small towns in America by Smithsonian Magazine in 2012), be sure to check out the Brunswick Maine Street Station. It has plenty to offer for locals and tourists alike.

1 - The Brunswick Station opened on November 1, 2012. The station is located at the Brunswick Visitors Center, between downtown Brunswick and Bowdoin College - home of the Polar Bears.

2 - Although Brunswick has a population of less than 21,000, the station saw an annual ridership of more than 30,000 passengers in 2017, making the city a popular destination.

3 - The Brunswick Station has more than just Amtrak to offer. The entire development is multi-modal and multi-



The Brunswick Maine Street Station located in downtown.

(Photo Credit: Amtrak)

use. It is a transportation hub for Amtrak, city buses and taxis. Also housed in the facility are businesses, health service, retail stores, restaurants, theater and even living space.

4 - With the station in downtown Brunswick, you are centrally located and in walking distance to the many great attractions of Brunswick. Attractions include the Bowdoin College Museum of Art, the Harriet Beecher Stowe House, Maine State Music Theatre, Flight Deck Brewing, Thomas Point Beach and much more.

5 - When stopping in at the Amtrak station, make sure to bring a friendly smile. The station is staffed by volunteers who are able to provide assistance to visitors.

OPEN LETTER, from p. 3

fraction of Americans living in rural communities, and demographic trends tell us that this population will have a large number of seniors, disabled and veterans who will need the kind of mobility that only rail can provide.

- Engage in an open conversation with host railroads and regulators about better, less-contentious approaches to shared-use corridors that promote investment in more network fluidity and a better passenger experience.
- Notwithstanding the search for more cooperative approaches, continue pressing for a private right-of-action so that on behalf of paying passengers Amtrak can hold host railroads accountable for poor on-time performance.

The Rail Passengers Association supports meaningful change. By all means, grow, adapt, evolve and position for a stronger more self-sustaining future. It is time for Amtrak to embrace the new century. But it's important that no community served today should see their service degraded. Rural America should not be shortchanged by any shifts in service. Amtrak has a mission beyond the balance sheet, a fact enshrined in law. Amtrak should always seek prudent stewardship of public funds. But Amtrak is a taxpayer-supported enterprise, whose core mission is to provide mobility

and access to communities that need it and where private industry cannot profitably provide it. That doesn't mean the nature of that service can't change, but no community should get worse service. We expect a prudently run but truly National Network.

Millions of Americans believe in the vision of an Amtrak worthy of a 21st Century America. At RPA we call it A Connected America, which will put 80% of Americans within 25 miles of a rail station within 25 years using a combination of high-speed/high-performance, long-distance intercity rail, commuter trains, light-rail, transit and innovative last-mile connections. A Connected America is not only good for passengers but good for business, an economic engine in the communities it serves. We believe passengers should be able to drive, bike, walk or take transit to those stations as they choose, whether traveling for work, school or leisure. They should have the choice of multiple frequencies each day in dense corridors. They should be able to take the train to airports to continue their journeys onward. In short, they expect a modern, frequent, reliable and safe service as part of a robust ecosystem of travel choices, from ride-sharing vehicles and bikes to cars, trains and jetliners. It's what America deserves.

Sincerely,
Jim Mathews
President & CEO

RAIL PASSENGERS TRAVEL ADVISORY

EAST LANSING AMTRAK STATION LOSES STAFFED TICKET WINDOW

The Amtrak station in East Lansing, MI, lost its staffed ticket window as of October 29, 2018. Amtrak's Blue Water trains will continue to serve the station daily. Customers will still have access to the station's waiting area and restrooms for the following trains each day:

- Westbound Train 365 — starting at 7 am
- Eastbound Train 364 — starting at 8 pm

AMTRAK IS PREPARING TO ACCOMMODATE A SURGE IN TRAVELERS FOR THANKSGIVING.

- On the NEC, Amtrak Acela Express and Northeast Regional trains will operate full and extended schedules with additional frequencies and added capacity during the Thanksgiving week.
- Additional NEC trains, including the Keystone (New York – Harrisburg), will require reservations in advance of travel.
- Hiawatha trains will also require reservations between Nov. 20 and Nov. 25.
- Additional capacity will be added to the Capitol Corridor, San Joaquins and Pacific Surfliner routes.
- During the holiday period, the Pacific Surfliner service will also require reservations between Nov. 21 and Nov. 25.
- The San Joaquins train will require reservations between Nov. 18 and Nov. 26.

‘RAILNATION:MIAMI’ A MAJOR SUCCESS

More than 100 rail advocates from across the country gathered in Miami for RailNation:Miami, where they heard from an outstanding line-up of speakers and presenters.

The program got underway on Friday, October 19 with a ‘Fireside Chat’ led by Jim Mathews with former Amtrak President Joe Boardman answering questions live and pre-recorded responses from former Amtrak President David Gunn; Trains Magazine Columnist Fred Frailey and Governor Michael Dukakis.

Saturday’s program included an opening presentation by Joe Boardman on his perspectives on railroad safety. Morning concurrent sessions included ‘Why The Swiss Can Build Big Projects Cheap And We Can’t...’ moderated by Sean Jeans-Gail; ‘How To Pay For Infrastructure; Unlocking The Value of Real Estate’ moderated by Abe Zumwalt and ‘Envisioning The Future Of The U.S. Rail Network; which was led by Jim Mathews. The morning concluded with a lively panel presentation ‘Passenger Rail On Freight Tracks’ with Patrick Goddard (President/CEO - Brightline); Gene Skoropowski (Retired from Brightline & California’s Capitol Corridor) and Jay Westbrook (General Manager - Florida Dispatch Company) participating.

Saturday’s lunch special guest was Stephen Gardner, Amtrak’s Executive Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer. Stephen addressed a number of timely topics and he reinforced that Amtrak is committed to a National Network.

Afternoon sessions included ‘The Miami SMART Plan’s First Mile/Last Mile Opportunities’ moderated by Joe Aiello; ‘Amtrak’s Upcoming Re-Authorization - The Next Opportunity & Challenge’ moderated by Sean Jeans-Gail and ‘Introducing RPA’s Station Volunteer Program’ moderated by Carolyn Cokley.

Attendees gathered on Saturday evening at Brightline’s MiamiCentral Station for a benefit reception in support of the Jim Hamre Scholarship Fund. Over \$2,200 was generously raised towards the initial \$100,000 Fund goal.

It was announced during the Sunday morning Council Business Session that the RPA Fall 2019 gathering will be held in Sacramento, CA over the dates of October 18 - 21, 2019. Other Sunday sessions included a review of the Summer By Rail 2018 intern trip and a lively

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

Saturday, November 17
**Association of Oregon Rail & Transit
Advocates (AORTA) Annual Meeting -
Salem, OR**

Saturday, November 17
**Empire State Passengers Association
Working Group Meeting - Schenectady, NY**

Saturday, November 17
**All Aboard Minnesota Fall Membership
Meeting - Bloomington, MN**

Saturday, December 8
**All Aboard Arizona Fall Passenger Rail
Summit - Tucson, AZ**

Friday, December 14
**TrainRiders NE 30th Annual Meeting &
Lunch - Portland, ME**

Thursday & Friday, January 24 & 25
Southwestern Rail Conference - Dallas

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!

interchange on ‘RPA’s Passenger Experience; What Do We Want To See In The Future?’

Tours held in conjunction with RailNation Miami included a Miami to Fort Lauderdale round trip on Brightline and a visit to the Gold Coast Railroad Museum.



NEW DISCOUNTS ADD VALUE TO YOUR RPA MEMBERSHIP

Whether you are from Bakersfield, Bismarck or Boston, MemberDeals has you covered. Wherever you live, work or travel across the country, MemberDeals has discounts available for all RPA members.

We are pleased to announce RPA's new partnership with MemberDeals. Now you have access to exclusive savings on movie tickets, theme parks, hotels, rental cars, tours, Broadway and Vegas shows & more through the members

only area of the RPA website.

Be sure to check often as new products and discounts are constantly being added! You must be a member in good standing and be logged in to the RPA website to have access to these internet only discounts.

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