

RAILPASSENGERS



WEEKLY HOTLINE

Issue #1,397–June 6, 2025



Take Action

Association News

Trump Administration Calls for Flat Funding for Passenger Rail

Advocates for improved passenger rail service have cause for cautious optimism following the release of the Trump Administration's fiscal year 2026 transportation budget request, which signals a continued commitment to the national Amtrak network.

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) [unveiled the proposal late last Friday](#), which includes **\$2.427 billion for Amtrak operations**—essentially the same levels of funding as in FY25 and FY24. While the purchasing power of that dollar amount has eroded due to inflation, it remains a dramatic improvement over calls to eliminate all Amtrak funding issued during the first Trump Administration.

The USDOT does call for a reallocation of resources between Amtrak's two operating accounts:

\$1.58 billion for Amtrak's National Network, an increase from \$1.29 billion in FY25

\$850 million for Amtrak's Northeast Corridor, down from \$1.14 billion in FY25

Amtrak hasn't issued a public statement in response to the budget proposal. Presumably, the railroad will be able to utilize increased ticket revenue to cover the reduction in federal assistance for NEC operations.

Other key rail and transit programs also saw flat funding or a slight reduction, including:

\$500 million for the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program, up from \$100 million in FY25;

Zero dollars for Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (FSP) Program, same as FY25; and

\$2.21 billion for the Federal Transit Administration's Capital Investments Grant (CIG) Program, same as FY25.

The document also includes advanced funding for rail programs from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) in tallying total budgetary resources, a positive indicator that the Trump Administration plans to move ahead with discretionary rail grants to states and local governments.

"This budget request indicates that the work advocates are doing is having an impact," said Jim Mathews, President & CEO of the Rail Passengers Association. "We are seeing a growing bipartisan recognition that rail is an important piece of the U.S. transportation network. With predictable investment, trains can provide Americans with a safer and more efficient travel alternative to congested roads and highways."

The U.S. House is scheduled to take up the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (T-HUD) bill in early July, meaning negotiations could still alter funding levels before the bill becomes law. Nevertheless, for rail advocates, the White House budget proposal is a strong signal that we've

made progress in building a more durable political coalition.

"We encourage the House and Senate appropriators to build on the Trump Administration's budget proposal for passenger rail programs," said Mathews. "It's up to Congress to continue this positive momentum."

Californian Leaders Vow to Move Forward with HSR

[By Sean Jeans-Gail | VP of Gov't Affairs + Policy](#)

California Democrats are organizing to defend the state's high-speed rail project following the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) June 4th announcement [that it intends to revoke \\$4 billion in federal grants](#). The FRA's decision cites delays, budget overruns, and concerns about the project's long-term sources of funding. However, Democratic leaders argue that the FRA's conclusions are misguided and fail to acknowledge the substantial progress that's been made.

In response to the FRA's announcement, the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) defended its progress, noting that over 170 miles of track are under design and construction and that the project has already generated more than 15,300 jobs. CHSRA asserts that the FRA's assessment does not reflect the reality on the ground, which includes progress in several key areas, such as:

More than 52 structures and 69 miles of guideway complete on the initial 119-mile segment currently under construction between Madera, Fresno, Kings, and Tulare counties;

- 15,300 family wage construction jobs for residents, with over 97 percent being filled by Californians, and 70 percent going to residents of the Central Valley;

- 463 miles of the 494-mile San Francisco to Los Angeles/Anaheim high-speed rail system fully environmentally cleared and ready for construction;

- \$714 million provided by the Authority to help fund the successful Caltrain Electrification Project, which has led to a 40% increase in current ridership and paves the way for future high-speed rail blended service;

- \$76.7 million provided by the Authority to support the Rosecrans/Marquardt grade separation – a public safety enhancement addressing the most hazardous grade crossing in California which is already improving road safety and efficiency; and

- \$423 million contributed by the Authority towards Los Angeles Union Station's Link Union Station (Link US) Project to upgrade and transform the station into a world-class facility.

State Senator Scott Wiener—a leading voice in the state for passing policy reforms to make it easier to [build major transit projects, including high-speed rail](#)—vowed to keep fighting for the project, stating that California will not allow federal opposition to derail the project.

"We've seen this coming and we're going to do everything we can to prevent it," said Wiener, who Chairs the State Senate Budget Committee.

"Regardless of what happens here, we're committed to making this project a reality."

Governor Gavin Newsom has [also recently reaffirmed](#) his commitment to support the project in May, emphasizing its importance for California's transportation future and environmental goals. The governor's budget—which is currently before the California State Legislature—has proposed allocating at least \$1 billion annually from the state's cap-and-trade program to ensure the project's continuation.

To hear more from Sean on this, [CLICK HERE](#)

Alstom's Upstate NY Plant 4 Opens

[By Jim Mathews/President & CEO](#)

The small upstate community of Hornell, N.Y., celebrated a very big victory this week – ribbon-cutting at Alstom's Plant 4, which now stands as the most advanced railcar-building facility in North America.

The facility is heavily outfitted with state-of-the-art robotic welders and tooling to handle fully formed bilevel vehicles, and at peak output it will be capable of producing a new railcar every three days or so.

Alstom says that the car body manufacturing process involves welding together primary parts to create assemblies as long as 80 feet. At Plant 4, automated welding robots will be used to make sure tens of thousands of welds are precise within 1 millimeter, a feat made possible by incorporating AI technology so that the robots can work together safely, efficiently, and

accurately.

Alstom says transit authority customers will benefit from enhanced quality and lower cost of production. Chicago's Metra will be the first order to run through Plant 4.

[This expansion at Alstom's Hornell site is expected to create 258 new jobs](#), including those in mechatronics engineering and robotics-related fields, while helping to retain 390 existing jobs.

"Hornell has long thrived as a hub for the railroad transportation industry, and our longstanding partnership with Alstom has played a vital role in that success," said Hornell Mayor John Buckley. "Alstom's continued investment in our city has not only created high-quality jobs and driven economic growth here in Hornell but has also delivered substantial benefits to the surrounding communities and the entire region. This collaboration strengthens Hornell's position as a leader in transportation innovation and manufacturing. We are deeply grateful to Governor Hochul and Alstom for their ongoing support and commitment to our community's future."

To continue reading, [CLICK HERE](#)

Meet The 2025 Summer Interns



We have once again partnered with [The Fund for American Studies](#) (TFAS) to select three amazing students to join us this summer.

[CLICK HERE](#) to learn more about them.

JetBlue, Brightline Team Up With Interline Ticketing

[By Jim Mathews / President & CEO](#)

"I've traveled in Europe, and there it's easy to just take a flight and a train together, no hassle. Why can't we do that here?"

How many times have you heard that...or maybe even said it yourself? This week, [JetBlue and Brightline unveiled a fly/rail partnership](#) that allows passengers to book seamless travel between origin and destination pairs the airline and the railroad serve.

Passengers will be able to book Brightline tickets as part of their JetBlue itinerary right on the [JetBlue.com](#) website, and the class of service will be consistent across the booking. In other words, if you book JetBlue's Mint business-class product and continue on Brightline to, say, Aventura, Fla., you'll enjoy Brightline Premium cabin seating and lounge access.

Fort Lauderdale was JetBlue's third-biggest market in 2024, and Orlando was the fourth.

[CLICK HERE](#) for more

Field Notes

Urgent Call to Action for Texas Rail Passengers!

Suspension Looms For Unfunded Heartland Flyer

Amtrak is warning today that its Heartland Flyer service between Dallas-Fort Worth and Oklahoma City could evaporate by October 1 unless Texas can secure its share of the Flyer's funding.

TxDOT asked the legislature for \$7.05 million in this year's session to fund Flyer operations for the next two years, but the legislature didn't approve it. That leaves the Flyer in real jeopardy, and Amtrak has said that while it's working with "state and local partners" to find a way out of the problem, the service will have to be suspended absent that funding.

"Reliable rail service provides a vital transportation option for residents and visitors alike, strengthening regional mobility, economic development, and tourism," Amtrak President Roger Harris said in a prepared statement this afternoon. "With service that supports Texas' continued economic growth and the region's connectivity, sustaining the Heartland Flyer is essential to maintaining momentum and ensuring long term mobility in the region."

Amtrak estimates that the Heartland Flyer generates \$5.3 million in direct economic benefits and an estimated \$23.7 million in overall economic benefits to the two states served. The service also supports jobs that are at risk if funding is not restored.

Amtrak also notes that the Dallas-Fort Worth region is scheduled to host more 2026 World Cup soccer matches than any other U.S. city, making it even more important to keep the Heartland Flyer service in place for transporting fans and visitors from Oklahoma and beyond.

Your Association is working with regional advocacy partners on the best steps we can take together to keep the Flyer in service.

What can you do?

[Use this link](#) to find our local representatives and contact their office to express your support for the Heartland Flyer.

Please email [Joe Aiello](#) if you have any local, state or regional stories/projects that you would like to see get highlighted in the Hotline.

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!

[Southern Rail Commission officials give update on Amtrak Service, WXXV News 25](#)

"Good things happen to those who wait."

Studies. Votes. Delays. More votes. Construction. There has been so much that has gone into the creation of the Mardi Gras service, but the official launch is coming.

[Ohio Senate Drops Passenger Rail Support from Budget, Columbus Underground](#)

Not only did the State Senate pull funding for Ohio to join the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission, they are pulling a legally required passenger rail seat on the Ohio Rail Development Commission

Be sure to check out our friends at [All Aboard Ohio](#) to see how you can help!

[San Diego to Los Angeles train routes reopening Saturday, CBS 8](#)

Good news for Surfliner & Metrolink passengers in Southern California, full service returns this Saturday (6/7) after being closed for emergency repairs since April 28th.

[Amtrak's New One-Seat Train Ride Will Finally Connect Long Island And New Jersey — And Mainland U.S., Secret NYC](#)

More on the plans to extend three Northeast Regional trains between DC & NYC out to Long Island, creating a no transfer/one-seat ride from Ronkonkoma to points south of Manhattan.

[\\$6 million renovation underway at Tampa Union Station, Bay News 9](#)

Opened the same year the Titanic set sail from Southampton, Tampa's historic Union Station is about to see its first major upgrade in 30 years.

[\\$1.3B south Phoenix light rail expansion opens in a week. What to know, AZ Central](#)

Under construction since 2019, Phoenix's 5.5-mile, \$1.3B light rail extension opens this Saturday, June 7th - and will help serve an underinvested area of the city where nearly 45% of residents have limited or no access to a personal vehicle.

[NC: Are you a rider or just train curious? NC's rail program wants to hear from you, Mass Transit Magazine](#)

Live in, or taken a train through, North Carolina? The State DOT wants to hear from you.

[Governor signs bill to study regional rail around Nevada, News 3 LV](#)

In an effort to combat growing traffic and environmental concerns around the state, Nevada Gov. Joe Lombardo is looking to expand public transportation options.



[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

JOIN ME
at **GBTA Sustainability Summit**
on June 10 in Washington, D.C.!

FEATURED SESSION
HOW TO: Integrate Rail
into Your Corporate Travel Program
See you there?

GBTA Summit 2025 | Sustainability Summit
Washington DC, June 10

Jim Mathews
President & CEO
Rail Passengers Association

At this year's [GBTA | Global Business Travel Association](#) Sustainability Summit, we're taking a broader approach—moving beyond carbon-focused discussions to include crucial social and environmental considerations.

Join us on June 10 in Washington, D.C. to collaborate, learn, and take action toward a more sustainable and responsible travel industry. Let's make the industry resilient together.

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**, kicked off the week at Alstom's newly opened Plant 4 in Hornell, N.Y., where the company and local leaders held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for what is – for now – the most-advanced passenger railcar body facility in North America. Back in DC, he worked alongside our three outstanding new interns and finished with a meeting of the Surface Transportation Board's Passenger Rail Advisory Committee.
- **Sean Jeans-Gail, Vice President of Policy**, met with local transit leaders in New York City this week, talking about how best to support the Penn Station redevelopment effort. He also talked with reporters about how to interpret the Trump Administration's recent decisions on

passenger rail funding – including a positive FY26 budget proposal and a decision to revoke \$4 billion in federal funding for California’s high-speed rail project.

- **Jonsie Stone, Chief of Staff**, processed membership dues and donations sent to the DC office, met with our auditor regarding the FY2024 financial audit and tended to the administrative and operational needs of the Association. Jonsie also spent time welcoming the Interns to the Association, and helping them get settled with their summer projects. She enjoyed getting to know them and is excited to work with Rifqa, Max M and Max P.
- **Joe Aiello, Director of Community Engagement & Organizing**, is at home recovering from surgery.
- **Kimberly Notarianni, Membership Management Consultant**, continues to support our members with a range of services, including password recovery, login assistance, membership renewals, and access to a printable membership card. As a reminder, Amtrak no longer requires presentation of a Rail Passengers Association membership card when traveling—your RPA member ID is automatically applied when you book your tickets.
- **Lili Leonard, Development Assistant**, looks forward to meeting our new interns and working with them on revitalizing our Community Partners program! Outreach to prospective corporate supporters continues.


Starting **Wednesday, February 19th**, all membership, donation, and event registration transactions are being processed through **CharityEngine**. **Neon** is no longer the Association’s CRM of record.


?? If you have the **Neon User Center** bookmarked, please update it to: <https://membership.railpassengers.org/usercenter>.

?? Your **Neon username and Account ID** have already been transferred to CharityEngine. However, because your **password was unique to Neon**, you will need to reset it when logging in for the first time.

Below is a screenshot of the **CharityEngine Constituent Portal** for reference.

Log in

 User Name



 Password

☒ Remember me

[Forgot password?](#)

LOG IN

Over the coming weeks and months, we will continue to enhance the system. If you have any questions or need assistance, please [email Kimberly A. Notarianni](#)

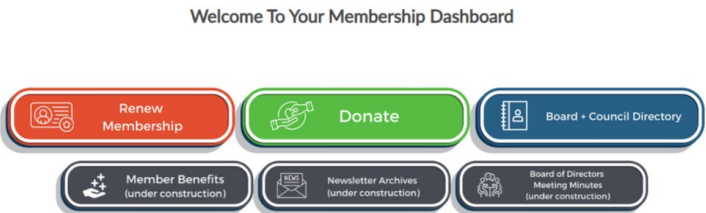
As with any upgrade, there may be minor hiccups. Your Association staff is here to help and if necessary, work with CharityEngine to gain the answers. We are excited by the full complement of options and benefits that will be available to our supporters through one system.

Thank you for your patience and cooperation.

?? New Dashboard Update in Your Constituent Portal!

When you access your constituent portal this week, you'll notice an exciting update to your **dashboard!**

We've added **new buttons** to make navigating your membership tools even easier:



Please note that some of the links are still under construction as we continue transitioning to our new software platform, **CharityEngine**.

?? **Membership Renewals:**

If you receive a renewal email, you can now access your renewal form directly through your dashboard or by clicking the link in the email.

?? **Important Note for RENEWAL on Membership Display**

The steps you take to **renew your membership** now mimic the “join” process. Don’t be alarmed—your historical membership data from NEON has been successfully transferred to **CharityEngine**. The current renewal process is designed to help you **verify your contact information, Amtrak Guest Rewards preference, and communication settings**.

?? If your NEON membership was set to **auto-renew**, your membership will continue to auto-renew in CharityEngine as well. We encourage all members to **log in and review your account** to ensure everything looks correct.

You will be issued a **new RPA member number** through CharityEngine, but your original number is still valid. You’re welcome to use **either number** when purchasing Amtrak tickets.

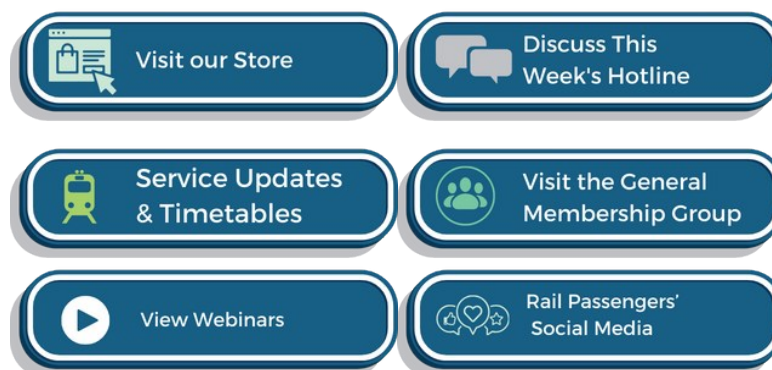
?? **About Your New Member Number:**

Your new membership number will contain **seven digits**.

?? **Only use the first SIX digits** if you’re using your new CharityEngine number when prompted during an Amtrak ticket purchase. Amtrak hasn’t updated their system yet to recognize the full 7-digit number.

?? Thank you for your patience as we continue working to enhance your member experience. We’re committed to making the new portal smooth, intuitive, and reliable!

We Have Merch!



Rail Passengers Timetables

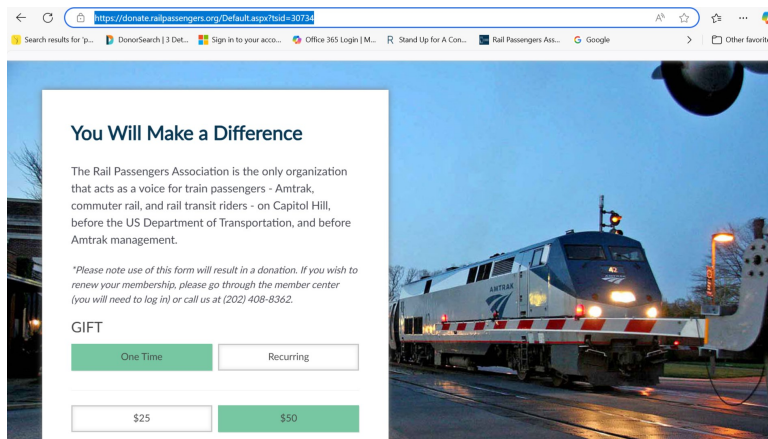
Thanks to a collaborative effort between Rail Passengers NYS Council Member Nathanael Nerode & juckins.net's Chris Juckins, we have been able to completely update our timetables resource page.

[CLICK HERE](#)

Donate Online with Confidence

You can donate to the Rail Passengers Association online with confidence, knowing your credit card information is secure. Charity Engine uses industry-standard SSL technology to keep your information secure. Don't wait for a paper appeal to donate, support the Association today by donating here. When the web browser shows a lock next to the URL, it means that it's an HTTPS, and it's secure:

<https://donate.railpassengers.org/Default.aspx?tsid=30734>



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!

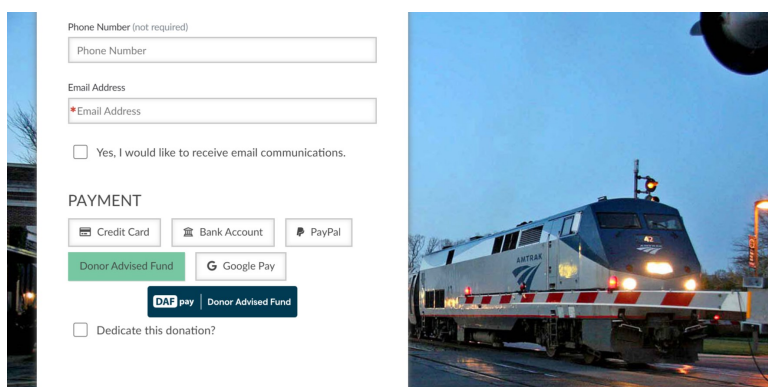
With multiple secure, protected methods of payment, you have more flexibility in the way dues are paid. Skip the hassle and [contact us](#) today for help setting up automatic or online payments.

- 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

Use Your Donor Advised Fund (DAF) to Donate, Renew or Join Online

You can now donate or join/renew your membership, online, through your donor advised fund using DAFpay. All Rail Passengers forms now include a "Donor Advised Fund" button under Payment.

Donation Form:

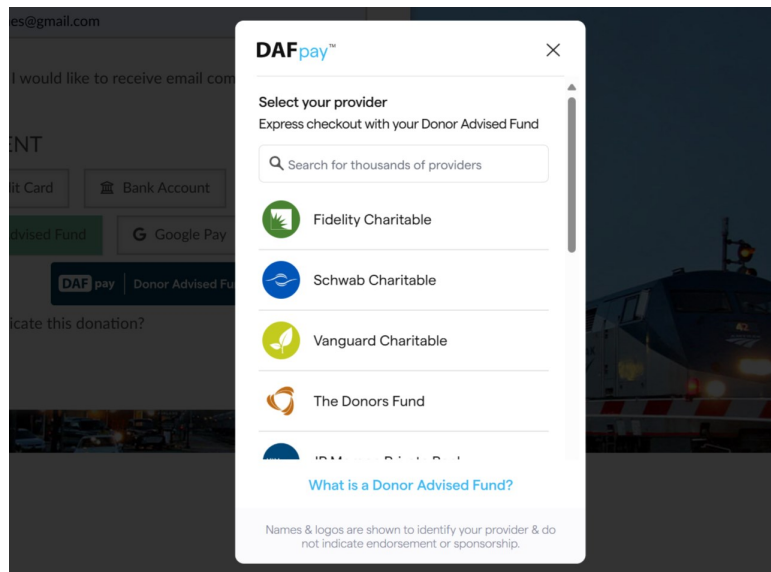


Membership Form:

The screenshot shows a membership form with the following elements:

- Three checkboxes: "Rail Passengers' Webinar Series", "Other", and "Yes, I prefer communication by email rather than by mail."
- A "PAYMENT" section with four buttons: "Credit Card", "Bank Account", "Donor Advised Fund" (highlighted in black), and "Google Pay".
- A "CAPTCHA" section with a checkbox "I'm not a robot" and a CAPTCHA image.
- A red asterisk (*) below the CAPTCHA.
- A "DAF pay | Donor Advised Fund" button at the bottom right.

After selecting Donor Advised Fund as your payment preference, you will be taken to a DAFpay screen to select your donor advised fund provider, ie., Fidelity Charitable, Vanguard Charitable, Daffy, etc.



Select your provider, then follow their prompts. If you need to provide information on Rail Passengers Association, please use the below:

National Association of Railroad Passengers, Inc.
dba Rail Passengers Association
1200 G Street, NW
Suite 520
Washington, DC 20005
Contact: Jonsie Stone, jstone@narprail.org
Tax ID: 36-2615221

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 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.

Charity Navigator



★ FOUR-STAR ★

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:



RAIL PASSENGERS

EST. 1967

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