



House T&I Passes Passenger Train Bill

The House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure passed H.R. 6003, the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act, on May 22.

Chairman James Oberstar (D-MN) said, "Today's markup is a historic milestone, because the legislation...is a truly significant and long overdue investment in the nation's passenger rail system. We can address many of the nation's most pressing transportation problems by improving Amtrak's service and operations, because increased passenger rail ridership will alleviate growing highway and airport congestion."

On May 8, Oberstar and Ranking Member John Mica (R-FL) held a news conference to announce they had reached agreement on the bill. The Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Wastes, chaired by Corinne Brown (D-FL), held a May 14 hearing on the bill and passed it on May 20.

Please ask your Representative to co-sponsor H.R. 6003. More co-sponsors increases chances for House passage—and a conference with the Senate on S.294—this year. Visit our website and click on "Action Alert" at the top right for full contact information.

H.R. 6003 authorizes \$14.4 billion over five years for Amtrak capital and operating grants, state intercity passenger grants, and high-speed rail. It also:

- requires Amtrak, within nine months of enactment, to give Congress a plan to restore service between Sanford, FL, and New Orleans. Amtrak is to consult with representatives of rail passengers, rail labor, railroads whose tracks might be used, and the four states. \$1 million is allocated for this process.

- authorizes congestion grants "to states, or to Amtrak in cooperation with states" to improve capacity at five, specific chokepoints, including Chicago-Porter, IN (page one photo, April News).

- requires the Surface Transportation Board (STB) to study effectiveness of existing law regarding dispatching prior-



At May 8 news conference announcing introduction of H.R. 6003, (l. to r.) Reps. Bruce Braley (D-IA), Corrine Brown (D-FL), Grace Napolitano (D-CA), Chairman Jim Oberstar (D-MN), Daniel Lipinski (D-IL), Ranking Member John Mica (R-FL) and Bill Shuster (R-PA).

ity for Amtrak trains and to recommend regulatory or legislative changes to improve effectiveness. [This is weaker than S.294. See Jan. News, page one.]

- requires the DOT Inspector General to recommend to Congress a process for DOT "to consider proposals by Amtrak to

"I was someone that said 10 or 15 years ago I'd never get out of my car. That's not the case today."

—Rep. Bill Shuster (R-PA)
Ranking Member, House T&I
Railroads Subcommittee

serve underperforming routes, and routes not currently served by Amtrak."

- requires DOT within 60 days to request proposals for financing, design, construction and operation of a New York-Washington "less-than-two-hour express service."

- requires the Amtrak Inspector General within nine months to "report on Amtrak's utilization of its facilities, including" the Beech Grove, IN, shops.

- requires a STB forum "to help complete stalled commuter rail negotiations."

The Committee's release and bill summary is at <http://transportation.house.gov/> then [click on "News" and "5/22/2008 T&I Approves Historic Amtrak Legislation"]. ■

Olver Honored With Golden Spike Award



NARP President George L. Chilson (l) presents Rep. John Olver (D-MA) with the George Falcon Golden Spike Award on April 30. The award recognizes Olver's "efforts to preserve and expand passenger rail service" as Ranking Member and now Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies.

California Amtrak Detective Mumford Wins Burch Safety Award

Amtrak Detective John "Jake" Mumford won the 2008 Dr. Gary Burch Memorial Safety Award. It was presented at NARP's Capitol Hill reception April 30.

The award honors individuals who have significantly enhanced rail passenger safety. It is sponsored by the family of Dr. Burch, who died in a 1991 passenger train derailment in South Carolina.

"Because security and safety go hand-in-hand, it is a particular honor for us to be able to spotlight the efforts of Detective Mumford this year," said Bette Burch.

Mumford is detailed to provide security services for California's Capitol Corridor. He was selected for his outstanding commitment to policing one of Amtrak's most heavily-traveled corridors.

"Detective Mumford carries out his duties with a smile, with authority and with a helping hand," said Eugene Skoropowski, managing director of the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority, which manages the Capitol Corridor.

Mumford has been praised in passenger surveys for his customer-friendly outreach and has received accolades from area police departments for fostering cooperation and coordination among various public safety departments. Mumford regularly attends local police pre-shift briefings, and maintains dialogue with Union Pacific, BART, and Sacramento



(l. to r.) Amtrak Pres./CEO Alex Kummant, Bette Burch, Detective John "Jake" Mumford, Amtrak Police Chief John O'Connor, Michael Burch, and Amtrak Police Deputy Chief Phil Arnold

RT (transit) police.

In opening remarks, Michael Burch, son of Dr. Burch and Bette noted that Mumford goes far above and beyond the call of duty. "He has the leadership and initiative to personally stop wherever he encounters a solo local officer making a routine traffic stop to act as cover or backup...(which) has developed a very positive rapport with local police officers and has left a positive impression about Amtrak and the Capital Corridor."

According to Skoropowski, after one such stop, local officers are known to have told colleagues, "Hey, you won't believe who stopped today to cover me on a routine traffic stop—Amtrak Police!"

Skoropowski and Michael Burch noted Mumford's recent work on the investigation, apprehension, and prosecution of local gang members who terrorized communities along the route and attacked an Amtrak train crew on April 16, 2007.

Mumford told the reception attendees that he has a simple motto: "Today, I will try to make the world around me a little safer, one small act at a time."

The Burch family noted these other outstanding nominees:

- The BNSF Railway Seattle Commuter Operations team, which developed an innovative and aggressive safety plan;
- Amtrak Mechanical Superintendent Bernard Campbell, who established new procedures to ensure rail car and station safety in Washington D.C.;
- Amtrak's Southwest Division Cross-Functional Safety Team, which initiated an in depth safety study resulting in recommendations to significantly lower passenger risks on *Pacific Surfliners*, and
- Daniel Corcoran, who as Union Pacific's manager of Signal Projects in Chicago developed a safety device for disabling and reestablishing railroad crossing protections affected by track work. ■

More information on the Burch Award is on the NARP website, click on Info & Links, then NARP Awards (scroll down).

Young People Gain Visibility at NARP



Taken April 30 at NARP's Capitol Hill reception, this shows some of the young people active in NARP. (l. to r., back row) Board Member Ryan Stern, Asst. Dir. David Johnson, Transp. Assistant Darryl Yates, Communications Associate Matthew Melzer; (front row) member and part-time volunteer Peter Roberts, Board Member Dennis Lytton. NARP has worked to increase youth involvement in train advocacy, to insure it has a strong future. Yates on May 19 left to work for Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-MD), who is on the Railroads Subcommittee. Darryl will focus on transportation and on liaison with Baltimore-area churches and clergy. We appreciate Darryl's fine work in his two-year NARP internship and are glad he remains involved in transportation.

First Annual National Train Day Heralds Push for More Trains

On Saturday, May 10, at stations nationwide, NARP, its members, and dozens of volunteers joined Amtrak to celebrate the anniversary of the Golden Spike with the first annual National Train Day.

Volunteer event organizers elevated the occasion from a general celebration of train travel to a focused call to action for citizens to demand that policymakers significantly grow our national passenger train network. The message reached thousands of Americans in one day.

While the labor of distributing literature about NARP's Grow Trains Campaign and Vision Plan was important, the committed work of the volunteers to successfully bring the events to fruition with a variety of activities began months earlier.

Amtrak focused on New York City, Washington, Chicago and Los Angeles, but did write all on-line mayors encouraging them to observe Train Day and, in response to volunteer efforts, gave support in other cities. One example: an equipment display in Tampa complementing family-friendly attractions such as musical acts, Radio Disney, and an Operation Lifesaver display. Such festivities were duplicated at dozens of other stations.

Former, long-time NARP Board Member Doras Briggs received the first California Golden STAR award (photo). The award honors "advocates from California who are dedicated to the cause of passenger rail." Briggs founded the successful, volunteer California Station Host Program. At 89, she still greets and assists passengers most mornings at Emeryville, where she began the program in 2001. Station Host volunteers also came out in force May 10 to greet travelers at many other California stations.

Thanks to the work of volunteers, local, state, and federal elected officials supported Train Day. Several cities passed proclamations, including Dallas, Emeryville, Fort Worth, Tampa and Toledo. Toledo also declared support for NARP's Grow Trains Campaign. At the Toledo event, State Sen. Teresa Fedor (D) presented a proclamation from the Ohio Senate. In La Crosse, WI, State

Sen. Dan Kapanke (R) and Rep. Jennifer Shilling (D) joined local officials to promote adding trains in Wisconsin.

Marshall, TX leveraged Train Day to ratify the formation of a coalition in the "Ark-La-Tex" region to seek federal funding for the South Central Higher Speed Rail Corridor between Marshall and Shreveport/Bossier, with goal of extending service to Fort Worth and Meridian. The East Texas and North Louisiana Councils of Governments signed a Memorandum of Understanding, building on a similar agreement that East Texas and Central Texas signed last August.

Representatives from the councils of government, Amtrak, NARP, the Texas Eagle Marketing and Performance Organization (TEMPO) and the East Texas Corridor Council were joined by local officials, Arkansas House Majority Leader Steve Harrelson (D), and staffers of Sens. Landrieu (D-LA) and Vitter (R-LA).

Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) and 20 colleagues sponsored a resolution supporting "the goals and ideals of National Train Day," though it stalled on the floor as at least one senator objected. The House passed on voice vote a similar resolution introduced by Railroads Subcommittee Chair Corrine Brown (D-FL). On Train Day, Brown rode the *Silver Meteor* with a church group from Jacksonville to Winter Park, and Rep. Dave Loebsack (D-IA) spoke at the Mt. Pleasant station. On May 3, Rep. Ciro Rodriguez (D-TX) rode *Sunset Limited* from El Paso to Del Rio to promote train travel and discuss the economy with local officials. ■



Visitors at Washington Union Station waited nearly an hour to view equipment on display.

—Photo: Matthew Melzer

Missouri: Big Step Forward

Missouri lawmakers approved \$5 million for capital improvements on the Union Pacific St. Louis-Kansas City line. This will add passing sidings to improve reliability of state-funded Amtrak trains. A week earlier, the legislature approved the full \$8 million in necessary operating assistance for Amtrak for the fiscal year that begins July 1. Missourians, thank you for your work and please thank your state legislators!

Downeaster Correction

Top *Downeaster* stations in FY 2007 were Boston, Portland, Exeter, Durham. (Our May page-one caption put Durham second.)



Doras Briggs receives California Golden STAR (State Advocate of Rail) award from (l. to r.) Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority (CCJPA) Chair Forrest Williams, Emeryville Mayor Ken Bukowski, Amtrak Asst. Supt. Anthony Chapa, Caltrans Rail Div. Chief William Bronte and CCJPA Managing Director Eugene Skoropowski. The award was presented at Emeryville's National Train Day event.

—Photo courtesy CCJPA



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our mission: a modern, customer-focused national passenger train network that provides a travel choice americans want.

Kummant Concerned About NY Penn Station Capacity

At the May 14 hearing on H.R. 6003 (lead story), Rep. Albio Sires (D-NJ) asked Amtrak President & CEO Alex Kummant what impact a new Hudson River rail tunnel would have on Amtrak. Kummant's statement was clear:

"Our biggest concern is the total capacity on a north-south basis through

New York. And so, I think a legitimate question to ask is, 'Is there going to be a tunnel that reaches into Penn Station and allows the total Northeast Corridor capacity to expand? Or is it only something for New Jersey going into the City?'

"I think that's something we continue to have fairly strong feelings about and would like to continue a dialogue on...If there is an overall design and structure that precludes any capacity expansion on north-south, I would say that's an issue for the entire region. It's not just Amtrak's issue, and that's something we need to be talking about."

This is consistent with NARP's concerns; see "New York City 'Dead-End' Tunnels: Missed Service, Security Opportunities" (May News). ■

Rail Trip Catalogue Available Free to NARP Members

An extra benefit of NARP membership: the Special Edition of The International Railway Traveler's "The IRT Society's Best-Loved Railway Journeys 2008," available to all active NARP members free of charge through July 31, 2008.

The 52-page, all-color booklet includes detailed descriptions of the World's Top 25 Trains, as chosen by the editors, writers and members of the 25-year-old Society.

NARP members should write or email name, address and NARP membership number to: NARP Offer, The Society of International Railway Travelers, 2010 Edgeland Ave., Suite 100, Louisville, KY 40204; phone (502) 454-0277; email: tourdesk@irtsociety.com; web site: www.irtsociety.com.

Perl Joins VIA Rail Board

Anthony Perl, a former NARP intern and board member, joined VIA Rail Canada's board in April. He is director of the Urban Studies program at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver and chairs Transportation Research Board's Committee on Intercity Passenger Rail Systems. With Richard Gilbert, Perl authored the 2008 book, *Transport Revolutions: Moving People and Freight Without Oil*, which emphasizes electrified railroads.

Funding: Hard Work Ahead

Progress on H.R. 6003 (lead story) is great news, but the fight for decent passenger train funding has a long way to go. An authorization bill does not provide funds. Real money comes through appropriations, or tax credit and tax exempt bonds, or an allocation for trains in a cap-and-trade bill like S. 2141 (March News) which may be on the Senate floor in June.

Tax credit bonds for passenger trains face a big challenge. At the May 14 hearing, Chairman Oberstar said the Congressional Budget Office told Ways and Means Committee staff that it will take at least \$4 billion of offsets (spending cuts and/or tax increases) to "pay for" the tax credit bonds and tax exempt bonds (\$12 billion each, over 10 years) in H.R. 6004, the revived "RIDE-21" bill aimed at providing real money for high speed rail. Oberstar: "Our two committees will have to work on that."

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Coast Starlight—Effective with departure from Los Angeles on May 6 and Seattle May 7, through operation resumed. Official re-launch date (with Parlour Cars and upgraded amenities): June 10.

City of New Orleans detour—Due to a sinkhole south of Memphis station, the *City* detours around Memphis. Memphis passengers are using a temporary site east of town; buses leave the station for the site at 6:30 am and 9:15 pm. Checked baggage service continues but, also due to the sinkhole, the only parking is on Main St. in front of the station.