

Why have Council meetings?

Twice a year the NARP Council of Representatives gathers—in Washington, DC in the spring and somewhere else in the country during the fall. The spring meeting is focused on Congress, Amtrak and the administration while the fall meeting allows us an up-close view of the rail transportation experience, and its challenges and opportunities, in a different part of the country, and to interact with local officials.

Your Council of Representatives represents almost every state in the nation. There are 124 positions (114 State Representatives plus up to 10 At-Large Representatives). All State Representative positions will be up for election in January 2014—you might consider running for one of them from your state. At-Large Representatives will be elected by the Council at the April 2014 Council meeting, along with the 15-member Board of Directors. Approximately 80-90 Representatives attend every meeting.

So what happened last April? The meeting was held in Alexandria, VA but we will be moving next year to the Doubletree Hotel in Silver Spring, MD. Some of the speakers were Trains Magazine passenger correspondent Bob Johnston, Amtrak VP for Government Affairs Joe McHugh, and Amtrak Chief—Corporate Research and Strategy Mark Yachmetz. During the meeting every council member joined one of the following Committees: Marketing, Fundraising, National Train Day, NARP's Fiftieth Anniversary, Legislative, Nominating, Finance, Hotel, and

Service Delivery.

But the big event for the meeting was our annual Day on the Hill. Most Council members, plus a few general NARP members who participated, had appointments with members of Congress and/or their staff. Our people all were equipped with position papers so they could answer the question "What do you want us to do?"

That evening we held our annual Capitol Hill Reception at the Rayburn House Office Building. We had the wonderful Gold Room for this event. This year, Burch Memorial Safety Award was presented to Amtrak Principal Engineer for Instrumentation and Wayside Design Michael Tomas. Every year we give Golden Spike Awards to outstanding legislators. This year, Sen. Mark Kirk (R-IL) and Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR) got the awards.

But the highlight of the reception was the return of Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood for the third year in a row. He gave a great speech on passenger trains, NARP, and the current administration.

The spring meeting is a wonderful opportunity for Council members (and any NARP member can attend) to get together and gather new information that will be helpful in their grass roots efforts in their home area. Sometimes you can feel like you are out there alone and no one understands what you are saying. This is an opportunity to interact with fellow members and know that you are not alone in your crusade. ■

JOIN US IN JACKSONVILLE - OCTOBER 19-20

NARP's volunteer Council of Representatives meets in Jacksonville at the Hyatt Regency Riverfront Hotel Sat.-Sun., Oct. 19-20. NARP members are welcome!

Confirmed speakers: All Aboard Florida VP Eugene Skoropowski; Hussein Cumber, Executive VP, Florida East Coast Industries (AAF's parent); Quintin Kendall, CSX VP—State Government & Community Affairs; Anthony Perl, Professor of Political

Science and Director of the Urban Studies Program, Simon Fraser University (Vancouver, BC).

Registration is \$200 if we receive payment by Oct. 4 [Saturday Only \$100, Sunday Only \$80]. There are youth and first-time-attendee discounts. To register, and to reserve a room at the Hyatt at NARP's rate, go to www.narprail.org/register or call 202-408-8362.

NARP News

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This has news through August 2.
Vol. 47, No. 5 was mailed July 2.

Chicago-Columbus, OH Corridor Studied

A feasibility study commissioned by the Fort Wayne-based Northeast Indiana Passenger Rail Association (NIPRA) says a Chicago-Fort Wayne-Columbus passenger train corridor would create 26,800 full-time jobs and \$700 million in household income along the corridor, at a cost of \$1.3 billion. It could be completed by 2020 if funding permits.

The \$100,000 study envisions trains traveling at top speeds between 110 and 130 mph, making the Columbus-Chicago trip in less than four hours.

The study says the potential economic returns make the line a strong candidate for federal and state funding and public-private partnerships. A separate study funded by OrthoWorx, Inc. found that the corridor would greatly benefit its large Warsaw, IN campus.

NIPRA now is raising the \$2 million needed for an environmental assessment before federal funds can be sought to help pay for a \$10 million engineering plan.

All Aboard Ohio's Ken Prendergast said, "The conventional wisdom has always been we'll get the Feds to pay for it. I think that's starting to change." ■

NARP, NJ-ARP Fight Princeton Line Cutback, Station Relocation

NARP and the New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers (NJ-ARP) filed a petition with the US Surface Transportation Board (STB) June 24, urging it to intervene to prevent New Jersey Transit (NJT) from cutting back its Princeton Branch by 460 feet from its current terminus. During construction, the line would be cut back even further.

The cutback would make way for Princeton University's planned development of an arts and entertainment complex. This would force passengers to walk an additional 700 feet from Nassau Street to the station (a full half mile from Palmer Square, the town's focal point), while passengers in wheelchairs would have to travel a further 1,100 feet for a ramp to access the platform.

The university has rejected suggestions to incorporate rail service of any kind within the arts complex.

"Moving the Princeton Station downhill and away from the population center would be to the detriment of NJ Transit's passengers, most particularly the disabled, senior citizens and—because of isolation of the proposed new station location—women (and men) who use the train at night," said NJ-ARP Director and NARP member Phil Craig. "The longer uphill walk will be especially difficult during inclement weather, when many passengers have to slog through snow, ice or rain."

NARP/NJ-ARP argue that moving the Princeton station to a less convenient location will result in a loss of passengers, reducing the rail service's economic viability and inhibiting any future extension.

The electrified, 2.9-mile Princeton Branch, commonly known as the Dinky, connects Princeton with NJT and Amtrak trains at Princeton Junction.

NARP/NJ-ARP contend that the University's proposed action, with which NJT has agreed,

usurps federal jurisdiction over rail line abandonments. Our petition asks the STB to declare jurisdiction over the Branch and require that any length reduction take place only with the STB's express approval.

This NARP/NJ-ARP effort is supported by an earmarked grant from a generous donor. ■

BOMBARDIER TAKES OVER MARC TRAIN OPERATIONS

Bombardier Transportation won the operating contract for the Maryland Area Rail Commuter (MARC) Camden (Washington-Baltimore) and Brunswick (Washington-Martinsburg, WV) Lines. They were previously run by track owner CSX, which did not want to continue as operator. Bombardier agreed the contract with Maryland on Oct. 16, 2012 and took over operations July 1, 2013. Bombardier hired almost all CSX conductors and engineers in MARC service. Amtrak continues to operate the MARC Penn Line.

CORRECTION

The man playing the role of Collis P. Huntington on p. 4 of our June-July issue was James E. Casto, member of the C.P. Huntington Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society and participant in the WV Dept. of Humanities' "History Alive" program.



Responses to T&I Questions

from page 1

senger.' A passenger-mile is one passenger traveling one mile. ... Based on what Amtrak has reported for Fiscal 2012, 40 cents per passenger-mile appears to be a reasonable threshold. ... This assumes use of Amtrak's current methodology [except that] *Texas Eagle* and *Sunset Limited* must be considered as a single route."

The latter point is due to the illogical way the two trains, which run combined San Antonio-Los Angeles, are reported. The *Eagle* is credited with all revenue from any trip that "transits" San Antonio yet charged with only a small portion of San Antonio-West costs. This even includes an Austin-Los Angeles passenger—who rides just 82 miles on

the *Eagle* proper but 1,423 miles on the combined train. No wonder *Sunset* numbers look bad—they're nonsense!

But "trends on [*Sunset+Eagle*] were sharply positive from FY 2008 to FY 2012"—net cost per passenger dropped 16% on *Sunset* and 23% on *Eagle*.

A 40-cent threshold is far enough above the existing long-distance train average to let new services mature.

Capon included an appendix listing "huge indirect subsidies" to aviation.

On service expansion, Capon said 240 new bi-level cars and 150 new single-level cars would cost \$1.29 billion over several years and roughly increase the long-haul fleet's size by 50%. "A

much smaller acquisition would permit capacity expansion on" existing trains.

"The federal government spent billions to help the [Gulf Coast] recover [from Katrina] but omitted passenger rail, even though it was needed and is wanted. The time has come to correct this error."

Capon explained why "shifting the costs to states for Amtrak's long-distance routes would be a death sentence" for those routes. ■

At www.bit.ly/hsetiques you can see the full Q&A.

Mica's Heated Exchange with Mayor John Robert Smith

Rep. John Mica (R-FL) continued his strident criticism of Amtrak at a July 9 Railroads Subcommittee hearing on "The Role of Innovative Finance in Intercity Passenger Rail."

Mica had an "interesting" exchange at the hearing's end with John Robert Smith, the former Republican mayor of Meridian, MS, who now heads the national transportation advocacy group Reconnecting America.

Mica took exception to a pro-Amtrak letter that Smith sent to the mayor of Winter Park (in Mica's district) and other mayors which suggested the House may put "the future of the national rail system in jeopardy."

Mica took aim at Amtrak's long-distance trains, saying "on the top three ridership is down, and losses have actually increased." [From Fiscal 2008 to 2012, revenues on long-distance trains jumped 24.4% while costs rose 12.5%. The net cost (a.k.a. subsidy) per passenger-mile dropped (improved) 8.1%.]

Mica resorted to the familiar technique of suggesting that spending on the program he criticizes (Amtrak) is forcing a questionable budget cut elsewhere in the federal government.

Mica to Smith: "...they are cutting out hot meals and warm breakfasts for our troops serving overseas. Are you aware of that?"

Trains Columnist Fred Frailey, in a July 31 blog post, noted "the false choice between financing Amtrak or financing food for soldiers, the U.S. military being the most wasteful spender on the face of the earth (I support the military despite the waste; my youngest son is a Navy officer)."

Mica admires the U.K.'s Virgin Trains (major route: London-Edinburgh) and said they "went from a deficit of \$300 million to \$100 million in profit."

Smith: "That ignores the capital."

NARP's blog response noted that the government invested \$5.83 billion in track owner Network Rail in the most recent fiscal year (nationwide spending total includes London-Edinburgh).

Smith remained calm despite the intense questioning, closing with these

comments:

"When my [former] Senator, Trent Lott, saw the Mississippians who used, and saw [Amtrak] as vitally important to them—the retired couples who used that system to visit their dispersed families..., the single mothers with children, the only way they could see their grandchildren affordably was through the use of that train. The disabled vets who were on board...—he understood the importance of that train."

Watch the exchange between Smith and Mica at www.bit.ly/micasmith or read it in Fred Frailey's *trains.com* blog post.

Miami Intermodal Center: How to Get Amtrak In?

The Miami Intermodal Center (MIC), physically connected to Miami International Airport, already houses local buses, Metrorail trains and rental car agencies and will soon host Tri-Rail commuter trains. Intercity buses may also come to the MIC.

There is a problem. The MIC is just south of Northwest 25th Street, with the railroad tracks crossing that street at grade at the north end of the platforms.

Years ago, the MIC's design firm asked Amtrak, "Can you serve 1,030-foot platforms?" The answer was yes—the standard *Silver Meteor* is just under 990 feet.

However, the designer didn't know and Amtrak apparently did not explain that the train cannot access the entire platform. The bumper takes up space. The train typically stops a bit north of the bumper. And track circuits for the crossing gates for NW 25th Street are some distance south of the crossing, so crossing gates would be down when the train is in the station even if not physically blocking the crossing.

NW 25th was closed for construction in June, 2012, and will reopen this October. Permanent closure of NW 25th was considered, but local officials and landowners have pushed back.

FDOT is working to reach an agreement with Amtrak on a solution and seems likely to foot the bill.

Solutions: Extending the tracks south (\$6 million) would put locomotives in a narrow space between Amtrak and Tri-Rail buildings. Amtrak is

Promoting NARP to Cyclists



Lance Erickson

NARP Life Member Lance Erickson used this sign to advertise NARP to participants in the 40th annual RAGBRAI bicycle ride across Iowa ("world's oldest" such event) as they paused in Perry.

concerned that this would place noise and diesel exhaust in close proximity to air intakes for those buildings, which have already been built.

FDOT studied 16 alternatives, including an overpass (\$20-25 million) and tunnel (\$35-55 million). [Costs from a *Miami Herald* article posted May 23.]

One economical solution: build a "runaround road" to the next crossing north. This would improve traffic flow and safety when trains block NW 25th. This could mean MIC completion in 2014 and Amtrak service there in 2015 after the road is built.

Here is some good transit news:

- Metrorail just celebrated its first anniversary of service to the airport. "The opening of ... the Miami International Airport Station, and Orange Line service to the station, changed the way residents and visitors travel to and from the airport. ... More than 750,000 people have passed through the MIA Station since its inauguration on July 28, 2012" [www.metro-magazine.com].

- Tri-Rail set a one-day ridership record of 19,060 on Monday, June 24, 2013, when the Miami Heat basketball team held a parade to celebrate its NBA championship.

RAIL GROWTH WORLDWIDE

A Frost & Sullivan report released July 10 says the rail networks in Africa, Latin America and the Middle East are expected to double in size by 2022: www.bit.ly/frostprpt

On-Time Enforcement: Court Invalidates PRIIA Section 207 but Law Still has “Teeth”

Section 207 of the Passenger Rail Investment & Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA) empowered the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and Amtrak to jointly establish standards and metrics to “enhance enforcement of the statutory priority Amtrak’s passenger rail service has over other trains.”

Amtrak and FRA each had veto power in the event the two could not agree.

But they did agree; standards took effect in early 2010. The big change from the draft standards outlined in our April 2009 lead story was an increase, from 700 to 900, in the allowable delay minutes per 10,000 train-miles. (A train-mile is one train going one mile.)

The railroads sued, arguing that it was unconstitutional to grant Amtrak such regulatory authority.

In 2012, a district court ruled against the railroads. But on July 2, 2013, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia reversed that decision.

The court said the law inappropriately gives Amtrak, a private company for this purpose, veto power over standards if FRA and Amtrak disagreed.

Fix the Law: An obvious solution, when Congress can pass new legislation, would be to delete Amtrak from Section 207 and give FRA sole responsibility for creating standards.

This was not done originally due to concern that an unfriendly FRA might write overly lenient standards.

Section 213 Lives On as does Amtrak’s case against CN (Feb., 2012, *News*, page 5): Under Section 213, the Surface Transportation Board (STB) can investigate where on-time performance is below 80% for two consecutive calendar quarters, and *must* investigate if Amtrak or another carrier files a complaint. The STB can assess damages, such as against a host railroad that unreasonably delayed Amtrak trains.

The court decision does eliminate the part of Section 213 which empowers STB to investigate where section 207 service standards are not met.

Progress: Reacting to the court decision, the FRA’s Kevin Thompson said that, since the 2010 establishment of standards, “delays have been reduced each successive year, culminating in a historic best for Amtrak in 2012.”

An optimistic view is that this performance was heavily influenced by factors other than 207. NARP brought the then-severe late-train problem to Washington’s attention with a 2006 letter to the STB. Since then, appropriations laws and PRIIA have pressured railroads to improve. ■

NARP PARTNERS WITH TRANSIT COMMUNICATIONS CONFERENCE

OCT. 22-24 IN WASHINGTON, DC

- NARP MEMBERS SAVE 20%



The Third Annual Transit Communications Conference, hosted by the UK-based Global Transport Forum, features ideas and innovations for improving the customer experience, increasing and retaining ridership on transit and passenger rail. Participating agencies include the Washington Metro, New York City Transit, and Amtrak. NARP is a first-time partner.

It takes place Tuesday-Thursday, Oct. 22-24, at Georgetown University Hotel and Conference Center, 3800 Reservoir Rd. NW, Washington, DC.

NARP members can save 20% off the regular registration rate for the conference by registering as Government/Rail Sector attendees.

For more info and to register online: go to www.transit-comms.com or call (to the UK) 011 44 0 20 7045 0900.

Amtrak’s New Pillow Policy Aims to Save \$500,000 a Year

Amtrak on August 1 replaced free pillows on long-distance coach runs with a for-sale “Passenger Comfort Kit.” The kit has an inflatable neck rest, blanket, earplugs and eye mask. The price is \$8 in Café Cars and at the Auto Train terminal shops, and \$15 (includes ship-

ping) at store.amtrak.com. Amtrak says the kits are higher quality than those airlines sell for a higher price.

NARP expressed concern about availability of the kits to passengers who board after the Café is closed, and about adequate stocking.



Image courtesy of Amtrak

Amtrak says it will monitor sale volumes closely, adjusting stock accordingly. Online kit sales is one avenue for people who board late at night; others may follow.

Amtrak implemented the

program before completing customer research.

Two considerations were the low quality of the pillow whose distribution (and collection) has been discontinued, and the fact that the kit can be reused—so the “organized” repeat passenger need purchase the kit only once.

The transition is more abrupt for Auto Train coach passengers who formerly were given pillows *and* blankets. E-mail alerts about the new policy were sent in advance to these passengers.

This change shows skeptics that Amtrak is cost conscious. However, NARP would oppose on health grounds any Amtrak attempt to repeat its previous, ill-advised discontinuance of antimacassars (headrest covers). ■

OUR MISSION: A MODERN, CUSTOMER-FOCUSED NATIONAL PASSENGER TRAIN NETWORK THAT PROVIDES A TRAVEL CHOICE AMERICANS WANT.

New ACAC Director

Warr Retires; Clarkson Takes Over

After 15 years as Director of the Amtrak Customer Advisory Committee (ACAC), Kate Warr retired July 19.

ACAC is a volunteer body of regular Amtrak riders that gives feedback on customer service and on service concepts under consideration. Members represent users of the different Amtrak service sectors; there also are a student member and members with special needs.

Warr is much admired by ACAC members and by the Amtrak managers with whom she worked.

Warr's successor is Karen Finucan Clarkson. She has long experience as a reporter in North Carolina and Maryland and has been Director of Public Information with the American Planning Association and a public affairs specialist for the Federal Election Commission.

NARP gives administrative support for the ACAC under a contract with Amtrak; the director is a NARP employee. ■

PRIIA SECTION 209 UPDATE

Among states that must pay more for Amtrak trains from Oct. 1, under the Passenger Rail Investment & Improvement Act, it appears that all have the ability to fund the services through either legislative appropriations or the state DOT.

Heritage Circle Profile: Ken Briers

The Heritage Circle is a distinguished group of NARP members who have chosen to make a lasting contribution to NARP's work by placing NARP in their wills.

NARP Board Member Ken Briers is a retired rail consultant with Parsons Transportation who once was a Penn Central/Amtrak locomotive engineer. His wife, Sally Donner, is a Washington lobbyist. He writes:

"I have always enjoyed riding trains, but more importantly, I have learned to appreciate their significant contribution to society's mobility and to moderating climate change.

"We need to help the cause of passenger rail to succeed by spreading the word to the public and encouraging political leaders to refocus policies, regulations, and financial assistance. NARP is the best vehicle for spreading the word.

"Financial support to further the cause is essential. Those who are aware, and care, and who possess the resources to help, need to step up and do their part. I'm fortunate to be in that position to make a long term contribution, and I want to make it a part of my legacy.

"NARP is the only organization I would consider to pursue that effort. No other advocacy organization is as competent or more respected than NARP, by both beneficiaries and opponents, or has more credibility.

"Because there are so many well-financed forces aligned against the cause,



Ken Briers and Sally Donner

there is no question in my mind that the contribution is needed, and will be faithfully and positively utilized by the NARP staff to further the cause." ■

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Buses replace trains between Chicago & St. Louis Aug. 13-19 to allow for trackwork to support faster, more reliable service. *Texas Eagle* will detour Chicago-St. Louis. Buses to run in place of all *Lincoln Service* trains and connect intermediate points to the *Eagle* at St. Louis.

Amtrak's July 15 System Timetable has no significant schedule changes.