

National Association of Railroad Passengers  
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

### Upcoming Event: SmartRail USA 2015 - Charlotte, NC

NARP is a sponsor of this year's SmartRail USA Congress and Expo, being held in Charlotte, NC, October 28 & 29, 2015. NARP Chairman Robert Stewart will be a Keynote Speaker at the event and he will address 'Creating An Attractive Service For 21st Century Passengers' during his presentation. Other prominent event speakers include Richard McKinney, Chief Information Officer at USDOT; Joe Szabo, former FRA Administrator and Frank Vacca, Chief Program Manager with the California High-Speed Rail Authority.

Being held at the Charlotte Convention Center, the two-day event will include numerous presentations and panels of interest to rail and transit advocates, in addition to a transportation industry vendor expo, where NARP will have an informational booth.

All NARP members are invited to participate for free in the event. Registration for access to the Technical Seminars, Expo



and Networking Opportunities is complimentary and can be made via a link on the NARP website's Event Page for SmartRail USA 2015. Other registration packages offering full VIP access for the entire event are also available at a discounted rate for NARP members. Complete event and agenda information can be linked to from our Event Page also. If you have further questions please contact Bruce Becker, Director of Special Events, at the NARP office. ■

## NARP TRAVELER'S ADVISORY

- Adirondack, Empire Service, Ethan Allen Express, Lake Shore Limited and Maple Leaf Trains: Possible Delays between Hudson and Albany-Rensselaer through December 2015.
- Blue Water and Wolverine Service Summer Schedules, effective through October 30, 2015.
- Wolverine Train 350 Will Not Stop at Troy, MI - Monday through Saturday Only, effective through September 30, 2015.
- Silver Star Trains 91 & 92 Sleeping Car Fare and Food Service Test is running through January 31, 2016.



# NARPnews

*"THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS SAID THE BILL WILL BE A POSITIVE STEP NEEDED TO 'BUILD THE MODERN RAIL SYSTEM AMERICAN WORKERS AND BUSINESSES WILL NEED TO COMPETE IN A 21ST CENTURY GLOBAL ECONOMY."*

CHAIRMAN JOHN THUNE - JULY 29, 2015, FROM THE FLOOR OF THE SENATE

## Senate Passes 4-Year Rail Bill; House Reticence Requires Another Short-Term Extension

The U.S. Senate was just able to beat a July 31st deadline to pass a long-term transportation bill -- which includes a four-year passenger rail title, a truly intermodal surface transportation bill that constituted a first in Congress -- by a vote of 65 to 34 on July 30. However, House leaders settled for a three-month extension of current law before adjourning for August recess, meaning Congress will have to readdress the issue in the autumn.

Senate Republican leadership successfully pushed a comprehensive transportation bill that provides a six-year framework for roads and mass transit, and a four-year framework for intercity passenger trains. NARP hailed the rail title, the Railroad Reform, Enhancement, and Efficiency Act of 2015 (R2E2), as a game changer for America's train passengers.

However, at more than 1,030 pages long, the bill contains a number of titles that were not vetted through the committee process, and the bill is opposed by transportation leadership in the House.

"It's 1,030 pages and this thing is going to grow," said House Transportation & Infrastructure Chairman Bill Shuster (R-Pa.). "We're not going to be able to sit and go through it... If this bill comes over and we take it, the House will not be able to speak. And that for me and my colleagues is a real, real problem."

In spite of the House's reluctance, public transit champions remained focused on improving the Senate bill, prevailing in their campaign to restore an 80-20 split between highways and transit.

The initial draft of the Developing a Reliable and Innovative Vision for the Economy (DRIVE) Act was based on a 94-6 split in

(Continued on page 3)



### America By Rail Donates New England Train Tour for Raffle

America by Rail, the leader in rail tours and train vacations, has generously donated a New England Fall Foliage tour for NARP to raffle off as a fundraiser. Raffle tickets were \$150 and will benefit our legislative efforts on Capitol Hill.

The trip, valued at \$5,690, is an eight-day tour of top spots in New England, including a ride on three scenic railroads in New Hampshire. Raffle tickets are fully tax-deductible.

The raffle winner was selected on August 10 through a software program called RandomPicker. We'll announce the winner in the next edition of NARP News. The trip will take place between October 12-20, 2015; we hope to be able to provide pictures of a lucky NARP member in the fall. ■

### Avis Budget Offers Car Rental Discounts For NARP Members

As summer winds down, it's not too late to take a vacation. If driving is involved, NARP members can save up to 25 percent off with Avis and can get \$25 off rentals of five days or more.

The deal covers compact car and above, but excludes Signature Series vehicles. Rental must be a minimum of five consecutive days, including a Saturday night.

The offer is valid at participating Avis locations in the contiguous U.S. and Canada. Use Avis Worldwide Discount (AWD) #A031500 and coupon #MUGA045 when making your reservation.

Go to NARPrail.org for a complete list of member discounts. ■

## Deborah Fischer Stout: All About Advocacy

Deborah Fischer Stout is the president of the Northern Flyer Alliance (NFA), an Olathe, Kansas-based advocacy group dedicated to intercity passenger rail expansion between Fort Worth, Texas, and Kansas City through Oklahoma City and Wichita. She has been a NARP member since 2011.

"I joined NARP at the recommendation of fellow NFA board member Gary Lanman, who joined the year before," said Stout. "He went to a NARP convention and became convinced that the organization would help the board of the Northern Flyer Alliance become more aware of national legislation and initiatives affecting passenger rail."

Several decades ago, there was a long distance corridor known as the Lone Star that was eliminated in 1979, said Stout, leaving a 200-mile service gap between the Wichita metro area and Oklahoma City. "If that gap is closed, it would reconnect Chicago with Dallas and the Gulf Coast, and segmentally, would reestablish that corridor, as certain sections are served by several different trains," she said. "Currently, if you live in the Kansas City

metro area, you have to travel to St. Louis to catch the Texas Eagle to get to Dallas. With so much business transpiring between the Kansas City and Dallas, this is an unacceptable, inefficient option."

A key part of that is also increasing ridership on the Southwest Chief, said Stout. "Reestablishing this route is imperative for the Chief's long-term future. Studies show closing this gap would increase ridership on the Heartland Flyer from 80,000 per year to 200,000 per year, bringing people from Houston, Dallas and Oklahoma City north to connect with the Southwest Chief," she said.

With millions of Americans stuck for hours in traffic jams every day, the U.S. is squandering its competitive advantage on an inefficient transportation network, said Stout. "Low hanging fruit projects, such as the Heartland Flyer Service Gap, that are low in cost, have short construction horizons and that would generate high ridership should be prioritized over more expensive, longer-term initiatives."

How can NARP members help? Stout advises members to contact their State representative,



Deborah Fischer Stout

and ask them what help is needed to grow grassroots support. She also advise members to find opportunities to give community presentations on rail issues. Stout said members can also help by: working with representatives to create regular regional meetings if none currently exist; writing constructive, informative letters to the editor on rail issues; and watch for NARP Action Alerts and contact legislators as requested.

For NARP volunteer opportunities, go to [www.narprail.org/get-involved/volunteer/](http://www.narprail.org/get-involved/volunteer/) ■

## Registration Open for Fall Council And Membership Meeting

Make plans NOW to participate in NARP's 2015 Fall Council and Membership Meeting, Friday, October 16 to Sunday, October 18, in Indianapolis, Indiana. The host hotel for the meeting is the beautiful and historic Crown Plaza at Union Station in downtown Indianapolis, adjacent to the Amtrak station.

If you have never attended a NARP Membership Meeting this is the perfect event for you. With opportunities to meet rail supporters from across the country and sessions geared to help you be a more effective advocate, plus updates on NARP's latest initiatives to reach our goal of 'A Connected America', you will leave Indianapolis empowered, engaged and energized; ready to make your voice heard for rail in your local community.

To that end, participants in the fall meeting will have access to breakout sessions in three tracks: Advocacy, Current Issues and America's Transportation Future. Under advocacy, participants will learn best practices and create a toolkit for efforts and learn how to get involved with local transportation issues.

The event agenda includes a comprehensive tour of Amtrak's Beech Grove Maintenance Facility on Friday; speakers, presentations and

workshops of interest to all rail and public transportation advocates on Saturday; followed by NARP Council business sessions on Sunday through early afternoon.

Event participation (including for Friday's Beech Grove Shop tour) is open to all NARP members. Space is limited and advance registration is required. Complete registration information is now available on the NARP website, [www.narprail.org](http://www.narprail.org), under the Events tab. Group rate guest room reservations at the Crowne Plaza are also now available via a direct link on the Fall 2015 Meeting webpage. Complete agenda information, including a full list of all speakers and presenters, will be posted on the website as details are confirmed.

"NARP will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2017, so now is the perfect time to move toward being part of the conversation about the future of America's transportation system," said President and CEO Jim Mathews. "We have a unique opportunity to rally behind local citizens and their elected political leaders to advocate for a broader vision of transportation, mobility and economic growth as part of our 'A Connected America' initiative." ■



**NARPnews**  
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This issue has news through August 3, 2015.  
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## States, Communities Mull Future Rail Plans

States and local communities are working on future transportation plans that are embracing NARP's call for "A Connected America." The 2015 Minnesota State Rail Plan calls for two levels of corridor prioritization. The top priority is advanced planning, which includes: a second Empire Builder between Chicago and the Twin Cities, the Milwaukee to Twin Cities segment of the Chicago to Twin Cities high-speed rail (between 110 mph to 150 mph), Zip Rail (an approximately 100-mile corridor located between Rochester and the Minneapolis/St. Paul Metropolitan Area for true high-speed rail) and Northern Lights Express (a proposed higher-speed rail service running 155 miles between Minneapolis and Duluth).

Phase II includes rail connections to additional intercity and commuter rail markets in Minnesota, and to an I-35 Corridor, Red River Valley, the eastern plains, Wisconsin and Canada. These proposed services are undergoing in-depth analyses that include engineering, demand analysis, and examination of project costs and benefits, according to the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

California's Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission is seeking input on a study on the feasibility of proposed passenger rail transit service along the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line, which roughly parallels Highway 1 and the coast in the county.

Reasons cited for the project include: the need to ease traffic congestion on Highway 1; fulfilling a rising demand for complete communities with good quality transit service; and building a commuter rail service that could connect with rail services to adjoining counties, the San Francisco Bay Area and Southern California. "Passenger rail service could contribute to or support many existing policies and goals of the RTC, local government, environmental groups and local business organizations," said a county report.

"As the backbone of a more diverse transportation system, rail service would need to be integrated with existing fixed route bus service," said the report. "It is not realistic to represent passenger



A rendering of the proposed Zip Rail

rail as the singular solution to many problems, yet it could provide a very strong supporting role in the future development of healthy sustainable communities in Santa Cruz County."

In Michigan, the first round of 16 public meetings hosted by Michigan By Rail was completed June 22 on the state's Coast-to-Coast Passenger Rail Study. The meetings were the first step in reestablishing passenger rail service linking Detroit, Lansing and Grand Rapids. The study is being managed by the Michigan Environmental Council in partnership with the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority and the Michigan Department of Transportation.

Supporters of the proposed service note that benefits of a coast-to-coast train include: providing a conduit for new partnerships between the world-class medical centers, and more than a dozen colleges and universities along its tracks; offering workers access to jobs along the corridor and make their commutes more pleasant and productive; giving out-of-town visitors a reliable and relaxing way to reach new cultural experiences; and helping Michigan attract and retain more of the talented workers the state needs to prosper in the future. ■

## Senate Rail Bill Must Wait Until September

(Continued from page 1)

capital funding for new projects, translating to roughly \$3.2 billion for the highway account and \$200 million for transit.

Senators committed to smart transportation planning succeeded in their fight to increase funds for new transit programs to \$815 million, restoring the traditional 80-20 split. "We fought back an effort to shortchange American commuters who depend on public transportation to get to their jobs and contribute to the economy," said Senator Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio).

Rail advocates also secured an additional \$199 million in funding for implementation of Positive Train Control, a life-saving technology that NARP has been working towards for decades. Senate Commerce Committee Chairman John Thune (R-SD) pointed to NARP's support on the floor of the Senate.

"[The PTC grant program] also explains why [R2E2's] inclusion in the broader surface transportation bill is strongly supported by Transportation for America, the States for Passenger Rail Coalition, the National Association of Railroad Passengers, the American Public Transportation Association, and the Southern Rail Commission," said Senator Thune. "...The

National Association of Railroad Passengers said the bill will be a positive step needed to 'build the modern rail system American workers and businesses will need to compete in a 21st Century global economy.'"

There are still problems that must be addressed when Congress reconvenes in September. The Senate's bill only provides three years worth of funding. NARP is advocating to use revenue from comprehensive tax reform to close the gap and create a dedicated trust fund for Amtrak and intercity passenger rail. ■



• Pennsylvania's SEPTA is one of a just a few transit agencies across the country on pace to meet the Dec. 31, 2015, deadline to have its Positive Train Control system up and running, reports CBS Philadelphia. The Senate's rail reform bill (RREEA 2015) creates prioritizing grants to implement PTC technology and identify common sense steps to speedily improve safety, such as creating speed limit action plans and addressing crew communication.

But New Jersey Transit officials say they won't meet the Dec. 31 deadline to install Positive Train Control systems on 322 miles of train routes, reports NJ.com. The state has allocated \$225 million in state funds for the project and spokeswoman Nancy Snyder said the agency is making progress. Plans call for PTC to be introduced next year on a seven-mile stretch of track between Morristown and Denville, and phased in systemwide by 2018. NARP continues to support a proposal giving the Secretary of Transportation authority to grant 18-month extensions to install PTC on a case-by-case basis. And the Senate rail reform bill includes provisions prioritizing grants to implement PTC technology and identifying common sense steps to speedily improve safety, including creating speed limit action plans and addressing crew communication.

• It was good news in July for the Southwest Chief after Amtrak and the Kansas City Terminal Railway announced reaching a tentative agreement on who will pay for more than \$30 million in safety upgrades, reports the Santa Fe New Mexican. No terms were revealed, but the deal was reached through arbitration.

NARP has worked closely with ColoRail, led by President James Souby, to save the Southwest Chief's present route through Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico. Amtrak and track owner BNSF Railway have been negotiating to commit the funds necessary to maintain the section between Albuquerque and central Kansas through southeastern Colorado to passenger standards, thus maintaining the reliability of the fastest train between Chicago and the West Coast.

• Metro-North Railroad needs to improve safety and overall operational efforts on the country's busiest commuter rail line, said Acting FRA Administrator Sarah Feinberg during a visit in Connecticut, reports NBC Connecticut. The visit, arranged by Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), focused on improvements made more than two years after the death of



SEPTA's Silverliner V on the Chestnut Hill West Line at St. Martins station. Photo courtesy of John Corbett/Wikipedia

a Metro-North maintenance worker in May 2013.

Feinberg said adding PTC is also crucial to improving safety and minimizing accidents. "Most accidents are caused by human factors," Feinberg said. "That means human error. Positive Train Control helps take human error off the table. It's just a game changer in terms of safety. It's just a huge priority for us."

• Rail supporter Gov. Dannel Malloy (D) has expressed concern to U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx about Amtrak delays and cost increases for rail line upgrades to support the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield commuter rail line scheduled to begin operation in late 2016, reports WNPR.

In a May 11 letter to Foxx, Malloy wrote: "The current cost of this Project has ballooned to \$615 million, an increase of \$250 million (68 percent) over an original budget of \$365 million. Connecticut already has committed \$244 million of state funds, \$70 million above the initial \$174 million we pledged to the Project in the grant applications. We have reached our state funding limit, and a potential crisis for the delivery of the project."

• High-speed rail linking Washington, D.C., to Richmond, Virginia, and eventually to cities farther south is one of the top priorities for Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx in the final months of Obama's term, reports the Richmond Times-Dispatch.

He made his remarks at the Virginians For High Speed Rail's 21st annual transportation luncheon.

The Washington-Richmond corridor is what Foxx categorized as the project that will allow for further extensions of frequent rail service into the south, with this one project offering a window of opportunity wrote NARP staffer James Zumwalt, who attended the luncheon.

"Foxx's goal for the region over the next year and a half is to 'get the project to a point of no return,' noting he is throwing an additional \$1 million of DOT funds into studies concerning it," he wrote. "In answering an audience question, Foxx said 'there shouldn't be a North East Corridor as such. We need an East Coast Corridor' and that it was time to 'get beyond the Civil War.'"

• Texas Central Partners, the group building high-speed rail between Dallas and Houston, announced that new investors are putting in \$75 million toward the project, reports the Fort Worth Star-Telegram. Two of the three investors will also join TCP's board.

The Lone Star Rail District plans to make a formal request to the San Antonio City Council in September to fund a commuter rail project between San Antonio and Austin, reports WOAI Radio. It would make stops in New Braunfels, San Marcos, and elsewhere, making traveling on the I-35 corridor easier, relieving growing congestion on the Interstate. ■

## NARP, COMTO Strengthen Transportation Partnership

NARP's Bruce Becker and Logan McLeod attended the annual meeting of the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials (COMTO), in Boston to strengthen a joint partnership aimed at advancing areas of mutual interest for both organizations.

The keynote event on July 13 was a speech by U.S. Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx, who was introduced by former DOT Secretary Rodney Slater. Other notable event speakers included former FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff (now under secretary for policy at DOT) and former DOT Deputy General Counsel James Cole, who is now general counsel for the U.S. Department of Education.

COMTO is a professional and education association -- and a 501(c)3 like NARP -- working to increase leadership opportunities for minorities in the transportation industry and to promote educational venues for young adults seeking careers in transportation. COMTO's members come from all aspects of transportation, with the majority representing the transit segment. COMPTO has chapters in most major cities across the country.

NARP's initial contribution to this new partnership will be helping COMTO to further develop its legislative agenda and advocacy outreach efforts. In addition COMTO is very interested in using NARP's Millennial Campaign aimed at engaging young adults on college and university campuses, which ties in well with its educational opportunity initiatives.

The immediate benefit to NARP is being



Secretary Foxx at COMTO

able to connect directly with a wide range of highly-placed transit officials from systems across the country. As we work to promote our 'A Connected America' initiative, such interactions can only be positive and constructive. Longer-range, capitalizing on our combined voices on matters of mutual interest will certainly be productive.

NARP's Becker had the opportunity to briefly meet Secretary Foxx and have several conversations with Slater during the four-day conference. "Slater expressed admiration for NARP's work and noted that he would like to reconnect with us and explore how he could assist our efforts," he said.

Slater currently co-leads the Transportation, Shipping & Logistics practice for Washington, D.C.-based law firm Squire Patton Boggs.

The networking opportunities were tremendous, with Becker and McLeod meeting influential transit industry officials and vendors. "We will be meeting with many of these folks over the coming months to explore how they can potentially assist with NARP's mission," said Becker. "Of particular potential interest, the executive leadership team of Keolis Transportation Services (operators of the VRE and MBTA commuter rail services) will soon be meeting with us here in D.C., and we hope to engage them as a future sponsor of NARP."

COMTO members will be invited to participate in all of our future events, starting with our fall meeting in Indianapolis in October. ■

## Support NARP Passenger Rail Efforts with Stock Gifts

There are different ways members can offer financial support to NARP so it can continue to do its important advocacy work to build a 21st century transportation system.

For example, as a member, you could donate \$2,000 to NARP in 2015. By donating cash, you receive a tax deduction.

But what if you also have some appreciating shares that you want to sell for profit? You bought them 10 years ago for \$1,000, and now they are worth \$2,000. If you simply sell the shares, you will have a capital gain of \$1,000.

If you fall into a tax bracket where you pay the 15 percent capital gains tax rate, you will owe \$150 in taxes on that gain. That tax bill will partially offset any benefit you received from donating cash to the charity.

But what if, instead of donating cash, you donate your stock? You keep that \$2,000 would-be donation in your bank account and transfer ownership of the shares to a charity like NARP. You get to

claim the entire \$2,000 as a deduction on your taxes, but you don't have to pay any capital gains tax.

You receive the full deduction for a charitable contribution, and it isn't partially offset by your capital gains tax bill.

A stock donation can be a great part of your year-end planning if you have some appreciated shares you want to redeem, whether you are looking for cash, or whether you are trying to rebalance your portfolio.

This is just one of the many innovative ways NARP provides its members to support American passenger rail. To learn about other ways, please contact our Director of Development Logan McLeod at lmcLeod@narprail.org or call (202) 408-8362 to find out how you can be creative with your giving this year. NARP appreciates all its members' support and dedication to improving American passenger rail service, and providing the necessary resources to advocate for A Connected America.