



RAIL PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION

PASSENGERS Voice

JANUARY 2019 | VOL. 53, NO. 1

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN POSSIBLE WITH CR EXPIRING DECEMBER 21ST

The post-election period on Capitol Hill has so far been notable for the action that hasn't taken place. Ahead of the holiday break—and potential government shutdown—the Rail Passengers government affairs team wanted to pass along the following legislative update:

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN LOOMS

With the holiday recess looming, there's no plan in place to avoid a partial government shutdown when the current Continuing Resolution expires on December 21st.

Talks between the White House, Congressional GOP leadership, and Democrats have stalled over \$5 billion President Trump is demanding for a border wall; Trump has said he will veto any spending bill that doesn't include his wall funding. Some late movement on the wall issue, however, could ease shutdown concerns.

Senate Appropriations Chair Richard Shelby (R-AL) said they are looking at more short-term stopgaps, ranging in duration from a week to five months.

Prior government shutdowns have not lasted long enough to affect Amtrak. The railroad has previously estimated it could operate for more than a month before the absence of federal operating and capital payments would begin to affect daily operations.

COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP FALLING INTO PLACE...

- Senate Commerce: Sen. Roger Wicker (R-MS) will take the mantle of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Transportation and Science, a vital committee in the surface transportation reauthorization process. This is excellent news, since Sen. Wicker played a key role in securing several beneficial sections of the FAST Act. It appears that Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA) will leave Energy & Commerce and take over as Ranking Member from Sen. Bill Nelson (D-FL) who was defeated in his race for reelection. It is still unclear who will take the Chair and Ranking Member role in the important Subcommittee on Surface Transportation.

SHUTDOWN, p. 2

CHIEF BUS BRIDGE WOULD CRIMP STATES' ECONOMIES BY \$180M



(Photo Credit: Carl Morrison)

Implementation of a bus bridge on the Southwest Chief could see states' economies lose \$180 million each year.

Replacing the Southwest Chief's existing service with a bus bridge between Dodge City and Albuquerque could permanently cost the economies of the three affected states – New Mexico, Colorado and Kansas – more than three times what Amtrak spends on the entire 10-state route, a draft of a new study conducted by the Rail Passengers Association and the University of Southern Mississippi suggests.

BRIDGE, p. 2

“Logistically it [North-South Rail Link] is challenging but it is truly needed for the region to continue to handle growth and non traditional job locations.”

John Pelletier, RPA Member from Newton, MA.



RAIL PASSENGERS

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This issue has news through December 18, 2018.

Vol. 53, No. 1 was mailed December 26, 2018.

QUESTION...

Do you have a relationship with the local office of your congressional representative?



A. Yes - I share my views regularly about passenger rail and transportation.

B. No - I generally don't (or haven't) contacted my local district office.

Click here to submit your answer to this poll on social media, or send in your response via email to: survey@narprail.org

SHUTDOWN from p. 1

- House T&I: Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR) will take the chairman's gavel on the House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure. DeFazio is an experienced transportation leader, and just this fall he committed to preserving Amtrak's existing service footprint in an exchange with Rail Passengers staff. He will be joined by Ranking Member Sam Graves (R-MO), a politician with a reputation for careful consensus building. Rep. Dan Lipinski (D-IL) believes he is well positioned to take over the gavel of the Rail Subcommittee; with several CREATE projects in his district, Lipinski is a big supporter of freight and passenger rail.

...ALONG WITH COMMITTEE AGENDAS

Chairman DeFazio appears to

be taking the lead in outlining an infrastructure agenda, telling media he has incoming House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer's (D-MD) support to bring an infrastructure bill to the House floor by May of next year.

Features of the plan include:

- \$500 billion in funding, with the largest part addressing surface transportation;
- Bonds based on the gas tax;
- Indexing gas tax to inflation and cap increases at 1.5 cents per gallon a year.

DeFazio has also said he will look to launch a Vehicle Miles Traveled pilot to supplement or replace the gas tax. The plan has bipartisan appeal, with Wicker and Graves signaling they are open to supporting it. Graves has pushed back against any increase in the gas tax.

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Permanent losses to these states' economies could reach \$180 million each year, according to the study. In addition, such a move could also impose another \$135 million in temporary losses during the construction and transition phases.

"While Congress this summer listened to the voice of the passenger and took the bus bridge off the table for now, it could come up again as negotiations begin next year on the shape of a surface-transportation bill reauthorization," said Rail Passengers President Jim Mathews. "That's why it's important that lawmakers, elected and appointed officials, and the traveling public understand that spending on rail transportation is a smart investment paying measurable annual dividends today

in communities nationwide."

Permanent direct economic losses each year include things such as cancelled spending on direct operations, plus fewer visitors and the loss of their tourist dollars, and higher travel costs imposed on families who live along the route and use the Chief. Temporary losses stem from work that would be postponed or eliminated associated with installing positive train control (PTC), as well as some minor benefits – mostly in Kansas – stemming from temporary construction associated with launching new bus service. The study also accounted for permanent indirect losses such as increased spending on pollution control, increases in highway fatalities, the need for additional

BRIDGE, p. 4

RAIL PASSENGERS “COMING ATTRACTIONS”

We want to introduce our members to a couple of things that we are going to start to roll out here at Rail Passengers HQ. Our www.railpassengers.org website is the portal that connects all things in our Association's universe – whether it be the Friday Hotline, upcoming events, ridership data, etc. – and we are making it more interactive.

As you might have seen in the Hotline in recent months, we now have a membership forum through Google Groups. This

is a place for you to gather and discuss anything rail related with other members without needing to pick and choose emails through the directory. While you needed a different login through google, we didn't want it to feel separate and get lost off in the corner somewhere (which it did at first).

Well that is changing... starting NOW. Head on over to www.railpassengers.org/forum and say hello. You still need to sign up though a Google/Gmail account,

but the forum is “in house” now.

The other thing we wanted to talk about is our blog. You might have noticed some familiar names posting over the last few weeks. If you haven't, what are you waiting for? Get over to railpassengers.org/blog and check them out. Well, that is going to continue for the weeks and months to come (with a brief holiday hiatus, of course). We don't want to give too much away right now. There will be more information after the new year.

AIRNET-21: PRIVATIZING THE NORTHEAST CORRIDOR

The following is a guest Op-Ed by AIRNET-21's Robert Serlin and Ross Capon, President Emeritus of Rail Passengers. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of Rail Passengers.

A pressing question for America's passengers in 2019 is whether Amtrak will get the needed funding in the Fiscal 2020 appropriations bill. The new House Democratic majority may successfully roll back GOP tax cuts, some of which could go to Amtrak. We, however, are more pessimistic. The current two-year budget deal ends next September, with statutory budget caps set to hit in 2019. With the Republican's 2018 tax law increasing the deficit dramatically, there will be intense pressure to reduce spending on domestic programs like Amtrak.

The New York Congressional delegation is engaged in talks

with President Trump to secure federal funding for Amtrak's New York City-area Gateway Project. We believe such a deal would make it almost impossible to fund the rest of the many projects along the Northeast Corridor (NEC), which include the Susquehanna River Bridge, B&P Tunnels, and other state-of-good-repair projects.

We believe the solution is AIRNet-21, or the American Intercity Railroad Network for the 21st Century. Under this plan, Congress would seize control of Amtrak-owned infrastructure in the Northeast and Midwest. The Surface Transportation Board would designate a private infrastructure management organization (IMO) which, under a 50-year revocable lease, would be obligated to fund and complete the above-mentioned NEC projects and to pay Amtrak \$1 billion. Commuter railroads and Amtrak would pay for

use of the NEC on an avoidable-cost basis. Amtrak during the first three years would pay a fixed amount and be allowed to add frequencies at no additional cost. AIRNet-21's viability depends on maximizing use of the facilities, and thus on encouraging Amtrak to run more trains.

Funding would come from a special-purpose federal loan of \$40 billion, with the IMO's contributing cash equal to 10% of the debt, or \$4 billion. Since the federal government already owns the infrastructure, debt would be collateralized by a financial instrument—a third-party, investment-grade loan-repayment guarantee, pre-approved by Wall Street and the U.S. Treasury.

We believe AIRNet-21 could end the debate over National Network economics, since Amtrak's financial statements would no longer include Amtrak-owned infrastructure costs.

AMTRAK CHAIRMAN: RAIL PASSENGERS' VISION AND AMTRAK STRATEGY "ALIGN CLOSELY"

In a letter, Amtrak Board Chairman Anthony Coscia told Rail Passengers how Amtrak might achieve the Association's vision for 'more and better trains' in America. Coscia's letter was a response to an open letter in October from Rail Passengers President Jim Mathews, who called on Amtrak's Board to embrace a bold growth plan for Amtrak. Coscia said that the suggestions provided by Mathews "align closely" with Amtrak's goals.

Coscia acknowledged the Association's continued call for restoration of daily service on the Cardinal and Sunset Limited routes, and also pointed to specific areas of the country where service can be added or frequencies increased. This includes "underserved cities, corridors and communities across the country," and the potential for "new routes in places like Kansas, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Illinois."

Amtrak is also taking steps on key issues that matter

to Rail Passengers, but Mathews has cautioned that the railroad must keep working closely with Congress, Mayors and other elected and appointed officials to take aggressive action on On-Time Performance, restoration of at least daily service system-wide, growth and expanded service, and the need for new and upgraded rolling stock.

With regard to equipment, Coscia said "Amtrak has begun formulating a comprehensive fleet strategy and is now taking critical steps toward re-fleeting." Coscia also said that Amtrak will seek our input to evaluate the appropriate strategy for bi-level equipment.



A top priority for both Amtrak and Rail Passengers is OTP.
Photo Credit: Amtrak

We are scheduled to meet with Amtrak in January for the first of several meetings to provide input to the re-fleeting plan and the bi-level equipment strategy, in particular. To read the entirety of the letters, please visit: www.railpassengers.org/happening-now/news/blog.

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highway maintenance and the lost value of forgone trips.

Working with a team from USM led by research professor Dr. Yuanyuan Zhang and supported by funds from the generous bequest of the late George McCallum, the Rail Passengers policy staff acquired economic planning tools and collaborated with USM for much of this year. Their work involved building a model to account for factors ranging from direct spending to construction, labor, local tax payments and visitation and tourist spending. This work created a robust model that can be used to examine the value of rail service on a county-by-county basis on any route in the U.S., or even to help assess the potential value of

service in an area not yet served by rail.

"We're so grateful for all of the elements that came together to make this possible," said Mathews. "This was a true team effort involving Abe Zumwalt and Sean Jeans-Gail in our D.C. office, and a strong group at [University of] Southern Mississippi under Dr. Zhang's leadership. Support from our members, as well as the generous gift of original Board member George McCallum, have put us in a position to create critical economic analyses, in-house, for the first time. This has been one of our goals since I arrived at the Association in 2014."

The full study should be published in early January.

RAIL PASSENGERS AND LONELY PLANET SHARE GREAT TRAIN JOURNEYS

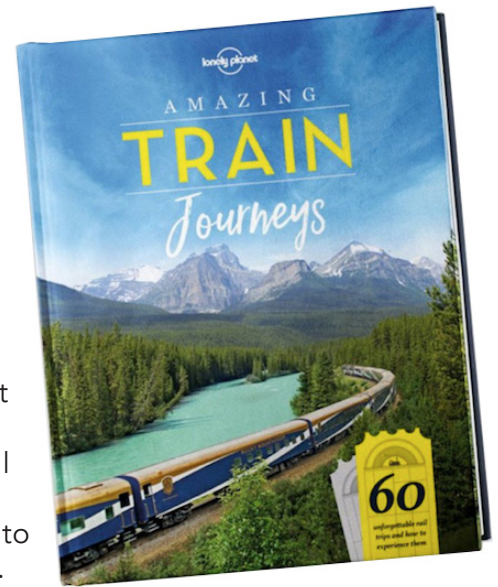
The Rail Passengers Association and Lonely Planet, the world's biggest travel publisher, have teamed up to bring you a new book that details 60 of the greatest and most breathtaking train journeys across the world. 'Amazing Train Journeys' is the culmination of more than 200 travel writers sharing their favorite train adventures, including classic long-distance trips like Western Canada's Rocky Mountaineer and Darwin to Adelaide's The Ghan, to little-known treasures on regular commuting lines.

The book is 304 pages, and each passenger train profile contains practical information that any rider can use, including ticket options, timetables and stops, as well as inspiring photos and illustrated maps.

'Amazing Train Journeys' is a 1st Edition, released

in October 2018. Your purchase will also help support the Rail Passengers Association's advocacy work as Lonely Planet is contributing 15 percent of all 'Amazing Train Journeys' sales to the Association.

'Amazing Train Journeys' is available to buy online at: www.railpassengers.org/lonelyplanet.



'Amazing Train Journeys' is a 1st Edition and it is available as a book or e-Book
Photo Credit: Lonely Planet

AIRNET-21, from p. 3

Former Gov. Jim Florio recently wrote that "public-private partnerships to fund infrastructure is an idea whose time has come and AIRNet-21 is a workable solution." Florio knows Amtrak both from serving as New Jersey's governor and chairman of the House authorizing subcommittee overseeing Amtrak. In 1979, he played a key role in dramatically scaling back the Carter DOT's proposal to eliminate 43% of Amtrak's route structure. Florio's column and more information are at <https://www.airnet-21.com>.

Robert VanderClute, long-time former VP—Operations at Amtrak and Association of American Railroads, in a November 2018 column for Railway Age, wrote that AIRNet-21 is "an innovative PPP with a unique design. Its elements are bipartisan in nature, and it involves no selling-off of government (Amtrak)-owned assets. It puts infrastructure management in the hands of infrastructure specialists, but makes those specialists subject to government oversight. It returns Amtrak to its pre-1976 role as a passenger-services-only operator."

Francis Mulvey, past Surface Transportation Board Vice-Chair and Democratic staff director of the House Railroads Subcommittee, in his June 2015, blog, called AIRNet-21 good public and business policy, "achieving better rail service, guaranteeing that more than \$50 billion of non-appropriated monies are invested in Amtrak's NEC and Midwest infrastructures, fully protecting Amtrak's passengers and workers, and removing Amtrak's infrastructure losses from Amtrak."



Acela Express (Photo Credit: Amtrak)

Make Plans To Attend RPA's Spring 2019 Advocacy Summit, 'Day on The Hill', Congressional Reception & Annual Council Business Meeting in Washington, D.C.

Sunday, March 31 through
Wednesday, April 3

- **Host Hotel - Westin City Center (1400 M. Street, NW; Washington) Discounted Group Rate Rooms Are Now Available!**
- **RPA's Annual 'Day on The Hill' & Congressional Reception Is Tuesday, April 2**
- **Event Registration Starts January 4th. Visit The Event Page For Complete Information**

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

Thursday & Friday,
January 24 & 25
15th Annual Southwestern Rail Conference - Dallas, TX

Saturday, March 9
ESPA/RPA Joint New York State Advocates Meeting & Lunch - Schenectady, NY

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!

RAIL STATION OF THE MONTH: PHOENIX UNION STATION

Phoenix Union Station has been without intercity trains since BNSF Railroad rerouted Amtrak's Sunset Limited south to Maricopa in 1996. This makes Phoenix the most populous city in the U.S. without train service—a sorry state of affairs city leaders would dearly like to change.

Commissioned as a joint venture between the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe Railroad Companies in 1922, the building is a large Mission Revival style station, with a grand two-story waiting room flanked by low, arcaded wings. Anchoring the southern end of downtown, the station remains on the National Register of Historic Places and Phoenix City Register.

It was dedicated as a "Monument to the progressiveness and prosperity of the valley and a testimony of the confidence in the future of the Salt River Valley and Phoenix," and helped usher in a new national prominence for the city, along with a wave of tourism. Train travel peaked in the 1940s, when Phoenix Union Station served as many as 18 passenger trains per day.

BNSF downgraded the tracks leading into Phoenix as a result of reduced freight traffic, and after a last-minute deal

for the state to take over the tracks fell through, the Sunset Limited was rerouted south to a station on the outskirts of Phoenix in Maricopa.

During December's All Aboard Arizona meeting held in Tucson, Mayor Jonathan Rothschild—joined by Rail Passengers Vice President Sean Jeans-Gail and Board Member George Chilson—talked about the need to develop passenger rail between Tucson and Phoenix, a corridor currently choked by automotive congestion. The Sun Corridor—Phoenix, Tucson, Prescott, Sierra Vista-Douglas and Nogales—is one of the fastest growing regions in the U.S., is expected to double its population by 2040. Without rail service, this corridor will become a huge drag on the economy.

Additionally, XpressWest has looked at connecting Phoenix to Las Vegas as part of the private sector southwest rail network it is trying to develop. Brightline, fresh off its success in Florida, recently acquired XpressWest, and is looking to launch phase one of the network: Los Angeles to Las Vegas.

For Phoenix's passengers, these projects can't launch soon enough!

STATE NEWS

RAIL PASSENGERS CALL OUT NEW NSRL STUDY

Joined by former Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis in Boston, Rail Passengers Association President Jim Mathews testified in a MassDOT public-comment session on the latest and questionable \$17 billion estimate for the North-South Rail Link project. In contrast, Rail Passengers believes the cost of the NSRL is closer to the \$5 billion a Harvard study laid out last year. But, the biggest problem with the new study, prepared by MassDOT consultants, ARUP, is that it showed nearly zero consideration of the project's benefits. An author of the study said during the session that assessing the benefits of the project was "too hard," so ARUP focused only on projects costs. Mathews believes that the country deserves a better look at the project because the NSRL is not just about Boston or the region, but is a national issue.

UTAH RAIL PASSENGERS ADVOCATE FOR AMTRAK SERVICE

Mike Christensen, executive director of the Utah Rail Passengers Association, hosted a Moab Transit Authority Study Committee meeting as part of an effort to bring passenger rail to Moab. Christensen, and other rail advocates support an Amtrak route



Rail Passengers President and CEO Jim Mathews speaks at MassDOT session.

that would connect the Wasatch Front north to Logan, southwest to Cedar City and southeast to Grand Junction. As it stands now, the only foreseeable way to connect Moab on the route is via motor coach from Green River. However, Christensen said he can see Moab eventually being connected by rail, but that priority number one is establishing the main route. Moab was one of several stops Christensen is making in Utah in order to build support for rail service in the state.

RAIL PASSENGERS TRAVEL ADVISORY

TRACK WORK AFFECTS SALUKI TRAINS 390 AND 391

****Effective December 18, 2018, track improvements being performed by Canadian National Railway and CSX, Trains 390 and 391 will be affected as follows:**

- Train 391, which normally operates between Chicago and Carbondale, will terminate at Champaign, IL. Alternate service will be provided.
- Train 390, which normally operates between Carbondale and Chicago, will originate at Champaign, IL. Train 390 will depart at 10:45 am, 31 minutes later than the normal schedule. Train 391 will operate the later schedule at all stops Champaign through Chicago. Alternate service will be provided.

WILMINGTON, DE STATION ACCESS DURING AREA CONSTRUCTION AND PUBLIC PARKING LOTS

****As of December 14, construction will continue on MLK Boulevard in Wilmington, DE. Front St. will be closed in front of the Amtrak Train Station between French Street and Walnut Street. Wilmington will close both East Front Street and MLK Boulevard, to expand the street from two lanes to three lanes. Customers will have to turn onto French Street for drop off and pick up.**



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:

- **Stephanie Wiggins** — In Los Angeles, Metrolink's board has appointed Stephanie Wiggins as the agency's new CEO, succeeding Art Leahy who will retire on January 4, 2019. Wiggins has been acting as the Deputy CEO of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro).

- **Paul Ballard** — Trinity Metro President and CEO Paul Ballard

will retire in April 2019. Ballard's retirement marks the end of his five-year contract with the Fort Worth, TX transit agency. Ballard was appointed the head of Trinity Metro, formerly Fort Worth Transportation Authority, in 2014, but has worked in transportation systems for the past 46 years.

- **Ericka Thomas** – Ericka Thomas has been hired as Operation Lifesaver Inc.'s new manager of education, training and instructional design. In this role, Thomas will develop safety education materials



(Photo Credit: Trinity Metro)

Trinity Metro President and CEO Paul Ballard will retire in April 2019.

for the public, as well as oversee OLI's e-learning programs and instructor-led training for Operation Lifesaver-authorized volunteers and coaches.



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