



Photo Credit: Jeff Pletcher



FRIDAY HOTLINE

#1437

APRIL 17TH, 2026



NOTICE: There will be no Hotline next week, April 24th, due to staff all being in DC for our Spring advocacy week.

Association News

Amtrak's Repair Backlog Report Shows a System in Transition

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

The Amtrak Office of Inspector General released [a new report](#) this week examining how the railroad manages the enormous backlog of infrastructure that is not yet in a state of good repair, and its conclusions are simultaneously unsurprising and important.

The report finds that Amtrak has made progress since 2016 in organizing its asset-management efforts, but still lacks some of the governance structure, performance metrics, and data systems needed to track progress clearly toward eliminating what it estimates is roughly a \$47 billion state-of-good-repair (SOGR) backlog of aging bridges, tunnels, track, signals, and electric traction systems. Amtrak management agreed with the recommendations and laid out a multi-year plan to address them.

None of this should be read as a surprise to anyone who has spent time around the Northeast Corridor or the National Network. Amtrak inherited a railroad in 1970 that had already suffered decades of deferred maintenance, and for most of its existence it has received capital funding in irregular bursts rather than as part of a sustained long-term renewal strategy.

The Inspector General itself sympathetically cites this reality, even as it critiques today's efforts.

"Congress created Amtrak in 1970 after the Penn Central Transportation Company, which owned most of the rail lines that today comprise the NEC, declared bankruptcy," IG notes. "By the 1960s, Penn Central and most other privately owned railroads had determined that providing passenger service was unprofitable and were deferring maintenance of capital assets. When Amtrak assumed responsibility for providing intercity passenger rail service, it became responsible for maintaining and improving an extensive rail infrastructure already in disrepair."

And it's been playing catch-up ever since.

[Click Here To Read More](#)

Amtrak Seeks New Long-Distance Car Designs

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

For months now, I got at least one or two emails every day from members or supporters or allies asking me when -- or, sometimes even "if" -- Amtrak was going to release its request for proposals to replace its long-distance Superliner bi-level cars. But this week [Amtrak made it official](#): the RFP is out, the car-builders have already come to some preliminary bidding meetings, and the process really is underway.

It can't come soon enough. Some of these cars will have more than half-a-century on them by the time their replacements begin to come online, a far

cry from what I learned visiting operators a few weeks ago in Europe, who plan a replacement cycle for their fleets every ten to 15 years. It's long-past time to get this going.

"Following an extensive evaluation, we plan to announce our selected supplier by the end of 2027," [Amtrak said this week](#) as it formally unveiled the new procurement plan and schedule. "This once-in-a-generation fleet replacement program was developed in close coordination with the Federal Railroad Administration, with the goal of modernizing overnight and cross-country travel for a fleet that includes many cars today approaching nearly 50 years of operations."

Right now, Amtrak expects to buy 800 new loose railcars to deploy across 14 routes. As I told you in February, current schedule projections assume first revenue service entry around 2031, with coach and café fleet replacement extending to about 2034. It's later than it should be, and it's later than even the originally delayed schedule with 2030 in-service dates contemplated. But the hope is that by adopting a simpler, more interoperable design, and something closer to service-proven and not fully bespoke, Amtrak and the car-builders will be able to get new cars built more quickly and as a result recover some -- but not all -- of the lost time.

You can read the formal announcement by clicking [here](#). And you can [follow this link to a video](#) illustrating some renderings of some of the design concepts Amtrak has already shared with the car-builders.

If you watch the full video, you'll catch a few notable details: the new "premium" coach entry, fully reclining seats in all classes, as many as eight power outlets in some of the sleeping accommodations, and the new Solo Suite one-person roomette. Solo Suite responds to the reality that a huge share of today's two-person roomettes are booked by one person (I do it all the time...).

There's also a beautifully panoramic dining car idea with lots of glass and natural light, and program planners say they know they need to pay special attention to spaces like the sightseer lounge car now that they'll only have a single-level car shell to work with.

[Click Here To Read More](#)

Field Notes

Please email [Joe Aiello](#) if you have any local, state or regional stories/projects (even something you know or experienced happening overseas) that you would like to write about and see highlighted in the Hotline.

Calling All Readers!

Do you have a favorite transit/train photo (or photos) you have taken from your travels around the country, or even around the world? Would you like to see them featured in our Hotline social media post each week (with credit, of course)?

Send them to us @ hotline@narprrail.org with the subject "HOTLINE PHOTO"

Hotline Links

A curated selection of passenger rail and transportation stories from this week. Check out our social media feeds to read breaking news and join the conversation!

[Experts Weigh in on State of Passenger Rail Efforts in Ohio, Columbus Underground](#)

Coverage of this weekend's Ohio Rail Summit hosted by our good friends at @AllAboardOhio. Our very own VP of Government Affairs, Sean Jeans-Gail, will be there as the featured "fireside chat" guest.

[\[Video\] Amtrak Advances New Long Distance Train Fleet, Amtrak Media](#)

Amtrak has officially submitted their RFP for the brand-new single-level long distance fleet. The future begins now.

[Amtrak Mardi Gras line set to board 100,000th passenger, 4WWL](#)

Big celebration in the Gulf Coast next Tuesday.

[Amtrak's plans to restore passenger rail in Madison are on track,](#)
The Cap Times

Arun Rao, Amtrak's senior director for state partnerships and one of the main officials behind the launch of the Borealis - even going back to his days with WisDOT - led a public meeting last night to discuss the future of service between MKE and Madison

[Heartland Flyer could face shutdown as Oklahoma talks funding cuts,](#)
WFAA

Last year, the Regional Transportation Council in TX stepped up to support the Flyer when the state legislature could not. Now, with the Texas chambers not in session until next January, it's their counterparts in Oklahoma that are failing passengers.

[NJ Transit's \\$48 million World Cup bill should be paid by FIFA,](#)
Sherrill says, NJ.com

The \$48M cost to run NJTransit during the World Cup represents 0.44% of the estimated \$11B that FIFA will bank this summer.

[Amtrak's Seattle Trainyard Expansion Hits Halfway Mark,](#)
The Urbanist

The construction of the future \$300M maintenance home for the new fleet of Cascades trains has officially hit the 50% mark.

[MTA sits on sidelines as Trump and NJ Transit rebuild Penn Station,](#)
Gothamist

Two weeks ago, NJ Transit was announced as a "key partner" in the Penn Station rebuild plans - but the "home agency" is still not involved.

['The steel highways are always open': Let's make trains and transit exciting,](#)
Halifax Examiner

Advertising for train/transit travel a generation ago was absolutely unmatched with countless museum worthy pieces - so what's stopping us from that now?

[First look at NJ Transit's new multi-level trains shows high-tech upgrades,](#)
CBS News

Thanks to a \$3B investment, part of which was announced back in 2019, the future of NJTransit's fleet is now.

[BNSF, Metra sign 10-year passenger-service pact,](#)
Progressive Railroading

While Metra and UP still can't get along, they have secured a long term access deal with BNSF for their busiest weekday line.



**WE ARE WORKING ON A DISCORD SERVER.
STAY TUNED FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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

Association Events

Local Meetings + Events

[The Ohio Rail Summit](#), Saturday, April 18

[22nd Annual Southwestern Rail Conference](#), May 18-19

[Greater Northwest Rail Summit](#), August 25-27

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**, met with congressional staff and allies in DC on issues ranging from the upcoming surface transportation re-authorization, the pending Union Pacific takeover of Norfolk Southern, our proposals to create a regular annual pipeline of new railcar buys, and the potential for a major restructuring of Amtrak.
- **Sean Jeans-Gail, Vice President of Policy**, spent the week working with our members and other stakeholders to prepare for next week's RailNation:DC week of advocacy.
- **Jonsie Stone, Chief of Staff**, worked on fundraising messaging, prepared for RailNation:DC, processed membership dues and donations sent to the DC office and tended to the administrative and operational needs of the Association.
- **Joe Aiello, Director of Community Engagement & Organizing**, spent the week preparing for the various aspects of our "Advocacy Week" in DC starting on Monday
- **Kimberly Notarianni, Membership Management Consultant**, continues to support constituents with renewals, new memberships, User Center access issues, password resets, and adding eligible sub-memberships. A lapsed membership campaign was launched this week focused on reconnecting with members who have lapsed over the past several years and may not yet have logged into our new system. We are here to assist anyone experiencing difficulty accessing their account, and a helpful how-to guide is available both in this newsletter and on our website at: <https://www.railpassengers.org/all-aboard/join/how-to/> or by emailing Kimberly at Knotarianni@narprail.org

Apply for Volunteer Staff at Rail Passengers Association

**VOLUNTEERS
NEEDED**



railpassengers.org/volunteer

Rail Passengers Association

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE!](#)

Membership How-To

Are you a current member and need help with your account number, username, etc.?

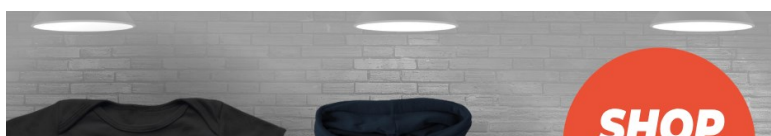
[Click Here For Our Membership "How-To" Page](#)

NOTICE: Looking for your 2025 membership/donation tax documents?

[Click here](#) for instructions.

We Have Merch!

New items available!





 Tell Us Your Story

 Visit our Store

 Discuss This Week's Hotline

 Service Updates & Timetables

 Visit the General Membership Group

 View Webinars

 Rail Passengers' Social Media

 Take Action

Rail Passengers Timetables



Our Timetables Manager, Chris Jukins, has created a spring update for us. He is still working on a few stragglers, but we should have those up soon.

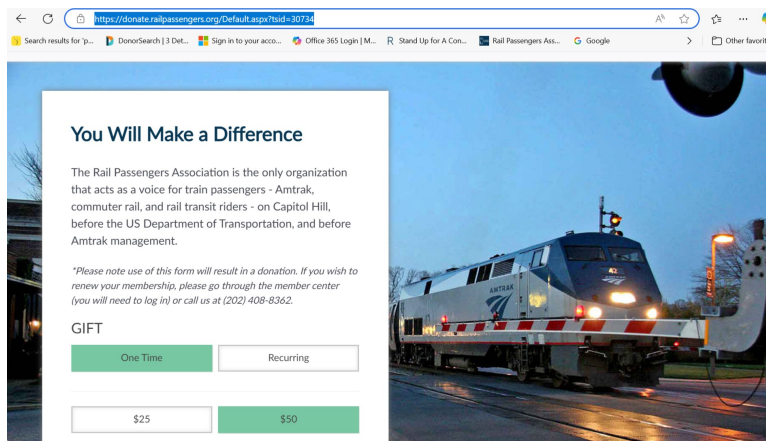
[CLICK HERE](#)

NOTE: Because we do update the links on our website - please bookmark **the main page** and not the individual schedules

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>



You Will Make a Difference

The Rail Passengers Association is the only organization that acts as a voice for train passengers - Amtrak, commuter rail, and rail transit riders - on Capitol Hill, before the US Department of Transportation, and before Amtrak management.

**Please note use of this form will result in a donation. If you wish to renew your membership, please go through the member center (you will need to log in) or call us at (202) 408-8362.*

GIFT

One Time Recurring



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!

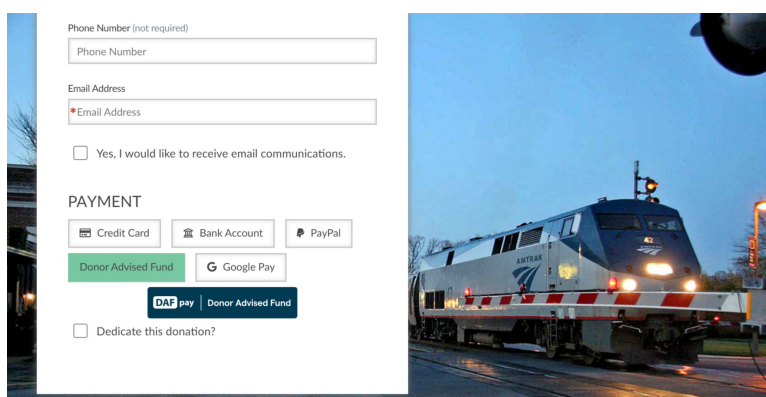
With multiple secure, protected methods of payment, you have more flexibility in the way dues are paid. Skip the hassle and [contact us](#) today for help setting up automatic or online payments.

- 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:



Phone Number (not required)

Phone Number

Email Address

*Email Address

Yes, I would like to receive email communications.

PAYMENT

Credit Card Bank Account PayPal

Donor Advised Fund Google Pay

DAF pay | Donor Advised Fund

Dedicate this donation?

Membership Form:

—

Rail Passengers' Webinar Series

Other

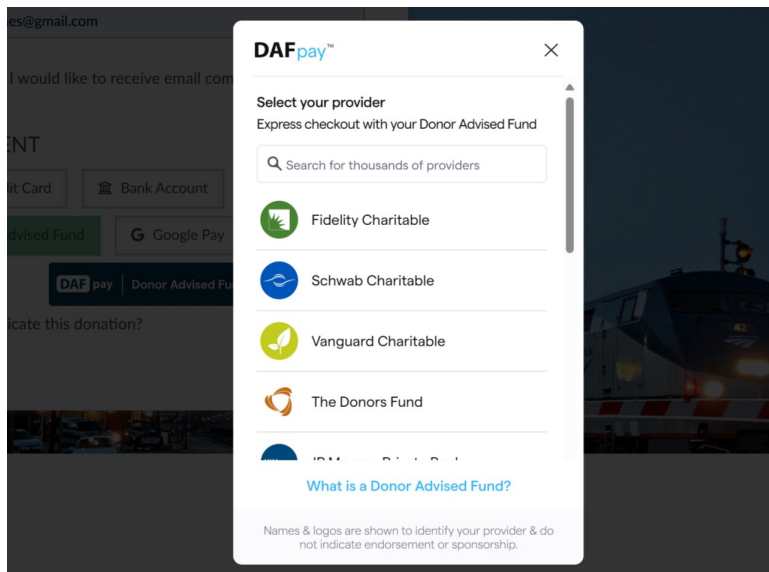
Yes, I prefer communication by email rather than by mail.

PAYMENT

CAPTCHA

I'm not a robot

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](#).

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS:



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.



Contact Us



RAIL PASSENGERS

EST. 1967

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