

Passengers Praise L.A. Rail Progress

NARP's Tracks to the Future Awards to Metro, Metrolink for Continuous Improvement



-Malcolm Kenton

New cab-control cars bring up the rear of two Metrolink trains, the left one to Lancaster and the right one to San Bernardino, at Los Angeles Union Station on a warm Saturday afternoon, Oct. 15.

NARP honored the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority (Metro) and the Southern California Regional Rail Authority (Metrolink) with Tracks to the Future Awards for running an efficient, attractive, interconnected public transportation sys-

tem.

Thanks to these agencies' steady, ongoing progress, the "car capital of the world" now offers a higher quality of life to residents who appreciate the choice to beat the region's notorious freeway traffic.

Metro is the nation's third-busiest transit system and its third busiest light rail network. Its Blue Line, connect-

ing downtown L.A. to Long Beach, is the second busiest light rail line in the country.

Metro opened the Gold Line between Pasadena and Los Angeles Union Station in 2003 and extended it to East Los

Angeles in 2009. Its ridership quickly soared to over 34,000 daily boardings. The light-rail Expo Line, between downtown and Culver City, and eventually on to Santa Monica, will open soon.

"We are partners with Metrolink's commuter rail in Southern Califor-

(continued on p. 2)



-Ken Briers

Metrolink CEO John Fenton describes the regional rail agency's recent improvements and plans for the future to the NARP Council of Representatives Oct. 14.

Supercommittee Blows Up; Next: Armageddon?

The failure of the congressional "supercommittee" [Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction] to agree on budget reductions creates huge uncertainty over federal spending in Fiscal 2013.

DOT Secretary LaHood's reaction: "We now face across-the-board cuts to programs that are critical to rebuilding our crumbling transportation infrastructure and putting Americans back to work."

President Obama said he would rather see deficit reduction achieved "with a scalpel, not with a hatchet." But he also said that if Congress can't agree on a selective approach he would veto any bill that failed "to stick to the painful deal that we made in August for the

automatic cuts."

Those cuts are estimated to total \$55 billion a year each for defense and for most domestic discretionary programs. On the domestic side, this translates into a roughly 9.3% reduction in Fiscal 2013.

Anything approaching 9.3% could devastate Amtrak, which this year suffered its second straight funding cut. Amtrak's FY 2012 federal grant is lower than the 2009 level.

The "hatchet" scenario has the potential to kill intercity passenger trains. **The White House and Congress need to hear strong opposition to that!**

But some lawmakers want to use the

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NARP Members to Choose Council Reps.

In January, NARP will conduct the first election for our national advisory body since its creation in 2008. Each state's NARP members are represented by at least one member of the Council of Representatives.

If there are more candidates than available seats in a given state, all NARP members in that state will be mailed a ballot. Please fill out your ballot and return it. Postmark deadline is February 14.

Council Reps. coordinate grassroots advocacy in their states and bring the interests of local members to the national level.

Michigan Rail Summit: Gov. Snyder (R) Supports Trains!

Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder (R) and Transportation Director Kirk Steudle, along with Deputy U.S. DOT Secretary John Porcari and Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph Szabo addressed a state Rail Summit. The event was to inform and re-energize a broad coalition working to further the investments Michigan has made in its future through improved passenger train service.

About 200 people—legislators, mayors, industry professionals and citizens—attended the Oct. 31 summit, whose sponsors included the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, Michigan Municipal League, Michigan Railroads Association, Michigan Environmental Council and Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers.

Gov. Snyder said his top priority was increasing the speeds of Amtrak's Chicago-Detroit-Pontiac trains. He reiterated his support for public transit,

Amtrak and the development of higher-speed passenger rail in the state. He also endorsed Canadian Pacific's planned, privately-funded cross-border rail tunnel between Detroit and Windsor, Ontario, and a rail transit link to Detroit Metro Airport.

Porcari and Szabo urged Congress to pass Pres. Obama's American Jobs Act, which has \$6 billion for intercity passenger trains and \$9 billion for transit. Porcari: "There are no Republican or Democratic potholes." (The Senate on Nov. 3 failed to reach the 60 votes necessary to move forward with the transportation component of the Jobs Act.)

Steudle emphasized that the government and railroads must work together to get Positive Train Control installed nationwide. "We need to have a com-



-John DeLora

The Summit was held at the Lansing Center in downtown Lansing, the state capital.

mon national system so that we do not end up with dozens of different systems," he said. Referring to high-speed rail, he added, "Don't try to do it all at once—do it in steps and get each step right."

Another speaker was former Meridian, MS **Mayor John Robert Smith** (R), now President of national transportation advocacy group Reconnecting America. He told how building a

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Southern California Rail Progress

nia, and work on such things as goods movement through the ports of L.A. and Long Beach—the biggest ports in the country—as well as the high-speed rail program," Metro CEO Art Leahy said in a statement thanking NARP for the award. "We really are revolutionizing Los Angeles."

Metrolink's regional rail system has grown since 1992 to six lines and 55 stations over 512 miles of track. Average weekday ridership is over 43,000. Metrolink trains connect at Oceanside with Coaster service to San Diego

and Sprinter to Escondido. Metrolink shares 14 stations with Amtrak trains.

CEO John Fenton has overseen the introduction of a new fleet of passenger rail cars, including the unique cab control cars pictured on page 1, that rank among the safest in the nation.

Metrolink plans to be the first U.S. commuter railroad to implement Positive Train Control, a federally-mandated system that prevents train-to-train collisions. The agency also launched a rail-specific safety leadership program with the USC Viterbi School of Engineering.

Over 20% of weekday Metrolink trains now have bicycle cars, after an August two-car-per-train pilot on the Inland Empire-Orange County line demonstrated high demand.

Metro Deputy CEO Paul Taylor appeared before NARP's Council on Oct. 14 in Leahy's stead. He and Fenton jointly engaged the audience in a lively question and answer session.

On Oct. 13, Metro staff guided several NARP leaders on a tour of the light rail system, pointing out work

that has been done to make each line safer, faster and more reliable. NARP leaders also viewed Metro's state-of-the-art Regional Operations Center and witness the dispatching of all five rail lines and the oversight of closed-circuit cameras systemwide. ■

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-Malcolm Kenton

Los Angeles M.T.A. Deputy CEO Paul Taylor (2nd from left) and Metrolink CEO John Fenton receive their Tracks to the Future Awards from NARP Chairman Bob Stewart (left) and President Ross Capon.



-Ryan Stern

Metro Gold Line train leaves downtown Los Angeles for Atlantic Nov. 15, 2009, opening day of the Eastside Extension.

Amtrak and FRA Personnel Changes

Deputy Federal Railroad Administrator Karen Rae left the agency November 3. On Nov. 14, she returned to New York, becoming Deputy Secretary for Transportation to Gov. Andrew Cuomo (D).

A stalwart friend of the rail passenger, Rae's leadership helped make get the High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail grant program off to a sound rather than rushed start. The major improvements funded but not yet realized are creating jobs the economy badly needs and will serve as a cornerstone of her legacy to travelers.



Karen Hedlund

Taking Rae's place at FRA is Karen Hedlund, previously FRA's Chief Counsel, where she provided legal oversight of the HSIPR program and led successful negotiations

with several Class I railroads. Prior to joining the US DOT in 2009, she was a partner at law firm Nossaman LLP.

Amtrak's High-Speed Rail Depart-

Major California HSR Grant

Two weeks after the California High-Speed Rail Authority's unveiling of a more realistic business plan generated a slew of negative press coverage, the U.S. Dept. of Transportation gave the beleaguered bullet train project a major boost by announcing a \$928.6 million federal grant for construction of the initial Fresno-Bakersfield segment.

The announcement by Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood means that construction in the Central Valley will begin in 2012.

In a press release, LaHood reminded critics why the high-speed line is necessary. "California's population will grow by 60 percent over the next 40 years," he said. "Investing in a

green, job creating high-speed rail network is less expensive and more practical than paying for all of the expansions to already congested highways and airports that would be necessary to accommodate the state's projected population boom."

The revised business plan, released Oct. 31, says the project will cost \$98 billion over a 20-year construction period (opening 2032). The original 2008 estimate was \$43 billion, with an opening date of 2025.

LaHood Out in Jan. 2013

The Secretary announced Oct. 13 that, should President Obama be re-elected next year, he will not serve in his second administration. ■

ment, headed by Albecht (Al) Engel, is incorporated into a new, unified Northeast Corridor (NEC) business unit as Engel departs.

Stephen Gardner, now V.P. for Policy and Development, becomes head of the new NEC business unit, encompassing both high-speed rail and upgrading the existing NEC.

Policy and Development Dept. functions not involving the NEC are now under the purview of a new business unit headed by Joseph McHugh, currently V.P. for Government Affairs & Corporate Communications. ■

Read Amtrak's 5-year strategic plan at www.bit.ly/amstrat (PDF, 2 megabytes). Business Line Strategic Plans are discussed starting on page 35.

Midwest Progress *from page 2*

new transportation center for city buses, Greyhound and Amtrak revitalized Meridian's business district.

Michigan State Rail Plan takes shape: The Michigan Environmental Council and the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers co-sponsored a series of 11 community meetings in 2010 to give citizens the opportunity to shape the state's Rail Plan. Most of the forums were well-attended.

The preliminary Plan will be released to the public soon. It will be at www.michigan.gov/mirailplan. The document will continue to be modified based on public feedback as time goes on. You may email comments to mdot-mirailplan@michigan.gov or call (517) 373-9534. ■

What's the Squawk About Twitter?



Twitter (www.twitter.com) allows you to share short updates, commentaries and reactions with others. These updates, each limited to 140 characters or less, are called tweets.

So who reads your tweets? Anyone who chooses to follow you. If, for example, your Twitter name is "4moretrains," ask people to go to www.twitter.com/4moretrains and click "Follow." Then, those people will be able to see your tweets each time they log on.

Twitter is independent from Facebook, though you can set it so that your Facebook status updates automatically post to your Twitter feed.

You can also "retweet" tweets from others, such as "narprail."

Breakfasting Across Indiana



-Ross Capon

NARP member Rudolf Chalupa and family enjoy dinner aboard Amtrak's westbound *Capitol Limited* crossing Indiana on August 6.

Coalition Organizes to Preserve *Southwest Chief* Route

Forty concerned citizens of western Kansas, southeastern Colorado and northern

New Mexico gathered Nov. 10 at City Hall in La Junta, CO, for the inaugural meeting of the *Southwest Chief* Coalition.



- Hane C. Lee on Flickr

Baked goods and gifts are sold to Amtrak *Southwest Chief* passengers during its half-hour stop at La Junta, CO on Dec. 31, 2009.

It aims to keep Amtrak's daily Chicago-Los Angeles train on its current route through Dodge City, La Junta, Raton Pass and Lamy, NM.

State and federal funding is necessary to maintain this

track to passenger train standards. Where freight trains run only at very low speeds or not at all, passenger trains must pay higher track costs.

La Junta City Manager Rick Klein organized the meeting. In attendance were staff from both Colorado U.S. Senators and two U.S. Representatives, Amtrak Western Government Affairs Director Rob Eaton, and Colorado Rail Passengers' Association President Jim Souby and Treasurer (and NARP Council Member) Jay Jones.

A six-member Steering Committee made up of local government officials was formed to develop the Coalition's communications, organizational structure and future meetings. ■

Illinois on Track to Big Improvements

New trains, faster service expected within a few years

Illinoisans should expect to see new bilevel cars on all three intrastate corridor routes beginning in 2014, along with much faster Chicago-St. Louis running, shaving 45 minutes off the current travel time of 5 1/2 hours.

All of these upgrades have been funded by the state of Illinois primarily using federal Recovery Act funds, but also with state funds. The work will create or retain over 24,000 jobs (April *News*).

Union Pacific's line between Dwight and East St. Louis, IL (about 186 miles) has new track and ballast, except through Springfield where the upgraded line's routing has not been decided.

Track replacement between Dwight and Joliet will be completed in summer 2012, along with better grade crossing protections and the installation of Positive Train Control. This will allow 110-mph operation to begin on this 18-mile stretch late next year.

For the 37-miles between Joliet and Chicago, neither Canadian National (owner) nor Metra (heavy user) have cleared work to begin.

Bilevel cars (similar to the California cars used on the *Capitol Corridor* and *San Joaquins*) have been funded and obligated:

- 12 locomotives, 24 coaches and 6 Business Cafés for Chicago-St. Louis
- 3 locos, 18 coaches and 3 Business Cafés for Chicago-Carbondale
- 2 locos, 6 coaches and 2 Business Cafés for Chicago-Quincy
- 2 locos, 6 coaches and 2 Business Cafés for Chicago-Rockford-Dubuque (no estimated start date for this new route).

Equipment for Chicago-Quad Cities service, set to begin in 2015, is funded under a separate application. The number of locomotives and cars has not been determined.

Several communities on the Chicago-St. Louis line have passed resolutions calling for new stations: Dwight, Pontiac, Bloomington-Normal (now under construction), Lincoln, Springfield, Carlinville and Alton.

Meanwhile, Talgo's Milwaukee plant is building 2 trainsets (14 cars, totaling



- Ross Capon

Talgo coach for Wisconsin at Milwaukee plant Oct. 28. Vertical collision and corner posts are part of compliance with FRA crashworthiness standards.

387 seats) for Wisconsin (state-funded), to enter Chicago-Milwaukee *Hiawatha* service in mid-2012, and two trainsets for Oregon to support expanded *Cascades* (federal Recovery Act funded). ■

Wheels of Progress

We have updated our list of recent expansions and improvements to passenger train and rail transit lines, trains and facilities. For the full list, dating back to 2008, go to www.narprail.org/wop (NARP member login required).

FY 2012 Amtrak funding perilously tight; HSR gets zero

House and Senate negotiators agreed Nov. 14 on fiscal 2012 spending that again reduces Amtrak funding. They also zeroed out DOT's capital grant program for intercity passenger trains.

President Obama signed the bill into Public Law 112-55 on Nov. 18. Amtrak says it will survive the fiscal year without service cuts. The orders for new single-level cars (CAF-USA) and electric locomotives (Siemens) will continue.

The law funds Amtrak at \$1.42 billion and does not include House subcommittee language that could have killed short-distance services.

Amtrak gets a slight increase in capital funding, including \$15 million for preliminary work on the Gateway (Hudson River) project and \$50 million to keep bringing stations into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

But there is no new funding for High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) grants to states and Amtrak for infrastructure and equipment.

And the Amtrak operating number is alarmingly tight at \$466 million, which is \$95 million (or 17%) below the 2011 level and only slightly above what the company actually used last year.

When Amtrak's operating loss is smaller than its operating grant, Amtrak can use the difference to pay for new cars and locomotives. (Technically, the full grant is used for operations and the excess passenger revenues applied to the equipment.)

It seems this opportunity will be much smaller for 2012 even though the payments required for new equipment will be much larger.

Non-union Amtrak employees got voluntary buy-out offers with a Nov. 25 decision deadline, for separation Dec. 31. Management can deny applications. Involuntary separations on

less favorable terms may be required in 2012.

HSIPR: The zero funding level for the HSIPR grant program follows the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) success in awarding highly productive grants this year.

FRA made great strides in clearing the way for states to request bids, hire engineers and workers, and begin upgrading tracks around the U.S.

Just in November, the DOT issued news releases on awards of:

- \$7.9 million for station upgrades in Washington state;

- \$21 million to improve existing California corridors and "nearly \$1 billion" for California High-Speed rail;

- \$150 million to Michigan to purchase from Norfolk Southern most of the Chicago-Detroit line that Amtrak does not own.

"Republican lawmakers are claiming credit for killing the [HSIPR] program. But billions of dollars still in the pipeline will ensure work will continue on some projects. And it's still possible money from another transportation grant program can be steered to high-speed trains" (AP, Nov. 17). ■

Roanoke-Bristol Test Train Well-Received



- David Crigger / Bristol Herald-Courier

Hundreds wait to board the Nov. 5 excursion to Bristol at Abingdon, VA.

Responding to growing grassroots support for restored passenger service, Amtrak ran a special train Nov. 5 from Roanoke to Bristol, VA over Norfolk Southern tracks that last saw regular passenger trains in 1971.

Hundreds of people rode the round-trip excursion, hosted by the Roanoke Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society.

The line is part of the proposed Trans-Dominion Express route (www.tdxinfo.org), backed by area political and business leaders. The smashing success of the *North-east Regional* extension to Lynchburg (Oct.-Nov. 2009 *News*) has inspired the Committee to Advance the Trans-Dominion Express to call for extending the new train to Roanoke and Bristol. ■

FEDERAL FUNDING FOR INTERCITY PASSENGER TRAINS

<i>Figures are Appropriations in millions of dollars</i>	2010 Enacted	2011 Enacted	2012 Amtrak Request	2012 Obama Request	2012 House Approps Subcom.	2012 Senate Approps Approved	2012 Enacted
Operations	563	561	616	659	227	544	466
General Capital incl. Fleet	594	618	1,150	2,278	628		631
ADA Compliance	144	0	175	1,184			50
Debt Service	264	305	271	280	271		271
Capital & Debt Service Total	1,002	923	1,556	3,742	899	937	952
AMTRAK SUBTOTAL	1,565	1,484	2,212	4,401	1,126	1,481	1,418
High-Speed & Intercity Rail	2,500	0		3,645	0	100	0
PASSENGER RAIL TOTAL	4,066	1,484		8,046	1,126	1,581	1,418

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(This has news through Nov. 28. Vol. 45, No. 10 was mailed Oct. 14)



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

TRAVELER'S ADVISORY

Amtrak's Nov. 7 timetable: Eastbound *Pennsylvanian* leaves Pittsburgh at 7:20 AM Sundays, same as Mon.-Sat.

Cary, NC: The rebuilt and now-staffed depot handles checked baggage for all trains, with automatic baggage transfers between *Piedmonts/Carolinian* and *Silver Star*.

Minot, ND regained Amtrak service on Nov. 15.

Maryland MTA Commuter Bus 201 runs daily, hourly between BWI (rail station & air terminal) and Shady Grove on Washington Metro's Red Line, plus Montgomery County park'n'ride lots. Uses controversial, new ICC toll road.

Supercommittee

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"scalpel" to cut domestic spending *more*, to shield the Pentagon from a 10% automatic cut. They disagree with Reagan defense official Lawrence Korb who says "the military has gotten spoilt" (*FT*, Nov. 23).

For a well-informed perspective on wasteful vs. essential programs, see "The Story of Broke," an eight-minute film at www.youtube.com/watch?v=G49q6uPcwY8 ■

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

By Robert J. Stewart



In October, our Council of Representatives met in Los Angeles. It was a great opportunity to see the dramatic development of rail there over the past few decades, with the growth of heavy and light rail and commuter rail, and the expansion of Amtrak. One light rail line is hauling 70,000 riders a day! (see pg. 1)

We worked on our five-year business plan. Many of your Representatives participated in the break-out sessions. In order to accomplish our goals, we are going to need the help of many of our members. If you are interested in

becoming involved, please contact your division leader and we will put you to work. Your division leader can be reached at www.narprail.org/council or by calling 202-408-8362.

You are going to see changes in our newsletter over the next few months. We plan to make it more informative about what is going on in our organization and around the country. If you can access the newsletter on-line rather than taking a hard copy, it really helps us. We do not give out our email list to other organizations.

We can also use your help in getting new members. Please tell your friends about NARP and sign them up. We can send you application forms, or you can print them out from www.narprail.org or sign someone up on-line. At the \$1,000 level, you can join our Silver Rails Society and be recognized on our web site,

Now is a Great Time to Get Involved

or you can become a life member.

We are facing difficult times in our country. The economy has not turned around and many legislators want to throw "the baby out with the bathwater". They need to understand that our nation's transportation infrastructure is a key to our success. Today, our infrastructure is ranked 23rd in the world, according to the World Economic Forum (<http://bit.ly/ovhZp9>).

We are developing a new editorial response team whose goal is to be ready to respond quickly to attacks on rail. There is much information being spread about passenger trains that needs to be refuted.

If you missed the December 1st deadline to run for Council Representative from your state, and you are still interested in serving, please contact our office to let us know of your interest. ■