

NARP's Fiscal 2013 Funding Goals

NARP filed statements in March with the House and Senate appropriations subcommittees, urging the highest possible fiscal 2013 funding for Amtrak and passenger train development grants.

NARP President Ross Capon points to Amtrak's continually record-breaking ridership, rising gas prices, economic development and job creation as reasons not to sacrifice passenger train investment in the name of budget cutting. Capon notes the "tangible improvements in service quality and availability in the short term" resulting from the High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail grant money that has already been spent.

NARP continues to emphasize the need for more and newer cars and locomotives. "The funding outlined is a minimum. It does not address the system expansion that we envision. It does not adequately address the desperate need for new rolling stock – both to expand capacity and to deal with the aging of Amtrak's fleet."

Given that the possibility of a daily combined *Sunset Limited* and *Texas Eagle* has been foreclosed for the next

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Senate Appropriators OK 2013 Funding

The Senate Appropriations Committee approved Apr. 19 a Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) spending bill for fiscal 2013 with \$1.75 billion for intercity passenger trains. The committee's THUD Subcommittee passed the bill April 17.

The \$1.75 billion includes \$1.45 billion for Amtrak, which is \$126 million more than the current year's level, but far less than the White House and Am-

trak requests. There is also \$100 million for state grants to "high performance" passenger train projects, and \$500 million for the Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant program, for which many rail projects are eligible.

The bill's Amtrak operating amount is even lower than Amtrak's reduced requested for \$450 million, which was

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California HSR Advances; Price Tag Lowered

California Gov. Jerry Brown (D) asked state lawmakers to approve the use of \$2.7 billion in voter-approved bond funds to build the initial segment of the state's voter-approved high-speed rail project, under a revised business plan that lowers the price tag and implements the project in stages, including major commuter train benefits.

Sometime before June 15, the California legislature will vote on whether to proceed with building the initial Central Valley segment.

The new business plan, released Apr. 2 and approved by the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CAHSRA) Board Apr. 12, also makes short-term investments in major commuter train service upgrades in the Los Angeles basin and the San Francisco Bay area.

The Plan pegs the cost at \$68.4 billion; the previous estimate was \$98 billion. Construction will start later this year unless a legal dispute delays it.

The Plan offers a "blended ap-

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Szabo's National Network Thumbs Up

Speaking at NARP's Northwest membership meeting in Whitefish, MT, Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph Szabo gave a strong defense of Amtrak's national network of overnight trans. He said FRA will soon hire a full-time staffer "to monitor the quality and on-time performance of long-distance train service."

"You can't deny that long-distance routes like the [*Empire*] *Builder* are gems," said Szabo. "They provide mobility to so many Americans that other-



- Allison Stillwell on Flickr.com

The westbound *Empire Builder* at Havre, MT in 2009.

wise might be left without transportation options..."

"Flying on a plane or driving on the highway, that's transportation. But riding the rails is travel," he continued. "We deserve freedom from fuel costs

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NARP Members Tour Philadelphia Railcar Plant



-Sang-Hun Chun, Hyundai Rotem

NARP's Ross Capon (left) with son Phillip in front of a brand-new Silverliner V EMU car.

The joint NARP/Delaware Valley Assoc. of Rail Passengers (DVARP) membership meeting March 24 included a tour of the Hyundai-Rotem USA facility in South Philadelphia. The

plant is building the Southeast Pennsylvania Transportation Authority's (SEPTA) Silverliner V EMU cars for Regional Rail service.

One of two U.S. facilities owned by this subsidiary of Korean manufacturer Hyundai Motor Group, the plant employs over 300, with an additional 100 at other sites. It is turning out about 7-8 Silverliners a month. SEPTA is replacing its old Silverliner II cars, originally acquired by the Pennsylvania Railroad and Reading Company in 1963.

Most of the high-strength steel used is locally sourced (from Conshohocken, PA), with small amounts from Oregon and Sweden. Columbus Castings (Ohio) supplies the trucks (which include the wheels) for the new cars. Many other domestic suppliers are used, including over 20 in Pennsylvania.

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This has news through April 20.

Vol. 46, No. 3 was mailed March 21.

California HSR

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proach." High-speed trains would share electrified tracks between San Jose and San Francisco with Caltrain commuter trains, instead of using separate tracks.

\$1.4 billion is already in place to electrify the line, a long-planned project—\$500 million from federal transit grants, the rest from bridge tolls and other local sources—having been approved by the Bay Area's Metropolitan Transportation Commission. Added funding from the state, expected to be part of its fiscal 2013 budget, must be approved before setting a timeline.

The Los Angeles Basin would see improvements to existing lines used by Amtrak and Metrolink commuter trains, making many trips shorter and more frequencies possible while laying the groundwork for HSR.

Up to \$2.3 billion in bond money would go to these short-term projects, along with a \$950 million "interconnectivity fund." Southern California would get \$1.4 billion, the Bay Area \$900 million.

"Bay to Basin" high-speed service would be operational in 2026. An

added \$23 billion would make a "full build-out" operational by 2033.

Support for both high-speed line construction and modernization of existing metro-area train services was the thrust of NARP's January joint letter to Gov. Brown (Feb. *News*; www.bit.ly/calet). It got positive feedback from Caltrain execs and other stakeholders.

Brown dismissed the suggestion that a judge would block the momentous infrastructure project over claims that the project today is different from what voters approved in 2008. "People want to micromanage everything," he remarked.

U.S. DOT Secretary Ray LaHood, speaking at a *Politico* event in Washington April 17, praised Brown as a governor "with vision. He has appointed a terrific guy head of the CHSRA – Dan Richard. He's made changes...reduced costs. They [earlier] made some bad mistakes. People in the agricultural community were treated badly. That has changed."

Also April 17, the state Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) issued a report

attacking the project because funding has not been identified to complete the entire project. Supporters respond that it is common for major infrastructure project to go forward without identification of all funds needed. The LAO in the past opposed new cars for the California Amtrak corridors.

Meanwhile, CAHSRA officials have said it may make more sense to begin extending the initial segment southward to Sylmar, then to Los Angeles (eventually following the route of Metrolink's Antelope Valley Line), instead of northward towards San Francisco. Richard said the Authority is leaning towards starting high-speed service between Merced and the San Fernando Valley.

State Senator Doug LaMalfa's (R) effort to put a project termination measure on the ballot got approval from the California Secretary of State on March 18, but it is unclear whether supporters will collect enough signatures to qualify for the November ballot. ■

CAHSRA's exec. summary of the new business plan is at 1.usa.gov/hsrpln.

two years (see *Sunset* story, pg. 5), we list our top priorities for system expansion as restoration of the New Orleans-Florida link and daily operation of the New York-Cincinnati-Chicago *Cardinal*. We also express our support for efforts to keep the Chicago-Los Angeles *Southwest Chief* on its current route across Kansas, southeastern Colorado and northern New Mexico.

NARP strongly backed Amtrak's Gateway project to boost capacity and reliability between New Jersey and New York City: "Every year that goes

by before Portal Bridge (over the Hackensack River) can be replaced, and Hudson River tunnel capacity can be increased, brings us closer to a potential mobility crisis that would touch the nerve center of the national economy."

NARP reinforced NARP's support for the California High-Speed Rail project, and expressed pleasure at the attention being paid to making near-term upgrades to commuter and transit rail service in the Los Angeles and San Francisco Bay metro areas.

NARP notes that a provision in the

Senate-passed surface transportation authorization bill (S. 1813) would cut \$30 million in federal funding from the state-owned Alaska Railroad, jeopardizing the state's passenger service. ■

Our statement: www.bit.ly/narp13

Treasury Dept. Calls for Transportation Investment

A Mar. 23 U.S. Treasury Dept. report says the nation needs to invest in transportation infrastructure to create middle-class jobs, increase the country's long-term competitiveness and support a more secure energy future. It singles out public transit and high-speed rail for their potential to protect against volatile oil prices, relieve auto congestion and provide travel options. ■

Full report: 1.usa.gov/trestran

Cascades Corridor to be Managed as a Unit

The Washington and Oregon Departments of Transportation signed an agreement Apr. 4 to create a partnership to manage the Amtrak *Cascades* corridor as a single unit between Eugene, OR and Vancouver, BC.

John Sibold, Rail and Marine Director at the Washington State DOT, was tapped to become Director of the Cascade Corridor. He will develop a plan for managing the service, increasing service speed and frequency.

He will work with US and Canadian border services on a new customs pre-clearance program to speed trains' border crossing, and work with British Columbia authorities on a shared vision.

Cascades ridership has risen 51% over the past 10 years. ■

News release: 1.usa.gov/cascorr

planning and analysis," said Szabo. "I am pleased to see the planning work currently taking place in Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas, proving that strong, long-term planning leads to the creation of a market-driven rail plan that benefits communities throughout the corridor." ■

Successful Kansas City Rail Symposium

The Northern Flyer Alliance—a grassroots group working to restore through Amtrak service between Fort Worth and Newton, KS, or Kansas City (Jan. *News*)—organized an impressive and well-attended April 6 event, *The Business Case for Passenger Rail 2012 Symposium*.

It was held in the board room of the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, in beautiful Kansas City Union Station (photo at right).

Host Scott Wagner, a Kansas City Councilman, said, "There's a reason why the Chamber is in Union Station and you are sitting in its board room. The business community understands the importance of this building and of railroads generally."

Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph Szabo was the featured speaker. Other presenters: Iowa, Kansas and Missouri state legislators; Mayor Homer Nicholson of Ponca City, OK; Wichita Councilman Pete Meitzner; Chris Larson, CEO of engineering firm Larson Binkley; NARP's Ross Capon, Midwest High Speed Rail Association Exec. Dir. and NARP Board Member Rick Harnish, Amtrak's Derrick James and state transportation officials.

The focus was on the huge, positive impact that passenger trains can have on local economies. The event received ample local media coverage. U.S. DOT



- Ross Capon



-Ross Capon

Kansas City Union Station's elegant boarding hall, now shops and museum. Amtrak has good space in the station, linked to platform by covered, outdoorside walkway. Secretary Ray LaHood wrote it up in his *Fast Lane* blog (April 6 entry at www.bit.ly/lahsym).

"Progress doesn't happen overnight — it becomes a reality after each state lays a solid foundation through good

FEC: Miami-Orlando Passenger Trains To Roll in 2014

Florida East Coast Industries Inc. (FECI) announced March 22 plans to develop a privately-funded and operated Orlando-Miami passenger train service dubbed "All Aboard Florida." FECI intends to begin service in 2014, after making capital investments of about \$1 billion. They envision future extensions to Tampa and Jacksonville.

Trains are to use the Florida East Coast Railway's (FECRY, a division of FECI) main line from downtown Miami north to Cocoa. A new, 40-mile, Cocoa-Orlando rail line is planned. There is also discussion of moving some Tri-Rail commuter trains onto the FEC.

Trains will have modern coaches, a bistro car, and free WiFi. Departures will be every 2-3 hours with top speeds up to 110 mph.

FECI is now undertaking an "investment-grade" ridership and engineering study is underway. The company will then issue a firmer timeline and decide what type of equipment to order.

FECI insists that the new service will cost state taxpayers nothing, though some minor state involvement may be necessary. It also will not impact FECRY's growing freight operations.

2013 Senate Funding *from page 1*

much lower than previous years. Its capital level is considerably lower than both Amtrak and the Obama Administration's requests. It leaves passengers to wonder what maintenance and investment needs will remain unmet.

Report language directs Amtrak to spend at least \$20 million of its capital grant on the New York City-New Jersey Gateway project.

The bill also has \$2.044 billion for the Federal Transit Administration's 'New Starts' program to fund new metro, commuter rail, light rail, streetcar and bus lines and systems.

The bill next goes to the Senate floor. There are strong pressures in the House for lower, less train- and transit-friendly levels. ■

A summary of the Senate bill is at www.bit.ly/13thudsum

Former [California] Capitol Corridor Managing Director (and former NARP Board Member) Eugene Skoropowski

joined FECI in March as vice president for passenger service. ■

More at www.allboardflorida.com

Wisconsin Talgos May Not Operate

Having killed longstanding plans to extend passenger service to Madison, state leaders are trying to tear up Wisconsin's maintenance contract with Talgo, which would result in mothballing the two brand-new train sets the state already bought for the Chicago-Milwaukee *Hiawathas* (Dec. 2011 *News*, p. 4; Mar. 2012 *News*, p. 4).

In a March 15, 12-4, party-line vote, the Wisconsin legislature's Joint Finance Committee decided not to let the state borrow \$2.5 million for a Milwaukee maintenance base for the trains.

Gov. Scott Walker (R) signed off on this decision Mar. 19. A state lawyer wrote to Talgo indicating Wisconsin's intent to cancel the maintenance contract. Talgo America Vice President Nora Friend warned Apr. 15 that cancellation could lead to legal action, and that the state ignored cheaper options for the maintenance base..

The state has paid Talgo \$49 million for trains the two trainsets. The base, costing \$55 to \$63 million, is funded in a separate contract. The state cannot hold up its end of the bargain with-

out the extra \$2.5 million. Without it, Talgo would leave Milwaukee, taking over 1,000 jobs with it.

Wisconsin DOT estimated that the state would save \$10 million a year in operating costs by using the existing Amtrak Horizon equipment instead of the Talgos. Talgo points out that the state chose to order bistro cars for the new trainsets. Talgo believes the resulting ridership would have more than offset some capacity loss due to the new trains' smaller number of seats (397).

If not used in Wisconsin, it is unclear whether the trains would go to the Pacific Northwest. Parking the trains indefinitely would be a travesty, considering Amtrak's strong ridership growth and desperate need for more cars.

While the state refuses to borrow more money for trains, it *is* borrowing funds for roadbuilding. Walker proposed borrowing \$400 million for new highway projects, while cutting all funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects (saving a mere \$5.7 million) and slashing \$7 million from transit (www.bit.ly/wishwys). ■

Devils Lake Bridge to be Replaced This Summer

This summer BNSF begins work on the three-year, \$97.4 million job of raising the line the *Empire Builder* uses to protect it from the rising waters of Devils Lake. Otherwise, Amtrak would have been forced to reroute the *Builder*, ending service to Grand Forks, Devils Lake and Rugby, ND.

The work includes replacing the bridge at Churchs Ferry, and is planned to minimize interference with the *Builder's* operation.

The project is jointly funded by BNSF, Amtrak and North Dakota. The state won a \$10 million federal TIGER III grant and the governor has promised to ask the legislature for another \$10 million. However,

to avoid delays, work in 2012 will proceed without state funding. Interest in maintaining the line also has grown due to North Dakota's booming energy industry. ■



- Steve Wilson on Flickr.com

The westbound Empire Builder passes Rugby, ND's grain elevator.

New Sunset Ltd Schedule Effective May 7

Amtrak and Union Pacific reached an agreement allowing for major *Sunset Limited* schedule improvements.

The new schedule (right; only major cities shown) takes effect May 9 with that day's New Orleans and Los Angeles departures. Westbound train 1 will now leave New Orleans Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays (instead of Fridays). Eastbound train 2 will still leave Los Angeles Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

It makes for a shorter overall trip and better times at Houston and Tucson. The dwell time for through *Texas Eagle* passengers at San Antonio is shortened by seven hours eastbound and three hours westbound.

The westbound change of day should improve equipment utilization and also produces a Los Angeles arrival in early Monday rather than Sunday.

Under the agreement with UP, Am-

trak agrees for two years from May 7 "not to make a request to UP to increase the current tri-weekly frequency of the *Sunset Limited* on UP, or make a request to UP to commence any other long distance or non-state-supported service along the current *Sunset Limited* route or any portion thereof." [See Apr. 2010 and Feb. 2012 *News* regarding Amtrak's daily *Sunset* plan.] ■

Amtrak's release, including full new schedule, is at www.bit.ly/snstsch

Train 1 (read down)	Station	Train 2 (read up)
9:00 A	New Orleans	9:40 P
6:55 P	Houston	12:10 P
2:45 A	San Antonio	6:25 A
1:47 P	El Paso	3:35 P
7:35 P	Tucson	8:15 A
8:55 P	Maricopa	6:55 A
5:35 A	Los Angeles	10:00 P

Chicago-St. Louis Development Continues

110-mph operation should begin on a 20-mile segment of Amtrak's Chicago-St. Louis *Lincoln Service* corridor this summer, according to Michael Garcia, Chief of the Illinois Dept. of Transportation's (IDOT) High-Speed and Passenger Rail Bureau.

Plans are to increase top speeds to 110 mph over much of the rest of the route over the next 5 years, and to add four round-trips to the current four (plus the Chicago-San Antonio *Texas Eagle*).

Garcia made these announcements at a public meeting in Springfield, the fifth of 10 being held across the state to discuss the state's rail needs. Hearings have also been held in Chicago, Rockford, Peoria and Champaign.

Commenting on feedback IDOT has received from these meetings, Garcia said "A lot of what we're hearing is wanting

passenger service or wanting increased passenger service."

In addition, work will take place on the southern section of the Chicago-St. Louis corridor through May, laying groundwork for 110-mph operation south of Springfield (see *Travelers' Advisory*, pg. 6)

More than 1 million passengers rode Amtrak trains in Illinois in the federal fiscal year that ended Sept. 30. The *Lincoln Service* accounted for nearly 550,000 of those riders. ■



- Ross Capon

FLORIDA ADDRESSES AMTRAK LIABILITY ISSUE

Amtrak service over the Florida East Coast (February *News*, p. 4; separate from "All Aboard Florida," p. 4 of this issue) is a step closer to reality. The Florida legislature approved letting the state grant the same level of liability protection to Amtrak trains operating over state-owned tracks that it gets from other host railroads. The measure is part of the fiscal 2013 transportation funding bill, on Gov. Rick Scott's desk as we go to press. He is expected to sign it.

This would permit the start of serious negotiations between Amtrak and the Florida DOT over FEC service. Amtrak will update forecasts for this service, which includes New York-Miami through-cars.

Federal Commitment

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and the ability for our country to beat its addiction to foreign oil."

Also speaking at the March 17 meeting, with over 70 in attendance, were Amtrak Vice President—Government Affairs Joseph McHugh, the Montana Department of Transportation's Doug McBroom, and NARP Chairman Bob Stewart.

"The economic benefits of Amtrak for a state like Montana are just huge," McBroom said. According to MDT, the *Builder's* presence reduces transportation costs in the state by \$4 million annually, reduces highway maintenance spending by \$600,000, brings tourists who spend more than \$7 million in the state every year, and results in \$4 million in Amtrak spending in-state.

"Long-distance trains are the glue that holds the national system together," NARP's Stewart concluded. "We need a system that connects everybody." ■

Phila. Plant Tour

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As the SEPTA order is being fulfilled, the plant will also handle additional orders from transit systems in Boston, Denver and possibly elsewhere. The other Rotem facility, located in southern California, is working on a Metrolink order. ■

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

Ground Broken on Major Missouri Bridge Project

Ground was broken March 29 for a new double-track railroad bridge across the Osage River near Jefferson City, MO, which will increase reliability of Amtrak's popular *Missouri River Runners* and freight trains. The \$28 million project got a \$22.6 million High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail grant from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). Its completion will make the entire St. Louis-Kansas City route double-track.

Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon (D) and FRA Deputy Administrator Karen Hedlund attended the groundbreaking. ■



Luis Olmo-Rivera

Connecticut, Olmo-Rivera earned his bachelors degree in Public Policy and Government from Eastern Connecticut State University. While a student, he interned for a Democratic State Representative and a Republican Member of Congress. He thereby gained extensive knowledge and understanding of the

Welcome, Luis!

Luis Olmo-Rivera began work as NARP Coordinator of Resource Development on March 12.

A native of Ashford in rural, northeastern

legislative process.

After spending three summers interning and working on Capitol Hill, Olmo-Rivera moved to DC permanently in 2010. He brings a strong background in administrative support and management in retail, hospitality, and advocacy/policy oriented nonprofits. ■

Thank you, Mary Beth!

We thank Mary Beth McCall for her excellent, enthusiastic work as Coordinator of Resource Development over the past 13 months. We also congratulate her on her recent marriage and on the start of a new career as a real estate agent in northern Virginia. ■

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

California Zephyr delays, detours mid-April-early June: Due to Union Pacific tie replacement between Grand Junction and Winter Park, CO:

May 15-21, May 31-Jun. 6 (Chicago and Emeryville departures): Trains 5 and 6 detour between Salt Lake City and Denver, missing intermediate stops. Alternate bus service between Denver, Glenwood Springs and Grand Junction, making only those stops. No service to Winter Park, Granby, Green River, Helper or Provo. Detouring train 6 will depart Denver and all stops east to Chicago 1 hour earlier.

Illinois trackwork Apr. 16-25,

May 1-10, May 16-25: As Union Pacific upgrades tracks for faster service, buses replace *Lincoln Service* trains between Springfield and St. Louis, and the *Texas Eagle* detours between Chicago & St. Louis. Express Springfield-St. Louis buses will meet each *Lincoln Service* train. Van service connects Alton and Carlinville to Springfield & St. Louis.

Joliet-St. Louis buses will connect all intermediate stops to the *Eagle*, which will run on a later schedule southbound and an earlier schedule northbound between St. Louis and Little Rock. Details at www.bit.ly/may12il

[may12il](http://www.bit.ly/may12il)

New York-Boston adjustments: Due to track and bridge replacement work, one track on the Northeast Corridor between New Haven and Westerly, RI, will be out of service almost continuously from Mar. 21 to Nov. 5. No change in New York-Boston service frequency, but different trains serve Old Saybrook, Mystic and Westerly, and delays are possible. Details at 1.usa.gov/ct12chg

Michigan trackwork Apr. 16 onwards: Delays, cancellations and bus substitutions Chicago-Detroit-Pontiac. See www.amtrak.com/alerts