

*“While the nation is experiencing the lowest gas prices in more than a decade, the affordability and convenience of public transportation to get around a city and a surrounding community is still important for a number of travelers. Using public transit also can help provide a traveler with a truly local experience during vacation.”*

APTA ACTING PRESIDENT AND CEO RICHARD WHITE

## Transportation Budget Races Summer Deadline

**While the transportation budget** passed out of the House Committee on Appropriations with ease, a packed legislative calendar and a looming July 15th recess has the clock ticking on Fiscal Year 2017 funding for passenger rail and Amtrak.

With the Senate already done with its version of the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development measure, all that stands in the way of full Congressional approval is a full House vote on the bill funding passenger rail, transit and highways. As always, NARP remains alert for anti-Amtrak amendments from the House side. However, the overwhelming bipartisan support for last year’s Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, which forms the framework for both the House

and Senate FY2017 bills, bodes well for a quick enactment.

But the pressures of a presidential election year mean time is short. Congress adjourns July 15th for the Republican and Democratic national conventions, at which point campaigning for the general election will begin in earnest. With an expiring Federal Aviation Administration extension and several politically divisive gun control measures taking up floor time, transportation is facing a small window for action.

Given the importance of the FAST Act-created grant programs, NARP is asking Members of Congress to act on the FY2017 transportation bills before the end of the current fiscal year on September 30. (See related chart entitled: Passenger Rail Funding on page 3). ■

**July 2016**

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## NARP CEO Issues Letters Urging Regulators To Expedite Critical Rail Projects

**New passenger rail projects** generate excitement and potential for strong economic growth, but frustration can be felt when initiatives languish in bureaucratic gridlock before getting started. Two critical rail infrastructure projects are currently bogged down in lengthy review processes, and NARP’s President and CEO Jim Mathews has recently issued letters on behalf of NARP to the relevant authorities urging more timely action. A key part of the Texas Central high-speed rail project between Houston and Dallas is currently under review by the Surface Transportation Board, while the Hudson Tunnel project in New York

and New Jersey is held up in the environmental review stage by NJ Transit and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). Both are critical projects, and both would benefit immensely from an expedited review process.

The Texas Central project would connect Dallas and Houston in an unprecedented way, injecting \$4.3 billion into the region’s economy during the four year construction phase, followed by \$352.4 million each year once operation begins. By 2040, the project could contribute a total of \$3.11 billion in taxes at the local and state level. Further, the project

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Photo: Kevin Hagen For The Wall Street Journal

One of two tunnels that carry Amtrak’s passenger trains under the Hudson River.

## • • • M E M B E R S P O T L I G H T • • •

## NARP Intern Proves Ease Of Bike Travel By Rail Across the United States

**NARP's intern, Elena Studier,** completed her 10,000-mile, 38-day "Summer By Rail" journey when she arrived at Washington, D.C.'s Union Station on June 20th. During her once-in-a-lifetime trip, which started in New York City on May 15th, Elena and her bike Stevie visited 20 different cities, a journey that took her from East Coast to West and back again.

As they traveled from city to city, site to site, Elena and Stevie focused on capturing and sharing her perspective on rail and bike travel between cities and America's landmarks, as well as how funding for rail infrastructure and services like Amtrak are critical to the country's economic vitality in the 21st Century.

"This has been a remarkable experience, and it has allowed me an opportunity to not only see the sites of the country, but also view our nation's transportation infrastructure in a different light," said Studier, 20. "I was able to meet and speak with so many great people, and capture how people live and move in different regions of the U.S., and understand how passenger rail and other forms of public transit can help benefit economies and development."

During each visit to cities like Chicago, Seattle, Los Angeles, New Orleans and many more, Elena met with a range of city and transportation officials as well as transportation advocacy groups to discuss the need for regular funding and support not only for passenger rail but also multimodal transit between bikes, trains, buses, car services, ferries and more.

Elena shared these meetings and new experiences during her travels on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), and her blog, HYPERLINK "<http://www.SummerByRail.com>" [www.SummerByRail.com](http://www.SummerByRail.com). ■



Elena travels through Texas on Amtrak.

Photo Credit: NARP

## Southern Rail Commission Hits Back Against Misleading Alabama Claims

**The Southern Rail Commission** issued a forceful statement correcting recent misleading and erroneous information circulating regarding Corridor Capital, which has been falsely described by some Alabama media outlets as a "passenger rail operator."

"Recent news reports about a passenger rail provider locating in Montgomery, Alabama and starting multiple passenger services across the state have created serious concern among members of the Southern Rail Commission, and those who are advancing the efforts of passenger rail," stated the Commission. "These reports imply that the Southern Rail Commission was the source for information presented in these reports, and implied that the SRC is a supporter of these efforts. These reports were erroneous and misleading, and do not represent the official position of the Southern Rail Commission. The SRC does not currently have any business with Corridor Capital, nor pending business."

"In fact," the statement goes on to say, "the SRC had one ten-minute presentation at a public meeting last year from Corridor Capital. No action was taken following their presentation, nor is any action expected. The SRC had no conversations or negotiations with them prior to, nor since, that time. In fact, in direct contradiction of comments made in the recent press stories about Corridor Capital "having existing operations for many years" in the Midwest and Northeast, their representative stated at the SRC meeting that they 'do not operate any train services at this time.'"

The SRC is a three-state rail compact, backed by the state governments of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. The Commission is the lead actor in the campaign to restore passenger rail service to the Gulf Coast and has worked with NARP closely in educating local politicians and passengers. The SRC emphasized that it has a strong partnership with Amtrak to expand the passenger rail network in the south. ■



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## Ahead Of Political Conventions, NARP Pushes For Passenger Rail In Party Platform Statements

**NARP asked both the Clinton and Trump campaigns** —as well as the Democratic and Republican national parties —to include language in their respective party platform statements supporting rail and recognizing the job-creating power of rail investment.

In letters to platform-drafters, NARP asked for two simple measures that would transform America’s rail network:

- Provide dedicated funding for the passenger rail programs created by the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act; and
- Increase investment in transit’s general fund and capital investment programs to address a massive capital backlog facing the U.S.’s most heavily-riden rail transit corridors.

A dedicated source of funding for intercity rail is especially important because it will allow states and Amtrak to purchase desperately needed new equipment, fueling the ongoing revitalization of America’s rail manufacturing industry.

It would also fund shovel-ready station improvements and corridor expansion projects.

Both candidates have spoken positively of investment in rail. Hillary Clinton’s campaign has released an infrastructure proposal that would boost federal investment in transportation by \$275 billion over five years, and “invest in a world-leading passenger rail system to meet rapidly growing demand and build a more mobile America.”

Donald Trump has lamented the fact that China has left the U.S. behind in constructing new high-speed rail corridors, and promised that he would close that gap.

“Our airports, bridges, water tunnels, power grids, rail systems—our nation’s entire infrastructure is crumbling, and we aren’t doing anything about it,” Trump wrote in 2015. “These projects put people to work... The Senate Budget Committee estimates that rebuilding America will create 13 million jobs.” ■

### Passenger Rail Funding (in millions)

Program	Fiscal Year 2016	FAST Act FY2017 Authorized Levels	Senate THUD FY2017 Proposed Levels	House THUD FY2017 Proposed Levels
Amtrak – General Operating	\$288.50	N/A	N/A	N/A
Amtrak – General Capital	\$1,101.50	N/A	N/A	N/A
Amtrak - National Network	N/A	\$1,026.00	\$1,075.00	\$1,000.00
Amtrak - NEC	N/A	\$474.00	\$345.00	\$420.00
Consolidated Rail Infrastructure & Safety Grants	N/A	\$190.00	\$50.00	\$25.00
Federal State Partnership For State Of Good Repair	N/A	\$140.00	\$20.00	\$25.00
Restoration & Enhancement Grants	N/A	\$20.50	\$15.00	\$0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,390.00</b>	<b>\$1,850.50</b>	<b>\$1,505.00</b>	<b>\$1,470.00</b>

### PROJECTS, from p. 1

is significant not just for its benefits to the region but also for the precedent it could set for other areas of the country moving forward. Texas Central is a private project, and, if successful, could serve as one model for funding high-speed rail projects around the country.

The STB has heard objections centered on accusations that condemnation would be used to acquire land for the project, but Mathews describes the objections as “ill-founded” in his letter, explaining that Texas Central is simply completing necessary steps in the regulatory process and complying with Texas law. Mathews encourages STB to expedite review of the application so that the project can move forward without delay.

Meanwhile, the Hudson Tunnel project is one of the most critical in the history of our nation’s infrastructure. With 24,000 passengers riding through the tunnels each day, the tunnels represent a vital link for transportation, as well as a “single point-of-failure” that could have a devastating impact on the economy

should disruptions occur, according to Mathews. The project’s Environmental Impact Statement remains under review, and each day that passes without approval increases the risk for a transportation meltdown.

In his letter, addressed to both FRA and NJ Transit, Mathews urges officials to separate the Hudson Tunnels project from the larger Gateway project in order to ease the regulatory burden and expedite the approval of the Environmental Impact Statement.

Preventing delays and getting projects started in a timely manner are crucial for major rail projects and keeping the country moving forward. To maintain enthusiasm and optimism regarding new infrastructure endeavors, it is important to minimize drawn-out, regulatory obstacles which build cynicism and stall progress. The Texas Central and Hudson Tunnel projects are prime examples of initiatives worthy of being expedited. For more details, read Mathews’ letters to the [STB](#) and to [NJ Transit](#) and the [FRA](#). ■

• • • S T A T E S N E W S • • •

**Officials at Brightline**, the high-speed rail line being developed between Miami and Orlando, Florida, are highlighting design features in their new rail cars as they count on a better passenger experience to attract riders to their trains. Overall management is making a point of specifying cars that are more desirable and comfortable for passengers. Each seat, for example, is equipped with power plugs, aisles are twice as wide as those on aircraft, windows are large enough for scenic enjoyment and plans are in place for cleaning bathrooms while underway and not just at endpoint stations. An adapted European suspension system should ensure a smooth ride. Brightline plans to begin service between downtown Miami and downtown West Palm Beach in mid-2017.

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**Indiana DOT**, in conjunction with Iowa Pacific Holdings and Amtrak, operated a special inspection train between Indianapolis and Lafayette in support of continued state funding for the current 4-day-a-week Hoosier State service and to highlight the need for increased frequencies on the route from Chicago to Indianapolis. State and local officials, including Indiana Lt. Gov. Eric Holcomb, spoke at a Lafayette press event and then rode the train back to Indianapolis. NARP staffer Bruce Becker & Council Member Cliff Dunn were among the invited guests and Indiana officials were pleased to have NARP's support on the trip. Ridership on the Hoosier State was up 20% in May 2016 over last year and revenue was up 65%.

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**The long-sought addition of** an 18-mile second main track between Albany and Schenectady, NY, is now underway. Amtrak's automated Track Laying Machine (TLM) started on the installation of new cement ties and welded rail. This segment of the Empire Corridor, which sees twelve passenger trains a day, has been a major choke point for over 25 years and has often contributed to significant delays. The new second track will have a top speed of 110mph when it enters service in 2017. This project is one of several improvements in progress across NY's Capital Region.



View of a Brightline locomotive under construction at the Siemens plant in Sacramento. Photo Credit: Jeff Ostrowski, The Palm Beach Post

**Rail projects in Vermont** will receive \$33.4 million, as part of a \$612.6 million transportation budget for FY2017. The budget was approved by Gov. Peter Shumlin, and will invest \$4.1 million of state and federal funds into track and bridge improvements on the Western corridor between Burlington and Rutland. The budget will continue state support for Amtrak's Vermonter and Ethan Allen routes, and will invest in the expansion of the Ethan Allen service to Burlington.

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**New York Governor Andrew M. Cuomo** announced that the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) will receive \$27 billion as part of the 2015-19 MTA Capital Program, which is part of a plan to reimagine MTA for the 21st century. Final approval of the funding is big for the area, as it took months of political wrangling to agree upon the final amount. The source of the funds is yet to be determined, but the money will cover everything from track and station repairs to new train cars and buses. MTA will also be moving forward with a plan to renovate 31 subway stations. ■

## Summer Travelers Prefer The Advantages of Public Transportation, Survey Shows

**Summer is underway**, which means Americans are traveling. Some will fly, while others drive to their U.S. destinations, but once they arrive they are faced with the same question, "how do we get around?" Public transportation, such as passenger rail is a great option that many vacationers prefer, based on a new study from the American Public Transportation Association (APTA).

According to the survey, close to 60 percent of the 131 million Americans who plan on vacationing in a U.S. city this summer will use public transit. The primary motivation is affordability. The majority of respondents agreed that taking a train or bus

is a better, cheaper alternative than taxis or rental cars.

Convenience is another major factor, with many respondents citing parking and navigating unfamiliar cities as the reason they prefer public transit. Parking can be expensive, and may prevent travelers from visiting some landmarks. And no one wants to be lost on vacation as they drive through new cities.

The reasons are many, but public transportation is the better option for Americans. Trains and buses are affordable and convenient. APTA's complete 2016 "Travel Like a Local" Summer Travel Survey is available here. ■

## Member Benefits: A Win-Win!

■ Travelers United and NARP have now teamed up to provide select benefits for the members of both organizations. The mission of Travelers United (TU) is to identify and promote ways to improve and enhance travel for consumers across all modes of travel - airlines, rental cars, cruise lines, rail and bus transportation and accommodations. The TU vision is that the voice of everyday travelers be heard by lawmakers, regulators and travel companies when policy is being shaped, resulting in a better overall experience for the travel consumer. NARP members can now sign-up at no cost to become TU Advocate members; to receive the TU newsletter and to participate in TU-conducted polls & surveys on consumer-related travel issues. Visit the benefits page on the narp website, or [www.narprail.org/tu](http://www.narprail.org/tu) for more information.

■ Amtrak Vacations now offers NARP members a 10% discount on the rail fare portion of the hundreds of wonderful tour packages they offer. Visit the NARP member benefits webpage for more information or contact Amtrak Vacations directly at 1-800-268-7252 to reserve a tour package and for more details.

■ We all shop online, but now it can directly benefit NARP through Amazon. NARP has been approved as an Amazon Smile program partner, which means that Amazon Smile will donate 0.5% of the price of all your eligible Amazon purchases to NARP if you start all your Amazon shopping experiences via the Amazon Smile link now available on the NARP website homepage. This great Amazon donation program costs you nothing and NARP stands to earn a significant new source of revenue in support of our goals!

■ VSP Vision Care Insurance now offers specially-discounted individual and family vision insurance plans exclusively for NARP members that will typically save you hundreds of dollars on your exams, glasses and contacts. And as a VSP member, you or any family member can also enjoy savings of up to \$1200 per hearing aid through TruHearing®. When you sign up for a VSP plan, you not only help yourself and your family, you help support NARP as well! Enroll today at <http://www.vspdirect.com/narp/get-a-quote>. ■

## Important Membership Reminder

■ Please do NOT use any old envelopes, membership renewal forms or donation requests you may have saved from previous NARP mailings prior to March 2016. These forms and the PO Box address on the old envelopes are no longer in use and your checks or credit card payment submissions will NOT reach NARP. Please only use the new envelopes and renewal/donation forms you receive with our current mailings, which are addressed to: NARP, PO Box 17082, Baltimore, MD 21298-9485. If in any doubt, you may always send checks and other payments directly to our office at: NARP, 505 Capitol Ct, NE, Suite 300, Washington, DC , 20002-7706.

■ There are still vacancies for state representative positions on the Council of Representatives. Of particular note are the multiple openings for California, Ohio and Texas seats. If you are interested in becoming more involved with NARP and advancing our goal of 'A Connected America', please visit our website, [www.narprail.org](http://www.narprail.org) for more information and for a complete list of the positions available.

■ Save the dates of Friday, October 14 - Sunday, October 16 and make plans to attend the NARP Fall Membership & Council Meeting being held in beautiful Denver, CO. Meeting highlights will include a tour of the newly-expanded Denver Regional Transit District rail lines on Friday; a welcome reception at Denver Union Station on Friday evening; a full day of exciting and motivating speakers and panels on Saturday and a keynote presentation on Sunday. The Embassy Suites Downtown at the Convention Center is our host location and discounted NARP group-rate room reservations are now available via a link on the Fall Meeting event page on the website. ■



Photo Credit: Amtrak

# WEB EXCLUSIVE! California High Speed Rail: A Bargain For Modern Mobility & Development

by Jim Mathews/President & CEO

**As a practitioner of the craft of journalism** for more than three decades, I believe firmly that The Wall Street Journal is one of the last bastions of quality journalism left on the American landscape. That's why it baffles me that the WSJ can be so completely and consistently wrongheaded on rail issues generally and on high-speed rail specifically.

The latest provocation from the WSJ fell with a thud on to the editorial page on May 23rd, derisively dismissing the California High Speed Rail project as "California's Bullet Train to Whenever." The editorial claimed that polls show "only 44% of voters favor high-speed rail." Well, that's nonsense. As our friend, colleague and former NARP Board Chair George Chilson observed, this very selective statistic misrepresents the real findings of the March 2016 statewide survey on the issue, conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California.

The poll reported that 63% -- nearly two-thirds -- of all adults surveyed said the high-speed rail system was "somewhat" or "very" important to the future quality of life and economic vitality of California. Just a bit more than half -- 52% -- favored spending \$68 billion over the next two decades to build it. Even those opposed to it, when asked how they would feel if the price came down, came around to support high-speed rail: overall support in that category rose to 66% of adults surveyed and 59% among likely voters.

Impressive on its face, yes. But considering how few Americans have ever personally experienced truly modern passenger rail service, that kind of support is powerful and surprising. In fact, it's even more so considering how hard the WSJ, the highway builders and the

NIMBY caucus have worked the propaganda machine to tear down this worthy investment.

Is \$68 billion a lot of money? Of course it is, but California's growing population is straining the nation's busiest roads. The California High-Speed Rail Authority is building America's first 21st century high-speed rail system -- 800 miles of rail with 24 stations between San Diego and Sacramento, initially connecting San Francisco and Los Angeles with 200-mph trains. That will cost money, time and engineering effort, but it will cost a lot LESS than doing nothing.

What happens if you don't spend \$68 billion on this project? You spend at least \$158 billion instead, adding 4,300 new miles of highway lanes, 115 new airport gates and four additional major-airport runways. Some less-conservative estimates put that figure at \$272 billion. And even by spending more you do nothing about congestion, nothing about lost time, nothing about highway safety (driving is, on average about 17 times more hazardous than taking a train or flying) and nothing about greenhouse gas emissions.

On the other hand, going ahead with the project generates a total economic return of about \$8 billion on its initial \$2.6 billion investment. The project will create 66,000 new jobs for 15 years. Each year, the high-speed train will eliminate at least 330,000 metric tons of CO2 emissions.

By delivering a new, better and more reliable mobility choice at upwards of 75% less cost, high-speed rail is a bargain, not a "boondoggle." WSJ calls it a "choo-choo." We call it a forward-thinking and economical strategy for sustaining the prosperity and quality of life. ■

## NARP Traveler's Advisory

- ❖ To accommodate a long-term track work project, several Springfield Shuttle trains will be canceled. Monday through Friday service changes, effective through July 29, 2016: Springfield Shuttle Trains 470, 490, 493 and 495 will be cancelled on Monday through Friday until July 29, 2016. Passengers will be provided bus service between New Haven, Wallingford, Meriden, Berlin, Hartford, Windsor, Windsor Locks and Springfield. All southbound weekday buses will depart all stations 30 minutes earlier than the respective trains.
- ❖ Through July 13, CSX Transportation will perform extensive track work between Albany-Rensselaer and Niagara Falls, NY. To accommodate this work, Empire Service and Maple Leaf schedules will be adjusted. Trip times between Albany-Rensselaer and Niagara Falls will increase by up to 25 minutes. On Sunday through Wednesday, Trains 284 and 281 will not run. Some train numbers will change, however, frequencies between Albany-Rensselaer and New York will not be affected. Some trains will depart earlier.
- ❖ Due to track improvements being performed along the Northeast Corridor, a number of changes are being made to Acela Express and Northeast Regional schedules through October 31: 1. Schedules of both Acela Express and Northeast Regional trains will change by up to 10 minutes in both directions between Boston, New York and Washington. 2. All Acela Express trains will depart Washington at five minutes before the hour, rather than on the hour. Some Acela Express trains will depart Boston a few minutes earlier than the times shown in the Amtrak Winter-Spring 2016 System Timetable. 3. Most northbound Northeast Regional trains will depart Washington three minutes earlier than the times shown in the Amtrak Winter-Spring 2016 System Timetable. ■