



PASSENGERS Voice

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CONGRESS APPROVES \$2.8 BILLION FOR PASSENGER RAIL

Congress significantly increased funding for Amtrak, passenger rail, and transit as part of the \$1.3 trillion Fiscal Year 2018 budget, a victory for passenger advocates that's been a long time in the works.

Congress looked to the popular, bipartisan bills passed out of committee this summer--largely thanks to the work done by advocates, including the RPA and our membership. The increase in funding shows that advocacy works--and will inspire work on the FY2019 appropriations bills, which Congress will have to begin work on almost immediately.



Amtrak travels through the Northeast Corridor.
Photo Credit: Amtrak

The bill, passed by Congress on March 23, includes \$2.813 billion for intercity rail--an increase of \$1.3 billion over last year! That figure includes \$1.9 billion for Amtrak (\$650 million for the Northeast Corridor and \$1.3 billion for the National Network); \$593 million for the Consolidated Rail Improvement, which includes \$250 million for PTC implementation; \$250 million for the State of Good Repair program; and \$20 million for the Rail Restoration program, which will be instrumental in restoring rail service to the Gulf Coast.

The budget also contained good news for transit, with \$10.3 billion for transit formula grants; \$2.64 billion for the New Starts program, including \$716 million for Core Capacity and \$400 million for Small Starts; \$150 million for DC Metro Rail; and \$1.5 billion for the multi-modal TIGER program, three times as much as was provided for FY2017.

This victory for train passengers comes in spite of the two-front war
CONGRESS, p. 2

CONGRESS LOOKS FOR PROGRESS ON PTC

With less than a year left before the deadline for implementation of the lifesaving Positive Train Control (PTC) technology, Congress is grilling passenger and host railroads on how they plan to get across the line.

PTC is a safety system that helps prevent train-to-train collisions and derailments through the continuous monitoring of train position and movements. Following a series of hearings looking at implementation challenges, the Federal Railroad

PTC, p. 2

“Congresswoman Slaughter was an ardent and vocal long-time supporter of passenger rail in Upstate New York and across the country. She was instrumental in advancing the construction of a new Amtrak passenger station for her hometown of Rochester. The beautiful new facility, which opened last fall, is a testament to her vision for a modern and passenger-focused rail network.”

RPA Vice President Bruce Becker remembering Congresswoman Louise Slaughter who passed on March 16.



RAIL PASSENGERS

ASSOCIATION

©National Association of Railroad Passengers

1200 G Street, NW, Suite 240
Washington, DC 20005-3818

202-408-8362 / 202-408-8287 (fax)

www.railpassengers.org • narp@narprail.org

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CONGRESS, from p. 1

that the Trump Administration has been waging on passenger rail issues—including a threat to veto the FY 2018 omnibus if it contained rail grant funding that could be directed towards the Hudson River tunnels.

The President's newest attack on passenger rail infrastructure was a confusing move for a person who is famous for owning property in Manhattan, the value of which would drop significantly if the corridor—and the 200,000 people per day that use it—ever failed. Northeastern Republicans met with the President to explain that the new \$12.7 billion rail tunnel is vital to the economic success of the Northeast Corridor, as well as the entire country. The current tunnels are more than 100 years old and were severely damaged following Superstorm Sandy.

CONGRESS, p. 7

PTC, from p. 1

Administration revealed it has hosted face-to-face meetings with executives from each of the 41 railroads subject to PTC over the past two months to evaluate each railroad's PTC status, and its ability to meet the December 2018 deadline.

This progress—or lack of it—could have serious effects for passengers. All eligible railroads must implement FRA-certified and interoperable PTC systems by the end of the year. While Amtrak says it will meet the deadline, a number of commuter and host railroads are struggling to stand up these systems. It is not clear what consequences the FRA will impose upon railroads that fail to meet the deadline.

While Amtrak has said it must and will obey the law, they are committed to safety. "We will assist our commuter partner,

PTC, p. 4

HIGH-SPEED RAIL COULD CONNECT PACIFIC NW

There is an ambitious proposal in the Pacific Northwest to connect every major city in the region with high-speed fixed guideway transit -- and if a more conservative vision is put forth, it may not pass. That's right, the measure can't be too small, or it may fail. Is this somewhat contrarian? Not as of late, at least not in the Pacific Northwest.

Often it has been the institutional opinion in the American rail advocacy movement that incrementalism is best. Indeed, such an approach is exactly what built high-speed systems in Japan and elsewhere; service was increased on major lines to the point that they ran at capacity.

Any rail line's maximum capacity represents a truly impressive number of people, and therefore also represents an impressive amount of political support which can be leveraged to achieve the radical success of building an entirely new right of way for passenger trains running at high speed. However well this holism builds a framework of support, what some advocates are doing in Washington is slightly more aggressive, and it's garnering a response.

This was seen on a smaller level in metropolitan Seattle upon the completion of the city's first light rail line coinciding with unprecedented population and job growth leading

to some of the worst traffic in the country. It took four decades of political struggle to construct the first line, and it came at the right juncture. Then, upon the opportunity to expand the system as per plans of the regional transit authority, something interesting happened. A grass-roots advocacy movement originated out of the Seattle Transit Blog called "Seattle Subway." The idea was to demand more and better out of a regional plan that advocates did not see as being ambitious enough. Instead of a 15 year tax measure to expand the system, Seattle Subway demanded more. They pushed the initiative to being a much bigger

HIGH-SPEED RAIL, p. 3

TEASER: SUMMER BY RAIL KICKS OFF IN MAY

The Rail Passengers Association will kick-off its annual Summer by Rail (SBR) journey on May 26 in Miami, FL. This year's adventure will focus on traveling by rail to see America's pastime in action at various Major League Baseball and Minor League Baseball stadiums across the country.

"When people think of summer they often think of it as a time to travel, and we wanted to throw in something unique about what

people can travel to during the summer," said Rail Passengers President Jim Mathews.

"This year we are sending our Summer by Rail correspondent by train from Miami to Seattle to showcase how easy it is for people to connect by rail to dozens of different baseball stadiums in the U.S."

After launching the trip in Miami to watch the Marlins at Marlins

Park in downtown Miami, the SBR correspondent will travel to Seattle with stops in Savannah, GA; Washington, D.C., Toronto, ON; Chicago, IL; St. Paul, MN and many more. The journey will conclude in Seattle on July 3, and will include 19 games in total: 10 Major League games and 9 Minor League games.

For additional details, and to follow along as SBR rolls out in May, please visit: www.summerbyrail.com.

HIGH-SPEED RAIL, from p. 2 and better value proposition for voters who could see more lines on the beautiful maps they made to sell it. It was a bold proposition at the right time: the initiative passed in 2016, and will authorize more than \$50 Billion over 25 years, leaving the region with a vastly expanded transit system. Initiatives of smaller, "reasonable" scope had failed in the past - and this one may have too.

This experience showed that a conservative and incremental approach will sometimes not serve as effectively as "A Big Idea," so long as the time and place is right. Now some of the same advocates who ran Seattle Subway are setting sights on a regional scale: they're calling their effort Cascadia Rail. The idea of high-speed intercity transport in the Pacific Northwest is partly a product of necessity as the economic success taking Seattle hostage

through its inadequate infrastructure has become endemic to the region. The Gates Foundation, Microsoft, and Washington State Governor Jay Inslee have discussed the concept of a very fast connection between

on the coast? The rebuttals are limitless.

Cascadia Rail is currently pushing a vastly expanded vision -- enough to drag more money for a larger study out of the state in the most recent legislative expansion. They're involving small splinter-cell like groups of advocates to do grassroots work in different parts of the region to bring awareness to constituents that can support a big idea so long as it benefits enough of the region.



Proposed route for high-speed rail in Pacific NW. (Photo Credit: Cascadia Rail)

Seattle and Vancouver, B.C. enough to commission a preliminary study that highlighted fabulous potential economic impact. But a project that just isn't expansive enough may fail to gain full throated support across the state. Why build a Seattle to Vancouver route, when current ridership aboard trains running today overwhelmingly goes to Portland? Why just one city pair

High-speed rail as envisioned by the state and a few large stakeholders may not get off the ground otherwise. Animosity in Eastern Washington State towards the Western coast is palpable, and the best way to quell it is to include them in the growth felt in the other parts of the region. Recalling that giant transit bill in Seattle, it had to be big enough to pass muster. This may be no different.

DESTINATION OF THE MONTH: MIAMI

From Beaches To Baseball, Miami Has It All!

Miami is home to heat, beaches, nightlife, waterways, baseball and tons of Cuban influence. Whether you're looking to take in a baseball game this summer, or a few nights out on the town, this lively metropolitan city has it all. So hop on Amtrak's Silver Meteor or Silver Star train and remember these unique facts as you explore Miami:

1 - Want to see a melting pot of cultures in America, or speak in a few different foreign languages? Miami is home to more than 150 different ethnicities and 60 different languages.

2 - Looking for a little bit of Cuban culture, food and art? Then Little Havana is the place to be. The area is full of Cuban influence and is a great place to get a variety of different, authentic, Cuban treats.

3 - The Mother of Miami, Julia Tuttle, is the only woman in the U.S. to have founded a major metropolitan city. By sending Standard Oil co-founder



View of Miami, FL

Photo Credit: Credits Miami Dade

Henry Flagler orange blossoms from Miami, Tuttle convinced Flagler to connect Miami with his railroad and lay the foundation of the city. Miami was incorporated after the railroad arrived in 1896.

4 - If you enjoy hiking, animal watching or just exploring the outdoors, Miami is bordered by two national parks: Biscayne National Park and Everglades National Park. This makes Miami the only city in the U.S. to be bordered by two different National Parks.

5 - Into diving? Then bring your scuba gear to Miami. More than 125,000 professional divers explore the waters of Miami to visit various shipwrecks and other underwater treasures.

ON THE MOVE

RPA, along with local, state and federal transit agencies have seen several new hires and appointments in the past month. A few of them include:

• **Mark A. Colucci**—RPA hired Colucci as the Association's new Vice President for Resource Development. With more than a decade of business development experience, Colucci will create, direct and execute a broad range of resource development and fundraising activities, helping RPA to expand funding and grant support from corporate, foundation, and major individual donors.

• **Catherine Rinaldi**—New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) has appointed Rinaldi president of MTA Metro-North Railroad. Rinaldi is the first woman to serve as Metro-North's president.

• **Shelley Devine** —The Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (TriMet) named Devine interim general manager after Neil McFarlane resigned from the role in February. Devine will temporarily lead TriMet while its board determines a permanent general manager.

PTC, from p. 2

where we can, to reach the deadline or to find viable alternatives to bridge the gap," Amtrak President & CEO Richard Anderson said in his testimony to a House of Representatives' Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. "It would not be prudent to force more commuters onto our highways in already

congested urban regions; rail remains the best and safer solution."

The Rail Passengers Association is pushing for an immediate investment blitz. Our association will

PTC, p. 5

STATE NEWS

NEW YORK CONGRESSWOMAN

LOUISE SLAUGHTER died March 16 from complications of an injury suffered the prior week. Rep. Slaughter and the Association have a long history together in advocating for Amtrak and other passenger rail services over the course of her 30 years in office. In 2011, Slaughter founded the 'Bi-Cameral High Speed and Intercity Rail Caucus' which brought together passenger rail advocates in both the House and Senate. She earned the Association's highest award, the Golden Spike, for her support of rail transit that year.



(Photo Credit: Office of Louise Slaughter)

MARC COMMUTER RAIL SERVICE will continue to run from Maryland to West Virginia following West Virginia Governor Jim Justice signing the Fiscal Year 2019 budget for the state. Under the new \$4.38-billion budget, House Bill 4389 will allow the transfer of \$1.5 million from the securities division in the state Auditor's Office to the the West Virginia Commuter Rail Access Fund. West Virginia was under threat of losing MARC service after a previous agreement ran out and Maryland Governor Larry Hogan said service would stop as early as this summer if a new deal was not reached. The funding will last for one year.

PTC, from p. 4

highlight the need for investment during our annual Day on the Hill in April, where we will honor the life and work of the late Jim Hamre, an RPA board member who was lost in the Train 501 derailment in Washington State--a crash that could've been avoided with PTC.

"The findings in the GAO's study are unsurprising; we have heard for years that rail and transit agencies

are struggling to meet the deadline and have limited resources in order to do so," said Rail Passengers President Jim Mathews. "The Rail Passengers Association has long argued in favor of implementing PTC technology, but the idea of shutting down parts of the passenger rail network if the deadline is not met will not create a safer transportation system for Americans.

PTC, p. 7

RAIL STATION OF THE MONTH: MIAMI'S BRIGHTLINE STATION

Miami's Brightline Station Redefines Transit Hub.

When people think of Miami, they may not think of public transit; or more specifically, they may not think of passenger rail. Yet Miami is serviced by a vast array of rail lines, including Tri-Rail, Metro Rail, Metromover and Amtrak. Arriving later this year will be the higher-speed rail line, Brightline, with a new mixed-use development in downtown Miami, known as MiamiCentral. Here are a few key facts about MiamiCentral before you take your ride on Brightline to Miami.



(Photo Credit: MiamiCentral)

A rendering of MiamiCentral.

1 - MiamiCentral is a nine-acre development that includes two office buildings known as 2 MiamiCentral and 3 MiamiCentral; a 50,000-square-foot food hall that will open this spring; an 800 apartment building; and 180,000 square feet of retail. 3 MiamiCentral opened earlier this year.

2 - MiamiCentral's Transportation Hub will connect commuter rail service in downtown Miami, including Tri-Rail, Metro Rail, Metro Mover and Brightline, making access to each more convenient.

3 - Central Fare, the marketplace with 20 restaurants

and food stalls, will feature the restaurant Monger, run by brothers and "Top Chef" alums Bryan and Michael Voltaggio.

4 - Park-Line Towers will be the future home for Miami residents who are looking to live in Miami with easy access to mobility. The apartment building will open in 2019.

5 - Once Brightline is fully up and running in 2020, people will be able to connect between MiamiCentral and Orlando International Airport, with stops in Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach. Trains will regularly travel up to 80 MPH.

IS YOUR MAYOR ONBOARD?

The Rail Passengers Association asked our members to help recruit their mayors to the campaign to defeat the President's budget request to eliminate long-distance trains, and you responded. RPA's Council of Representatives has led the way in this campaign. We'd like to share the work done by one of your most active Council Members, Doug Kerr of Northern California.

Kerr wanted to respond to the call, but knew his city--not served by the national network and far from an Amtrak station--wouldn't be an ideal candidate. So he volunteered to contact not just his own mayor, but every mayor and town manager of a city served by the California Zephyr.

Motivated by Kerr's success, RPA staff members found other Council Members to reach out to Amtrak mayors, and--led by Kerr--our Council Members engaged in a campaign to contact every long-distance served community.

"This is my passion, and I do it because I believe in it," said Kerr. "I jumped at the chance to take part in the Rail Passengers mayor's campaign to save the long-distance trains for a few key reasons. First, the battle can only be won in Congress and we will need Republican support since they control both House and Senate. Second, our resources are limited and must be used wisely to gain the most benefit. Finally, small cities

and rural towns with Amtrak service have the most to lose if the LD trains are eliminated, and many of the affected cities are in Republican districts and states."

Kerr found that our simple message resonated with these communities.

"Small cities are focused on basic services and long-term economic viability -- threats to Amtrak may not be on radar screens," he explained. The project's objective is to inform all cities/towns served only by Amtrak LD trains that these trains are in jeopardy and please contact your representatives in Congress to fight this. So far the response has been good, varying from 'Thanks for the warning, we will take appropriate action' to major efforts in Grand Junction, Colorado and Salinas, California."

Salinas, California is an excellent example of what one email can cause to happen. The City of Salinas took action on their own and also forwarded a Rail Passengers email to the Transportation Agency of Monterey County. The TAMC letter addressed not only long-distance trains, but TIGER grants, CRISI funding, State of Good Repair grants, and transit funding.

"If every RPA member got this kind of response from their city, we'd have a modern passenger rail system in this country in no time," added Kerr.

PASSENGER VOICE: BLIZZARD GROUNDS ALL PLANES, BUT NOT ALL TRAINS

We enjoy hearing from our members on why they enjoy taking the train to get where they need to go. To share your stories with us, please email them to narp@narpmail.org.

Braden Toan, Binghamton, NY

Amtrak has provided me with essential transportation when no other option was available, and in more ways than one.

A few years ago, while touring with a Broadway show, I had to stop in New York for elective surgery. This was between performance cities of Washington, D.C. and Cleveland, OH. I took the train from D.C. to New York, and the next day went under the knife. I only had a two-day window to have the surgery and resume performances in Cleveland, and the surgeon had warned me that flying, the stresses and the resultant

change in cabin pressure would be bad for the stitches in my forehead.

Luckily I had a Viewliner Roomette reserved on the Amtrak Lake Shore Limited, so I knew I could stay still and rest from the surgery. It turned out I was doubly lucky because that same night a blizzard blew into the Northeast, grounding all planes and closing the interstates. Only the Amtrak was running.

Another man returning home from a business trip, who was lucky enough to get the last sleeper had never before traveled by train. We both made it safely, and surprisingly close to schedule. The Lake Shore Limited made it through the blizzard arriving at Cleveland only a half hour late. For both of us, both traveling for business, the Amtrak option provided the redundancy in our national transportation system to get us to and from work on time!

CONGRESS, from p. 2

The attack on the rail tunnels comes on top of a Presidential budget request that looked to slash funding for Amtrak's National Network in half, which would end long-distance service in the U.S. for all practical purposes.

Thankfully, Congress largely ignored both White House directives.

Funding for intercity rail increased significantly. And, while the Hudson River tunnels were never explicitly mentioned, the committee bills did include language that would have granted them pole position in any grant application process. To assuage the President, Congressional leaders removed that language, likely shifting the money to other rail projects. However, leadership did include an extra \$328 million for Amtrak Northeast Corridor grants, which Amtrak is theoretically able to use towards Gateway projects without U.S. DOT consent. And since transit formula funding was increased, New York and New Jersey will have over \$153 million to use towards the tunnels.

PTC, from p. 4

The way forward is to enforce the PTC implementation deadline, and ensure the FY 2019 budget allocates money for infrastructure projects."

The law does permit a railroad to request FRA's approval of an "alternate schedule" with a deadline beyond December 31, 2018, but no later than December 31, 2020.

The FRA released fourth quarter data from the end of 2017 that shows how far many railroads have come--and how far many have yet to go:

- PTC systems are in operation on approximately 56 percent of freight railroads' route miles that are required

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

Saturday, April 14 - RPA Delaware-New Jersey-Pennsylvania Regional Meeting - Philadelphia, PA

Saturday, April 21 - Louisiana ARP Meeting at 10am at the NOLA Union Passenger Terminal

Saturday, April 28 - RPA Northwest Regional Meeting - Portland (OR) Union Station

Please contact Bruce Becker (bbecker@narprail.org) to have a local, state or regional meeting added to the Rail Passengers calendar (print and on-line) of upcoming events!

to be governed by PTC systems—up from 45 percent last quarter and 16 percent on December 31, 2016.

- Passenger railroads have made less progress—with PTC systems in operation on only 24% of required route miles, unchanged from the previous quarter.
- 15 railroads reporting they have completed installation of all hardware necessary for PTC system implementation and another 11 railroads reporting they have installed over 80% of PTC system hardware.
- All but three railroads report having acquired sufficient spectrum for their PTC system needs.



(Photo Credit: Amtrak)



\$10,000 SWEEPSTAKES FOR EDUCATION CONCLUDES THIS MONTH

This month marks the conclusion of the Rail Passengers Association sweepstakes for \$10,000 to go towards higher education. RPA kicked-off the sweepstakes in February for college students who can use assistance paying for college in the 2018-2019 school year.

"We understand that higher education can be expensive, especially for students who have to take public transportation to get to class," said Rail Passengers President Jim Mathews. "The

sweepstakes is a great opportunity for students to put money towards their future."

Students can still enter or be entered by a friend or family member through April 26. The only criteria is that the winning student must be enrolled in a U.S. accredited college or graduate program for the 2018-2019 school year. For details on how to enter or nominate a student, as well as rules for the sweepstakes, please visit: www.crowdrise.com/rpascholarship.



RAIL PASSENGERS
ASSOCIATION

1200 G Street, NW, Suite 240
Washington, DC 2005-3818
202-408-8362 | 202-408-8287 (fax)
www.railpassengers.org | narp@narprail.org