



RAIL PASSENGERS
ASSOCIATION

PASSENGERS Voice

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CONGRESS KICKS OFF REAUTHORIZATION PROCESS

Back on the job after an extended government shutdown, Congress held the first of many hearings on the coming surface transportation reauthorization in February—a once-in-a-decade opportunity to dramatically expand passenger rail service in the U.S.

The House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure kicked off the surface transportation process on February 7.

"I'm going to focus on the costs of inaction. It has incredibly serious consequences that far, far exceed the costs, were we to belly up, and suck it up a little bit, put up the money that we need and put into place the policies we need, to bring things up to a state of good repair and begin to build out a 21st Century infrastructure," said House T&I Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-OR).

Amtrak's Richard Anderson spoke before the hearing, emphasizing the economic benefits that passenger train service brings to the communities it serves. He also talked about the importance of the Hudson River tunnels project.

"The benefits of completing this project are immense--it will preserve existing NEC service, improve reliability, add resiliency and system redundancy, and offer substantial environmental benefits. Not tackling this project invites disaster," Anderson said, according to his written testimony. "A closure of just one tube of the North River Tunnel could reduce capacity by as much as 75 percent and force tens of thousands of commuters and travelers onto already

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Amtrak's Richard Anderson spoke before the House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure. (Photo credit: Amtrak)

OTP DISPUTE HEADS — AGAIN — TO SUPREME COURT

Expect a showdown this Fall over on-time performance in the U.S. Supreme Court, as your Association goes to bat to defend the victory we won last summer that gave Amtrak and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) the green light to set standards for measuring OTP.

Last month the Association of American Railroads (AAR) filed a formal request asking the Court to take up the issue when its next session convenes in October, appealing a ruling AAR lost in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the DC circuit in July.

The Rail Passengers Association immediately began preparing a brief in response.

The contours of the argument haven't really changed: AAR contends that giving Amtrak the power to work with FRA regulators to set passenger OTP standards for operations over

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“ We are so proud of @MartinHeinrich @SenatorTomUdall and look forward to working with their respective offices as well. ”

—New Mexico Rail Passengers Coalition, Twitter



RAIL PASSENGERS

ASSOCIATION

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congested bridges, tunnels, and highways in both New York City and New Jersey.”

Unfortunately, in talking about the the demand that “is clearly there for additional short corridor service throughout the U.S., [including] both additional frequencies for existing routes and establishing new routes between city pairs”— and there clearly IS such demand— Anderson failed to recognize the role long-distance routes play in connecting rural Americans to urban centers and allowing for network fluidity. Rail Passengers is already working with members of Congress to ensure that Congress insists on equal access to the National Network for rural and small town passengers.

The Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee

joined the fray on February 14 with a hearing titled “America’s Infrastructure Needs: Keeping Pace with a Growing Economy.”

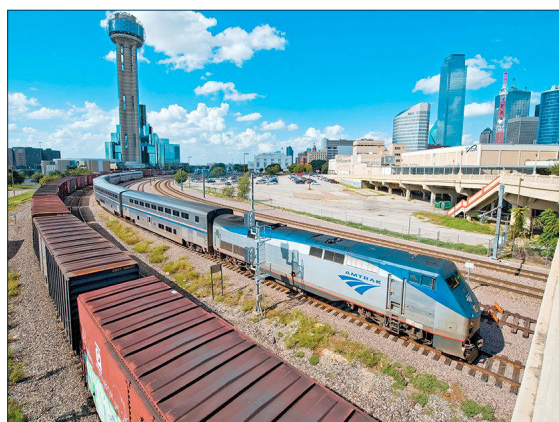
The good news for transit advocates is that there is a broad, growing consensus that U.S. transportation infrastructure requires a massive investment blitz, and that passenger rail is part of the picture. There is, however, no clear understanding on how to pay for this additional investment.

Rail Passengers has outlined a number of sensible proposals for new revenue, and we’ll be working with members of Congress to ensure that passenger rail receives a fair share of any boost in funding. You can read more at www.RailPassengers.org/2020.

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host railroads gives Amtrak an unfair competitive advantage over its host railroads. Rail Passengers and other advocates argue that the lower courts erred in gutting the protections passed by Congress in the 2008 Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA). DC Appeals supported Rail Passengers’ argument, and it is this decision that the AAR is appealing to the Supreme Court.

While the argument is the same, the Court that will hear the case is different than the one that last heard passenger complaints in 2013 -- and that difference in makeup could have a very real effect on the outcome.



AAR filed a formal request to Supreme Court on OTP
(Photo Credit: Amtrak)

The three-judge panel in the DC Appeals Court that ruled 2-1 against AAR included then-Judge and now Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh. This means that Kavanaugh will have to recuse himself from hearing the case. Thus, there will be only eight

justices to vote on a ruling in this case, and if the four Justices who have reliably supported passengers’ claims in the past rule similarly this time, the resulting 4-4 tie will not be enough to overturn the DC Appeals Court ruling. Our victory would stand.

“Congress mandated decades ago that we should prioritize people first, a fact which the Trump Administration’s Solicitor

General recognized in its own brief to the Supreme Court in 2017,” said Rail Passengers President Jim Mathews. “In the real world, the host railroads thumb their noses at Amtrak’s contracts for minimum OTP,

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REGISTRATION OPEN FOR 2019'S RAILNATION D.C.

Join the Rail Passengers Association in Washington, D.C., for our annual Spring advocacy Summit (April 1-3), where you can learn how to be a better advocate for improving America's rail system. With the surface transportation reauthorization kicking into gear, advocates have a unique opportunity to bring about real change. Join us in drafting the blueprint for 21st Century passenger rail in the U.S. **Register Now** by visiting www.railpassengers.org.

The event will be held at the Westin City Center in downtown Washington, D.C.

DAY ON THE HILL + CONGRESSIONAL RECEPTION

Each year Rail Passengers members

meet with hundreds of Representatives and Senators to advocate for better trains and transit. The day will wrap up with a cocktail reception on Capitol Hill where will honor Senators Michael Bennet, Cory Gardner, Martin Heinrich, Jerry Moran, Pat Roberts, and Tom Udall for their role in saving the Southwest Chief.

NO SCHEDULES: REGIONAL RAIL AND THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN PASSENGER TRAINS

Panelists will discuss the immediate and long-range visions of transforming current transit



From Left to Right: RPA Chairman Peter LeCody; RPA President Jim Mathews and Rep. Denny Heck (D-WA) during RPA's Golden Spike Award Ceremony in 2018. (Photo Credit: Rail Passengers)

systems and creating a regional mobility worthy of our 21st century economy. Invited Panelists include Peter Brassard, Chair of

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WINNERS OF #VIEWSONATRIN PHOTO CONTEST

We have received dozens of amazing and unique pictures for our #ViewsOnATrain photo contest. Pictures ranged from views of the country's beautiful landscape - mountains, rivers, lakes, canyons and more - to the people we see and meet on trains to views of major metropolitan skylines.

We are sharing many of these great photos on Instagram (www.instagram.com/railpassengers) and in a photo album on Facebook at: <http://ow.ly/bCPm30nGWLA>.

They include pictures from:

- **James Rogers** took a photo of Green River, UT from the Amtrak California Zephyr;
- **Paul Russo** who submitted a photo of Mount Shasta in California at sunrise from the Amtrak Coast Starlight Train;
- **Jim Fellers** was runner up in the photo contest with an image of Lake Champlain from a southbound Adirondack train;



Jim Fellers submitted an image of Lake Champlain from a southbound Adirondack train. (Photo Credit: Jim Fellers)

- **Wayne Senville**, who took a photo of the Kingston-Rhinecliff Bridge over the Hudson River from a southbound Empire Corridor train;
- **Grant Haynes** shared a pic of Montana, which he took from an Empire Builder train; and
- **Bill Wrenn** took a photo of Barstow, California, from the Southwest Chief.

We are also still looking for more submissions. Photos can be submitted via Instagram, Facebook or Twitter depicting your experience as "The Rail Passenger" and your views from a train. Rail Passengers Association executives will be judging the photos, and the winners' images will be used as part of our new visual identity on our website, in our monthly newsletter, on social media, and more!

When submitting your photos on social media, be sure to use the hashtag **#ViewsOnATrain** and tag **@RailPassengers**.

AMTRAK ORDERS 75 NEW LOCOMOTIVES

Amtrak is making good on its promise to support the National Network, and invest in the system's infrastructure and future thanks to record ridership. Due to the growing demand Amtrak is acquiring 75 new Charger diesel locomotives from Siemens Mobility to replace its aging fleet - very welcome news for rail passengers across the country. The new locomotives will also provide much-needed help with on-time performance and reliability. Just as important, it demonstrates a commitment to a truly national footprint by Amtrak.

The initial order of locomotives will be used to replace the P40 and P42 locomotives on Amtrak's Long Distance train service, allowing thousands of passengers to enjoy modern technology when the trains begin service in 2021. The locomotives will power trains used on the AutoTrain, California Zephyr, Capitol Limited, Cardinal, City of New Orleans, Coast Starlight, Crescent, Empire Builder, Lake Shore Limited, Palmetto, Silver Meteor, Silver Star, Southwest Chief, Sunset Limited and Texas Eagle. Amtrak's deal with Siemens also includes the option to purchase more locomotives for use on State Supported routes and for future growth.



Amtrak orders 75 new Charger locomotives.

The new locomotives can run up to 125 MPH, and will offer the latest safety systems including Crash Energy Management and Positive Train Control. The diesel engine will also help the railroad reduce emissions. The engine is equipped with the latest Tier 4 emissions technology, reducing nitrogen oxide by over 89 percent and particulate matter by 95 percent, and provide an average of 10 percent savings in diesel fuel consumption.

The locomotives will be built at Siemens Sacramento manufacturing plant, and delivery will begin in summer 2021. Passenger service is expected to begin in fall 2021 and all locomotives are expected to be in service by 2024.

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the Rhode Island Association of Rail Passengers and TransitMatters member; David Alpert, Founder of Greater Greater Washington and Executive Director of DC Sustainable Transportation; and T. R. Hickey, Chief Development Officer of Virginia Railway Express.

THE VIEW FROM THE HILL: INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE 116TH CONGRESS

We'll hear from congressional staffers on the House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure and the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation about the transportation agenda for the 116th Congress and the plans for addressing the transportation crisis in the U.S. in the coming reauthorization.

HOW TO SELL TRAINS TO YOUR CONGRESSMAN

Mike Friedberg, a partner at Holland & Knight who specializes in transportation, will give tips on how to best advocate for passenger rail and investment to your elected officials. Mr. Friedberg most recently served as staff director of the Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials of the U.S. House

of Representatives' Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure under former-Chairman Bill Shuster.

INVESTMENTS, NOT SUBSIDIES: HOW AMERICAN LONG DISTANCE TRAINS MAKE MONEY

Learn exactly how and why American long distance passenger trains create economic benefits that far outweigh their costs, and how the Rail Passengers Association is quantifying the benefits of America's National Network trains through economic impact. Panelists will include Rail Passengers President Jim Mathews and Dr. Yuanyuan Zhang, Research Professor at the University of Southern Mississippi's Center for Logistics, Trade and Transportation.

WHAT CAN PASSENGERS DO?: ADVOCACY STRATEGIES THAT REALLY WORK

There are other Rail Passengers around the country, just like YOU, that have made amazing progress for expanded passenger rail service in their communities. This panel of other Rail Passengers' Council Members will share success stories, advocacy tips, and strategies for bringing about real change. Panelists will include Bruce Ashton of Rail Passengers - Texas.

RAIL PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION BOARD DIRECTOR ELECTIONS

Nominations are now being sought from qualified Rail Passengers Association members interested in being elected to one of two available Board Director positions at the upcoming Council of Representatives Annual Business Meeting being held on Wednesday, April 3, 2019. These Board Director positions are for three-year terms, ending in April 2022.

For more information on how you could make a difference as a Rail Passengers Association Board Director, please review the position's required qualifications, description, duties and responsibilities at: www.railpassengers.org/

[about/leadership/board/become-a-board-director](#).

If you are interested in seeking a Board Director position, you must complete and submit a Candidate Information Statement by the March 31, 2019 deadline. It is available online at: www.cognitofrms.com/Rail-PassengerAssociation/CandidateInformationStatementFor2019RPANARPBoardDirectorElections.

Questions may be directed to either Board Chair Peter LeCody at plecody@narprail.org or Vice-President of Operations Bruce Becker at bbecker@narprail.org.

STATE NEWS

NY AND MA PROGRESSIVE DEMS UNVEIL AMBITIOUS HSR PLAN

Recently elected members of the Democrats' progressive wing offered their own, ambitious infrastructure plan as part of a "Green New Deal" (GND), which includes a call to construct a national network of high-speed rail lines in the U.S. to make air travel unnecessary, thus reducing harmful emissions from airplanes.

This high-speed rail provision resembles policy proposals that your Association has long advocated—not only for its environmental benefits, but for mobility, efficiency and economic development.

And, in this regard, Rail Passengers is a strong supporter of the transportation elements of the GND.

Adding a robust, comprehensive high-speed rail network to the nation's transportation system would indeed help reduce dependence on air travel and could make it "unnecessary"—which is not to say "non-existent"—in many corridors. We've already seen this take place along much of the Northeast Corridor and around the Chicago Hub.

Countries like Japan and Switzerland have clearly established the many benefits of HSR. And while China develops long-term transportation plans, the U.S. is constantly working off of 2- and 5-year stop-gap funding solutions that never address the long-term transportation needs of the country.

The framework for the deal was introduced by freshman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, (D-NY) and longtime infrastructure stalwart Senator Ed Markey (D-MA).

Markey and Ocasio-Cortez said they are planning to begin work on legislation for the GND, which will outline the specific projects involved, working with members of Congress to incorporate existing legislation into a comprehensive plan.

Your Rail Passengers staff is currently working to get a meeting scheduled with Ocasio-Cortez's office to discuss opportunities for development of passenger rail—conventional, as well as high-speed—to ensure that it is included in the legislation for the Green New Deal.

Make Plans To Attend RPA's Spring 2019 Advocacy Summit, 'Day on The Hill', Congressional Reception & Annual Council Business Meeting in Washington, D.C.

Sunday, March 31 through
Wednesday, April 3

- Event Registration Is Now Open!
- Host Hotel - Westin City Center (1400 M. Street, NW; Washington)
- RPA's Annual 'Day on The Hill' & Congressional Reception Is Tuesday, April 2
- Visit The Event Page For Complete Information

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

Saturday, March 9
ESPA/RPA Joint New York State Advocates Meeting & Lunch - Schenectady, NY

Saturday, March 9
Rail Passengers Kentucky Meeting - Louisville, KY

Saturday, March 9
Mid-Atlantic Regional Meeting

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

RAIL PASSENGERS MEMBERS SHARE THOUGHTS, POLL RESULTS

QUESTION...

DID YOU MEET YOUR SPOUSE OR SIGNIFICANT OTHER WHILE TRAVELING ON A TRAIN?:



A. Yes

B. No

Click here to submit your answer to this poll on social media at <https://www.facebook.com/narprail>, or send in your response via email to: survey@narprail.org.

Late last year we began conducting polls on social media and in our newsletters to spark conversation and provide another outlet for you to share your opinions on recent passenger rail news.

During the first week of February, we asked: "When it comes to eating in the dining car while traveling, would you rather make a reservation OR eat when and where you want." More than 300 passenger rail advocates responded to the poll, with 66% preferring to make a reservation, though most of the comments emphasized passengers' interest in both options:

- **Jeanette-Bob Kimes:** "Enjoyed the option to do both - loved the dining car experience and the chance to have room service! PS-the food was wonderful!!!"
- **Daniel Lilly:** "I want to eat 24/7 on the train. It's the only part of the operation that ISN'T 24/7 and I've never understood why."
- **Matthew Petersen:** "I'd like to keep the dining car option, especially on the longer rides, but also have a Deutsche Bahn style bistro car - better-quality anytime food."

AMTRAK MEETS SMALL TOWN IN ALPINE, TX

After the Southern Pacific (SP) railroad arrived in 1882, the town sprung up as a “watering stop” post, so called because in the days of steam engines, the fireman would pull a cord to release water from a water tower and into the tender located behind the locomotive; Alpine’s water tower still stands. The station was originally commissioned by the Texas and New Orleans Railroad. The T&NO was the largest railroad in the state before it was merged into the parent company, Southern Pacific Railroad (SP) in 1961.

The building is a modest 1946 Spanish Mission Revival style station that features light Art Deco detailing and serves as a very important support to the town. The station has been de-staffed for some time now and Amtrak no longer provides ticketing or baggage services. Alpine is served by the tri-weekly Sunset Limited/Texas Eagle with Westbound service on Tuesday, Thursday, Sunday and Eastbound service on Monday, Thursday and Saturday, but there has been recent support from Jefferson (Beaumont), Jasper and Terrell (Sanderson) county commissioners court; the Mayor of Houston; Alpine and San Antonio city councils; Del Rio mayor and county judge and Del Rio Chamber of Commerce, as well as the Mayor of Tucson for expanding to daily Sunset service. Officials also hope to get support from El Paso in March.

The town calls itself the “Gateway to Big Bend National Park,” a large 800,000+ acre wilderness area in West Texas that lies just south of the town.

Alpine has a great reputation of being popular with retirees who seemed to be attracted by its small



The Amtrak station in Alpine, TX.

town feel and preserved Main Street that features structures such as the 1928 Granada Theater, known for its colorful marquee. Consistently noted as one of the state’s best small towns, Alpine’s collection of restaurants, specialty shops, and galleries draws visitors, as does local university Sul Ross’ outdoor Theater of the Big Bend, which presents comedies, dramas, and classical works underneath the star-filled sky.

With all that it has to offer as a best small town, the residents of Alpine are no stranger to fighting to preserve it. Gwynne Jamieson is one of those residents. On a sunny Saturday back in 2017, about two dozen people protested across the street from Alpine’s Amtrak station as part of a national “Rally for Trains” day of action sponsored by then National Association of Railroad Passengers. “To cut a train from Alpine is really destructive,” Jamieson says. “We have 5,000 passengers a year going through our train station. It may not seem like much, but considering our population is 6,000, practically everybody uses the train.”

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just as they have thumbed their noses for years at the federal law outlining passenger-dispatching preference. It’s heartening to see the courts step in to help us protect the rights of the American passenger.”

With on-time performance last summer at record lows, America’s rail travelers had been waiting

for years to see the rights of the traveling public vindicated – rights that Congress has clearly, unmistakably, and repeatedly written into law, and rights your Association has vigorously defended in Congress AND in federal courts across the U.S.

Amtrak is also preparing to challenge the AAR in this case.



ON THE MOVE

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

• **U.S. Rep. Dan Lipinski** — Rep. Dan Lipinski (D-Ill.) will chair the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure’s Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials. Lipinski has experience in rail, pipeline and hazmat safety; freight-, commuter- and passenger-rail issues and regulation.

• **Kevin Winters** — Amtrak has named Kevin Winters as the railroad’s inspector general. Winters has served as the deputy inspector general and counsel since 2015, and was previously a senior executive with NASA’s Office of Inspector General (OIG).

• **Gwen Robinson** — The board of the Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority, which runs the Cincinnati Bell Connector streetcar, elected Gwen Robinson as its vice chair. Robinson first joined the agency’s board in 2012, and previously served



(Photo Credit: Rep. Dan Lipinski’s office)

Rep. Dan Lipinski (D-Ill.)

as the president and CEO of the Cincinnati-Hamilton County Community Action Agency.



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