



# PASSENGERS Voice

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## WHITE HOUSE TARGETS LONG-DISTANCE TRAINS FOR ELIMINATION IN FY2021 BUDGET PROPOSAL

The Trump Administration’s proposed Fiscal Year 2021 budget once again calls for the elimination of long-distance trains, wiping out funding for almost all Amtrak trains not on the east and west coasts.

If enacted, 220 cities and towns would lose train service completely and 140 million Americans will completely lose all access to passenger trains.

“Amtrak trains inadequately serve many rural markets while not serving many growing metropolitan areas at all,” wrote the White House.

“The Administration believes that restructuring the Amtrak system can result in better service at a lower cost, by focusing trains on better-performing routes, while providing robust intercity bus service connections.”

Rail Passengers responded immediately, launching a campaign to combat the proposal with facts about the importance of the National Network to tens of millions of Americans.

In just two days, our members generated more than 2,500 individual messages to 309 House offices and 96 Senate offices!



“My message to all of you is: KEEP IT UP,” urged Rail Passengers President Jim Mathews.

“If you haven’t yet used our Rail Passengers webtool to reach out to your elected officials, just go to [www.RailPassengers.org/Action](http://www.RailPassengers.org/Action).

We’ve made it incredibly simple for you to make your voice heard, and every one of our tens of thousands of members nationwide should do this. It will take you no more than five minutes...so please take action today!”

**[You can also call the Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask them to connect**

**you to your Senator or House representative; just say**

**“Please fully fund Amtrak’s National Network and Northeast Corridor grant.”]**

Rail Passengers has also been reaching out to the press to

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**“We have successfully beaten this in the last three years, and I have a high degree of confidence we will be able to do the same thing this year.”**

Sean Jeans-Gail, Rail Passengers VP of Policy, on the White House Budget Request



# RAIL PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION

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This issue has news through February 17, 2020.  
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# DAY ON THE HILL

Join the Rail Passengers Association in Washington, D.C. for our annual Spring advocacy conference (March 30th – April 1st) where we'll discuss the challenges and solutions to building a better American rail system.

With the surface transportation reauthorization kicking into gear, advocates have a unique opportunity to bring about real change.

The integrity of the National Network is paramount to the

sustainability of communities across the country.

On March 31st, hundreds of passenger rail supporters will travel from the host hotel to Capitol Hill visiting with Members of Congress to fight for more and better passenger train service. It's important that we stand in the offices of elected representatives and push for the rail services we all deserve.

We must leverage our collective voices.

**Register Now!**  
by visiting  
[www.railpassengers.org](http://www.railpassengers.org)  
**The event will be held at the Embassy Suites Alexandria Old Town**

## WHITE HOUSE, from p. 1

ensure that the facts about the importance of passenger rail service in ALL parts of the US. "While we're confident Congress will once again reject this proposal, we plan on actively fighting back against this attack on the long-distance network—the only passenger train service for 140 million Americans in 220 towns and cities," Mathews told Railway Age.

In the Washington Post, Vice President of Policy Sean Jeans-Gail said the White House proposal was an insult to the rural Americans who form President Trump's base.

He stressed that he believed the coalition-building work the passenger coalition has done

	FY2020 Enacted	Trump Administration FY2021 Proposal
Amtrak – Northeast Corridor	\$700 million	\$325 million
Amtrak – National Network	\$1.3 billion	\$611 million
Amtrak – Total	\$2 billion	\$936 million

in Congress would carry them through."It would be a huge blow to passenger train [travel] in the United States if this was implemented," Jeans-Gail told the Post. "But we have successfully beaten this in the last three years, and I have a high degree of confidence we will be able to do the same thing this year."

### The Hard Numbers

While the Trump Administration hasn't provided a complete picture of its infrastructure plan—saying "full details of the Administration's proposal will

be provided in a forthcoming legislative transmittal to Congress"—there are some things we do know for sure.

The White House slashed National Network funding by \$689 million as part of its plan to eliminate long-distance train routes. However, it also proposed cutting funding for the Northeast Corridor by \$375 million. All in all, the White House proposal provides under a billion dollars for Amtrak to run existing NEC and

**WHITE HOUSE, p. 3**

by Jim Mathews / President & CEO

[Originally posted on Feb 4th at [railpassengers.org/gulfcoast](https://railpassengers.org/gulfcoast)]

Although the politicking for the past few weeks made it a real nail-biter, today the Mobile City Council did the right thing and voted 6-1 to move forward with its share of the funding to bring rail service back to at least a small segment of the Gulf Coast -- Mobile to New Orleans.

It's a huge win for all the communities from Alabama through Mississippi and Louisiana that I've been visiting for years to push this along. And it wouldn't have happened without the work of our members, the Southern Rail Commission, Transportation for America, Amtrak, and forward-looking elected officials in Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

We can't thank these people enough, and we're ready to get to work to get this train up and running. There's one other small hurdle -- Mobile is requiring a study

# GOOD THINGS HAPPEN WHEN YOU SHOW UP!

proving that the service won't tangle up the Port of Alabama -- but we all know that four trains a day won't crimp the port.

But this is a great time to foot-stomp something else that came out of this episode. Pressure from regular citizens living and working in Mobile really helped to make this happen. AL.com columnist John Archibald made an absolutely crucial point this afternoon, a point that's relevant not only for Gulf Coast restoration but for all of our efforts as an Association to Connect America with more trains, better trains and better infrastructure. "It's almost like -- I can't believe I'm seeing this -- the people got what they wanted," Archibald wrote.

"It's almost like -- I can't believe I'm saying it -- the government grudgingly listened."

He's right. A lot of folks I talk with on my travels around the country grumble that things aren't working the way they want. But when I ask about their willingness to visit their Mayors, their local elected officials, their local congressional offices or to come out for hearings about rail service, their intensity fades.

Let's be clear: Mobile showed up. And Mobile's elected officials listened.

Our team here at the Association -- spearheaded by VP Policy Sean Jeans-Gail and our field team of organizers Joe Aiello and Madi Butler -- worked closely with dozens of advocates at the organizations I named above.

Everyone involved has worked for more than a decade to get to this morning's vote, and all I can think about is all of the wonderful folks I've met in these communities along the Gulf Coast waiting for service to resume. They're going to get their way. It's almost like showing up and speaking out really works.

**WHITE HOUSE**, from p. 2  
State-supported services.

Mathews spoke to Railway Age about the irony of the White House eliminating L-D service in favor of NEC funding "on the same day his Department of Transportation gave the NEC replacement Hudson River tunnels a low priority rating.

"We all know that building redundancy for the existing North River Tunnels [part of the \$13 billion Gateway Infrastructure Program], which currently

carries around 450 intercity and commuter trains every day, is [one of] the most time-sensitive rail project in the country."

The Administration also provides \$550 million in National Network "transformational grants" which would draw down to zero over five years. This money would presumably help Amtrak cover the costs of multi-year labor agreements and contracts which—in conjunction with the lost revenue from the eliminated trains and lost connections—make getting rid of the long-

distance network such an expensive proposition.

Congress, meanwhile, has responded to the proposal with a bipartisan shrug, with leaders in both parties pointing out that the existing two-year budget agreement is still in effect and they expect it to guide spending in FY2021. "We've got the caps deal in place," said Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. "We negotiated it last year. It's good for the second year, and we'll comply with that."

# FIELD TEAM CELEBRATES SUCCESSFUL SOUTHERN TRIP

In January, Field Coordinator Joe Aiello and Grassroots Organizer Madison Butler embarked upon a 13-day, 7-city advocacy tour of the South. Their mission was to drum up support for passenger rail amongst elected officials, business leaders, and local members. The main topic on the minds of many in the region was the return of service to the Gulf Coast - and you can read more about that victory at [railpassengers.org/gulfcoast](http://railpassengers.org/gulfcoast).

## Highlights of the trip included:

- Discussing potential rail corridors between Nashville, Memphis, and Jackson with staffers for Representative Cohen and Senator Wicker.
- Station renovation and Main Street revitalization in Greenwood.
- Actively advocating for restoration of Gulf Coast Rail with members of the Louisiana Association of Rail Passengers, Biloxi Mayor Andrew Gilich, and representatives from the Southern Rail Commission.
- Touring the Meridian Union Station and interviewing Jerome Trehan, former Amtrak



employee now marketing director for the Mississippi Arts & Entertainment Experience.

- Beginning dialogues with Councillor O'Quinn and Kelvin Datcher in Birmingham to discuss a HSR corridor to Atlanta and better connections to the Gulf.
- Discussing new possibilities for member benefits and discounts at a variety of destinations along the City of New Orleans, Crescent, and soon the return Gulf Coast route.

## LEAVE A LEGACY

Please consider the Rail Passengers Association in your will. If you have already included us in your estate plans, let Jonsie Stone know at [jstone@narprail.org](mailto:jstone@narprail.org) or 202.408.8362 Ext. 3207. We'd like

to thank you for your generosity and make sure the purpose of your gift is understood.



## MEMBERSHIP NEWS AND NOTICES

- If you have received a renewal letter and have already sent in a payment, please disregard the letter. We will update your account as soon as we can.
- **Monthly-paying members will always have their membership dues pulled out on the same date every month, as auto-renewal is required for monthly membership. To cancel your monthly membership, please contact our office at 202-408-8362, ext. 3123 or [narp@narprail.org](mailto:narp@narprail.org).**
- If you'd like to change your membership level and the payment associated with it, please contact our office at 202-408-8362, ext. 3123 instead of contacting your financial institution for a chargeback. We can cancel or refund the payment. By working through your bank, Rail Passengers could be assessed fees. We are happy to assist you with your membership needs.

# THE JIM HAMRE MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Jim Hamre spent four decades working to improve and increase passenger rail service. During this time Jim built strong, lasting relationships and to this day his loss is being felt by his family, friends and the entire rail community. On December 18, 2017, the rail community mourned the loss of Jim Hamre and Zack Willhoite when Amtrak Train #501 derailed near Tacoma, Washington. Both men were devoted to their family and friends, as well as passionate advocates for passenger railroad and advancing the advocacy work of RPA.



Jim Hamre biking the Milwaukee Railroad Trail  
(Photo credit: Carl Fowler)

With the gracious support of Jim Hamre's family, the Rail Passengers Association has established The Jim Hamre Memorial Scholarship Fund. The scholarship will benefit engineering graduate students interested in rail and transit.

Preparing the next generation of rail transit professionals is a necessity to the viability of rail travel and the Rail Passengers Association can't think of a better way to honor Jim's memory than looking to the future. As we approach Jim's birthday, which is March 30th, we ask you to help

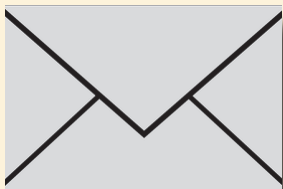
us celebrate his life by donating to the Rail Passengers Association to benefit The Jim Hamre Memorial Scholarship Fund.

Through your generosity we can help educate tomorrow's engineering leaders who will shape the future of rail transportation.

Send checks made payable to **The Jim Hamre Memorial Scholarship Fund** to:  
Rail Passengers Association  
1200 G Street, NW,  
Suite 240, Washington,  
DC 20005, Attn: Jonsie Stone/Hamre

**Please note:** our bank will not accept checks for the The Jim Hamre Memorial Scholarship Fund if they are made payable to the Rail Passengers Association. Checks made out to the Association with the purpose of supporting the scholarship fund will be returned.

## MEMBERSHIP MAILING NOTICE



**If you renew your membership by mail**, please be sure to double check the form you send in with your payment! We will update your membership dues only if you return a form asking you to **RENEW** your membership.

**Forms asking you to DONATE** will be processed as donations, not membership dues payments. (Donations are 100% tax-deductible and membership dues are tax-deductible minus any AGR points you receive at 2.5 cents each.)

## JOIN RAIL PASSENGERS



# RAIL PASSENGERS

A CONNECTED AMERICA

If you're reading the Passengers Voice and are a current member, **THANK YOU** for your support. Rail Passengers invites you to share our membership information with your family, friends, colleagues, etc.

If you're reading the Passengers Voice and are NOT a current member, we invite you to join.

Visit [railpassengers.org/all-aboard/join](https://railpassengers.org/all-aboard/join) or call 202-408-6382 to join!

## #RAIL PASSENGERS TRAVEL REVIEW

Feedback on your recent Amtrak travel experience is very important to us! Please take a moment and tell us the good & the bad of your journey. Share your thoughts at [railpassengers.org/travelreview](https://railpassengers.org/travelreview) or scan the QR code from your mobile device.



Remember, the progression of the data we collect depends upon the feedback you provide as well as your outreach to other rail passengers. Please help us to keep this going. If you have any constructive feedback or suggestion, please send an email to [TravelReview@narprail.org](mailto:TravelReview@narprail.org).

## RAIL PASSENGERS MEMBERS SHARE THOUGHTS, POLL RESULTS

### QUESTION...

**PRESIDENT TRUMP HAS ONCE AGAIN PROPOSED ELIMINATING AMTRAK'S LONG-DISTANCE TRAINS IN THE FY2021 WHITE HOUSE BUDGET. HOW SERIOUSLY DO YOU THINK PASSENGERS SHOULD TAKE THIS THREAT?**

**A. Very Serious** - It's always concerning when the President talks about eliminating trains to 23 states in the U.S.

**B. Not Seriously** - Congress will do the right thing for the National Network, just like they have the last three times the Trump Administration has proposed eliminating the long-distance network.

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](mailto:survey@narprail.org).

Each month we conduct polls on social media and in our newsletters to spark conversation and provide another outlet for you to share your thoughts on rail.

On our Facebook page in February, we asked, **Do you like sitting with strangers for meals on the train?**

**79%** of the respondents overwhelmingly said that they enjoyed the company of strangers, while only **21%** said that they valued the quiet time.

#### Poll comments included:

- **Joe Kurland** said, "I'm shy about starting conversations with strangers but I love meeting them. Sitting with strangers in the diner is a perfect way to make new friends."
- **Josh Fredman** said, "I've had some of my best experiences on Amtrak sitting with strangers in the dining car."

# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

**Name:** Harvard Morehead  
**Location:** Gaithersburg, MD  
**Member Since:** 1974

**What does RPA mean to you?:** In the mid-'70's, I was living in California, and periodically flew back to the Midwest to visit my family. At one point, I decided to look into Amtrak, as a change. I was intrigued.

As I learned more about rail travel, I became convinced that, not only was it pleasant, but it was

vastly superior to both flying and driving for most travel needs. It is much less polluting and more energy-efficient than either, uses much less land than roads, is as safe as air, and is no more subsidized than other modes.

I also learned that Amtrak has been under attack by politicians since its creation, for no discernable reason other than prejudice. The RPA is the oldest and largest organization advocating for more and better trains, and I am proud to have supported it and its mission since I first learned of it.

The **"Member Spotlight"** is a new monthly section where we highlight the Association's most important asset: **YOU**. To be considered, email Kim Williams at [kwilliams@narprail.org](mailto:kwilliams@narprail.org).

## Upcoming Rail Passengers Association Events

Make Plans To Attend  
RailNation:DC 2020 in Washington, DC  
Sunday, March 29 thru Wednesday, April 1!

- The Rail Passengers' 2020 Annual Advocacy Summit Is Monday, March 30; The 'Day on The Hill' & Congressional Reception Is Tuesday, March 31 And The Annual Council Business Meeting Is Wednesday, April 1
- Host Hotel - Embassy Suites Alexandria Old Town (At The King Street Metro & Alexandria Amtrak Stations) - Discounted Group Rate Rooms Are Now Available!
- Event Registration Is Now Open!
- Visit The Event Page For Complete Information & Details

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

Saturday, March 14  
AAWA Central Washington Passenger Rail Summit  
Yakima, WA

Saturday, March 21  
2020 New England Rail Advocates Annual Meeting & Lunch - New London, CT

Friday, March 27  
Virginians For High Speed Rail - 25th Anniversary Luncheon - Richmond, VA

Saturday, March 28  
WisARP Spring General Membership Meeting  
La Crosse, WI

Saturday, April 18  
Rail Passengers Association NW Meeting  
Tacoma WA

Please contact Joe Aiello ([jaiello@narprail.org](mailto:jaiello@narprail.org)) to have a local, state or regional meeting added to the Rail Passengers calendar (print and online) of upcoming events!

**STAY UP TO DATE WITH THE WEEKLY HOTLINE!  
DELIVERED EVERY FRIDAY STRAIGHT TO YOUR INBOX.**

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