



PASSENGERS Voice

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ERRATIC MESSAGING FROM WHITE HOUSE THROWS STIMULUS TALKS INTO CHAOS



The White House

Photo: Credit: Matt H. Wade

After promising signs of progress between White House negotiators and House Democrats early in October over the shape of the next coronavirus stimulus package -- the likely vehicle for Congress to provide funding and oversight to restore daily service to the National Network -- President Donald Trump brought talks to a screeching halt on October 6th, announcing via Twitter that he had ordered White House negotiators to stop talks with Congress until after the election.

President Trump has since contradicted that unexpected announcement several times in the following day. At first, the President indicated he'd only changed his mind about a bailout

for airlines and stimulus checks for individuals. Then White House negotiators said they were willing to increase their offer to House Democrats to \$1.8 trillion. By the end of the week, President Trump once again changed his mind during an appearance on Rush Limbaugh's radio program.

"I would like to see a bigger stimulus package, frankly, than either the Democrats or the Republicans are offering," Trump told Limbaugh, stating he's going in the "exact opposite" direction from his prior position.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), meanwhile, is indicating he's not taking his lead from the White House, expressing

doubts that anything can be done before election day.

Adding more pressure, Amtrak this month warned that without more federal help, and soon, we could see even more cutbacks in service and staffing, along with important capital projects -- including plans for new rolling stock -- being put in serious jeopardy.

In a letter to Vice President Pence and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), Amtrak cautioned that "given this uncertainty, as well as the low levels of ridership and revenue projected over the next few months, and the limited funding provided under the short-

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“So I’m simply announcing to those nominees, and perhaps to Amtrak and the Department of Transportation, that while I’m voting today to report them to the floor, I will place a hold on Ms. Feinberg and a hold on Mr. Rokita until I receive satisfaction that they are supporters of the Southwest Chief and the long-distance passenger service.”

Senator Moran (R-KS)



RAIL PASSENGERS

ASSOCIATION

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This issue has news through October 15, 2020.

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term continuing resolution (CR), Amtrak is in a very precarious position as we await final decisions on our funding levels.”

A continuing resolution is a stopgap funding measure that holds most programs and spending flat for some period of time when Congress can't agree on a consensus bill for which members can vote. CRs keep the government moving temporarily while congressional members and staff take more time to work out their differences.

CEO Bill Flynn told Pence and Pelosi that Amtrak would adjust its operating and capital spending plan to minimize “further impacts on customers and employees” over the course of the CR, which only runs through December 11.

However, if Congress can't pass

coronavirus relief funding for the railroad by that point, Flynn warned it will be “unable to avoid more drastic impacts that could have long-lasting effects on our Northeast Corridor infrastructure and the national rail system,” such as cutting an additional 2,400 jobs.

And while service decisions about the 28 State-supported routes are ultimately a local choice (Amtrak has 20 partners across 17 states), Amtrak warned that without federal funding these partners are likely to make long-lasting cuts to train service -- perhaps as much as 65%.

RAIL PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION KEEPS WORKING FOR PASSENGERS

With all this uncertainty and chaos still swirling, it's natural to

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Upcoming Events

Go to railpassengers.org/events for more information

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

EXCITING NEWS! RAIL PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION EARNS COVETED 4-STAR RATING FROM CHARITY NAVIGATOR



Rail Passengers Association's strong financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency have earned it a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator, America's largest independent charity evaluator.

This is the first time that the Association has earned this top distinction.

Only a quarter of charities rated by Charity Navigator receive a 4-star distinction. **The Rail Passengers Association's Charity Navigator** profile can be found by clicking [here](#).

You can read the press release [here](#).

VIEW FROM THE HILL: SENATE FIREWALL HOLDS AGAINST ROKITA NOMINATION TO AMTRAK BOARD

The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation voted in September to advance three nominees to the Amtrak board—including controversial candidate Todd Rokita, **who voted to defund Amtrak on multiple occasions** during his tenure in the U.S. House—sending them to the senate floor for final confirmation. However, Rail Passengers Association 2019 Golden Spike winner Sen. Jerry Moran (R-KS) placed a hold upon Mr. Rokita's nomination until he received a credible confirmation of their support for Amtrak's long-distance services.

The makeup of Amtrak's Board of Directors has become an even more fraught question for passengers in the wake of a series of decisions by the railroad that undermines the long-term stability of National Network service. As Rail Passengers continues to raise the alarm about these cuts, both and to frequencies to onboard service levels, we have stepped up our advocacy to ensure the placement of quality voices on the Amtrak Board.

"Most of the actions taken by Amtrak's board members happen behind closed doors, with little public explanation of how or why board members voted on issues," wrote Jim Mathews in an August letter to Commerce Chairman Roger Wicker (R-MS) and Ranking Member Maria Cantwell (D-WA). "Nevertheless, these actions have a big impact on the present and



Todd Rokita
(Photo Credit: Almondator/CC BY-SA)

future of the U.S. passenger rail network—establishing new policies, providing corporate management and oversight, and helping decide major issues addressing who the railroad serves and what levels of service they receive... Given his voting record in Congress, putting Mr. Rokita on the Amtrak board would be too great a risk."

Sen. Moran voted to advance all three nominees, but delivered a statement explaining that he would place a hold on Ms. Feinberg and Mr. Rokita's nominations until they had submitted, in writing, credible confirmation that they would use their position on the Amtrak board to maintain, increase, and improve service on the long-distance lines. Sen. Moran explained that while Mr. Koos had provided a satisfactory statement, he felt Ms. Feinberg's submission could use more details. Mr. Rokita, meanwhile, ignored Sen. Moran's request and failed to submit

anything in writing.

As a reminder, some of Mr. Rokita's most alarming votes include:

- **2017** – Voted YES on H.Amdt. 287 to H.R. 3354, filed by Rep. Mo Brooks, that would have eliminated funding to Amtrak's National Network (the amendment failed).
- **2015** – Voted YES on H.Amdt. 72 to H.R. 749, filed by Rep. Tom McClintock, that would have completely ended federal grants for Amtrak (the amendment failed).
- **2011** – Voted YES on H.Amdt. 43 to H.R. 1, filed by Rep. Pete Sessions, would have reduced Amtrak's capital grant by \$446 million (the amendment failed).

Rail Passengers has worked hard to oppose Mr. Rokita's nomination through our correspondence with key committees and through our interactions with congressional allies, and we are incredibly gratified by the actions of Sen. Moran, who we recognized in 2019 by our association for his work to defend the Southwest Chief service.

You can read the full statement from Sen. Moran below:

"As has been my practice with most Amtrak nominees, I have voted to advance them from the Commerce committee but have in most instances placed holds on their nomination pending their

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Remember the Rail Passengers Association

As we move closer to the holiday season, your end of year giving decisions may be forefront. We hope the Rail Passengers Association is part of your philanthropic plans. Your generous gift helps us work to build support for a modern, more efficient national passenger rail network. Ways you can help our small professional staff:



Mail a donation directly to the office.

Rail Passengers Association
1200 G Street, NW, Suite 240
Washington, DC 20005
Attn: Jonsie Stone/EOY

Note: Include the Mail-In Donation form or please write the word “donation” in the check memo field.



Make a donation online

**TO DONATE NOW
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While you are making that donation, consider making it a monthly gift.

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confirmation to me and several of my colleagues of their support for long-distance passenger rail service.

“This becomes particularly of value to me as the Amtrak leadership has altered their train schedules due to COVID-19, with a plan presumably in place that would determine when that passenger service would return. We’ve had an ongoing, perhaps ‘battle’ with Amtrak in regard to long-distance service and I want to be certain that the circumstances due to COVID-19 is not an excuse to diminish in any long-term, or really in any intermediate term, passenger service on the long-distance lines in the country.

“So I’ve asked each of the nominees that have been before our committee to provide me, in writing—this has also been of interest to the Senator from Mexico, Senator Udall, and the Senator from Colorado, Senator Gardner—and we generally have operated jointly with a request that each nominee confirms to us their support for long-distance passenger service, they will actively pursue achieving the goal of maintaining that service, increasing and improving that service. And with particular respect in regard to the Southwest Chief which runs through, among

other states, Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico, this all arose more than a year ago when Amtrak indicated they were going to replace passenger service with bus service on a significant portion of that line. So we’ve been engaged with Amtrak ever since.

“Mr. Koos has certainly complied with my request, and I voted for his confirmation, or his recommendation to be confirmed, today and I don’t expect anything further today; his words were satisfactory to me.

“Ms. Feinberg has responded, but I would like to hear more specifics from her.

“And Mr. Rokita has not responded to our request at all.

“So I’m simply announcing to those nominees, and perhaps to Amtrak and the Department of Transportation, that while I’m voting today to report them to the floor, I will place a hold on Ms. Feinberg and a hold on Mr. Rokita until I receive satisfaction that they are supporters of the Southwest Chief and the long-distance passenger service.”

The Rail Passengers Association needs supporters like you to help make a difference. Through your partnership we can continue to:

- **Advocate** for passengers of commuter, regional and inter-city rails;
- **Collaborate** with grassroots supporters, annual partners and affiliated state-level passengers' organizations;
- **Educate** tourism bureaus, lawmakers, communities and departments about the importance of rail transportation;
- **Inform commuters**, lawmakers and other rail fans about the latest rail news and happenings that impact them.
- **Because of people like you**, Rail Passengers Association advocates on behalf of a nation of passengers and communities who depend on rail transportation for their livelihood and well-being.



As a small charitable organization, we rely on the generosity of others.

Your support ensures staff has the ability to work closely with constituents, communities across the country and Congressional

leadership to reinforce grassroots efforts and ensure rail passengers voices are heard loud and clear in Washington, DC.

There are easy ways to give:

1. Make a donation online by visiting railpassengers.org/donate.
2. Call the DC Office at 202-408-8362 for assistance in making a donation via credit card.
3. Recommend a grant from your donor advised fund to the Rail Passengers Association.
4. Ask your Human Resources Department about matching your membership dues or recent donation

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ask "what is Rail Passengers Association doing to represent me in Washington?"

It's important to remember that there are broad political questions at play when the leadership of the House, the Senate and the White House are sparring over an election-year dispute about stimulus levels, picking industrial winners-and-losers, making power plays over the strength of the House and the Senate, and trying to get desperately needed cash into the hands of voters before Nov. 3.

All of those factors, and others, exist outside of our control. But that doesn't mean we have to stand by and watch! We wanted to give you an update on the concrete steps we've taken to warn the public and lawmakers about the perils of losing these trains, and pass common sense solutions into law (be sure to follow the links to see more information):

• **On September 9th, Rail Passengers President & CEO Jim Mathews testified** before the U.S. House of Representatives' Transportation & Infrastructure rail subcommittee's hearing explicitly about "Amtrak and COVID."

• House and Senate committee staffs, who have been alarmed by what they're seeing, asked our

Association to supply our economic-impact data from these cuts formally. **We have done so.**

• We led **a group of rail industry leaders** to remind U.S. House leadership that as they work on a stimulus package for the airline industry, they must not forget about Amtrak and transit.

• Since August, we have worked with Senate offices to generate bipartisan letters of support from Senators whose states would be hurt the most.

• We've built a tool to let you call, write, and tweet your members of Congress. As of early October, this has helped us generate 15,000-plus constituent emails to our elected officials from citizens around the United States, with more coming in every single day. **Click here and make your voice heard!**

• CEO Jim Mathews and VP Policy Sean Jeans-Gail have been giving interviews to national and local newspapers, radio and websites since May 25th, getting the facts out to the public to help raise awareness and activate the public. Our press release was featured in the **Washington Post**, and we've also worked on stories in the **New York Times** and **USA Today**.

DOES YOUR EMPLOYER MATCH?

Does your employer match charitable donations? Many Do!

If they do, please ask them to match your membership dues or donation. If you are unsure how this works, please contact Rail Passengers' Director of Resource Development, Jonsie Stone, by sending an email to jstone@narprail.org.



OR

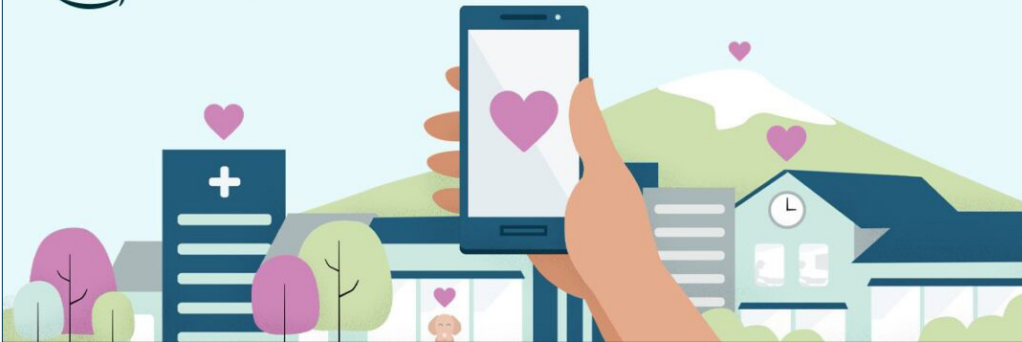


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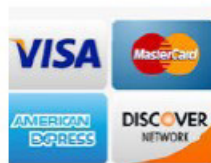
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1200 G St NW Suite 240
Washington DC 20005

JOIN PASSENGERS VOICE OR RENEW YOU MEMBERSHIP

**Know someone who relies on passenger rail but is not yet a member?
Encourage them to join!**

If you haven't renewed your membership in 2020 consider doing so today. As our membership grows, so does our impact!

Join or Renew
your membership

This year we received a 4-star rating from
Charity Navigator.

We are proud of our fiscal responsibility, and that 77 cents of every dollar donated goes directly to support programs. Rest assured that if you choose us as your philanthropic partner, we will use your donation in the most effective and efficient way, ensuring the highest level of support for the Rail Passengers Association's mission.

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 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.



QUESTION...

**DID YOU CONTACT
YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS
TO FIGHT FOR
DAILY SERVICE?**

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.

RAIL PASSENGERS MEMBERS SHARE THOUGHTS, POLL RESULTS

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.

Due to Facebook's recent format change, pages are no longer allowed to post polls. We are working on a new way to bring you this content. Stay tuned for more!

GIVE THE GIFT OF MEMBERSHIP MAIL-IN FORM

Rail Passengers Association membership is a truly distinctive, meaningful present that lasts all year long. Share your love for the Association with your family, friends and colleagues by giving them the gift of Rail Passengers membership. It is the ideal holiday or special occasion gift!

**You can mail your Give the Gift of Membership form directly to the office.
Please use the following form and mail to (For New Members Only):**

Rail Passengers Association, Attention: Gift of Membership/Alicia Guinn
1200 G Street NW, Suite 240, Washington, DC 20005

Remember to:

- Make your check payable to the Rail Passengers Association
- Sign your check
- Include the credit card expiration date **AND** CVV number

*****Note:** To receive a tax receipt for 2020 purposes, your gift **MUST** be postmarked no later than December 31, 2020.

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Salutation: (circle one) Mr / Ms / Mrs / Miss / Dr

Name: _____

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Primary Phone Number: _____ (circle one) Home / Cell

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- Type of Membership:** (Please Check One)
- Individual (\$60), Senior (\$50), Family (\$80)
 - Advocate Bronze (\$160) Advocate Silver (\$290) Advocate Gold (\$550)
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City/State/Zip: _____

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(NOTE: Without an accurate expiration date and CVV we will not be able to process your donation.)

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RAIL PASSENGERS
ASSOCIATION

MAIL-IN DONATION FORM

Mail this completed form, along with your check or money order to Rail Passengers Association.

Thank you for your gift!

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Primary Phone Number: _____ (circle one) Home / Cell

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GIFT INFORMATION

Donation Amount: \$ _____

Payment Type (circle one): **Check/Money Order / Visa / MasterCard / American Express / Discover**

Credit Card Number: _____

Cardholder Name: _____

Expiration Date (MM/YY): ____/____ CVV: ____

(NOTE: Without an accurate expiration date and CVV we will not be able to process your donation.)

() I'd like to make this a monthly donation, please sign me up.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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Attention: EOY/Jonsie Stone
1200 G Street NW, Suite 240, Washington, DC 20005

Remember to:

- Make your check payable to the Rail Passengers Association
- Sign your check
- Include the credit card expiration date **AND** CVV number

*****Please Note:** To receive a tax receipt for 2020 purposes, your gift **MUST** be postmarked no later than December 31, 2020. Donations are considered as separate gifts above and beyond membership fees, and **DO NOT** count towards membership fees.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Name: Mark & Becky Conway

Location: St. Paul, MN

What does RPA mean to you?:

RPA is the only truly effective organization advocating for passenger rail on a national level. As travelers who use Amtrak several times per year—for long weekends in Chicago, to see grandkids in Michigan, or our annual vacation that usually involves reaching our destination on a long-haul train in a Sleeper—we recognize that our travel experiences and options would be very different without the work of RPA and its dedicated staff and membership.

Despite some of the recent foolish and shortsighted cutbacks Amtrak has made, it's clear that the attitude that elected officials have toward passenger



rail has turned a corner, and there is broad, bipartisan support for Amtrak. And this support is due overwhelmingly to the efforts of RPA. When COVID-19 finally subsides and the economy slowly improves, it is RPA alone who has the organization, connections, and people to push for the restoration of daily service, new corridors, and new equipment.

I have been regularly traveling by rail since I was a little boy in the pre-Amtrak era, and Becky has been traveling with me since we took the train to Florida on our honeymoon 26 years ago.

We are active members of RPA because it advocates for our preferred mode of travel, but also because of the economic boost passenger rail gives to many rural communities, the cars it takes off the road when operating between major urban areas, and the mobility it gives to those who cannot drive or choose not to drive.

The “**Member Spotlight**” is a new monthly section where we highlight the Association’s most important asset: YOU. To be considered, email Madi Butler at mbutler@narprail.org.

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 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 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.

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

MEMBERSHIP NEWS AND NOTICES

- Check out the new **Frequently Asked Questions** page on our website to help answer popular questions about your membership.
- **Production and mailing of the printed version of the Passengers Voice newsletter has temporarily ceased.** The Passengers Voice will still be available at www.railpassengers.org and as a downloadable PDF. For those of you who have paid extra to receive a mailed copy of the newsletter, we will extend your subscription by the number of months we are interrupted.
- While the Rail Passengers staff is working remotely, **we are unable to print permanent membership cards, dues/donation acknowledgment letters, or membership/benefits information.** Luckily, you can find information about your Rail Passengers membership by visiting www.railpassengers.org and selecting "My Account" to log in or create an account with us.