

LaHood to NARP: "You Help Embolden Us"

"When you come to Washington, you help embolden us in our efforts to continue the progress for passenger rail. And not just on the Northeast Corridor. All over America! High-speed rail, passenger rail is coming to America, thanks to a lot of your efforts!"

Thus spoke U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, attending his second, consecutive, annual NARP Capitol Hill reception.

He continued, "We're partners in this. ... You are the ones that are going to make this happen."

LaHood emphasized that transportation should not be an issue of partisan division. "When it comes to passenger rail, it's not one party, it's about America."

He reiterated that a state-of-the-art passenger train system is a legacy that the current generation ought to leave to the next, as the previous generation left the Interstate highway system.

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Secretary LaHood at NARP's Apr. 24 Capitol Hill reception. See pages 4-6 for awards he assisted in presenting and reports from our Spring Council Meeting.

PTC: NTSB Supports NARP's Rear-end Collision Concern

The National Transportation Safety Board has urged the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to require positive train control (PTC) "that will detect the rear of trains and prevent rear-end collisions" like the one that killed two BNSF engine employees near Red Oak, Iowa, on April 17, 2011.

This is the point that NARP has been making. FRA's PTC rule does not require the system to know where the end of a train is, even though this is safety-critical information needed to comply with the federal law that FRA is implementing.

NTSB's April 24, 2012, report on Red Oak said "the positive train control designs that are being deployed and the FRA's final rule on the application of PTC are unlikely to prevent future restricted speed rear-end collisions similar to the 58 rear-end collisions reported to the Federal Railroad Administration over the last 10 years or the collision at Red Oak because train speeds at the upper limit of restricted speed are allowed."

FRA responded April 25 to NTSB's report on Red Oak with "Safety Advisory 2012-02; Restricted Speed" that

focused on managing employee fatigue but was silent on PTC.

The advisory detailed six rear-end collisions over the past year that caused four employee fatalities (the other two were at Mineral Springs, NC, on CSX), six employee injuries and property damage exceeding \$6 million. Thankfully, no passenger trains were involved.

Current operating rules allow trains to pass intermediate signals showing red "at restricted speed" under certain conditions. As planned, this will continue to be true after PTC is implemented.

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Federal Surface Transportation Saga Goes On

A House-Senate conference committee began meeting May 8 to merge the Senate-passed two year bill (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century, MAP-21, S. 1813) with the House-passed 90-day extension bill (H.R. 4348).

NARP wrote to the conferees May 7 to highlight provisions that will affect train passengers (available at www.bit.ly/narpm21).

NARP urged keeping the Senate's

Amtrak provisions. These include making Amtrak directly eligible to receive grants through Sections 301 and 302 of the Passenger Rail Investment & Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA), letting Amtrak use its own revenues to provide the 20% match for federal grants, and creating a 100% federal grant program for improvements to routes over 750 miles long.

NARP said this could help preserve

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Citizens, Officials Work to Save *Chief's* Route

Because of shifting freight traffic patterns, BNSF Railway will not maintain the line between Newton, KS, and the Albuquerque area at speeds suitable for Amtrak's Chicago-Los Angeles *Southwest Chief* after the start of 2016.

Amtrak estimates needed track work at about \$10 million a year for the next ten years. Costs might be shared among Amtrak, BNSF, Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico.

Amtrak says a commitment must be pledged by the end of 2014. If it is not, Amtrak would take steps needed to re-route the train by early 2016.

Amtrak and BNSF both say retaining the existing route is the best solu-

tion for the *Chief*, preserving service to Hutchinson, Dodge City and Garden City, KS; Lamar, La Junta and Trinidad, CO; and Raton, Las Vegas and Lamy (for Santa Fe), NM. A rerouted train would make a back-up move to serve downtown Albuquerque.

Matt Allen and Rick Klein, city managers for Garden City and La Junta, respectively, have taken major leadership rolls in the effort to save their train.

There have been resolutions of support from La Junta, Trinidad, Kansas City, the County of Santa Fe, and the Colorado state legislature.

The three states' DOTs are negotiating cost-sharing, although a happy ending is not yet assured.

The genesis for this activity was formation of the Southwest *Chief* Coalition. NARP Council Members Jim Souby (who is Colorado Rail Passengers Association President) and Jay Jones organized the founding meeting in La Junta in November with Rick Klein. Ear-



-Ross Capon

Westbound *Chief* pauses at Las Vegas, NM. Jan. 25, 2008.

Transportation Bill

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the *Southwest Chief's* existing route (above) and help restore New Orleans-Florida service.

As to the December 31, 2015, deadline for installing Positive Train Control, we support Senate language letting the Secretary of Transportation grant up to three, one-year extensions for cause, on a company-by-company basis.

But we add: "The proposed time extension should be used in part to correct" the current, planned failure to have PTC prevent rear-end collisions" (separate story, p. 1).

- NARP supports the Senate bill's
- National Rail Plan provision;
 - restoration of commuter benefits parity between parking and transit fares (see box at right); and
 - provision that lets states continue to

use Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality grants for operating intercity passenger trains (like the *Downeaster*), eliminating the three-year limit.

We want the Federal Railroad Administration and the Research and Innovative Technology Administration added to the University Transportation Center selection process to ensure continuation of the revival in federal funding for academic railroad research and education programs.

We oppose Senate wording cutting Alaska RR federal funding, jeopardizing passenger trains and PTC work.

Conferees are likely to include the "RESTORE the Gulf Coast States Act" (S. 1400) which potentially could fund restoring New Orleans-Florida service (see www.narprail.org). ■

NARP News

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This has news through May 17.
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lier, Souby briefed the La Junta and Trinidad City Councils, and the Transportation Committee of Action 22, the association of Southeastern Colorado Counties, to test the waters for a coalition. The Northern Flyer Alliance and its president, NARP Council Member Deborah Fischer Stout, have encouraged this work.

With help from Mike Weber of Cincinnati, Ford Robbins organized a counterpart meeting in February in Santa Fe. Both men are NARP members.

If you want to get involved, contact the NARP office. ■

TAX-FREE POLICY GOES AMOK

In early 2009, an employer could give up to \$230 tax-free to an employee for parking each month but only up to \$120 for transit. The Recovery Act raised the transit allowance to \$230, but only through Dec. 31, 2011. On Jan. 1, 2012, that allowance dropped back to \$125 even as the parking allowance rose to \$240. S. 1813 would restore transit/parking parity.

Introducing NARP's New Website

LaHood

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NARP unveiled a fully redesigned and expanded Website (www.narprail.org) on April 12.

The Website should be simpler to navigate and more pleasant to view. Its new features include live Amtrak train status maps (developed and maintained by NARP member John Bobinyec of Cary, NC), more information for first-time train riders about what to expect on their trips, and a guide to Amtrak's 500-plus rail stations, with links to connecting transit services and nearby hotels. The members-only section contains material highly useful for advocacy efforts.

NARP Vice-Chair John DeLora secured a grant from the Sally Mead Hands Foundation and split the work with consultant and NARP member Larry Sobczak. The site is based on the versatile and popular Joomla platform, which DeLora said "is not for the faint of heart; fortunately, Larry could explain the

"Do not be dissuaded by the naysayers," LaHood insisted. "There are thousands of people all over America who are for passenger rail and you represent the best of what America is about!"

"We need your continued enthusiasm and support. You've got it in Washington, you've got it in DOT, and ... in the White House. ... Let's keep it going!"

LaHood thanked the Burch and Academic Award winners "for your contribution to really making sure that passenger rail continues

to be very, very important for our country."

Asked if he would consider serving during a second Obama term, LaHood said, "after the President wins re-election, I'll sit down with him, and we'll figure out what course we go from there."

Loud applause greeted NARP Council Member Ken Sislak's statement that, "Mr. Secretary, I've been in this business my entire adult life. You're the best Secretary of Transportation we've ever had." ■



Reception attendees are inspired by Secretary LaHood. First row L to R: NARP Pres. Capon, AAR's Bob VanderClute, Amtrak's Steve Chrismer (Burch Award winner, p. 4), NARP Council member Mel Sacks (with camera), Amtrak's Frances Bourne, Council members Ryan Stern and Aaron Berkovich.

tricky parts to me."

Username: Unless you have modified your account since Apr.

NTSB Echoes NARP's Rear-end-collision PTC Concern from page 1

mented, undermining the safety PTC is intended to provide.

PTC Mileage Reduced: Separately, FRA on May 10 revised its PTC rule in response to industry efforts to reduce the mileage where PTC must be installed. FRA's release says the revisions mean that "railroads will no longer have to conduct risk analyses to obtain approval to not install PTC or take other costly risk mitigation measures on an estimated 10,000 miles of track that will not carry passenger trains or poison inhalation hazard (PIH) commodities after December 2015."

Fairwarning.org's May 10 report included this: "But Ross Capon, presi-

dent of the National Association of Railroad Passengers, expressed disappointment. He said the Transportation Department's Federal Railroad Administration 'is kind of gun shy.'

"Everything they do, they get accused of regulatory overreach, even if it's clearly necessary to comply with existing laws,' Capon said.

"He also blamed the action on 'an intense effort by the industry to minimize the number of track miles where PTC will be installed and, obviously, thus to increase the number of track miles where... train collisions of any kind will continue to be possible.'" ■

12, your username now is the part of your email address before the @ sign. (If your email address is myname123@example.com, your NARP username is myname123.) Your password now is your 6-digit NARP membership number.

Comments, suggestions or questions about the new site? Email narp@narprail.org or call (202) 408-8362. ■

MORE ON-BOARD WIFI

In 2011, Amtrak completed outfitting all of its corridor trains on the east and west coasts, as well as the *Coast Starlight's* Pacific Parlour Car (for sleeping car passengers) with Wi-Fi (except for the *Piedmont* service, which uses different equipment). Further expansion of on-board WiFi will depend on available funding.

Amtrak Executives Brief NARP Council on Technology and Fleet Issues

Matthew Hardison — Technology

By summer's end, Amtrak will be deploying eTicketing nationwide, supported by conductors with iPhones that include an integrated business application for lifting eTickets and maintaining an up-to-date list of expected passengers (manifest).

Conductors will be able to:

- check in passengers by scanning the bar code on either their printed eTicket document or on their phone, or even by confirming their name from their photo IDs against reservations;
- report equipment defects in real time.

Amtrak Chief of Sales Distribution and Customer Service Matthew Hardison demonstrated the iPhone's business application capabilities to the NARP Council on Apr. 23.

He described what Amtrak's customer iPhone app can do. You can book and change reservations directly from the app. Future versions (including for Android phones) will display travel documents for the conductor to scan, and will have an interactive system map and more station and route information. NARP supported Amtrak in developing this app by providing feedback to improve functionality and usability.

In 2011, Amtrak also completed deploying a new locomotive monitoring system that tracks each unit's location by GPS, permits more accurate estimated arrival times for down-line stations, and notifies a central location of excessive delays. The system also monitors fuel consumption and engine performance, giving maintenance personnel advance notification of problems.

Hardison said investing in information technology for the business and for customers is key to continually improving Amtrak's financial performance.

Mario Bergeron — Fleet

Amtrak Chief Mechanical Officer Mario Bergeron and Deputy Chief Mechanical Officer Terry Schindler briefed the Council Apr. 25 on the department's operation and reviewed Amtrak's fleet

fleet strategy and renewal campaign.

Over 2-1/2 years, the mechanical department reactivated 81 cars and 15 P40 locomotives, all previously sidelined. Of these, 34 cars and four locos were among the Fiscal 2011 overhauls we reported in *March News* (p. 3).

The reactivations included prototype Viewliner diner 8400 now on the *Lake Shore Ltd.* It is a model for the diners CAF USA is building in Elmira, NY, and uses a galley designed and built by the vendor that is also providing galleys for future production units and has chiller carts which are easier to stock.

Recovery Act-funded rebuilds of Superliners have improved the design of

Amtrak Engineering Team Wins Burch Safety Award

Three men in Amtrak's Engineering Department—Steven Chrismer, Michael Trosino and Marty Perkins—won the 18th annual Dr. Gary Burch Memorial Safety Award for developing a method to monitor rail temperature.

This is seen as a better guide to when train speeds should be reduced due to hot weather vs. the traditional measuring of ambient air temperature. The new approach has been implemented on Amtrak-owned lines along the Northeast Corridor and in Michigan.

Robert C. VanderClute, Association of American Railroads (AAR) Vice-President—Operations and Safety, presented the award on behalf of the Burch Family. He was so impressed with the

the lower level of the coaches, including the accessible restroom, while giving sleepers a more deluxe feel.

In fiscal 2012, Amtrak plans to overhaul 155 Amfleet coaches (including 10 cafe-to-coach conversions), 182 Superliners and 18 electric locomotives, while starting major *Acela* work. Also, Amtrak's Beech Grove (IN) Shops are overhauling three F59 locomotives for North Carolina and are overhauling and reconfiguring 14 former New Jersey Transit Comet cars for California.

New progressive maintenance facilities recently were opened in Hialeah, FL, and Los Angeles, and one is cur-

(continued next page)

Amtrak team's work that AAR forwarded the information to its member railroads for their review and consideration on their properties.

Other nominations submitted:

- Terry Cattani, Chief of Rail Equipment Assets, nominated by GO Transit (Toronto) for his passion for "continuously looking for ways to improve safety and the commuter experience...He led...development of *Deployable Steps* to help customers safely disembark the train on uneven ground."
- Steve Ditmeyer, consultant, nominated by NARP's Ross Capon for "efforts over the past year for the best and most effective implementation of Positive Train Control."

- Joel Kirchner, Manager of Yard Opera-

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L to R: Federal RR Administrator Joseph Szabo, Amtrak's Mike Trosino and Steve Chrismer (Burch winners), DOT Secretary Ray LaHood, Amtrak's Marty Perkins (Burch winner), Assoc. of American Railroads VP Bob VanderClute.

Needed for Service Expansion: More University RR Programs

Dr. Christopher P. L. Barkan, winner of NARP's Academic Award (see story below), told NARP's Council Apr. 25, "Society and the rail industry need people who understand rail transport and are committed to its present and future excellence."

He noted the disconnects among growing rail passenger and freight traffic, the high retirement rate of railroaders and the limited number of academic programs teaching principles of rail engineering and transport.

In the early 1900s, most of the nation's leading universities had rail programs. But in the post-war era, government-funded university research

for highways and aviation increased substantially. Meanwhile, as railroads began rationalizing infrastructure and operations they substantially curtailed hiring and funding research.

By the early 21st century, the highway-to-rail funding ratio for U.S. academic programs was approximately 100:1.

Yet Sweden (population 9 million vs. US 312 million) has 3 railroad institutes bigger than the largest U.S. program.



"Each may have felt wronged by the other. Both moved on ... but the scars remain." (From Barkan's PowerPoint presentation)

Restoring academic rail capability, said Barkan, requires railroads, government and universities to work together to encourage and support college rail engineering and transport programs—teaching, research, and continuing education. ■

U of I's Chris Barkan Wins NARP's Academic Award

Dr. Christopher P.L. Barkan, George Krambles Faculty Fellow and Director of the highly regarded Rail Transportation and Engineering Center at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, received the second NARP Academic Award. He was honored for his work to develop the next generation of rail professionals.



L to R: Federal RR Administrator Joseph Szabo, DOT Secretary Ray LaHood, Prof. Barkan, NARP Pres. Capon, NARP Chairman Bob Stewart

At NARP's Capitol Hill Reception, he said the award was special to him because his father, the late

civil engi-

neer Benedict Barkan, was an early NARP member. *NARP News* provided

... I know he would be proud." ■

much fodder for household discussion. Barkan noted his and his father's long friendships with last year's academic award winner, Dr. Vukan Vuchic (June 2011 *News*).

"My interest in rail [and] my appreciation of NARP and its role and accomplishments [should be evident]," said Barkan. "This award means more than I can express in words. ... I wish [my father] could be here tonight

Burch Award

from page 4

tions, Commuter Operations Service Unit (Chicago), nominated by Union Pacific for dedication to safety for the communities UP serves. One prominent example: "Joel is the driving force behind 'Station Blitzes' ... convened at commuter stations ... to educate the passengers on railroad safety." · Nathaniel Watts, Assistant Dir.—Safety and Security Training, nominated by Long Island Rail Road. He was instrumental in developing and implementing LIRR standards for lesson plans to assure comprehensive and consistent for all employees. He also "developed on-track safety training programs for all our conductors." ■

Revised Fleet Strategy

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rently under construction in Seattle.

Bergeron reviewed differences among recently-released Amtrak Fleet Strategy Plan 3.0 and previous fleet plans. Plan 3.0 again bases fleet replacement on Commercial Life, not useful life, because there are business benefits to renewing the fleet more often. The next generation of coaches will include modern features such as bigger windows.

Amtrak will analyze ridership more in depth by route and car type to guide decision making instead of conserva-

tively assuming 2% growth across the board. Amtrak's record growth since 2010 has been well above 2%.

Amtrak considers its current plan for 40 new *Acela* coaches (adding two to each trainset) as part of its stair-step to the next-generation, high-speed trainsets due to replace current *Acelas* by 2026.

Amtrak's Mechanical and Transportation Depts. are working closely to insure that restrooms are functioning and cleaned more often en route to give travelers a better environment. ■

our mission: a modern, customer-focused national passenger train network that provides a travel choice americans want.

T4America's Corless: NARP Must Cultivate Elected Champions

James Corless, Director of the Transportation for America campaign (T4A), told the NARP Council on Apr. 23 that NARP's most important challenges are to cultivate the next generation of passenger train champions in Congress, and to build a base of support among state and local elected officials.

T4A is co-chaired by Reconnecting America and Smart Growth America, and NARP is a member.

Corless encouraged NARP to work with public health groups and others that support passenger rail and public transportation for various reasons.

He suggested that the "taxmageddon" Congress faces late this year is a chance for pro-train Senators to win a dedicated funding pot for intercity passenger trains as part of the grand bargain to raise the debt ceiling and deal with expiring tax cuts.

T4A was formed to influence the surface transportation reauthorization. Corless praised the Senate version's (page one) provision making freight rail eligible for funding from the Highway Trust Fund under the National Freight Program.

Corless grew up in a small town in northern England where he could safely bike and walk. The family moved to Pennsylvania when he was 10. Then, he could not venture outside of his cul-de-sac community on his own.

He spoke of how American cities

and towns are still reaping the benefits of vibrant downtowns and neighborhoods fostered by passenger train service and streetcar systems, though the streetcars are mostly gone and the train service diminished.

"We believe fundamentally that transportation has lost its connection to land use," he said. "Transportation can make great places."

Corless began his transportation career as a NARP intern. Later, he was

a senior planner for the Metropolitan Transportation Commission in the San Francisco Bay Area where he managed the agency's efforts to promote smarter growth, transit-oriented development and mobility options for low-income communities. He wrote California's groundbreaking Safe Routes to School law and legislation that required smart growth "blueprints" to become part of regional transportation planning processes statewide. ■

FRA Exec. Dir. Cummings Addresses NARP Council

"There can be no more business as usual" — that was the message Stacy Cummings, Executive Director of the Federal Railroad Administration, delivered to the NARP Council when she addressed them Apr. 23.

Her career at the Department of Defense and studies at the National Security University convinced her that decades of underinvestment in transportation, especially the neglect of rail, have left the U.S. weaker economically and more vulnerable to disruptions.

"Our transportation network won't be ready to efficiently move the more than 100 million Americans we expect to add by 2050 unless we revitalize [modes like] passenger rail," she said.

Cummings announced that FRA is proud to kick off a **planning study for a passenger rail network connecting**

Oklahoma City to Dallas/Fort Worth, Houston and San Antonio (the Texas Triangle). Texas is the fastest growing state and its residents have some of the country's longest commutes.

Cummings reviewed other FRA passenger oversight responsibilities, including Northeast Corridor planning, 110-mph service in the Midwest, 16 Cascades corridor projects intended to cut Seattle-Portland travel time by one hour and add up to 10 daily frequencies, and implementing California High-Speed Rail's revised business plan.

She concluded by expressing confidence that, with the help of NARP and visionary state leaders, future generations will say ours made the right decisions, and that rail's role will grow because of its inherent advantages. ■