

RAILPASSENGERS



WEEKLY HOTLINE

Issue #1,390–April 11, 2025

Share your thoughts, feelings, and reactions to issues you may have had on a recent Amtrak trip. Thanks to your support and participation in previous surveys, we have been able to take the passenger's voice straight to Congress and Amtrak Executives. Help us keep hammering the message home by sharing this survey with other passengers!



Association News

"Well, Actually"



Rail Passengers President & CEO Jim Mathews rides the rails after a successful two-week stay in DC for our #RNDC advocacy workshops and lays out five points on why privatizing Amtrak is still a real dumb idea.

Did you miss Jim's videos from the Hill? [Check out the playlist here.](#)

Rail Passengers Association RailNation:DC Draws Passengers from Across the U.S.

Passenger Advocates Take Part in Hundreds of Meetings on Capitol Hill to Ask for Better Amtrak and Rail Service

The Rail Passengers Association wrapped up two weeks of Congressional advocacy as part of its annual Washington, D.C. advocacy summit. Our advocacy conference, which included volunteer leadership from across the nation, featured frank conversations about the future of Amtrak and intercity passenger rail service in the wake of [the Trump Administration's ouster of Amtrak CEO Stephen Gardner.](#)

We're asking our members to join us in demanding that Congress continues the recapitalization work initiated by the infrastructure bill.



Rail Passengers' 2025 Legislative Ask

Congressional Oversight: *Rail Passengers* remains committed to working with Congress to ensure there is meaningful oversight on these newly expanded passenger rail programs and on Amtrak operations. **It is imperative that these funds are used to support programs in the manner laid out by Congress, and that State partners who have allocated local sources of funding to secure grant agreements are able to move forward with construction on these projects.** Delays in the obligation of funds for previously approved grants will cost local taxpayers through extended project construction timelines and increased costs for labor and materials. We believe strong Congressional oversight can help ensure that these rail projects move as quickly as the law allows through planning, review, design, and construction.

Support Operations and Administrative Capacity: IIJA funding can only be used for certain purposes and cannot replace Amtrak's annual appropriations. Providing sufficient FY26 funding is necessary to allow Amtrak to meet record levels of demand for rail service (find out more about ridership trends at RailPassengers.org/Ridership); perform annual maintenance and carry out core functions to avoid long-term deterioration of assets and services; and make targeted, high-priority investments for future expansion. ***Rail Passengers* is asking Congress to fully fund rail programs at the authorized levels established by the IIJA.**

	FY25 Enacted	FY26 IIJA Authorized
Amtrak	\$2,427 ML	\$4,400 ML
<i>Northeast Corridor</i>	\$1,141 ML	\$1,400 ML
<i>National Network</i>	\$1,286 ML	\$3,000 ML
Federal Railroad Administration	\$268 ML	\$279 ML
Federal-State Partnership for ICPR	\$0 ML	\$1,500 ML
CRISI Grants	\$100 ML	\$1,000 ML
Railroad Crossing Elimination Grants	\$0	\$500 ML
Restoration & Enhancement Grants	\$0	\$50 ML

***Rail Passengers* supports the Amtrak Transparency and Accountability for Passengers and Taxpayers Act (H.R.188) which will improve Amtrak increase transparency for taxpayers** by requiring Amtrak's Board of Directors to comply with the Government in the Sunshine Act, with key exceptions for contract negotiations, collective bargaining agreements, and matters involving the employment status of individual employees.

Blueprint for Success in the Surface Transportation Reauthorization

Rail Passengers has outlined several proposals to build on the success of the rail programs established over the past surface transportation reauthorization cycles. However, the status quo simply isn't good enough; the next reauthorization must include meaningful reforms to the environmental review and service development process, which has led to lengthy delays and cost overruns. See RailPassengers.org/Blueprint for a full summary of our reauthorization priorities.

Sec. 1 - Reauthorize Core Rail Programs: Reauthorize the Amtrak National Network and Northeast Corridor Operations, Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Program, Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program, Corridor Identification (CID) Program, Restoration and Enhancement (R&E) Grant Program, Next-Generation Equipment Committee (NGEC), Northeast Corridor Commission (NECC), and the State-Amtrak Intercity Passenger Rail Committee (SAIPRC) at current levels. Our Association also supports the establishment of **Formula Distribution of Rail Funds to States** to increase State-level capacity and lower costs.

Sec. 2 - Implementing the Federal Railroad Administration's Amtrak Daily Long-Distance Service Study: If fully realized, the FRA's Long-Distance Service Study (LDSS) represents a long-term infrastructure strategy that will extend the U.S. rail network to 39 million people that don't currently have access to passenger rail, including 7 million people in rural communities. The LDSS represents a multi-decade effort similar to the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, and Congress should establish a **Long-Distance Service Working Group** capable of implementing this vision, building on the expertise and working relationships established during this

study.

Sec. 3 Planning, Construction, and Procurement Policy Reforms:

Congress should introduce a “shot clock” for Environmental Impact Statements and Environmental Assessments for intercity passenger rail projects. We also support the creation of a **National Equipment Pool**, federal standardization of project elements, mandating formalized cost transparency, and authorizing advance acquisition of railroad right-of-way.

Making Our Voices Heard

Below is just a very small sample of the photos taken over the two weeks of regional advocacy workshops that took place in our DC HQ and on Capitol Hill.

Attendees heard from representatives from [Amtrak](#), [Alstom](#), [OneRail](#), [Big Sky Passenger Rail](#), and, of course, our staff! A special thank you to our sponsor and presenter [Icomera](#).



What's After The Investment in Infrastructure and Jobs Act?

[By Jim Mathews / President & CEO](#)

Yesterday I appeared alongside seven other passenger-rail stakeholders before the senior staffs of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, and I was pleasantly surprised and pleased that all of us were united urging T&I to keep a rail title in the next version of the surface transportation authorization bill.

Dropping the rail title – which would, in effect, return us to the bad old days when the surface bill was really just “the highway bill” – would force rail authorizations to proceed through the Congress as a separate measure, and in a Congress that has trouble moving bills as it is, that would be a disaster for rail policy. When stakeholders learned that dropping the rail title was beginning to surface as an idea among T&I members, all of us pushed back together, despite our varying interests. It was a very encouraging moment.

Your Association professional staff continues to develop ideas for what comes next for the surface reauthorization after the Investment in Infrastructure and Jobs Act, or IJA, expires in 2026, and T&I staff asked us to offer a preview of our priorities as they begin work on the reauthorization process.

The key message we delivered was this: the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act must not be treated as a one-time infusion. It took a four-decade Federal commitment to build the Interstate Highway System. Likewise, the U.S. interstate passenger rail network can't succeed without a strong Federal partner willing to invest across multiple authorization cycles. A one-off would be just another policy failure. The primary goal for passenger rail in the reauthorization should be building on the foundation of the rail programs introduced across the last four reauthorization cycles.

I told the staff that a strong rail title isn't just about rail. It's about making the whole transportation system work better. Freight and passenger rail both intersect with our roads, ports, and communities. Whether it's unclogging supply chains, expanding passenger service, improving grade crossing safety, or reducing congestion, rail plays a vital role. We think a strong rail title is vital to speed up the planning and implementation process and lower project costs.

Most of what we plan to submit formally involves streamlining processes and regulations, making it easier for leaders in the rail business community to plan, invest, and thrive.

[Click here to continue reading Jim's blog](#)

Delivering Our Message To Statehouses

[By Rail Passengers Staff](#)

This week several state legislatures began considering passenger-rail programs, and your Association was there to make sure our voices were heard.

Rail Passengers Association Chairwoman Meredith Richards appeared before a panel of the [Oregon legislature's Joint Transportation Committee](#) to share her experiences as one of the leaders behind Virginia's efforts to create a sustainable, long-term investment in passenger rail – one that has paid off handsomely in the decades since that commitment was made.



Oregon is considering an overall rail bill, as well as a measure creating the Oregon Rail and Transit Department. You can watch Chair Richards' excellent testimony [here at this link](#), advancing to the 1:32 mark.

And Sean Jeans-Gail, VP for Government Affairs and Policy on your professional staff, participated as an "informational witness" before the Montana legislature as it begins to work on moving forward with new passenger-rail initiatives in Big Sky country.

This kind of advocacy is just one of the many ways we're working to make sure that even as Federal funding looks shaky, commitment to strong passenger-rail programs everywhere in the country remains strong. We're out here every day in every way possible working to bring more and better trains to more people in communities large and small.

Field Notes

Please email [Joe Aiello](#) if you have any local, state or regional stories/projects that you would like to see get highlighted in the Hotline.

What's Your Story?

We want to hear from you

What does passenger rail mean to you and your community?

2025 is going to be a big year for passenger rail advocacy, and we want to know why it matters to you. If passenger rail helps you commute to work, see family, get services

you need, or anything else, please tell us.



We're gearing up for a big year of advocacy in 2025, and we want your stories to help us connect to elected officials, government agencies, and local advocates on why passenger rail matters.

We want you to tell us what passenger rail means to you and your community. Whether it helps you commute to work, see family and friends, get services you need, or anything else, please tell us.

Tell Us Your Story!

Hotline Links

A curated selection of passenger rail and transportation stories from this week. Check out our social media feeds on [Twitter](#) & [Facebook](#) to read breaking news and join the conversation!

- **[Video] [America Builds: A Review of Our Nation's Transit Policies and Programs](#), House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure**

The House T&I Committee held a hearing this week on the policies and infrastructure of transit systems around the country.

- **[Ohio House backs funding for passenger rail plan](#), 10tv.com**

Advocacy works! (Louder for those in the back)

Thanks to the grassroots efforts of our friends at All Aboard Ohio, the state budget will now include funding for the Buckeye State to join MIPRC - a huge win in the efforts to make the "3C+D" plan a reality.

- **[Secretary Sean Duffy takes a ride on Utah's FrontRunner](#), Deseret News**

USDOT Secretary Sean Duffy joined Sen. John Curtis (R-UT) & Rep. Celeste Maloy (UT-02) to ride Utah Transit Authority (UTA)'s FrontRunner commuter rail service - highlighting how crucial federal support is for Utah's rapid growth and evolving community needs.

- **[Video] [Amtrak's Phase VII Livery for Passenger Cars](#), Amtrak**

Following up on a story we have covered in the past, Amtrak has released a video officially introducing the brand-new Phase VII paint scheme on the current fleet - one that will match the details of the upcoming Airo trains.

- **[Boise Depot Centennial](#), City of Boise**

Boise, ID's landmark station celebrates its 100th birthday on April 16th and the city is going all out with four days of food, music, tours, art installations, and a 1920s themed party.

- **[Fight over Fort Worth high-speed route continues as potential funding cuts could affect projects](#), Fort Worth Report**

The fight over Fort Worth's high-speed rail route heats up as potential federal funding cuts threaten the project. Legal battles, local pushback, and budget woes could derail plans.

- **[Alexandria station ranks second busiest in Southeast Amtrak Network](#), ALXnow**

Thanks to the Commonwealth seeing a record number of passengers in FY24, the station in Alexandria (at King Street) is now the 2nd busiest in the VA/NC system with over 350,000 people getting on and off a train there.

- **[Train horns to sound during early morning SMART testing in Petaluma](#), The Press Democrat**

Sonoma-Marina Area Rail Transit will be running grade crossing and signal testing this coming Saturday (April 12th) near the brand new Petaluma North Station

- [Eye On Illinois: Dozens of state transit agencies, big and small, looking to close funding gaps](#), **Shaw Local**

From big-city metros to rural bus lines, dozens of Illinois transit agencies are scrambling to close growing funding gaps. Without new solutions, service cuts and fare hikes could be on the horizon.

What's at stake? Equitable access, economic stability, and daily commutes for thousands.



[WE ARE NOW ON BLUE SKY!](#)

If you aren't following Rail Passengers on social media, you should be! We are covering all the breaking news America's passengers need to stay informed on local, regional, and national issues.

Upcoming Events

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!

Staff Updates

Your staff is at the table, in the field, having the conversations that make a difference for passengers across the country. Learn what they're up to each week and how you can support your Association's key missions!

- **Jim Mathews, President & CEO**, began the week in Dallas, Tex., presenting our outlook on passenger rail to the 21st annual Southwestern Rail Conference hosted by Texas Rail Advocates, and wrapped it up back in DC appearing before the senior staff of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee to begin the long process of drafting what comes next after the Investment in Infrastructure and Jobs Act.
- **Sean Jeans-Gail, Vice President of Policy**, spent the week working with our CEO Jim Mathews to respond to a House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure request for policy proposals for the surface transportation reauthorization.
- **Jonsie Stone, Chief of Staff**, spent time processing membership dues & donations received in the mail at the DC office, crafted fundraising messages for use in the coming weeks, tended to the administrative and operational needs of the Association.
- **Joe Aiello, Director of Community Engagement & Organizing**, after playing social media MC during the two-weeks of DC workshops ([check out our IG account for the videos](#)), Joe has been working with attendees on reporting their Hill meetings and following up with any future advocacy needs. Joe is also getting ready to meet with the local planning committee to start to sketch out the fall event in San Antonio.
- **Kimberly Notarianni, Membership Management Consultant**, encourages all members to log in to their Constituent Portal to ensure their information is accurate and up to date. Members can verify and update their contact information, email preferences, and other profile details directly from their dashboard. We've also made some recent updates to the User Center, which are included in this week's Hotline. A quick note on renewals: The steps to *renew* a membership do resemble the *join* process. Members should not be alarmed—all historical membership data from NEON has been successfully transferred into our new system, CharityEngine. If members need to add, remove, or verify sub-members in their household, please contact Kimberly directly at knotarianni@narprail.org.
- **Lili Leonard, Development Assistant**, it was such a pleasure to meet members from across the country at RailNationDC over the last two weeks! We're so grateful for your advocacy. The Association continues to engage with rail industry companies for corporate support, and to join our first-ever Business Advisory Council. Additionally, we have seen an increase in Donor-Advised Fund and RMD gifts from members; please accept our sincerest thanks for your support!

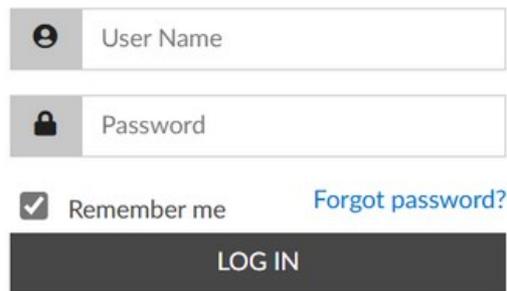
Starting **Wednesday, February 19th**, all membership, donation, and event registration transactions are being processed through **CharityEngine**. **Neon** is no longer the Association's CRM of record.

If you have the **Neon User Center** bookmarked, please update it to:

Your **Neon username and Account ID** have already been transferred to CharityEngine. However, because your **password was unique to Neon**, you will need to reset it when logging in for the first time.

Below is a screenshot of the **CharityEngine Constituent Portal** for reference.

Log in



Over the coming weeks and months, we will continue to enhance the system. If you have any questions or need assistance, please [email Kimberly A. Notarianni](mailto:Kimberly.A.Notarianni)

As with any upgrade, there may be minor hiccups. Your Association staff is here to help and if necessary, work with CharityEngine to gain the answers. We are excited by the full complement of options and benefits that will be available to our supporters through one system.

Thank you for your patience and cooperation.

New Dashboard Update in Your Constituent Portal!

When you access your constituent portal this week, you'll notice an exciting update to your **dashboard!**

We've added **new buttons** to make navigating your membership tools even easier:

Welcome To Your Membership Dashboard



Please note that some of the links are still under construction as we continue transitioning to our new software platform, **CharityEngine**.

Membership Renewals:

If you receive a renewal email, you can now access your renewal form directly through your dashboard or by clicking the link in the email.

Important Note for RENEWAL on Membership Display

The steps you take to **renew your membership** now mimic the “join” process. Don't be alarmed—your historical membership data from NEON has been successfully transferred to **CharityEngine**. The current renewal process is designed to help you **verify your contact information, Amtrak Guest Rewards preference, and communication settings**.

If your NEON membership was set to **auto-renew**, your membership will continue to auto-renew in CharityEngine as well. We encourage all members to **log in and review your account** to ensure everything looks correct.

You will be issued a **new RPA member number** through CharityEngine, but your original number is still valid. You're welcome to use **either number** when purchasing Amtrak tickets.

About Your New Member Number:

Your new membership number will contain **seven digits**.

Only use the first SIX digits if you're using your new CharityEngine number when prompted during an Amtrak ticket purchase. Amtrak hasn't updated their system yet to recognize the full 7-digit number.

Thank you for your patience as we continue working to enhance your member experience. We're committed to making the new portal smooth,



Rail Passengers Webinars

Miss out on our past events? You can watch them on our [YouTube channel](#) or through our website at railpassengers.org/webinars



We Have Merch!

OUR ICONIC STATEMENT

For years, the "I'd Rather Be On The Train" bumper sticker was a favorite among our members, with many requesting extras, so they could share with their family & friends. Over time, one of the most asked questions whenever we are in the field has been if we are ever going to bring that sticker back (one day!).

We are, **ONCE AGAIN**, dusting off this classic statement for our latest merch drop - and this year, with a well known historic twist,

Do you own Association gear? Show us your selfies and let us know what products you want to see next! Contact [Joe Aiello](#) for merch information and questions about our products.



Rail Passengers Timetables

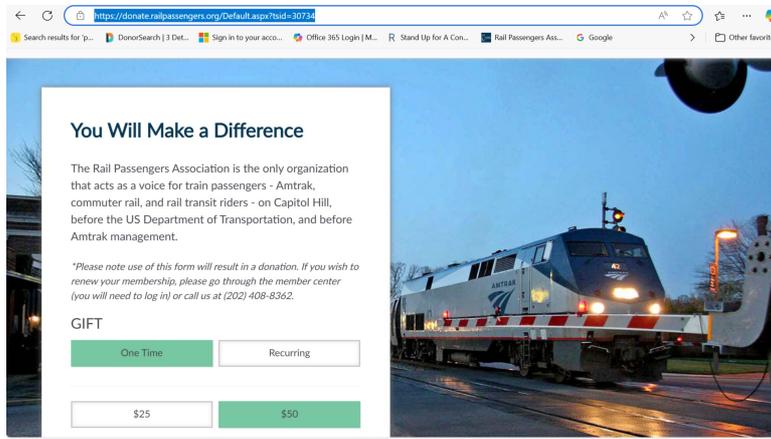
Thanks to a collaborative effort between Rail Passengers NYS Council Member Nathanael Nerode & juckins.net's Chris Juckins, we have been able to completely update our timetables resource page.

[CLICK HERE](#)

Donate Online with Confidence

You can donate to the Rail Passengers Association online with confidence, knowing your credit card information is secure. Charity Engine uses industry-standard SSL technology to keep your information secure. Don't wait for a paper appeal to donate, support the Association today by donating here. When the web browser shows a lock next to the URL, it means that it's an HTTPS, and it's secure:

<https://donate.railpassengers.org/Default.aspx?tsid=30734>



Do more with your donations. If you have questions about employer match, gifting a membership, or other questions about how to make a bigger impact, let us know! Your staff is here to help with:

- Online Donations
- Donor Advised Funds
- Employer Match
- RPA Signature Visa Card
- Gift of Membership
- and More!

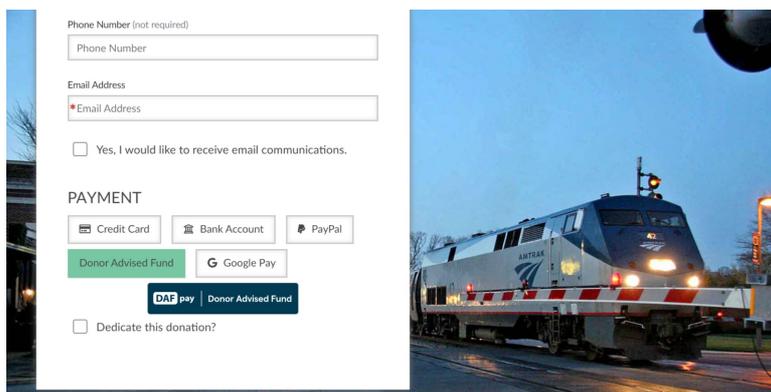
With multiple secure, protected methods of payment, you have more flexibility in the way dues are paid. Skip the hassle and [contact us](#) today for help setting up automatic or online payments.

- Setup ACH or E-Check with your bank of choice
- Use a Debit or Credit Card to pay online, or
- Send a check to 1200 G Street NW Suite 520 Washington, DC 20005

Use Your Donor Advised Fund (DAF) to Donate, Renew or Join Online

You can now donate or join/renew your membership, online, through your donor advised fund using DAFpay. All Rail Passengers forms now include a "Donor Advised Fund" button under Payment.

Donation Form:



Membership Form:



Yes, I prefer communication by email rather than by mail.

PAYMENT

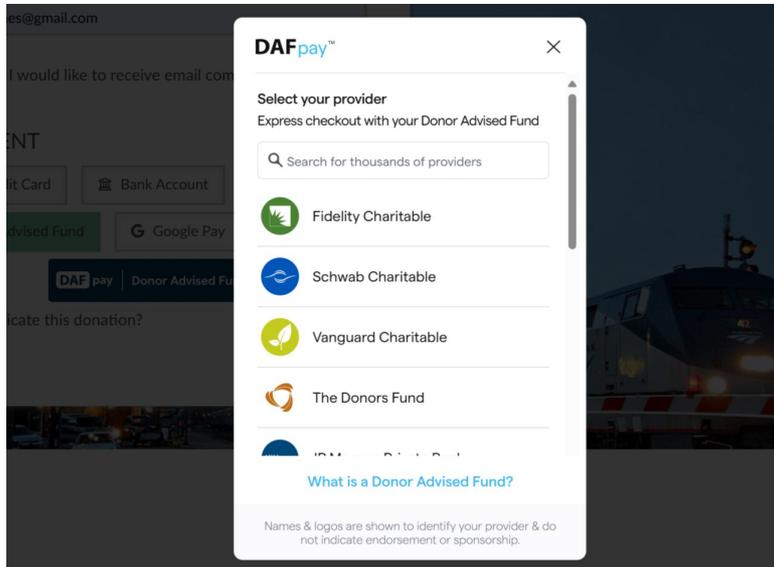
Credit Card
 Bank Account
 Donor Advised Fund
 Google Pay

CAPTCHA

I'm not a robot
 

DAF pay | Donor Advised Fund

After selecting Donor Advised Fund as your payment preference, you will be taken to a DAFpay screen to select your donor advised fund provider, ie., Fidelity Charitable, Vanguard Charitable, Daffy, etc.



Select your provider, then follow their prompts. If you need to provide information on Rail Passengers Association, please use the below:

National Association of Railroad Passengers, Inc.
 dba Rail Passengers Association
 1200 G Street, NW
 Suite 520
 Washington, DC 20005
 Contact: Jonsie Stone, jstone@narprail.org
 Tax ID: 36-2615221

Member & Donor Notices

- **The Rail Passengers Association is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. Our federal tax identification number is 36-2615221**
- **To help facilitate dissemination of electronic thank you receipts, please make sure your contact information, specifically your email address, is up-to-date in your Neon profile.**
- **If you need assistance with your membership, please call the Office at 202-408-8362.**
- **While our staff continues to work remotely, we are unable to provide permanent membership cards.** You can print a temporary membership card by creating an account at www.railpassengers.org (select "My Account" on the homepage).
- **Complete all information!** -- Before sealing your envelope, PLEASE double-check the credit card information on the buck slip!
 - Print credit card information clearly.
 - **Include an expiration date, month and year, as well as the CVV number.**
 - Without **COMPLETE** information, your membership renewal or donation can't be processed.
- **If you have your financial institution send a check on your behalf, without a buckslip, PLEASE instruct them to add:**
 - a notation in the memo field if the payment is for membership dues or a donation, AND,
 - your Rail Passengers Association member ID. If we have multiple members with the same name, i.e., John Smith, it can be hard to identify the correct member to attribute the payment, without the member ID.



Rail Passengers Association members have access to a full service, nationwide federal credit union with extensive product and service offerings. Signature FCU is the exclusive provider of the [Rail Passengers Association-branded Visa credit card](#) with our logo, which supports our work by giving back to our organization, and gives you 1 point for every \$1 you spend to redeem for travel and merchandise. The card has no annual fee, no balance transfer fees, no foreign transaction fees, and has a very low interest rate.

Charity Navigator

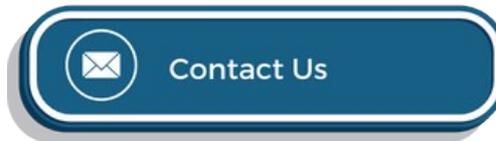


◆ FOUR-STAR ◆

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. Our Charity Navigator profile can be found by clicking [here](#).

If you have questions, feedback, or submissions for next week's hotline, send us your thoughts! Help us spread the word about your local, regional, and national passenger rail wins.



THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS:



RAIL PASSENGERS

EST. 1967

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