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NARPnews

“Increasing the level of investment in our rail system is essential for our nation to safely, reliably, and efficiently move up to 100 million additional people and four billion tons of freight in the next 35 years.”

FEDERAL RAILROAD ADMINSTRATOR JOSEPH C. SZABO

Your Voices Heard: Delays Begin to Ease Out of Chicago

While there’s still a lot of room for improvement, Norfolk Southern has made progress in easing network delays that this summer slowed the *Capitol Limited* to a crawl, and the railroad promises more dramatic improvement by the end of this year and early 2015.

Top Amtrak officials met with NS in recent weeks to continue to press for action, and NARP in mid-September met with Amtrak, the Federal Railroad Administration and the Surface Transportation Board to keep up the drumbeat that passengers were suffering unconscionable delays and to share the early results of our FixIt! online campaign.

Many of our members took part, using the online FixIt! tool to send messages directly to their congressional delegations from aboard late trains – more than 1,300 messages in the first two days alone.

A little more than a week after NARP and the Environmental Law and Policy Center met with STB Chairman Daniel Elliott and his team, Elliott issued a formal demand letter to NS calling on the railroad to explain what it intended to do to solve the problem.

Only days later, delays of more than four hours shrank to an hour or less; on one remarkable day, the *Capitol* pulled into Chicago Union Station a few minutes early. (Continued on Page 2)

NARP Honors Salt Lake City, FRA Addresses NARP Members

The National Association of Railroad Passengers presented an award to Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker, honoring Salt Lake City’s officials and community leaders for building a rail transit system that has become a national model for smart growth.

Becker addressed NARP members who were gathered in Salt Lake City for NARP’s national council meeting from October 17-19, giving the audience a glimpse of what it took to ambitiously expand the city’s Frontrunner commuter rail system, add the TRAX streetcar service and develop bike infrastructure.

“We’re honored to be recognized by the NARP for our work, in partnership with UTA, municipal and state partners and community stakeholders, on behalf of residents to grow our public transit and transportation options,” said Mayor Becker. “The commuter and light rail expansions are having profound, widespread and positive impacts in our city that include contributing to the improvement of our air quality, enhancing the walkability and livability of our neighborhoods and creating options to



NARP Chairman Robert Stewart, Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker, Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph C. Szabo, NARP President & CEO Jim Mathews

automobile travel.”

Becker was joined by Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph C. Szabo to commemorate the award and discuss the future of passenger rail and transit in Utah and the U.S. Szabo emphasized the importance of getting the GROW AMERICA Act passed, which would serve as an intermodal alternative to the Highway Trust Fund.

“Increasing the level of investment in our rail system is essential for our nation to safely, reliably, and efficiently move up to 100 million additional people and four billion tons of freight in the next 35 years,” said Szabo. “The GROW AMERICA Act would, for the first time, provide predictable, dedicated federal rail funding; investing in existing state corridors while providing an additional \$6.4 billion for... (Continued on Page 3)

Millennials Voice Their Support for Passenger Rail

By Logan McLeod

Telecommuting, unemployment, traffic, online shopping, internet and technology, urban living, home entertainment, and public transportation -- What do all of these topics have in common?

They're the reasons why we're driving less and less every day. And by "we," I mean Millennials. Millennials are ages 18-34 and are the second largest demographic in the world!

I like to validate the desire for more public transportation with a report on a recent project that NARP has been developing over the past year.

The NARP Millennial Outreach Program is a grassroots approach directed towards reaching younger generations and educating them on the need to create, expand, preserve and improve America's intermodal transportation system. This national campaign will serve to better community transportation systems around the country.

The origins of this project stem from our work with Purdue University to help save the Hoosier State a year ago, when the key to our success was the involvement of the Purdue Student Government. I saw the power in the student government voice and realized that was a key element missing in public transportation advocacy. We subsequently developed a turn-key program for engaging student support for all kinds of public transportation projects.

Right now NARP is working with Texas Central Railway in a joint effort to reach out to universities around the Dallas and Houston area—first to educate them about the project, and then provide them with the resources to recruit additional support in their communities. We have already recruited four student governments to pass resolutions in favor of the project and to participate in the upcoming scoping meetings (potentially six after November 6th). The four universities are: Sam

Houston University, Paul Quinn College, Southern Methodist University and the University of North Texas.

I will leave you with a statement made by a student senator at Sam Houston University in a conversation with another student at SMU about collaborating with one another on passing a much larger resolution agreed upon by every university in the Dallas and Houston area:

"I'm thinking we make our local resolutions for our own schools, and use the one I draft this week for the "big picture" resolution. Tell me what you think, because I know we can move mountains!"

-Drew B. Carson

If you are interested in supporting these students and/or NARP's national Millennial campaign, please contact Logan McLeod, Director of Resource Development at (202) 408-8362. Thank you for all your support and we look forward to updating you on this exciting project.

DELAYS BEGIN TO EASE (From Page 1)

Since then, delays have begun to creep up again, but are still more than 50% better than they were in September.

In his October 6 demand letter, Chairman Elliott noted that NS responded only partially to his August request for details on plans for handling peaks and "did not include the requested discussion of NS's plans regarding Amtrak service."

On October 13, NS Chairman "Wick" Moorman outlined a series of changes to crew recruitment, locomotive acquisitions, efforts to shift traffic off of the Dearborn Division or out of Elkhart Yard, capacity additions, capital projects and other steps which should help ease congestion for all NS customers, including Amtrak. In addition, the Englewood Flyover in Chicago just opened, separating about 70 Metra commuter trains from the flow of Amtrak trains on the city's South Side; the project was funded through a \$123 million federal High Speed & Intercity Passenger Rail grant.

"Each of the steps discussed should provide incremental improvement to Amtrak service once implemented," Moorman wrote to Elliott. "Improvement is expected to be gradual over the coming months."

Despite NS' cautionary statements, the fact that the travelling public saw improvements in OTP within days of STB issuing the letter indicates that there are immediate operational steps that can be taken by host railroads to bring some measure of relief. NARP underscored this point in a letter sent to the STB. The letter also transmitted scores of train delay stories collected from NARP members, emphasizing that this is not a NS-specific problem.



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The Clock is Ticking for the Hudson River Tunnels

By Graydon Vann, NARP Policy Intern

When Super Storm Sandy hit New Jersey and New York on October 29, 2012, thirteen million gallons of seawater flooded the two North River tunnels as well as two of the four East River tunnels. The water was quickly pumped out of the tunnels and train service was restored within a few weeks after initial repairs were made.

However, a September 2014 structural assessment exposed the long-term dangers of the flood damage, revealing that elements left behind by the seawater will continue to weaken the concrete and erode the iron and steel that line the tunnels. Amtrak CEO Joe Boardman warned that the tunnels might not be functional at all in as little as seven years.

Amtrak has proposed a solution: what it calls the Gateway Project, which would build an entirely new high-speed rail line

between Newark Pennsylvania Station and New York Pennsylvania Station. This \$14.7 billion project would have many components, including building two new tunnels under the Hudson River, expanding Penn Station in New York, building a new bridge over the Hackensack River, and more.

Constructing a new high-speed rail line between Newark and New York would not only remove two of the biggest bottlenecks in the Northeast Corridor, but it would be a crucial first step to building a true high-speed rail line throughout the Northeast. This is why several groups, including NARP, support the project.

Funding for the Gateway Project must be made available by Congress and it must be built as soon as possible. We can no longer wait—the clock is ticking.

You can find the full version of this story on the NARP Blog.

NARP HONORS SLC (From Page 1)

...rail service improvements along existing, expanding and new passenger corridors over the next four years.”

“What mayor, what citizen’s association, what chamber of commerce wouldn’t want access to a proven formula for large-scale revitalization, and one that provides an alternative to traffic congestion and builds stronger regional connections?” asked Szabo. “What if they knew that there was a good plan, and that all we needed was for Congress to pass it?”

Meeting attendees also enjoyed hearing from Utah Transit Authority Chief Development Officer Steve Meyer, who oversaw the completion of five rail lines and 70 new miles of rail within just five years.

Presentations and materials from the National Council Meeting in Salt Lake City will be available soon on the NARP website.

Amtrak Customer Service Chief: “F&B Essential Part of Experience”

Tom Hall, Chief of Customer Service for Amtrak, spoke to the NARP Council about the challenges of developing a responsive customer service program in the midst of political attacks on Food & Beverage services—and indeed, the very existence of Amtrak.

Hall pushed back against the calls which have been issued by some Members of Congress to eliminate dining car options,

calling it an essential part of Amtrak’s service, and a necessary component in attracting paying customers. He compared Amtrak’s F&B operations with that of a popular hotel chain that uses complimentary food offerings as a loss-leader to help compete.

“Does the Embassy Suites make any money on food and beverage?” asked Hall. “No. Where do they make their

money? On the room! That charge for that food and beverage is embedded in that room rate—you’re not getting anything for free... The cruise industry—do they make money on food and beverage? They make money on the cabin they sold you. I think that’s really important, and I think we need to keep pushing that point.”

NARP Makes Pledge to Restore Service to the Southeast

The National Association of Railroad Passengers has pledged nearly \$60,000 in the form of in-kind donations to a Southern Rail Commission study, which represents the first step towards restoring passenger train service east of New Orleans.

The study will consider the possibilities for daily service across the Southeast region and smaller corridors within. It will

also look at infrastructure conditions, station conditions, and the potential for station-area development, which could eventually offset the cost of operating the service.

The Southern Rail Commission recently applied for a \$950,000 Corridor Planning Grant from the Federal Railroad Administration to move ahead with the plan.

Due to damage caused by Hurricane Katrina, passenger rail service has been suspended east of New Orleans across coastal Mississippi, Alabama and Florida since 2005. The restoration of such service is not only necessary to provide citizens with affordable, efficient and reliable transportation alternatives, but it is also an important component of economic development for the Gulf Coast.

Supreme Court Poised To Make – Or Break – The National Network

By Jim Mathews

The Supreme Court on December 8 will hear oral arguments in a case that could either ease – or make permanent -- freight-interference delays that have crippled rail travel across the country. Your association has filed a friend-of-the-court brief in Dept. of Transportation v. AAR, to make sure your voice is part of the argument, and we expect a decision to emerge sometime in the Spring.

In July 2013, when a federal appeals court struck down performance metrics and standards in the 2008 rail reauthorization law, reported freight-interference incidents nearly tripled, and Amtrak's on-time performance plummeted to 42 percent. In a particularly extreme example, the *Capitol Limited's* OTP plummeted to 1.6% in July. Skyrocketing delays are eating into ridership and revenue, and turning off hundreds of potential new rail riders

each day.

The case will turn on a technicality, but it's an important one: AAR says Amtrak can't work with DOT in setting standards because it's a private company. If the Supreme Court agrees, it would effectively gut Section 207 of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) and threaten the entire national network. Four non-profit advocacy groups, including NARP, argue in a brief that the appeals court was wrong when it found Amtrak is a private entity, and ignored the reality that there are plenty of government controls over the development and implementation of the metrics and standards.

Since the 1970s even though lawmakers have encouraged Amtrak to behave like a private company, everyone recognized the reality that Amtrak is shackled like no other company in America: a politically appointed board of directors, budgets and plans approved by Congress

every year, money doled out by the Dept. of Transportation, and congressional reporting requirements that rival those of the Pentagon.

So is the Supreme Court actually about to rule on whether Amtrak is or is not a real company? Probably not; more than likely technicalities will send the case back down to the D.C. Circuit Court for another go. Besides, in one way, the Court's conservative majority has already settled the issue. Consider the case of *Lebron v. National Railroad Passenger Corp.*, in which the Court agreed with Lebron that Amtrak violated his First Amendment rights – something only a government can do. That was in 1995, and no less than Justice Antonin Scalia wrote the opinion for the majority that Amtrak was a government entity. Which way will the majority rule this time?

YOUR STORIES: THE IMPACT OF LATE TRAINS

NARP has continued to ask our members to send us stories of being stuck behind freight trains so that we can educate Congress and transportation officials on the human cost of these delays.

Some NARP members had distressing tales of personal discomfort:

Kay Stoppa, Havre, MT—"Very upset at this point. [We were] scheduled to leave the depot at 3:59 pm this afternoon. As of this writing, train is not scheduled to arrive until after 11:00 pm (approx. 7+ hours). Our son and daughter-in-law have an infant daughter traveling and had to be back in Spokane by early Tuesday morning. They now have both lost a days work and have missed a scheduled doctor appointment—what are we to do???"

Charles deProsse, Iowa City, IA—"At 88 years of age I have begun to travel by rail instead of plane. I like the ease of

train travel, the folks I meet and the passing scenery. However, in July I took the train from Chicago to Albany and then back again ten days later. The train was not only late getting into Albany, which caused disruptions that at my age are harder to handle than they would have been 20 years ago, but also very late -- by 4 hours -- on arrival back in Chicago. This caused me to miss my MegaBus home to Iowa City and to buy a new bus ticket on Trailways. I believe Congress should care about promoting train travel."

Other passengers focused on the impact to business travelers:

Julie Michael, Ellisville, Missouri—"I took the Texas Eagle from St. Louis to Chicago... I was two hours late getting into Chicago and 1.5 hours late returning to St. Louis. In both cases, according to announcements on the train's public address system, the delays were caused

by freight trains. My trip was personal, not business, but I would NEVER rely on Amtrak to get me where I needed to go on time. Unless things change, I will not take Amtrak anywhere ever again."

There were an alarming number of people who said they would not travel by Amtrak again until things got better. Even worse, at NARP's national meeting in Salt Lake City, Amtrak's Tom Hall warned that each significantly delayed train risked producing "Never Again" passengers—first-time riders who would assume all train travel was this unpleasant.

But NARP also heard a lot of unwavering commitment to the national system, including Sandra Burns of Porterville, CA:

"Amtrak has given me so much freedom... (Continued on Page 4)

Zen and the Art of Modern-Day Train Travel: Thanksgiving Travel Tips

By James A. Zumwalt

Contrary to popular belief, Thanksgiving does not hold first place for busiest travel day in America. According to the U.S. Travel Association, the most hustle and bustle occurs on Fridays in June, July and August.

Yet this does not hold true for railroads; more people travel by train during Thanksgiving than any other time of year. Every available piece of equipment is pressed into service to handle the load. Special schedules are made for some corridor services that enjoy additional frequencies in the Northwest, Midwest and Northeast. The apex of train travel each year coincides with the gathering of greater community.

While this seems a perfect opportunity to wax poetic about why this may be—the social delight of a dining car,

the shared pleasure of an observation lounge, the unique quality of train travel being particularly evocative of the spirit of the holiday—we must also face the reality of today's service.

The opulent rolling communities that passenger trains have been in the past primed the American psyche for the elevated potential of what travel can be with, and en route to, the people we love. However it is also true now that if you are in Chicago Union Station's Metropolitan Lounge this holiday season, you may be sitting on your luggage waiting for first class accommodation. It is inevitable that some who turn to trains this year for Thanksgiving travel will be turned away due to constricted supply. The melodrama of this year's holiday travel season will at the very least keep us mindful of our overall mission as NARP members.

... Which is also the single most valuable 'travel tip' for this upcoming season: practice mindfulness. Know that you cannot control the results of your trip, only your actions during the course of it. Ultimately, even though you may literally have a turkey brining in the baggage car, know that those actions are your only true possessions.

So take ownership of your trip and tell us about it! Share the good times, and tweet @narprail with pictures to share—conversely, shoot us an email or letter if the Surface Transportation Board needs to hear about your trip should things go awry. Above all, practice patience, and serve as an example to other passengers. Let it guide you towards more inner peace during this hectic part of the year. Be the passenger you want to be, and foster an onboard community worthy of the holiday!

Honoring Lewis Hoppe: A Passenger and a Patron

It's a difficult task to describe a man that you've never met. That is why I asked longtime NARP member and council representative Richard Kulla to illustrate the character of a man who was so dedicated to NARP's mission that he made us a beneficiary of his estate.

Richard writes: "Lew's dedication to rail passenger service spanned a period of over 30 years during which time he held most steadfast and never let any obstacle deter him from pursuing his viewpoints. The words that best describe Lew are dedication, tenacity, determination and being a most humble individual. His position with New York State was something he did not flaunt or bring up in debates so as to flatter himself or his opposition. His determination was exhibited many times, despite having health issues which would have had major setbacks for the average person.

In conclusion, Lew had a great appre-

ciation for the benefits of rail transportation. For Lew, the battle in support of rail was a major part of his life. His presence and commentary at meetings were always most constructive and his not being with us has created a void for those who had known him. May his spirit live on with us."

We thank Richard for offering his testimony and Lew for his gift that has had a tremendous impact on our cause. We are honored not only by his gift, but also by his many years of service to the American passenger.

If you are like Lew, and want to leave a legacy that will better the lives of future generations, please consider making NARP part of your estate planning. To learn more, please contact Logan McLeod, director of resource development, for more information. Thanks for all your support!

-- Logan McLeod

LATE TRAINS (From Page 4)

...that I never had before. After my daughter graduated from college in the bay area. She married and continued living in the bay area which is 5 hours away. Then she had my two grandkids. I do not like driving long distance or the freeways. So I only got to see them when my husband went, until I discovered how easy Amtrak was... To me Amtrak is a godsend and affordable. Thank you Amtrak."

It's an important reminder that these trains are vital lifelines for Americans, and it's why NARP is fighting hard to fix this problem. We'll continue to collect your stories online, and will pass them on to the Surface Transportation Board with a request for intervention into train dispatching.

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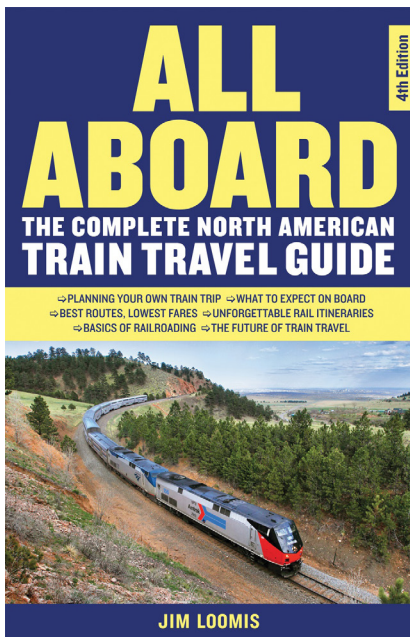


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Exclusive Gift Offer for NARP Members



"Crammed with excellent ideas for booking, preparing for and enjoying your next rail journey." --Railfan & Railroad

Looking for the perfect holiday gift? Donate \$60 or more to NARP and we'll send you a gift copy of All Aboard: the Complete North American Train Travel Guide (4th Edition) by Jim Loomis.

This book is more than the ordinary travel guide; it's the ultimate guide to American train travel and its unique history and culture. Written both for veteran train travelers and those considering their first rail journey, All Aboard tells readers everything they need to know for smooth and enjoyable train travel throughout the U.S. and Canada.

The book won't hit the shelves until mid-January, but through this exclusive NARP offer, you can get your copy ahead of time!

Go to tinyurl.com/HolidayGiftOffer or the NARP website and make a donation of \$60 or more by December 5 to receive your book before Christmas.

Thank you for supporting NARP!

TRAVELER'S ADVISORY

- Amtrak will add more trains in Michigan for Thanksgiving travel between November 26 and December 1. See Amtrak.com for the updated schedule, and book early!

- Both east and westbound *Capitol Limited* and *Lake Shore Limited* passengers should expect delays of varying length due to heavy freight congestion.

- *Cascades Train 508* and *Coast Starlight Trains 11* and *14* will be affected by track work November 16-21. See Amtrak.com/alerts for details.