

“This loan is a key step to providing investments needed to help keep high-speed trains moving throughout the region and to help all commuters in the Northeast Corridor”

VICE PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

NARP Advocates With Congress For Amtrak Funding

[**Editor’s note:** this article is up-to-date as of September 16, 2016. We recognize that rapidly moving political action may render this information out-of-date by the time you read this. For the latest up-to-date rail news, check NARP’s weekly Hotline at www.narprail.org/hotline.]

With Congress racing against a September 30th deadline, NARP Council Members are hard at work to ensure that Amtrak receives a full year’s funding and remind policymakers of the importance of funding rail programs created by the FAST Act before the year is out.

When Congress and the president fail to agree on and pass one or more of the regular appropriations bills, a continuing resolution (CR) can be passed to continue

government funding at pre-existing levels identified in the previous fiscal year. As of this writing, the Senate is working on a CR that is expected to extend the current budget through mid-December, avoiding a government shutdown ahead of the final stretch of the general elections.

“... The Senate is working on a CR that is expected to extend the current budget through mid-December...”

Promisingly for passengers, the White House released a list of funding anomalies for the upcoming Continuing Resolution. Funding anomalies are specific programmatic requests for additional funding in what otherwise should be an extension of current funding levels for nearly all programs. Included in the list is full funding for Amtrak in FY2017, which would

CONGRESS, p. 6

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INSIDE

Amtrak Loan A Major Step In Right Direction For Rail Infrastructure	PAGE 2
.....	
Taking Public Transit Found To Be Safer Than Driving	PAGE 2
.....	
Freight Railroads Respond To Passenger Rail Victory	PAGE 3
.....	
Southern Rail Commission Looks At Intermodal, Gulf Coast Transit	PAGE 3
.....	
States News	PAGE 4
.....	
NARP Member Benefits & Important Membership Reminder	PAGE 5
.....	
Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation	PAGE 7
.....	
WEB EXCLUSIVE!	
It’s the End Of the Year!	PAGE 8
.....	

State Ballot Measures Look To Move Beyond Congressional Stalemate

While the presidential and congressional elections dominate the national headlines, state ballot measures across the U.S. are attempting to remedy the deficit in transportation investment created by federal inaction. On November 8, voters across the nation will consider more than \$200 billion worth of transportation related ballot measures—and pollsters are saying, due to public frustration with the growing gap between investment needs and public funding, the majority of these ballots are well



Marta Train Along GA 400

Photo Credit: Atlanta Journal Constitution

positioned to become law.

The need is certainly dire. The American Society of Civil Engineers estimates there is a \$3.6 trillion backlog in transportation infrastructure project needs, for both state-of-good-repair (SOGR) and expanded capacity. Transit alone faces an \$86 billion shortfall in SOGR funding for upgrades to aging legacy systems.

The good news is that, not only are there a lot of transportation ballots measures, but a significant

BALLOT, p. 6

Amtrak Loan A Major Step In Right Direction For Rail Infrastructure

NARP's President and CEO Jim Mathews spoke to The Washington Post in support of Vice President Joe Biden, along with Deputy Secretary of Transportation Victor Mendez, regarding their announcement of a new federally secured loan that will support Amtrak's purchase of 28 new Alstom high-speed trains in the Northeast Corridor to replace its aging Acela fleet. The loan, which will help Amtrak lead efforts for the new trains, as well as upgrades to modernize service, is the largest single loan ever given by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

"This loan is a key step to providing investments needed to help keep high speed trains moving throughout the



Vice President Joe Biden and Amtrak Chairman Anthony Coscia During Loan Announcement
Credit: AP

region, and to help all commuters in the Northeast Corridor," said Vice President Biden in an official press release. Vice

President Biden is a long-time Amtrak rider who made the announcement at the Joseph R. Biden Jr. Railroad Station in Wilmington, DE. "We need these kinds of investments to keep this region – and our whole country – moving, and to create new jobs."

The \$2.45 billion loan was from the Railroad Rehabilitation & Improvement Financing (RRIF) loan program, which was originally designed to provide affordable financing for Class II and Class III freight railroads. Congress expanded RRIF eligibility to passenger rail and dramatically increased the program's loan and loan guarantee authority to \$35 billion. Unfortunately, a lengthy application process left

LOAN, p. 7

Taking Public Transit Found To Be Safer Than Driving

Whether intercity passenger rail, streetcars, subways or buses, people take public transportation because they can easily reach their destinations while focusing on other tasks such as reading, listening to music or sightseeing. Now, a new report from the American Public Transportation Association adds another reason to that list: it can save your life.

The findings from "The Hidden Traffic Safety Solution: Public Transportation" revealed that people who regularly drive on U.S. roads, can significantly decrease their chances of being in an accident by 90 percent if they take public forms of transit. To put it another way, public transit is 10 times safer than driving and can help increase commuter safety in U.S. cities.

"It is time we employ public transit as a traffic safety tool because it can dramatically reduce the crash risk for individuals as well as a community," said APTA Acting CEO and President Richard White. "While no mode of travel is risk free, the safety of public transit is striking when observing the number of fatalities that are a result of auto crashes."

Overall, the study revealed that deaths and injury rates trended down in communities that had higher rates of public transit ridership. Cities that average more than 50 annual transit trips per capita have about half the average traffic fatality rates as cities where residents average fewer than 20 annual trips.

"This is a remarkable finding by APTA, that truly highlights why passenger rail and other forms of public transit are critical to moving people to their destinations, safely," said Jim Mathews, NARP President and CEO.

"We hope these findings encourage people to think twice about driving on our nation's congested highways, while also encouraging regular and

PUBLIC TRANSIT, p. 5

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Freight Railroads Respond To Passenger Rail Victory

Passenger advocates scored a huge victory in August when the Surface Transportation Board (STB) issued a decision that reaffirmed Amtrak's right to priority dispatching over freight trains, and included intermediate stations in measuring on-time performance—but the freight railroads are back at it again.

The Association of American Railroads (AAR) has responded to our victory aggressively, filing a petition with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit that questions the STB's authority to define on-time for passenger rail. The AAR maintains that Congress gave the Federal Railroad Administration and Amtrak the authority to define on-time performance (OTP), not the STB.

This could threaten the foundation for quality, on-time service that we've been working so hard for—and NARP is taking action. NARP is teaming up with the Environmental Law & Policy Center (ELPC) to file a motion to intervene to support the STB's rulings, defending the right of passengers to quality, on-time service. NARP and ELPC—who previously joined together to file a "friend of the court" brief in the Supreme Court case that pitted the U.S. Department of Transportation and Amtrak against the AAR—are filing before the 8th Circuit with eight other organizations. Our coalition includes All Aboard Indiana, All Aboard Ohio, All Aboard Wisconsin, Friends of the Cardinal, Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, Midwest High Speed Rail Association, Southern Rail Commission, and Virginians for High

Speed Rail.

The motion lays out the history behind the OTP decision, and makes the case for why it's important to U.S. intercity passenger rail service.

The case itself is unusual, since it was the AAR who originally petitioned the STB in January 2015 to pursue rulemaking proceedings to define OTP. The STB agreed to AAR's request, and originally issued a preliminary finding that favored freight traffic—an interpretation the AAR publicly supported. However, following a concerted advocacy campaign—led by NARP and Amtrak-served communities—the STB revised the proposal and issued a more passenger-friendly final ruling. Now, the AAR finds itself in the embarrassing position of



Penn Station NYC

accusing the STB—which only issued the ruling in response to an AAR request—of not having jurisdiction over OTP.

Rest assured, NARP will continue to fight for your rights in the courts, in Congress, and in the sphere of public opinion. But we need your support! Please give a special gift at www.narprail.org/donate to NARP and help us continue to fight for the rights of America's passengers!

The counsel for the railroads and AAR have agreed not to oppose NARP's motion, which will make it easier for the Court to grant our intervention. We are awaiting the Court's action on our motion, and will keep our members updated on this important fight. ■

Southern Rail Commission Looks At Intermodal And Gulf Coast Transit

The city of Anniston, a stop on Amtrak's daily Crescent service, is nestled in scenic northern Alabama in the foothills of the Appalachians about halfway between Atlanta and Birmingham along the I-20 corridor.

At a recent Southern Rail Commission meeting, Anniston Mayor Vaughn Stewart touted his city's intermodal draw to Millennials. Anniston, along with Oxford, AL, operate ACTS (Areawide Community Transportation System), a system of bus routes between Anniston, Oxford, Weaver, and Hobson City. A seven-mile extension to the Chief Ladiga Bicycle Trail is in progress and will terminate

at Anniston's Amtrak Station.

The Chief Ladiga Trail connects to the Silver Comet Trail at the Georgia state line and continues to the Atlanta area; the extension will make the combined trail over 100 miles and the longest paved bike trail in the U.S.

With the completion of the station platform improvements/extension in Anniston, Amtrak will be able to load/unload bicycles making Anniston a great Amtrak destination for bikers and hikers.

Anniston is also just 25 miles from the famed Talladega Race track

• • • STATES NEWS • • •

As a major advocate and supporter that worked alongside other passenger rail organizations, NARP is excited to hear that the Working Group designated to review the restoration of Amtrak service in the Gulf Coast, is making significant progress. The group has informed lawmakers that their work is moving forward, though they still need to determine cost estimates for restoring service, as well as solutions for funding. “The region is ready to restore service, not only because its residents hold fond memories of it, but because it is now an economic necessity,” the group said in its update to Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) and leaders on the House and Senate transportation committees. Service along the route between New Orleans and Orlando was suspended after Hurricane Katrina caused severe damage to the region’s railroad infrastructure in 2005.



Photo Credit: Siemens USA

Siemens Charger Diesel-Electric Locomotive.

Members of the New York congressional delegation announced more than \$5 million in federal funding to improve the safety of 53 rail grade crossings along Metro-North and Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) lines. U.S. Senators Charles E. Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, and Congresswoman Nita M. Lowey announced the funds, provided by the Railroad Safety Infrastructure Improvement grant program. Projects include \$1.3 million to install new highway traffic signals; \$1.9 million to install new CCTV cameras to better study future mitigation measures; and \$1.9 million towards roadway and signage upgrades.

Florida’s Brightline successfully completed initial testing of its first Siemens Charger diesel-electric locomotive on a quarter-mile test track in Sacramento, Calif. “This signifies another major milestone for the production of Brightline’s trains as the company has now approved production for all locomotives currently being built by Siemens,” said Brightline Senior Vice President of Railroad Operations Gene Skoropowski. “Operation of the locomotive and its passing of initial track testing has demonstrated Siemens’ engineering expertise and given us a high degree of confidence that Brightline service will be exceptionally reliable. Brightline will be the only passenger rail service in the country to have such dynamic and modern trains that will offer Americans a new and modern experience in train travel.”

After the Minnesota Legislature declined to approve \$135 million in state funding to support the Southwest Corridor light rail project, the Metropolitan Council, Hennepin County and other Twin Cities area counties agreed to pull together to bridge the \$144.5 million gap. To cover the funding for the \$1.86 billion, 14.5 mile line, Hennepin County committed an extra \$20.5 million to the project, raising its contribution to \$185 million, while other counties agreed to match that amount. The line would run from downtown Minneapolis to Eden Prairie, with 15 stops. The project’s environmental impact statement has already been finished, and orders for light rail cars could be placed as soon as this fall. Planners hope to open in 2021.

In California, a new partnership between Sacramento Regional Transit and Sacramento Steps Forward are using trains to connect homeless people to help. The effort focuses on agency workers finding and helping homeless people on trains, at light-rail stations and in homeless camps near rail lines and connecting these people to social services and housing agencies. Homelessness is an important issue for Regional Transit as 2,659 individuals in the Sacramento area are homeless any given night, according to Sacramento Steps Forward’s homeless count in 2015. The RT outreach program is part of a countywide effort – called Common Cents and administered by Sacramento Steps Forward – to effectively end homelessness by 2020. ■

TRANSIT, from p. 3 and just 10 miles from Jacksonville State University. You can learn more about the bike trail at www.chiefladigatrail.com. To learn more about Amtrak’s bicycle policy, see www.amtrak.com/bring-your-bicycle-onboard.

In addition, SRC Commissioners continue to re-iterate that the Gulf Coast Working Group will get to a resolution with CSX regarding restoration of service between New Orleans and Orlando. SRC Secretary/Treasurer Knox Ross (MS) pointed out that “This is a negotiation. Everyone is confident we will prevail and get this done.”

A summary report will be sent to Congress on September 17th

from the Gulf Coast Working Group with the final report due in December.

Along with discussions of Gulf Coast restoration were talks regarding service between Atlanta – Meridian - Dallas/Fort Worth; service that would be a westward continuation of the Crescent.

A recent Amtrak feasibility study showed that an I-20 passenger rail corridor would be “cash positive.” The SRC has begun talks with mayors in Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi to gauge support. The bottom line is SRC is making huge strides in moving passenger rail forward in the south; another step forward in a Connected America!

Don't Miss Out On Your Benefits!

■ If you haven't done so already: claim your Travelers United Advocate Membership, and further broaden the support for consumer focus at <https://travelersunited.org/welcome-narp/>

■ Review the full and growing list of NARP benefits by logging into <https://www.narprail.org/for-members/membership-benefits/obtaining-discounts/> ■

PUBLIC TRANSIT, from p.2

continuous investment in public transit and our nation's rail infrastructure.”

APTA's findings come at a notable time, as new data from the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) this year, highlighted that there were 35,092 fatalities as a result of car wrecks in 2015. This statistic represents an increase of 7.2

“We hope these findings encourage people to think twice about driving on our nation's congested highways....”

—Jim Mathews

percent over 2014, and the largest increase in fatalities since 1966. People can also expect this number to increase as the DOT also found that the nation has seen a record-breaking number of miles driven by U.S. motorists during the first half of 2016. According to data from the federal agency, drivers in the U.S. reached 1.58 trillion miles, up 3.3 percent from the first six months in 2015. ■



Anniston Amtrak Station. Photo Credit: WBRC

Members, Take Note:

■ **Please do NOT use any old envelopes**, membership renewal forms or donation requests you may have saved from previous NARP mailings prior to March 2016. These forms and the PO Box address on the old envelopes are no longer in use and your checks or credit card payment submissions will NOT reach NARP. Please only use the new envelopes and renewal/donation forms you receive with our current mailings, which are addressed to: NARP, PO Box 17082, Baltimore, MD 21298-9485. If in any doubt, you may always send checks and other payments directly to our office at: NARP, 505 Capitol Ct, NE, Suite 300, Washington, DC , 20002-7706..

■ **There are still openings for state representatives** on the NARP Council of Representatives in several states, including one each in Alabama; Arizona; California; Delaware; Hawaii; Idaho; Louisiana; Massachusetts; Missouri; Nevada; New Jersey; North Carolina; Ohio (2 Seats); Texas (2 Seats) and Wyoming. If you are interested in becoming more involved with NARP and advancing our goal of 'A Connected America' please visit our website, www.narprail.org under 'About to Leadership to Council of Representatives to Open Seats' for more information on applying and for a complete up-to-date list of the positions available.

■ Save the dates of Friday, October 14 - Sunday, October 16 and **make plans to attend the NARP Annual Fall Conference** being held in beautiful Denver, CO. Meeting highlights will include a tour of the newly-expanded Denver Regional Transit District rail lines on Friday; a welcome reception at Denver Union Station on Friday evening; a full day of exciting and motivating speakers and panels on Saturday and a keynote presentation on Sunday. The Embassy Suites Downtown at the Convention Center is our host location. Information on available hotel rooms and a link to the event registration is now available on the Fall Meeting event page on the NARP website. ■

■ NARP members can obtain discounted registration to **attend the SmartTransit 2016 Conference**, being held at the Renaissance Newark (NJ) Airport Hotel October 25 - 26, 2016. Past NARP Chairman Robert Stewart will moderate several of the panels. Visit the NARP Events page for more details and discounted registration information. ■

CONGRESS, from p. 1

provide \$1.39 billion—\$370 million for the Northeast Corridor and \$1.02 billion for the National Network. This funding is in line with what was provided by both the House and Senate’s proposed Transportation-HUD appropriations bills. The Administration is requesting a full year’s worth of funding to support Amtrak’s transition to its new accounting structure, which is required by the FAST Act.

The Obama Administration is looking to prevent additional costs and wasted hours that would come from having **a.)** to pause the changeover during the end-of-year CR negotiations; **b.)** reverse the changeover halfway through; or **c.)** run to parallel accounting systems. This puts Amtrak operations on firmer footing, and NARP will advocate in support of the Administration’s provision.

However, this CR does not fund the FAST Act passenger rail grant programs that NARP worked so hard to get passed into law. During our advocacy outreach after the election we will ask Members of Congress to push for the agreed upon levels of funding outlined by both the House and Senate appropriations committees.

You can help us by going to www.narprail.org/action and



Amtrak train 353, The Wolverine
Photo Credit: Kalamazoo Gazette

taking part in our campaign to pass the Amtrak Fix as part of the CR, and remind members of congress about the importance of investing in the FAST Act rail programs ahead of the post-election negotiations. ■

BALLOT, from p. 1

portion of them are targeted specifically at transit. And these transit-oriented ballot measures are ambitious in nature. The ballot measures focused on so-called “mega infrastructure projects” include:

- **Measure M:** \$120 billion over 40 years in **Los Angeles** for rail, bus transit, highway projects, and SOGR work;
- **Sound Transit Proposition 1:** \$53.8 billion in **Seattle** for 62 new miles of light rail, BRT on I-405, expanded capacity on the Sounder south rail line, improved access to stations for bicyclists, pedestrians, drivers, and pick-up and drop-off services, among other features;
- **Regional Transit Authority Public Transit Tax:** \$4.6 billion in **southeastern Michigan** for Detroit-to-Ann Arbor passenger rail, BRT along three major corridors, express bus services, a universal fare card and several, and other improvements;
- **MARTA Expansion Ballot Measure:** \$2.5 billion in **Atlanta** for the Atlanta BeltLine, 15 complete streets projects, Phase 2 of the Atlanta Bike Share program, pedestrian improvements in sidewalks, and traffic signal optimization;
- **California Proposition 51:** \$9 billion in **San Francisco** for school bonds and the city’s transit system.

“I think this is certainly close to being unprecedented,” said American Public Transportation Association (APTA) CEO Richard White during a September 12 press call (NARP is a member of APTA).

Many of the ballots focus on special sales taxes and increasing gas taxes. In addition, voter-approved sales of municipal infrastructure bonds is also providing billions of dollars for local transportation projects, which takes advantage of near

record-lows municipal bond interest rates. Industry experts believe that voter approval of these bonds sales shows an increased confidence in the economic stability of local governments, which was shaken by the recession.

The movement has gone so far as to take on the third rail of U.S. transportation politics: the gas tax. Six states—Idaho, Georgia, Maryland, Rhode Island, Nebraska and Vermont—raised their gas taxes in 2015, and Oregonians will vote on proposals to increase local gas taxes this fall.

Voters have been generally supportive of local transportation measures that clearly outline where taxpayer dollars go. Since 2009, 71 percent of transportation ballot measures have passed.

Of course, the best way for passenger advocates to support this movement is to educate themselves on their local ballot measures, speak with friends and family about the critical need to invest in this country’s infrastructure, and volunteer with local ballot measures. Look for all the latest information about transit-friendly ballot measures at www.narprail.org/ballots. ■



LOAN, from p. 2

RRIF funds largely untapped. But the bipartisan surface transportation act passed by Congress in 2015 streamlined that process, shortening review time and expanding eligibility to include transit and station development.

“This is more than just a loan. For NARP, Amtrak and rail passengers across the country, the loan represents a large and ongoing effort to provide the support that is truly needed to bring the nation’s rail infrastructure into the 21st Century,” said NARP President and CEO Jim Mathews, who attended the announcement event on August 26. “We applaud the Obama Administration and Amtrak for working together on this project. With year after year of surging demand, the additional capacity is desperately needed—not only on the Northeast Corridor, but across the national network.”

Moving forward, if executed properly, RRIF has the potential to open tens of millions of dollars in revenue, and grants into the billions, in infrastructure investment for passenger rail in the U.S. This will include station renovations, track maintenance and repair, and fleet upgrades throughout the country.

“We can’t buy these trains and send them out to run on the

tracks we have now,” said Delaware Senator Thomas Carper, who attended the event. “There’s a requirement for the Congress to step up.”

Alstom, a French company, will design and manufacture the new “Avelia Liberty” trains at its Hornell and Rochester, New York facilities, creating 400 local jobs. The new equipment will help Amtrak phase out the current Acela trains, providing enhanced amenities and additional seats capable of carrying 30 percent more passengers.

The new trains, which will phase out the older Acela trains by 2022, will feature travel speeds over 160 mph, active tilting technology for trains around curves, a smoother ride for passengers, upgraded food cars, and personal outlets, USB ports and reading lights at seats. The Avelia Liberty trains will also bring an increase of 40 percent to the size of Amtrak’s fleet, and will allow for service to be offered every half hour between D.C. and New York City at peak hours.

Amtrak noted that the federal loan was made in agreement with the U.S. DOT, and that it will be paid back over 29 years with the revenue made in the NEC. ■

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B. Paid Circulation

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b. Paid Circulation		
i. Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions State on PS Form 3541	10,370	12,496
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iii. Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS	29	57
iv. Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS	11	11
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e. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution	500	500
f. Total Distribution	11,285	13,318
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h. Total	11,285	13,318
i. Percent Paid	95%	96%
16. Electronic Copy Circulation		
A. Paid Electronic Copies	13,517	16,581
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C. Total Print Distribution + Paid Electronic Copies	24,802	29,899
D. Percent Paid	98%	98%

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Jim Mathews, NARP President and CEO

WEB EXCLUSIVE! It's the End Of the Year!

The past 12 months have been productive ones for advancing NARP's goal of "A Connected America." Together, we have seen progress on both long distance and corridor routes, delivery of new long distance equipment and electric power, and large equipment orders for Amtrak's next generation Acela fleet.

We have been at the table helping to craft some of the most favorable legislative language passenger rail supporters have ever seen, and seen real progress on both public and privately funded high speed rail and transit lines.

In short we've had a great year, but we couldn't have done it

without your strong support. We have real challenges ahead to ensure that passenger rail delivers on the promise of creating "A Connected America," as we take on the freight railroads in the U.S. Eighth Circuit court, work to energize our growing Daily Cardinal coalition in four states, and participate as regular members in federal rail study groups during the next 12 months.

We know you want more and better trains. Would you please consider making an end of year donation to our cause, or maybe committing to a monthly contribution to help us get there.

Donations can be made online at: www.narprail.org/donate ■

NARP Traveler's Advisory

❖ Due to track improvements being performed along the Northeast Corridor, a number of changes are being made to Acela Express and Northeast Regional schedules through October 31: 1. Schedules of both Acela Express and Northeast Regional trains will change by up to 10 minutes in both directions between Boston, New York and Washington. 2. All Acela Express trains will depart Washington at five minutes before the hour, rather than on the hour. Some Acela Express trains will depart Boston a few minutes earlier than the times shown in the Amtrak Winter-Spring 2016 System Timetable. 3. Most northbound Northeast Regional trains will depart Washington three minutes earlier than the times shown in the Amtrak Winter-Spring 2016 System Timetable.

❖ Bridge work being performed by Keolis Transportation Services, and will affect Downeaster service, between now and November 20, 2016. Bus service will be provided between Haverhill and Boston North Station: Fridays, September 9, 23 and October 7, 18: Trains 688 and 689 will be replaced by bus service, operated by Peter Pan, between Haverhill and Boston North Station; Saturdays and Sundays, September 10, 11, 24, 25; October 8, 9; November 19, 20: All trains will be replaced by bus service, operated by Peter Pan, between Haverhill and Boston North Station; and at Woburn Station buses will not stop at Woburn on the dates listed above. Trains have also been canceled on Fridays, October 21 and November 4: Trains 688 and 689 will be canceled with no alternate transportation provided; and Saturdays and Sundays, October 22, 23 and November 5, 6: All trains will be canceled with no alternate transportation provided.

❖ Amtrak's popular On-Board Pets Program has been expanded to include all services in New York State and on the Ethan Allen Express to Vermont points. Pet reservations are now being accepted for travel. There is a \$25.00 fee per pet, a limit of 5 pets per train and other restrictions apply. ■