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NARPnews

"We need to unite our great nation once again with this 21st century transportation system."

NARP MEMBER PAUL NELSON

NARP Helps Defeat House Anti-Train Amendments In FY 2016 THUD Bill

Rail funding and safety were in the spotlight at a hearing held by the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on June 2 as NARP's battle for a predictable, dedicated source of funding for passenger trains and upgrade an aging infrastructure.

"While the men and women of Amtrak are doing a good job of providing safe a service for their passengers, they have been saddled with 40 years of underinvestment. They need more help from Congress to do even better," said President and CEO Jim Mathews. "All Americans deserve to ride safe trains, wherever they ride them. Let's not get distracted from the larger truth: that wherever Americans can choose between driving and the train, many opt for the train, which is 17 times safer than hitting the highways. This means that simply investing in

rail, either intercity or commuter transit, gives travelers and commuters safer choices -- choices denied to the hundreds of thousands of riders who have had their options taken away by service cuts or suspended routes."

That choice was threatened yet again, but thanks to NARP members, two anti-train amendments offered by Rep. Mo Brooks (R-Ala.) on June 4 under the fiscal year 2016 Transportation, Housing & Urban Development appropriations bill were resoundingly rejected. The amendments sought to eliminate Amtrak's operating and capital grants, respectively—a move that would have killed passenger train service in this country as we know it for tens of millions of Americans—as well as threatened commuter service that millions of commuters rely on to get to work every single day.



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NARP CEO Jim Mathews Emphasizes Local Involvement in Trains Q&A



The best course of action intercity passenger rail supporters can take to influence public opinion is a cliché, but it's true: get off the couch, said NARP CEO Jim Mathews in an interview with Trains magazine.

"Becoming an active and visible participant in the political process is vitally important. Many rail supporters have told me that they believed that their only chance for influence was during congressional elections, but that is most assuredly untrue," said Mathews. "Constituents have more influence than they realize, and if you take the time to write sensible, cogent letters to mayors,

staffers who read and answer the mail...and who tell their bosses about the 'pulse' in their district."

NARP members can also get involved early by helping their local political party as it prepares for the next round of elections, said Mathews. "Attend local hearings and meetings. No hearing is too small. You need to be visible and when you have the opportunity to speak, even for a minute or two, take it," he said. "Don't attend dressed in costumes or festooned with slogans; simply appear professionally and calmly, and make your points forcefully but with cheerful command of the facts." Visit <http://narprail.org/our-issues> for more information and white papers.

county officials, planners and your congressman or senator, it will resonate with the

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NARP Members Betsy and Paul Nelson Push for Intermodal Transportation in Mississippi



Betsy and Paul Nelson

"All of us like trains, but what we really like is what trains can do...for our towns and cities, for jobs, both regionally and nationally." For Mississippians and NARP members Paul Nelson and his wife Betsy, (who just earned a master's degree in Transportation Engineering and Public Policy), ensuring their home state is connected to a national intermodal transportation network is a matter of economic survival. "We need to unite our great nation once again with this 21st-century transportation system. All parts of the transportation system – road, air, water and rail – must work together in balance doing what each mode does best while moving people, freight, and ideas seamlessly together across states and regions. Rail, both passenger and freight, are becoming an increasingly more important part of this new economic engine."

NARP should work to bring like-minded partners together to advocate for "A Connected America," said Paul, who currently lives in Biloxi, Mississippi. "A Connected America will be made up of states and regions tied together by a high-quality, linked and balanced intermodal and multimodal transportation system, and will serve all our citizens," he said. This 21st-century system will unite our great country in the same way that the interstate highway system did a generation ago and position us to compete in the 21st century linked economy.

"At the end of the day, it's not just about trains," he continued. "It's more about finding a balanced intermodal system that not only impacts regions, jobs, and safety, but also transforms the U.S. economy allowing people and goods to easily move across the

country," he said. "We are the richest and most-productive country in the world, but we won't stay that way if we don't invest in the future now. Millennials, who have a constant need for connectivity, and baby boomers, who won't or shouldn't drive, are choosing to live where they have sustainable travel choices. We want Mississippi to be one of those places."

Paul believes that NARP needs to be at the table anytime anyone talks about transportation, even when the debate isn't something that directly deals with passenger rail. "We need to work to leverage public and private partnerships to improve all infrastructure, including rail," he said. "That's where we need to be. It's all about jobs, investment, and growing the economy by linking all U.S. regions in a truly national network. If we don't, our country loses."


Betsy cited Hattiesburg, Mississippi, as an example of what happens when infrastructure investments are made, and thanked bipartisan leadership for making good things happen in her home state. "With strong leadership and a commitment to the city, Hattiesburg invested \$13 million to upgrade the old train depot into the Hattiesburg Intermodal Center," she said. "As a result, Hattiesburg has seen \$80 million in private money invested downtown within a three-block area surrounding the depot in just the past few years. Our mayors know that kind of investment is transformational, and why they, along with business and community leaders, are fighting for the rail option.

"It's the same pattern we saw in the 1990's in Meridian, where the first intermodal station was built in the south, and why our elected officials fought so hard to get a north Mississippi Delta station stop at Marks, Mississippi." Betsy is working with the mayor's office, the Southern Rail Commission, and NARP to host an upcoming event surrounding the 10th Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina ("Y'All Aboard for Gulf Coast Rail Service"). "The tracks are back along the Gulf Coast from New Orleans to Florida...we are long overdue to connect the region once again with high quality passenger rail to spur tourism, economic development, and provide resiliency if there was ever another Katrina type of storm," she said.

With the country's infrastructure crumbling, there is not enough government money to build and operate the type of 21st-century transportation system needed to move forward, said Betsy. "In the past,

transportation investment was one issue that all could create support in spite of party affiliation, and that's good for our country," she said. "We recognize that government has a limited, but direct, role in helping create this 21st century transportation system, but much of government's responsibility is to create the pre-conditions for transportation investment from the private sector through tax policy, sensible tax credits, and creative legislation. Transportation investment through transit oriented development using smart growth strategies can be a win-win for all parties – public and private."

Sensible government investments should be measured not just in terms of farebox recovery but also in terms of their ability to catalyze local, state, and regional efforts toward economic development, promote competitiveness and regional connectivity. "We need to preserve and grow our national transportation network," said Paul. "What kind of country do we want to live in and leave our children... 'A' United States of America... or 'The' United States of America?" ■




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Report: Millennials Have High Expectations For Public Transit

Millennials' adroitness at using technology, their predisposition for living in urban neighborhoods and taking a train or bus to get around is already influencing trends in the transportation field, says a report by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). The study, "Millennials & Mobility: Understanding the Millennial Mindset," examined what is driving the millennial generation's transportation choices, what will drive those choices in the future and the opportunities for the transit industry to capitalize on those choices.

The study did in-depth interviews in five cities -- Boston, San Francisco, Austin, Texas, Boulder, Colorado, and Minneapolis -- and surveyed 1,000 people in six cities that represent the types of cities Millennials find attractive. Reasons and motivations for transportation choices are pragmatic: 46 percent stated that a need to save money drives their choices; 46 percent also noted onvenience; 44 percent want exercise; and 35 percent said they live in a community where it just makes more sense to use transit.

Millennials ride trains and buses primarily for convenience and to save money, said the study. At the same time, they have high expectations for the transit services they use: 61 percent want to see more reliable systems; 55 percent expect real-time updates and wireless internet service wherever they go; and 44 percent want a more user-friendly travel experience over the next decade.

Millennials are multimodal, choosing the best transportation mode -- driving, transit, bike or walk -- based on the trip they are planning to take, said the report. "Communities that attract millennials have a multitude of transportation choices, as proven by millennial hotspots, popular zip codes where residents have self-selected into a multimodal lifestyle," it said.



Photo courtesy of Minneapolis/St. Paul Metro Transit

Public transportation options are considered the best for digital socializing and among the most likely to connect the user with their communities. Transit also allows millennials to work as they travel, a trend noted by 40 percent of those polled. These benefits of public transit need to be fully leveraged by the industry, as they provide a clear competitive advantage.

Fully leveraging technology, through real-time transit applications that connect users with community amenities, through smartphone fare payment, and by providing Wi-Fi and 3G/4G, will allow transit users to be more spontaneous, thus addressing the key competitive advantage of the car. ■

NARP, House Rail Legislation

Continued from page 1

"It's clear that a small group of die-hard House members didn't get the memo," said Mathews. "Americans have repeatedly and consistently voted in favor of rail, transit and mobility at the ballot box and with their wallets, setting Amtrak ridership records year after year. Thankfully, most members confronted with moves to de-fund Amtrak—money that would, in part, be used to finish installing critical safety improvements—refused to take the bait."

Two amendments offered by Rep. Pete Sessions (R-Texas) targeting the Sunset Limited and the National Network trains, along with two submitted by Rep. Bill Posey (R-Fla.) targeted at slowing the progress of All Aboard Florida, a private sector-led project that will develop higher-speed service between Orlando and Miami, were defeated in the House of Representatives on June 9.

Even before the amendments, the House FY 2016 T-HUD bill slashed Amtrak funding by \$262 million, transit funding by \$161 million and funding for the intermodal TIGER grant program by \$400 million. NARP is working with Senate appropriators to improve the funding figures for trains and transit, necessary to address the hundreds of billions of dollars in capital upgrade and repair backlogs facing our nation's rail system—the result of decades of underinvestment.

A coalition of nine Senate Democrats from the Northeast have responded to the House Appropriations Committee's efforts to slash Amtrak funding by calling

on Congress to raise Amtrak's funding, allowing the railroad to make critical investments to infrastructure and safety systems. They have asked for Amtrak's FY 2016 funding to be increased to \$2.45 billion, the amount identified in President Obama's FY 2016 budget request.

Senators Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), Jack Reed (D-R.I.), Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), Bob Casey (D-Pa.), Chris Coons (D-Del.), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Chris Murphy (D-Conn.), Edward Markey (D-Mass.) and Cory Booker (D-N.J.) issued the call at a press conference in the U.S. Capitol Building.

"Throughout the Northeast Corridor, Amtrak has some infrastructure that is so old, it was built and put into service when Jesse James and Butch Cassidy were still alive and robbing trains," said Schumer.

"Despite record levels of ridership on passenger and commuter railroads across America, federal investment in rail has fallen behind, growing the backlog of improvement and safety projects," said the senators in a statement. "In the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, President Obama and Senate Democrats provided unprecedented funding for needed passenger rail projects. Instead of working to build on this success, Republicans in Congress have starved federal programs that help repair, rebuild and renew vital passenger rail assets. It's time to invest in America's rails, not gut them." ■

- “There will be service cuts” in the frequency of trains on some routes if Illinois’ Amtrak subsidy is reduced by \$16 million, Amtrak board member Thomas Carper told an Illinois House transportation committee. The Belleville News-Democrat noted that Gov. Bruce Rauner (R), dealing with a \$6.2 billion gap in the state budget, has proposed a \$16 million cut in the annual subsidy the state pays to Amtrak. “I don’t know which routes would be cut,” Carper said.

A NARP member blast noted that the organization is learning more about the impact of Gov. Rauner’s budget cuts – and it could be worse, with Amtrak, Metra, CTA, Pace and Downstate bus services all poised to see serious service reductions and fare increases.

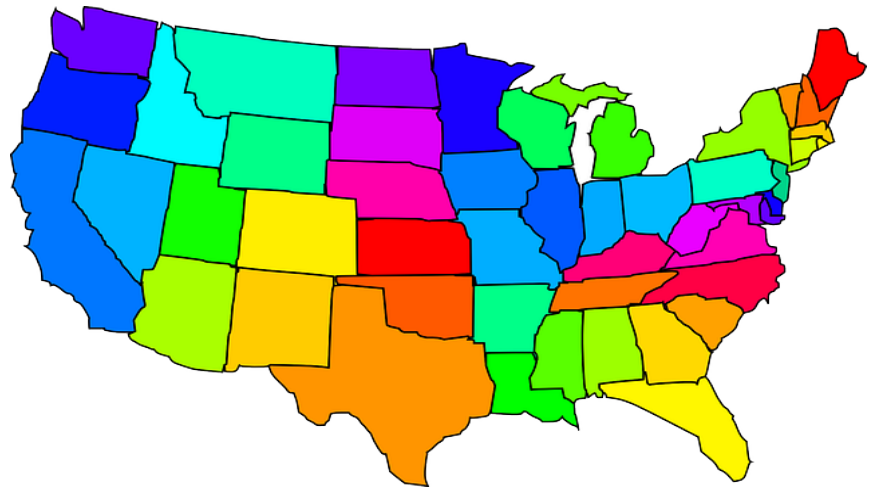
Budget negotiations are heating up in Springfield, and any action taken will have an outsized impact. Help NARP make it clear that Illinois does not want cuts to transit by letting state representatives know how important Illinois transit services are.

- Colorado is stepping up in the effort to keep Amtrak’s Southwest Chief railroad line running through the state, reports the Denver Post. The state’s Transportation Commission approved \$1 million in funds through a TIGER grant that will help pay to repair Colorado’s section of the Southwest Chief’s tracks.

The Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad said it would not maintain the track for Amtrak past January 2016. Communities in Kansas are also trying to find ways to upgrade the track in their state to avoid having the train routed away.

- The Palm Bay City Council passed a resolution of support for All Aboard Florida, a privately led plan to develop modern passenger rail service between Orlando and Miami along Florida’s east coast. “What this brings for us, for the entire state, is just amazing economic development. It’s moving us forward,” said Councilwoman Michele Paccione. “It’s just time that we have to think outside the box. You have to think for the future. There is a lot at stake, and I’m hopeful that they will keep Brevard right at the top of their list to get a station. I do believe that.”

However, the Jupiter city council has unanimously voted to oppose issuing the bonds needed to build the railroad between Orlando and Miami, saying the All Aboard Florida project presents unacceptable risks, reports the Palm Beach Post. “The AAF proposal, as it stands, provides no benefits to the town of Jupiter and only results in safety risks and costs to the community,” according to a letter from the council dated May 20 addressed to the Florida Development Finance Corporation board of directors.



All Aboard Florida plans 32 passenger trains a day between Miami and Orlando on the Florida East Coast Railway tracks, with stops in Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach. The Miami-to-West Palm Beach service is expected to begin in late 2016, with the Orlando leg starting in 2017.

- The Las Vegas Sun is reporting that the State Assembly approved a bill that sets up a Nevada State High-Speed Rail Authority, by a vote of 40-1 on May 20. The bill, SB457, will establish the authority as part of an effort to connect Las Vegas to Los Angeles and, eventually, California’s statewide high-speed rail system. The Sun states that the law requires the authority to select an infrastructure company by October 15 of this year to begin work on the project. Xpress West, a private company, has been working on developing a plan and securing federal regulatory approval for the line, but has stalled due to a federal loan application that was suspended by the Federal Railroad Administration due to a disagreement on Buy America provisions.

- The Texas Tribune uncovered the stealthy subterfuge employed by opponents to use state regulation to kill Texas Central Railway’s efforts to use private sector funding to develop high-speed rail.

“Tucked in Page 682 of the budget passed by the Senate in April is Rider 48, a provision that would bar the Texas Department of Transportation from spending any state funds toward ‘subsidizing or assisting in the construction of high-speed passenger rail,’” reported the Tribune. “The budget rider is one of several efforts by some Republican lawmakers to stop Texas Central Railway’s plan to build a high-speed rail line that would travel between Dallas and Houston in less than 90 minutes, reaching speeds of 205 mph.”

One proposed bill would require high-speed rail projects to secure approval from elected officials

of every city and county along a proposed route, while another would strip high-speed rail companies of the eminent domain authority .

- Caltrain says it will have positive train control in place on all its trains by the December 2015 deadline mandated by Congress in 2008, reports NBC Bay Area. In San Carlos, Caltrain workers are connecting fiber optic lines along the entire length of the transit service’s right of way. The fiber optic lines will link with radio transmitters, officials said.

- Fares on the bullet train being built from Los Angeles to San Francisco would cost around \$86, reports the Los Angeles Times. The original price was \$50 seven years ago when the project was approved by voters. Since then, the California High-Speed Rail Authority has projected the fare would be \$83 and \$105. The current estimate would be one of the world’s cheapest high-speed rail trips on a per-mile basis, assuming that it reflects a typical fare between downtown stations in Los Angeles and San Francisco, a Times analysis found.

- The Raleigh News-Observer reports that U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx is optimistic that high-speed rail will eventually become a reality in the Southeast after Georgia and South Carolina expressed interest in a joint agreement between North Carolina and Virginia to study, coordinate and advocate for the project. “You look across the country, the Northeast corridor is more than a constellation of states,” Foxx told the Associated Press. “That multistate coordination just hasn’t existed as strongly here in the Southeast. And that would be a really key part of starting something big.” North Carolina and Virginia established a compact to promote high-speed rail years ago, and officials in Georgia and South Carolina are now discussing whether they should join. ■

Allen Montgomery: Dedicated to Improving the U.S. Passenger Rail System

Allen Montgomery's journey to becoming a passenger advocate -- and a NARP Silver Rail member -- began with a politician and a poor decision. "I have always had a love for a rail system. It was the mode of transportation I used to commute to my first job that helped me pay for college," he recalled. "It was a source of release. My commute allowed me to focus my thoughts on the day ahead and relax on my adventures home."

A mayor from eastern Pennsylvania changed all that when his loyalty to highways, trucker associations and a local bus company clouded his judgment and contributed to the discontinuation of passenger rail service between Allentown and Philadelphia in 1979, said Montgomery. "This left me stranded and unable to commute to Philadelphia from Allentown. Only a couple of buses remained, and I longed for something better," he said.

Frustrated with buses and looking for a solution, Montgomery heard about the work of long-time rail advocate and former NARP Director Wayne Davis, where he first learned about the association. "Wayne's work on the Downeaster was inspiring and encouraged me to join NARP in hopes of one day having success in the Lehigh Valley region similar to what Wayne and the TrainRiders/Northeast had," he said. "There have been a number of studies done on returning service in our region, but little follow through or action."

Montgomery said he's reached a point where he's no longer able drive a car or fly, leaving him with only one alternative -- the train. "We still are without service in the Lehigh Valley region, but that will not deter me from pursuing my dream of once again taking a train from Allentown to Philadelphia," he stated.

"With the assistance of NARP and its members, a connection between Allentown and Philadelphia, along with many other cities, will allow our communities to grow and thrive," said Montgomery. "Please join me as a Silver Rail member, and let's provide NARP with the resources that will build a multimodal national transportation system we need and deserve."

For more information on the Silver Rail Society, please contact NARP's Director of Resource Development, Logan McLeod at (202) 408-8362 ext. 3202 or email him at lmcleod@narprail.org. ■

NARP Members and Rail Advocacy

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NARP serves as a reference repository for legislators at all levels -- federal, state and local -- supplying information on rail service and intermodalism across the country, said Mathews. "In House and Senate testimony, I have highlighted places where small federal investments have paid off handsomely in revitalized downtowns producing many multiples of economic growth, such as Meridian, Mississippi, and Salt Lake City, Utah," he said. "We also try to ensure our members across the country have access to the best information we can give them so that they are always ready to answer the call for more data or to refute a rumor or myth."

Since starting at NARP six months ago, Mathews said he has raised questions with top Amtrak brass on issues including: its ability to house and feed displaced passengers in Chicago during January's tough winter conditions; restoring connections on the Empire Builder lost during construction delays; its winter-related disruption to food service on the Lake Shore Limited; and asked repeatedly about rolling stock replacement. "But we also realize there are things that can be done from a policy perspective to facilitate this, and we're working with Congress to make a better Railroad Rehabilitation & Improvement Financing program," he said.

Amtrak has made it very clear that it's waiting for Congress before it takes action, and NARP is unwilling to wait, said Mathews. "At the same time, it's important to realize that Amtrak already has 535 'directors' (i.e., members of Congress) criticizing every move, and there's not much percentage in joining the chorus for every attack," he said. "In many cases they're incorrect; in others, they're misinformed. In still others, they're correct, but unfair. We need to remain mature and constructive in our approach, challenging Amtrak when

it's appropriate while also recognizing that some things -- on-time performance, for example -- can't really be laid completely at the feet of Amtrak management."

But NARP can't be a management-in-exile for Amtrak, said Mathews. "Our role is to be the voice of the passenger, and to express our concerns. We have no way to know in many cases what the best answer is, but as passengers we know it can be better," he said. "It's also important to realize that NARP can't 'lobby' or move directly to influence the political process. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit, and as a result we can't directly support or oppose any specific politician."

What NARP can do is to share facts with its members, who are free as private citizens to make the case for the 21st century transportation network they and their children want and deserve, said Mathews. "We can and do serve as a resource, and a clearinghouse for information that members, local officials and agencies can use as they plan for the future and take positions on issues of concern."

NARP has been moving ahead with structural changes that will make the organization more effective, said Mathews. "We have re-examined every significant vendor relationship, and we're taking fairly drastic measures to replace our membership database administration system, whose shortfalls have led to unacceptable levels of service for our members," he said. "I have been traveling the country extensively since I assumed this role, meeting with mayors, local officials and NARP members to try to understand their unique problems and concerns at the local level. I truly believe that we can change the national conversation by educating local officials about rail and intermodalism and the ways they act as economic engines in their communities, because those local officials have an outsize voice in national policy decisions." ■

NARP Needs Volunteers

With ongoing rail battles on Capitol Hill and in state and local governments, NARP needs your help more than ever. Are you looking to build your resume? Do you want to add to your creative portfolio? Are you looking to develop new expertise in preparation for a career change, or just looking for a way to make a difference? Then consider volunteering with NARP. These are meaningful opportunities and a great way to jump-start your professional life and contribute to NARP's ongoing efforts to advocate for an improved multimodal transportation system.

It's also a great way to contribute your professional talents to your association. We need volunteers in administrative, communications, advocacy/programs and technology, and you can work from the comfort of your own home.

While these positions are unpaid, the results they produce -- for you as well as for NARP -- are real. You'll make a difference while generating work products, references and networking opportunities. It's a win-win!

Read more about these opportunities by clicking through the Volunteer menu to find each job listing page. If you think you're up to the challenge, apply by sending your resume and a cover letter by email to volunteer@narprail.org. See all the volunteer positions available at <http://www.narprail.org/get-involved/volunteer/>

What are NARP's key needs right now?

- State Support Coordinator: serve as an administrative and liaison resource for NARP Council state representatives as assigned, supporting Council reps as needed with organizational help, materials, lists and related tasks.
- Millennial Evangelist: generate excitement and enthusiasm for rail as the greenest and most efficient long-distance travel mode among college-age and young adults as part of NARP's Millennials Campaign, using social media, face-to-face peer persuasion and campus outreach.
- Newsletter distributors: leave NARP membership brochures and newsletters to take aboard trains, in train stations, at coffee shops, libraries, gyms, houses of worship, or other public places with community literature racks.
- Blogger: contributing lively, engaging content to association blogs. Researches and writes articles to engage readers and encourage them to take action.
- Graphic Design Associate: producing logos, graphics, interactive elements, infographics and other visual projects under the direction of NARP national staff.
- Routes Spokesperson: supports NARP's advocacy goals by becoming the passenger "expert" on a specific route or set of routes, and sharing that expertise.

NARP To Raffle Off New England Train Tour

America by Rail, the leader in rail tours and train vacations, has donated a New England Fall Foliage tour as a fundraiser for NARP. The trip, valued at \$5690, is an eight-day tour of top spots in New England, including visits to the Trapp Family Lodge and the Billings Farm in Vermont and a ride on three scenic railroads in New Hampshire. It must be taken on Oct. 12-20, 2015.

Raffle tickets are \$150 and will benefit NARP's legislative efforts on Capitol Hill. For more information, please contact our Director of Resource Development, Logan McLeod at (202) 408-8362 ext. 3202 or email him at lmcleod@narprail.org. ■

Car Donation Benefits NARP

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