



PASSENGERS Voice

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FOLLOWING PASSENGER ADVOCACY, POSITIVE SIGNS OUT OF CONGRESS

It was clear that Senators had been hearing from members of the Rail Passengers Association from the questions they asked Amtrak during a pair of hearings held on May 16, producing illuminating answers on Amtrak's plans for the National Network, among some other key issues.

Given recent changes to service, it was not unreasonable for Amtrak passengers to wonder about what the future will look like for long-distance trains. However, given the information submitted on the record to Congress, we know now that while we may need to continue to debate what the right level of

service is, we don't have to worry about whether there WILL be service.

Moreover, the fact that members of Congress were directly responding to concerns Rail Passengers staff has raised in conversations with Congressional offices--with Republicans leading the way--shows the power of the outpouring of letters and calls from you, our members.

"Are there plans to reduce Empire Builder service and does Amtrak remain committed to Long Distance Rail?" Senator Steve Daines (R-MT) asked Stephen Gardner of Amtrak point blank

in a hearing on Rail Safety in response to the recent elimination of station staff at station stops in Havre and Shelby, Montana. Gardner responded carefully that they "do not plan to institute tri-weekly service on the Empire Builder."

When pressed by Senator Daines, Gardner added that Amtrak will not reduce its footprint and "any conversations about the broad future of our network is best placed in our authorization context as we approach our next authorization [...] we will consider any future changes collectively between the congress, the administration, and Amtrak as we look at the network ahead." Amtrak's network is currently authorized under the FAST act through 2020.

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Current and Proposed Federal Budgets

Program	FY2018 Appropriated Levels	FAST Act FY2019 Authorized Levels	RPA FY2019 Request	House THUD FY2019 Budget
Amtrak - National Network	\$1,300.0	\$1,143.0	\$1,400.0	\$1,292.0
Amtrak - NEC	\$650.0	\$557.0	\$750.0	\$650.0
Consolidated Rail Infrastructure & Safety Grants	\$593.0	\$255.0	\$600.0	\$300.0
Federal State Partnership For State Of Good Repair	\$250.0	\$300.0	\$500.0	\$500.0
Restoration & Enhancement Grants	\$20.0	\$20.0	\$20.0	\$0.0
Total	\$2,813.0	\$2,276.5	\$3,270.0	\$2,742.0

“ We believe that MiamiCentral will be a significant landmark in Miami for generations and Brightline will connect the state in ways that haven't been done before. ”

Patrick Goddard,
Brightline President and CEO



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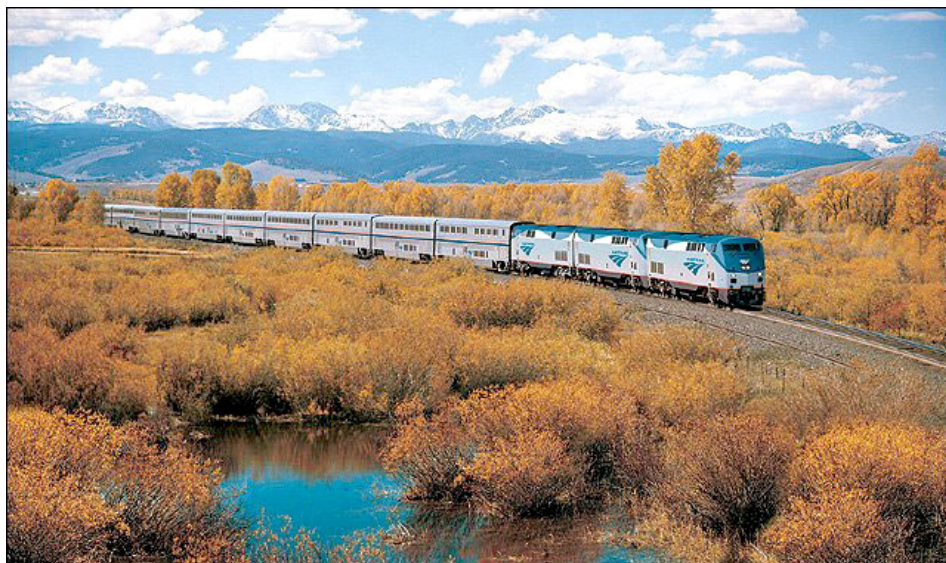
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CONGRESS, from p. 1

"Let's talk Gulf Coast," said Senator Roger Wicker (R-MS) in the confirmation hearing for Amtrak Board potential Joe Gruters. Wicker continued, "Anderson wrote to CSX in support of the service. Are you willing to be a strong partner?" To which Gruters responded "As soon as my nomination was announced, the small communities started contacting me. I will do everything I can to make this work."

Submitting Rail Passenger's Southwest Chief letter to the record, Senator Cory Gardner (R-CO) held Gruters feet to the fire about Amtrak's failure to honor its commitment to the TIGER grant that will save the route. Senator Jerry Moran (R-KS) jumped on



The Amtrak Southwest Chief travels through Apache Canyon. Photo Credit: Amtrak

the issue as well, saying that "You can't reduce service and expect customers to arrive at your door."

And it wasn't all talk from Congress in May.

The House Appropriations subcommittee on Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development released their FY 2019 budget, and the numbers for conventional passenger rail are very encouraging:

- Federal State of Good Repair: \$500 million - DOUBLE the amount awarded this year!
- National Network: \$1,291,600,000 - \$200 Million more than requested by this committee last year!
- Northeast Corridor (NEC): \$650 million - stable with this year's funding.

There were some questionable provisions:

- Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI): \$300 million, with \$150 million

reserved for Positive Train Control - which represents half of what was appropriated in FY 2018.

- Maglev: \$150 million, which we suspect isn't significant enough to amount to any meaningful action.

And some unfortunate ones, as well:

- California High-Speed Rail is barred from receiving any federal funds.

That said, at a time of year when we're used to ringing alarm bells, passengers find themselves in a comparatively enviable negotiation point.

Again, this is a testament to the power of sustained, coordinated advocacy on behalf of passenger rail by our Association staff, our members, and the broader coalition of rail and transit riders.

For full context, see the chart on page 1 for more funding numbers in comparison with prior years and the FAST act.

HOW TO ACTUALLY BOOST BALLPARK ATTENDANCE

By Jacob Wallace, Summer By Rail Correspondent

Marlins Park has an attendance problem, to put it mildly. Attendance is averaging around Triple-A level numbers, if that, and has been for years. Although you can certainly argue that the Marlins' struggling roster has a hand in depressing numbers, there might be at least one tangible way Derek Jeter can get more people to his stadium: public transportation.

Case in point: During my visit to Marlins Park, I took the free Miami Metromover from the Knight Center to Government Center, transferring onto the Miami Metrorail there, which is a serviceable line, if in need of some maintenance.

Where I ran into problems was finding the Marlins free shuttle to the stadium. The MLB website says that the shuttle can be picked up from Culmer station. When I was actually in Miami however, I was told by multiple transit workers

that the shuttle in fact operated from Civic Center. Then once I arrived at Civic Center, the station manager informed me that the shuttle does not run on weekends, and I'd have to walk from the metro station to the stadium itself, about a 20 minute walk. All told, Google Maps originally told me I could be at the stadium in roughly twenty minutes via public transportation, but I finally entered the stadium after an hour and fifteen minutes of transit.

Clearly, this is a problem, both because of general confusion over where the shuttle goes and because of the hours themselves. If the Marlins had a more consistent, reliable approach to transportation to and from the stadium, more people might come to the area, which in turn could boost not only attendance but commerce in the area immediately surrounding the



Great American Ball Park, home of the Cincinnati Reds
Photo Credit: Rail Passengers Association

stadium, which after all was part of the Marlins' promise when they picked their location. I'm not the first person to point this out; a 2011 column in Chicago Magazine when the stadium was being built raised many of the same points.

This might all come across as an indictment of the public transportation system in Miami overall, but it's not. It's a cautionary tale of what happens when a major sports team doesn't spend enough time considering how they can get

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THE FUTURE OF RAIL MAY HAVE ALREADY BEGUN IN FLORIDA

By Jacob Wallace, Summer By Rail Correspondent

In Florida, a brand-new passenger rail line shuttling people between Miami, Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach that will eventually reach Orlando is changing perceptions of what's possible. Though, not a true high-speed rail line like those in Europe, the train still operates faster than most Amtrak lines in between stops, and via a noticeably smoother ride. By offering premium service on new trainsets, Brightline is betting that lurking beneath the frustrating landscape of rail policy is a demand for efficient rail service just waiting to be tapped.

A quick look into high speed rail in America brings you scattered and pessimistic results. The last serious national push for an HSR network in the U.S. occurred in 2010, but was quickly nixed by members of congress after numerous governors and state politicians moved against HSR projects in their area. Despite all this, interest has remained high.

Amid wild swings in interest in funding Amtrak or other regional rail projects, Brightline has emerged as a possible new path forward for communities interested in creating new rail lines. Operated by All

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DESTINATION OF THE MONTH: TORONTO

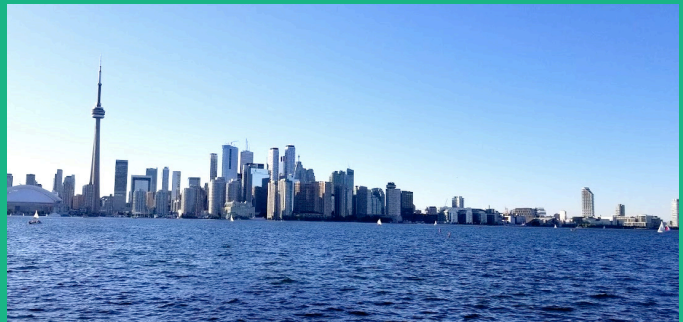
Toronto: A Populated City With Plenty To Offer

Toronto, a 2018 Summer by Rail destination, is a major metropolitan city - not just in Canada but in North America. With nearly six million residents in the metro region, Toronto is the most populated city in Canada and provides international sights, sounds and tastes that appeal to anyone looking for a new tourist destination by rail just across America's northern border. Toronto is served by Amtrak's Maple Leaf and by numerous VIA Rail Canada trains.

If you make your way to the city, keep these five facts in mind:

1 - Hanlan's Point Stadium in Centre Island is where Babe Ruth hit his first professional home run as a baseball player for the Providence Grays. It was on September 5, 1914 and he was 19 years old.

2 - The Toronto Transit Commission has the third largest public transit system in North America with 2.7 million bus, subway, streetcar, and paratransit riders daily. It is only behind the New York City Transit Authority and Mexico City Metro. The TTC recently opened a new subway extension serving



Toronto skyline

Photo Credit: Rail Passengers Association

the city's northwest suburbs. GO Transit provides regional rail and bus service to over 250,000 daily riders.

3 - Like theater? Toronto has plenty for everyone as it is the third largest city for English theatre, right behind New York and London.

4 - If you enjoy easily connecting to stops, businesses and restaurants, Toronto is home to PATH, which is a 19-mile long network of underground pedestrian tunnels, elevated walkways, and at-grade walkways. With 1,200 stores, it is the largest all-weather connected shopping complex in the world.

5 - If being outside is your thing, Toronto has nearly 1,500 parks and more than three million trees within the city. There are so many parks, the Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division has a motto of "A City Within a Park."

ON THE MOVE

Local, state and federal transit agencies have seen several new hires and appointments in the past month. A couple of them include:

- **Ed Hamberger** - Freight rail industry voice and icon Ed Hamberger will retire in 2019. Well-known through both freight and passenger rail sectors, Hamberger served as the President and CEO of the

Association of American Railroads (AAR) since 1998.

- **Don Billen** - Seattle's Sound Transit has appointed Don Billen executive director of the Planning, Environment and Project development department. Billen joined Sound Transit in 1996 as a graduate intern and has held numerous positions since that time.



Ed Hamberger to retire in 2019

(Photo Credit: Association of American Railroads)

STATE NEWS

MARYLAND RECEIVED CERTIFICATION FROM THE FTA for its transit-rail state safety oversight (SSO) program for the Maryland Transit Administration's heavy and light rail systems in Baltimore. With this certification, 12 states and Washington, D.C. have been approved by the FTA and meet statutory requirements, including establishing an agency that's financially and legally independent from the transit agencies it oversees.

THE ALTAMONT CORRIDOR EXPRESS (ACE) AND BAY AREA RAPID TRANSIT (BART) rail systems received approval of a \$750,000 grant from the state of California. The grant will specifically help fund planning for the ACE-BART connection, which requires a new rail line from River Islands, Tracy, Mountain House and Livermore in



Baltimore's Light RailLink. (Photo Credit: WBAL)

Northern California to connect with a BART terminus. The new route would run along former Transcontinental Railroad right-of-way.

RAIL STATION OF THE MONTH: TORONTO UNION STATION

The Busiest Transit Hub In Canada

Centrally located in Toronto's business and entertainment districts, Union Station is Canada's largest and busiest transit hub. It serves more than 250,000 passengers a day who use GO Transit, VIA Rail and Amtrak to get to and from the city. The station is also connected directly to the Toronto Transit Commission's vast subway and streetcar network. Outside the realm of transit, Union Station itself is considered a classic work of architecture and design and "one of the finest examples of Beaux-Arts railway station design in Canada." So when you make your way to Toronto, be sure to visit Union Station and be aware of these six facts:

1 - Opened in 1927 as the city's third Union Station, it was named to the National Historic Site of Canada in 1975, and was named a Heritage Railway Station in 1989.

2 - Construction was actually completed between 1914 and 1920, but the network of tracks leading to the station still needed to be completed. Once they were, the first visit to the station was made by the Edward, the Prince of Wales who said, "You build your stations like we build our cathedrals."

3 - Every year more than 2.4 million VIA Rail passengers



A street view of Toronto Union Station (Photo Credit: City of Toronto on Flickr)

travel through Union Station. This makes up more than half of all of VIA Rail's ridership each year.

4 - There are 22 columns that line the Front Street entrance of Union Station. Each column is made out of Bedford limestone and each one stands 40 feet tall and weighs 75 tons.

5 - Union Station had one of the first underground PATH tunnels, which still connects the station to the historic Royal York Hotel.

6 - Union Station is undergoing a complete rehabilitation and expansion now slated to be completed by the end of 2018.

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fans to their stadium, and paying the price year after year as a result.

As a counterpoint, consider Miami's booming Museum Park district. Once known as the forlorn Bicentennial Park area, today the development anchored by the Perez Art Museum and year-old Frost Museum of Science is a beautiful and modern space with views of cruise ships heading south through the city's Main Channel. Even though its original plans were significantly scaled back, the area continues to draw attention from developers. David Beckham even wants to build a new soccer stadium there. Most importantly, in my opinion, the area is easily accessible by Miami's free Metromover, a Tomorrowland-esque monorail that traverses much of downtown.

All of this was evident when I visited the Perez Art Museum on Memorial Day. For \$4, you could enjoy a hot

dog and chips on the well-designed terrace and listen to live music, which is a far cry from the nearly \$20 you spend on a hot dog meal at Marlins Park. The museums were also open on the holiday, so you could walk inside and enjoy the art as I did.

Although I haven't seen attendance numbers for the event, I can guarantee nearly every outdoor seat was taken by 4pm, when the event was supposed to be wrapping up, despite the constant threat of rain that had kept crowds relatively low at events elsewhere in the city. It was refreshing to see an event comfortably at capacity instead of the rows of empty seats at a weekend baseball game I'd witnessed the day before.

All of this illustrates an important lesson: it's not enough to just say "if you build it, they will come." Maybe developers and sports team owners should consider instead, "if you build transportation to it, they will come."



Downtown Miami's
Metromover
free to all riders.

Photo Credit: Miami Herald

NARP TRAVEL ADVISORY

- Due to the continued Infrastructure Renewal at New York Penn Station, multiple Empire Service, Ethan Allen, Adirondack and Maple Leaf trains will run to Grand Central Terminal instead of Penn Station between May 26 - September 3. Trains arriving at and departing from Grand Central Terminal will operate on an adjusted schedules available at: www.Amtrak.com
- NJ Transit has suspended or modified service for 18 trains starting June 4 as it works on implementing PTC. For details on the updated summer schedule, please visit www.njtransit.com.
- From May 31 to July 13, track work performed by Canadian National will effect the schedule of City of New Orleans Train 59. Trains will:
 - Depart Chicago at 8:05 pm and operate normally between Chicago and Jackson.
 - Depart all stations from Jackson to New Orleans, 2 hours later than the current schedule, Monday through Friday, but it will operate on the normal schedule between on the weekend.

FUTURE, from p. 3

Aboard Florida, Brightline follows Florida East Coast Railway lines across the Florida coast. Although the project has run into controversy in Congress with its tax-exempt bonds, the project has been built entirely with private funds and most representatives that have Brightline in their districts support the project. If it's successful, the company hopes they can become a model for similar systems in states like Texas.

Hopping on the line in Miami is already a luxe experience. The station is bright and heavily accented with the brand's cheery yellow. Brightline's platforms are located in the MiamiCentral station, which will eventually connect with the regional Tri-Rail and Miami's Metrorail and Metromover as well. The project as a whole is expected to include apartment buildings, food options including a food court and coffee shops, and other amenities for those who live or work nearby, such as a dry-cleaning facility. Currently none of these locations are open, but many are expected to open starting in the fall, and gradually more and more locations will come online as well.

Brightline's services, meanwhile, are already fully operational. Ticket agents will cheerily help you purchase a ride, check your bag, and get you through their very quick security, which includes the standard metal detectors but is relatively unobtrusive, especially compared to travelling through the TSA. Once through the ticketing gate, Brightline already has its own café and gift shop available for customers to grab some food before their train, as well as lounges for passengers willing to shell out a little extra which include complimentary tea, coffee and snacks. The experience on the train is a definite step up from your standard train experience. Stewards and stewardesses come by your seat with a food cart like you'd see on an airplane, with various beverages and snacks available. The ride itself is super smooth: you hardly feel any of the bumps and jiggles that regular rail travelers might have come to expect on longer-distance routes.

No one is sure yet how successful this venture will be yet, but there's reason to be optimistic: rail ridership is increasing nationwide, especially in places where passengers can expect regular service with a certain level of quality. Time will tell what the future holds for private rail travel, but employees working for Brightline certainly seem to be optimistic – as my train pulled out of the Miami station, those workers who were left on the platform all stood and waved the train off until the new rail train was out of sight.

Upcoming Regional Rail Passengers Association and State Passengers Association Member Meetings & Events

Sunday, August 11

• **Empire State Passengers Association Meeting - Utica, NY**

Saturday, September 29

• **RailPac California 2018 'Steel Wheels' Conference - Sacramento, CA**

**Friday, October 19 to
Sunday, October 21**

**RPA's RailNation Miami - THE Rail
Passenger Advocacy Event of 2018**

• **Three days packed with an exciting array of presentations, speakers, exhibits, tours and events.**

• **Host Hotel: Hyatt Regency Miami - 400 SE 2nd Avenue in Downtown Miami.**

• **Discounted hotel reservations are now available! Registration starts July 1st.**

• **Visit The RailNation Miami Event Page for complete information, to make a reservation, and to register.**

Please contact Bruce Becker (bbecker@narprail.org) to have a local, state or regional meeting added to the Rail Passengers calendar (print and online) of upcoming events!



MEDICAL STUDENT AWARDED \$10,000 FOR EDUCATION

Third-year medical student Steve Grado Jr. was the recipient of a \$10,000 award from the Rail Passengers Association. The check was presented to Grado on June 4 at his school, The University of Mississippi Medical Center, by RPA President Jim Mathews.

“This award means a lot to me and my family,” said Grado, who regularly utilizes Amtrak for travel between home and school. “The support from the Rail Passengers Association will help with all the costs that come with not only education, but medical school. I’ll make sure to put it to good use as I earn my medical degree.”

Grado was entered by his father, Steve Grado Sr., into an education sweepstakes hosted by the Association. The education sweepstakes was launched in February for college students who could use assistance paying for higher education in the 2018-19 school year. Grado began his



Photo Credit: Rail Passengers Association

Carrie Cooper Director of Financial Aid at University of Mississippi Medical Center (Left) and Rail Passengers Association President Jim Mathews present a \$10,000 check to Steve Grado Jr.

higher education at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, and after graduating worked for two years before entering medical school.



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