



Association News

Amtrak Reports Revenues Up, Satisfaction Down

By Rail Passengers Staff

One important thing we learned this week from Amtrak's publicly broadcast Board meeting was that ridership and revenues are both ahead of last year's results and also beating Amtrak's Fiscal 2025 plan – but customersatisfaction scores are taking a beating from a spike in weather-related delays and mechanical issues.

"Host railroad improvements have been offset by Amtrak and third party-caused delays, with a 22% increase in equipment-related delays versus last year," said Gery Williams, Amtrak's executive vice president for service delivery and operations, presenting to the Board and quoted in trains.com's account of the session.

Jim Short, the acting senior VP of capital delivery, briefed the Board on where Amtrak's big programs all stand and it struck us as the first comprehensive – if cursory – public summary on the status of Amtrak's capital spending, which got a big boost from the Investment in Infrastructure and Jobs Act / Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Through June, Amtrak's capital projects unit was managing 236 active projects – nine major capital programs, 56 maintenance programs, and 92 improvement projects, with a 54 percent increase in year-over-year capital investment in Fiscal 2025. That's a bit more than \$4 billion year-to-date, \$1.4 billion more than last year's high-water mark of \$2.7 billion.

A little less than \$1.2 billion of this year's spending is on bridges and tunnels, as the East River Tunnel project finally got underway. Amtrak has spent so far this fiscal year \$947.1 million on state-of-good-repair projects, and just under \$684 million in a catch-all "Other" category. In addition, Amtrak has spent \$678.3 million on fleet and facilities in Fiscal 25, and \$493.6 million on station work and improvements. ADA-related investments were just over \$133 million.

Short highlighted work on the East River Tunnel, the B&P tunnel in Baltimore, and the Philadelphia 30th St. Station, as major capital drivers, while Amtrak President Roger Harris closed out the Board brief by announcing that the new Alstom-built Acelas – another major capital procurement project – have passed evaluations by the Federal Railroad Administration to permit the trains to enter revenue service. Harris didn't offer a firm date during the public meeting on when service might start.

You can read all of the publicly available Board meeting materials by clicking here.

Merging UP Settles Late-Trains Case With Amtrak

[Read Rail Passengers' statement on how the proposed merger

between Union Pacific and Nofolk Southern would affect passengers.]

By Jim Mathews / President & CEO

Just a few days following Union Pacific's <u>announcement of its intent to</u> <u>merge with Norfolk Southern</u>, Amtrak revealed it has settled with UP over its long-running late-trains proceeding and <u>asked the Surface</u> <u>Transportation Board this afternoon to dismiss the case</u>.

"Under the settlement that Amtrak has reached with Union Pacific in this matter, Union Pacific has made commitments regarding the Sunset Limited's customer on-time performance and has further agreed to consequences if it does not meet those commitments," Amtrak said this afternoon in a filling to the now-bulging STB docket (NOR_42175) in this proceeding.

Amtrak told the Board it was authorized to make the motion on behalf of all the named parties in the proceeding except CPKC, the newly merged Canadian Pacific-Kansas City Southern Railway, and asked the Board to dismiss the case "with prejudice" – a legal term which means that the case would be closed and could not be brought again.

It also means that while the settlement itself can probably be seen as a guide for handling future disputes, the STB will not really get a chance to rule on the overall merits of the case. After a half-century of the law – 49 U.S.C. § 24308(c) – being on the books, there will still be no precedent set for what it actually means when it says Class I hosts must give Amtrak "preference over freight transportation in using a rail line, junction, or crossing."

In its original 2022 complaint against UP at the Surface Transportation Board, Amtrak accused UP of "routinely" prioritizing freight trains over passenger trains, despite the long-standing legal requirement to give passenger trains preference. Whether resolving meets and passes, determining access to main lines, or otherwise failing to ensure that tracks are available for the scheduled and infrequent transit of Sunset Limited trains, UP is doing a "clearly substandard" and "abysmal" job, Amtrak said.

>>CLICK HERE TO CONTINUE

Passengers Should Weigh In on Union Pacific Merger

By Jim Mathews / President & CEO

Union Pacific shook up the rail world on Tuesday when it confirmed that it expects to acquire Norfolk Southern in a friendly deal that would see N-S become a wholly owned subsidiary of UP, creating a truly trans-continental railroad for the first time in U.S. history. But what does it mean for Amtrak, for passenger-rail services generally, and for all of us whose trains will use the new combined railroad's right-of-way to get us where we need to go?

If you read social-media comments, you'd conclude that we already have all the answers to those questions. Certainly, the social media commentariat does!

But the reality is, we don't really know yet. The two railroads have to go before the <u>Surface Transportation Board</u> – rail's Federal economic regulator – to get the deal approved. UP doesn't expect to put the formal application before the Board until at least three months from now and probably, more likely, sometime in January next year. And that formal application will be the first time all of us who care about what happens will get to see the details on what Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern executives have in mind.

Those details, including any plans for concessions related to passenger-rail concerns, will be critical to deciding what our position ought to be. In addition, there will probably be an evidentiary process and hearings, and we'll learn more during those events, too.

So far, I'm standing by what I told many of the reporters who contacted me on Tuesday – America's passengers and shippers have good reason to treat this news with skepticism, and for our part we'll be actively involved in protecting the rights of passengers as STB examines this proposal. The past decade has seen Class I railroads steadily losing market share to trucking in pursuit of shareholder dividends. While that's been good for Wall Street, it's meant worse rail service for passengers and shippers in the rest of the country. That means we'll keep an eye on the fillings to the docket and take every opportunity as a non-party to ensure that passengers' concerns are addressed, whether that's filling formal responses or testifying at any public hearing the Board might convene.

>>HEAD TO OUR WEBSITE TO CONTINUE WITH JIM'S BLOG

Senator Edward Markey (D-MA) and Congressman Chris Deluzio (D-PA-17) reintroduced the *All Aboard Act* yesterday, a proposal that would dedicate \$200 billion over five years to build modern electrified passenger rail across the U.S.

"Electrifying America's railways would revolutionize how we move people and goods throughout the country, providing more efficient intercity connections and strengthening economic activity between regions," said Jim Mathews, President & CEO of Rail Passengers Association. "We applaud Senator Markey and Congressman DeLuzio for their leadership on the All Aboard Act, which takes seriously the scope of the challenges—and opportunities—involved in modernizing the U.S. rail network."

>>TO READ WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE BILL, CLICK HERE

Communication Breakdown

By Joe Aiello, Director of Community Engagement & Organizing

Originally posted on our website on 7/25



Credit: Charles Bonnay/Getty Images

I want to get this out of the way right up top: I really hate repeating myself. I honestly do. But, sadly, I feel that it's time to write what is now the "third in a series"

First it was cold weather issues.

Then it was warm weather issues.

Now it's equipment failures, availability issues, and a sinkhole.

But there is, much to many passengers' frustration, a single thread that connects them all: a communication breakdown.

[I doubt Robert Plant had to deal with stuff like this. Well, at least not in transportation options.]

Last weekend, Trains Magazine's remarkable reporter, Bob Johnston, covered the rash of delays, cancellations, and overall disruptions to Amtrak's service in the recent weeks -- ranging from disabled freight trains, broken down Chargers, track work, and service suspended simply because they don't have enough equipment to go around. A couple of these situations, like a rash of bad weather and a sinkhole in NY, are truly out of anyone's control -- but even when things are out of Amtrak's control, there are things Amtrak can do better when that happens (we will get to that in a second).

This isn't just a handful of instances over the last few weeks. This seems to happen **All. The. Time.** Check any number of threads on the <u>Amtrak Reddit page</u> or on the <u>Amtrak Fans Facebook page</u>. Users posting in real-time from the broken down train they were stranded on. Almost like clockwork, the "passenger in peril" will comment -- "no one knows what the hell is going on." And even when the on-board staff is working their tails off to help the passengers, they are left in the proverbial dark by their managers.

Why is it that Amtrak's social media team can come up with a number of clever, viral-worthy, Gen Z styled posts on Instagram -- but passengers can't get a clear answer on why their train was cancelled or delayed?

>> NOT SURPRISING, JOE HAS MORE TO SAY. CLICK HERE TO CONTINUE

Read the Article, Not Just the Headline

By Jim Mathews / President & CEO

If you've ever posted a transportation news story on Facebook and found yourself wading through a comments section full of outrage, confusion, or wild misconceptions, you're not imagining things: most people aren't reading the article—they're just reacting to the headline.

Watching the reaction to the Union Pacific-Norfolk Southern merger proposal got me thinking about this, but so, too, does watching the continued posting, and posting, and posting, of the "high-speed transcontinental auto-train" idea. As does watching the TV news stations across the country picking it up without really bothering to understand it.

Look, we've all done it. You're scrolling quickly. A headline catches your eye. You've got a hot take. But here's the thing—when it comes to infrastructure policy, funding mechanisms, or Amtrak service debates, the headline almost never tells the whole story. And scrolling really, provably, fails to engage higher-level thinking.

Yes, I have data to back this up. A 2016 study by Columbia University and Microsoft found that 59% of links shared on Twitter were never clicked. More than half! That means a majority of people commenting or reposting were doing so without ever reading the actual article. Similarly, analytics firm Chartbeat discovered that social media sharing has virtually no correlation with actual time spent reading. It's all surface-level.

It's even worse now in 2025, because not only are people skipping the actual article—often it's not even *people* doing the sharing! Bot networks and automated scripts are responsible for millions of social shares daily, helping to amplify content without any genuine engagement or critical thought.

More recent work has shown that what's happening with social-media is a phenomenon psychologists describe as "offloading cognitive effort." It's a fancy way of saying that when people are overloaded by information on social media, most people bypass the mental effort required to absorb or even remember what's said. And if they do engage, they have to be fooled into doing so with a headline or a verb typed in all caps ("Joe DEMOLISHES Their Argument!")

>> CLICK HERE TO READ MORE OF JIM'S THOUGHTS (AND YOU WON'T BELIEVE WHAT HAPPENS NEXT!)

Field Notes

Calling All Readers!

Do you have a favorite transit/train photo (or photos) you have taken from your travels around the country, or even around the world? Would you like to see them featured in our Hotline social media post each week (with credit, of course)?

Send them to Joe Aiello @ jaiello@narprail.org with the subject "HOTLINE PHOTO"

North American Passenger Rail Roundup

By Philip Mayer, Association Volunteer

Canadian Prime Minister Pushes for Regional Rail near Vancouver

On July 11, CN, the Canadian National Railway Company, Canada's national rail service gave notice that it will be discontinuing passenger service on the Sea-to-Sky Corridor in British Columbia between Squamish, just north of Vancouver, and Exeter in the north. CN has been operating this 100 mile rail line since 2003 when British Columbia's Liberals-led provincial government controversially sold BC Rail's equipment to CN Rail for \$550 million. Privately leased the railway's operations to CN Rail under a long-term agreement valued at \$1 billion. That agreement included a 60-year lease with an option for a 30-year extension, which CN is now prepared to break.

This does not necessarily mean the end of passenger rail service in the region. Member of Parliament Patrick Weiler is very interested in continuing passenger rail service in a region with highways nearing capacity, "I would say that Highway 99 is very much at capacity. We're seeing major congestion. We're seeing frequent, often fatal crashes in the area." The region's population has increased 60% since Highway 99 was expanded to support the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver.

CN will cease operations in the region in July 2026, giving regional leaders a year to find alternative transportation options. The national train system's exit might actually lead to greater passenger rail access. Weiler noted that

adding more transit to the Sea-to-Sky corridor was part of a list of priorities when the governing B.C. New Democratic Party and the B.C. Greens signed a cooperation agreement in December 2024.

New York's MTA Board Approves Design for Interborough Express Train

On July 30, New York City's MTA, Metropolitan Transportation Authority, approved the design plan for the 14-mile Interborough Express Train, or IBX. The IBX is a proposed 14-mile passenger rail line between Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, in the south, and Jackson Heights, Queens, in the north.

New York City is famous for its high quality public transportation, especially by United States standards. However, most of the bus and subway lines are oriented toward traveling within Manhattan, or to Manhattan from the outer boroughs. Traveling between the outer boroughs can be a very frustrating experience, which often requires traveling to Manhattan and transferring lines. Currently, a subway trip between those two destinations would take over 90 minutes and would require transferring in Manhattan. A ride on the IBX would take only 40 minutes, while not requiring a transfer or entering Manhattan.

The IBX will use freight rail tracks which typically get one to two trains a day into a light rail line which is expected to carry 200,000 passengers a day. The line will include 19 stations and will connect to 17 different subway lines, which will significantly increase connectivity for Brooklyn and Queens residents and visitors.

"A complete change of mobility and access for so many people," MTA chair and president Janno Lieber said. "This is a huge deal. The IBX is going to change people's lives, and folks are understandably psyched about it."

The board approved a nearly \$166 million design contract with Jacobs and HDR. Total IBX construction is expected to cost \$5.5 billion. The contract will include a "comprehensive scope of work." Engineers will conduct surveys, geotechnical and environmental investigations, and structure inspections, among other tasks, to advance the design.

New York Governor Kathy Hochul has championed the project for the staterun MTA since she took office in 2021. The project is expected to be completed anywhere from 2027 to 2030, with possibilities of further expansion.

Please email <u>Joe Aiello</u> if you have any local, state or regional stories/projects that you would like to see get highlighted in the Hotline.

Hotline Links

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

Taking Amtrak to New Orleans or Mobile? Walkable downtowns are not far away, Sun Herald

As we inch closer to the first revenue train along the Gulf Coast in 20 years, the cities along the route are looking forward to welcoming passengers.

Amtrak Pacific Surfliner stops service north of Goleta from Aug. 1-16, bus service planned, Lompoc Record

The two-week closure is due to planned UP work to replace the 127-year-old La Cañada Honda Bridge.

<u>President Trump's Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy Cancels</u> \$26 Million in Funds for Doomed DC-Baltimore MagLev Boondoggle, USDOT

After nearly a decade of delays, cost overruns, and unresolved impacts on federal agencies and infrastructure, the project has been deemed unviable.

<u>Commuter diversity urged for public transit trustees</u>, The Charlotte Post

The Southern Coalition for Social Justice is calling on Charlotte and Mecklenburg County leaders to ensure that transit-dependent residents—including working-class commuters, seniors, and people with disabilities—have a seat at the table in shaping the future of public transportation.

Virginia state-supported Amtrak routes set ridership record, Trains

Another year, another record for passenger rail in the Commonwealth of Virginia

MTA, Amtrak joint Penn Station Access project delayed for 3rd time, news 12

A plan to extend Metro-North into Penn Station to help underserved areas in the Bronx - is seeing, yet again, a delay in the construction schedule.

Amtrak Shares Portal North Bridge Progress, Railway Track and Structures

Updates on Amtrak's progress to replace the 114-year-old swing bridge

Marquette City Commission adopts resolution supporting Amtrak expansion, WLUC-TV6

The "Yoopers" are trying to get a piece of the passenger rail action.



WE ARE NOW ON BLUE SKY!

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

Upcoming Events

RailNation: San Antonio



REGISTER NOW!

RN:SAS Event Page

Please contact Joe Aiello (jaiello@narprail.org) to have a local, state or regional meeting added to the Rail Passengers calendar (print and on-line) of upcoming events!

Staff Updates

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

- **Jim Mathews, President & CEO**, spent a lot of time talking with reporters about the Union Pacific/Norfolk Southern tie-up, as well as preparing for an upcoming meeting of members of the Passenger Rail Advisory Committee, and continuing work on the program for RailNation: San Antonio in October.
- Sean Jeans-Gail, Vice President of Policy, worked on policy recommendations for the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization, helped reporters understand the Senate transportation budget, and helped formulate the Association's response to news of a proposed merger between Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern.
- Jonsie Stone, Chief of Staff, processed membership dues and

donations sent to the DC office, collaborated with our Accountants and Auditor to review a draft of the 2024 990, began closing June financials and tended to administrative and operational needs of the Association.

- Joe Aiello, Director of Community Engagement & Organizing, tracked this week's Amtrak board meeting, worked on a number of comms projects, spoke to a number of our members & supporters around the country on various issues, and continues planning for this fall's meeting in San Antonio
- Kimberly Notarianni, Membership Management Consultant, thanks you for your patience while our software developers addressed the online access issue for our newest members. While the issue was resolved as of 7/28, we still have more than 2,000 new memberships that require manual approval before online access can be granted. She is working through these approvals as quickly as possible while balancing her regular workload, and truly appreciates your understanding during this process. If you need immediate access to your account or are experiencing difficulties logging in, please don't hesitate to reach out to her directly at knotarianni@narprail.org, and I'll be happy to assist.

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

?? If you have the **Neon User Center** bookmarked, please update it to: https://membership.railpassengers.org/usercenter.

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

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

Log in

0	User Name	
<u>•</u>	Password	
✓ F	Remember me	Forgot password?
LOG IN		

Over the coming weeks and months, we will continue to enhance the system. If you have any questions or need assistance, please <a href="mailto:emailto

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

Thank you for your patience and cooperation.

?? New Dashboard Update in Your Constituent Portal!

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

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

Welcome To Your Membership Dashboard



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

?? Membership Renewals:

If you receive a renewal email, you can now access your renewal form

directly through your dashboard or by clicking the link in the email.

?? Important Note for RENEWAL on Membership Display

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

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

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

?? About Your New Member Number:

Your new membership number will contain seven digits.

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

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

We Have Merch!





Rail Passengers Timetables

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

WE HAVE A FULL SUMMER UPDATE, INCLUDING THE NEW MARDI GRAS SERVICE

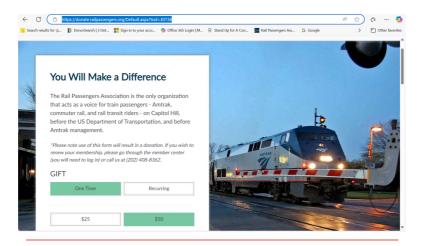
CLICK HERE

NOTE: Because we do update the links on our website - please bookmark **the main page** and not the individual schedules

Donate Online with Confidence

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

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





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

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

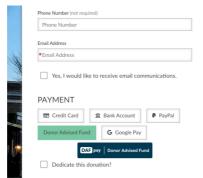
With multiple secure, protected methods of payment, you have more flexibility in the way dues are paid. Skip the hassle and <u>contact us</u> today for help setting up automatic or online payments.

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

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

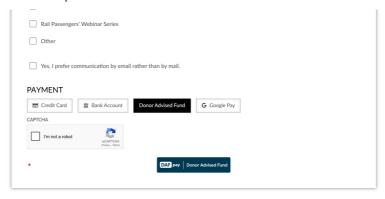
You can now donate or join/renew your membership, online, through your donor advised fund using DAFpay. All Rail Passengers forms now include a "Donor Advised Fund" button under Payment.

Donation Form:

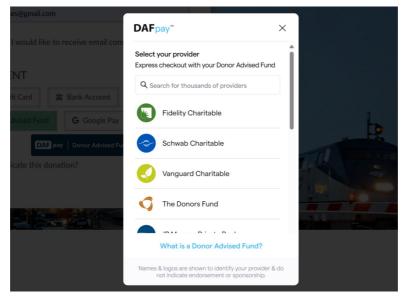




Membership Form:



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



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

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

Tax ID: 36-2615221

Member & Donor Notices

- The Rail Passengers Association is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. Our federal tax identification number is 36-2615221
- To help facilitate dissemination of electronic thank you receipts, please make sure your contact information, specifically your email address, is up-to-date in your Neon profile.
- If you need assistance with your membership, please call the Office at 202-408-8362.
- While our staff continues to work remotely, we are unable to provide permanent membership cards. You can print a temporary membership card by creating an account at www.railpassengers.org (select "My Account" on the homepage).
- Complete all information! -- Before sealing your envelope, PLEASE double-check the credit card information on the buck slip!
 - Print credit card information clearly.
 - Include an expiration date, month and year, as well as the CVV number.
 - Without COMPLETE information, your membership renewal or donation can't be processed.

- If you have your financial institution send a check on your behalf, without a buckslip, PLEASE instruct them to add:
 - a notation in the memo field if the payment is for membership dues or a donation, AND,
 - your Rail Passengers Association member ID. If we have multiple members with the same name, i.e., John Smith, it can be hard to identify the correct member to attribute the payment, without the member ID.



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



Rail Passengers Association Earns Coveted 4-Star Rating from Charity Navigator

Rail Passengers Association's strong financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency have earned it a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator, America's largest independent charity evaluator. Our Charity Navigator profile can be found by clicking <a href="https://example.com/here/bases/bas

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



THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS:





Rail Passengers Association 1200 G St. NW Suite 520 Washington, DC 20005

> P 202.408.8362 F 202.408.8287

www.railpassengers.or