

## **Purdue Students Lauded for Helping Save Amtrak's Hoosier State**

**NARP's 3rd Student Passenger Rail Citizenship Award  
Goes to Purdue University Student Government**



Rick Harnish

**NARP Chairman Bob Stewart (left) presents NARP's Student Passenger Rail Citizenship Award to Purdue Student Body President Kyle Pendergast (2nd from L) and other Student Government leaders at a ceremony in Indianapolis.**

NARP presented our third award to students to the Purdue Student Government, which passed a resolution calling for continuation of Amtrak's Chicago-Indianapolis *Hoosier State* and urged state and local leaders to provide funds to keep the train running (Nov. *News*, front page). Purdue University students use the train to Chicago and its suburbs and airports.

Over 60 people attended the Nov. 9 Indianapolis ceremony, part of the Midwest High Speed Rail Association's Annual Fall Meeting. Attendees included two Amtrak Beech Grove Shops employees who worked hard to save the train, plus NARP Member Joe Krause of West Lafayette, who worked closely with the Purdue Student Government leaders. ■

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FROM INDIANAPOLIS -- PAGE 4**

## **California High Speed Rail Court Decision**

California Superior Court Judge Michael Kenny ruled Nov. 25 that the California High Speed Rail Authority's (CAHSRA) cannot begin to sell the \$8 billion in bonds California voters approved in 2008.

However, as our Nov. 27 release noted, the judge "rejected opponents' request to stop construction," which can proceed using federal funds.

Our release reiterated NARP's support for world-class high-speed trains connecting Los Angeles and San Francisco. It quoted NARP Pres. Ross Ca-

pon: "We are calling on federal authorities to renew support of this key legacy infrastructure project, and develop an affordable investment framework to guarantee the line's completion and meet the requirements of the Superior Court judge's order."

Also in our release: "Numerous studies have confirmed that additional runways and freeway lanes would cost more than high speed rail—an estimated \$171 billion to provide an equivalent [road and air] capacity [without] high speed

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## **Plan for Chicago-Detroit Electrification**

**NARP Tells Corridor Planners to Prepare for the Next 100 Years**

"We believe the Chicago-Detroit line should be designed so that it can be electrified in the future," NARP wrote on Oct. 28 to the Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac Passenger Rail Program, a joint planning undertaking of the Michigan, Indiana and Illinois Departments of Transportation in association with the Federal Railroad Administration.

NARP offered full support of the Program's effort to bring faster and more frequent trains to the corridor, but urged the planners to go even further.

NARP's biggest concern regarding future electrification is with the "South of the Lake" segment (Chicago to Porter, IN), for which an alternate route to the current busy Norfolk Southern (ex-New York Central) main line is proposed. Whatever alternate route is chosen for passenger trains over this segment would also be used by trains serving other points in Michigan, Indiana, Ohio and farther east—not just on the Chicago-Detroit corridor. That makes it all the more important for this line to be able to accommodate not just a much higher volume of passenger

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## Reps. Want Pets on Amtrak Trains

A bill introduced in the House in May (H.R. 2066) would direct Amtrak to come up with a policy allowing passengers to bring domesticated cats and dogs in carriers on certain trains, for trips up to 750 miles. Pets would ride either in a designated passenger coach or in a climate-controlled baggage car. It would require Amtrak to charge pet owners a fee sufficient to cover costs associated with keeping pet-carrying passenger cars clean and complying with Animal Welfare Act standards. Amtrak's policy allowing service animals on all trains would not change.

House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Railroads Subcommittee Chairman Jeff Denham (R-CA) and Rep. Steve Cohen (D-TN) of Memphis, along with Reps. Michael Grimm (R-NY) and John Campbell (R-CA), are the bill's primary co-sponsors. Railroads Subcommittee Ranking Member Corrine Brown (D-FL) and T&I Committee Ranking Member Nick Rahall (D-WV) are among 44 other co-sponsors. The Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council and the Humane Society



Carol Danko / New York Daily News

**Reps. Jeff Denham (left), with his French bulldog, and Michael Grimm, with his Yorkshire terrier, at the Nov. 20 presser in front of Washington Union Station.**

of the United States both endorse the bill.

Denham, Cohen, Grimm and Campbell held a Nov. 20 news conference in front of Washington Union Station touting the bill. Each man except Cohen brought his dog along.

“Harry Truman said, ‘If you want a friend in Washington, get a dog,’” Rep. Cohen said at the conference. “But you have to get your dog to Washington.

## Rebuffing Attacks on Amtrak Food & Beverage

Rep. John Mica (R-FL) chaired yet another hearing in which he purported to show that Amtrak's food & beverage (F&B) service is a drain on taxpayers. The venue was the Subcommittee on Government Operations (which Mica chairs) of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee.

Mica's Nov. 14 hearing was sparsely attended—three other members dropped in.

Malcolm Kenton and Sean Jeans-Gail wrote a rebuttal on the NARP Blog that afternoon ([www.bit.ly/micafood](http://www.bit.ly/micafood)). **You can use its statistics in your own advocacy.**

Mica claimed that Amtrak has achieved no actual F&B savings in recent years, but has instead transferred funds between accounts through “accounting gimmicks.” He said the company spends \$1.50 to make \$1 from

F&B overall, with \$2 spent per dollar received on the long-distance trains. Mica pressed Amtrak to expedite implementation of cashless F&B sales.

Amtrak Chief of Customer Services Tom Hall testified that Amtrak would lose \$93 million in *ticket* revenue if F&B were eliminated. Hall said when Amtrak switched from hot meals to a sandwich basket in *Acela Express* First Class (where a full meal is included in the \$100-plus accommodation charge), so many passengers switched to cheaper Business Class that Amtrak lost more in ticket revenues than it saved in F&B costs.

Amtrak's F&B cost structure is in line with the rest of the travel industry. The railroad's average spending of \$6.95 per passenger on F&B is only slightly above the airlines' \$5.45 to \$6.46 per passenger.

## NARP News

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This has news through December 3.  
Vol. 47, No. 8 was mailed November 19.

And Amtrak's the best way to do it.”

Amtrak CEO Joseph Boardman noted after the conference that “it has to take some time” to determine how pet-friendly cars would be maintained. ■



## Two More Illinois Routes! Rockford, Quad Cities

The Illinois Dept. of Transportation is negotiating with Canadian National Railway regarding the infrastructure improvement plan and budget for starting Chicago-Rockford-Dubuque rail service. The state's goal is to start service at least to Rockford by the end of 2015, with the extension to Dubuque as soon as possible after that.

For Chicago-Quad Cities service, the state is nearing the end of preliminary design. Construction is expected to begin in early 2014 on a track at Wyanet, IL, to link the BNSF Chicago-Galesburg line used by other Amtrak trains and the Iowa Interstate Railroad's line to the Quad Cities. The goal is for service to begin in December 2015. The



Flickr.com user rails4me

Westbound Chicago-Quincy Illinois Zephyr passes a crowded Metra commuter train platform at Downers Grove, IL on June 3, 2011.

## Readying Chicago Union Station for Another Century

Since Dec. 2010, the Chicago Dept. of Transportation (CDOT) has led a master planning process to figure out how to move growing multitudes of commuters and intercity train passengers to, from and through Chicago Union Station. The nation's third-busiest train station is a hub for local, regional and national passenger train networks. The process is a collaborative effort with station owner Amtrak, commuter railroad Metra (its primary tenant) and other stakeholders.

The first phase Final Report came out in May 2012 ([www.bit.ly/cusplan](http://www.bit.ly/cusplan)). The second phase, begun in Dec. 2012 and due to be finished in mid-2014, involves using models to simulate present and future train and pedestrian flows and street traffic within 40 blocks.

The 1925 station, most recently reshaped in the late 1980s, is near capacity. Continued growth, including development of high-speed rail, requires

various options to be considered to let the facility handle more travelers.

Among many recommendations, the Master Plan Study identifies re-purposing the mail platforms, better connections to other rail and transit services, and building new multi-level underground train sheds.

Meanwhile, an advocacy organization is working on recommendations how best to improve the passenger's experience within the limitations of the station's current configuration.

NARP Board Member Rick Harnish serves on a civic advisory committee chaired by Chicago's Metropolitan Planning Council. ■

## Chicago-Detroit from page 1

trains, but also to be resilient to future energy challenges.

"Changing energy markets will likely make electric trains desirable for 110-mph service," NARP President Ross Capon wrote in our formal comments. "Electric railroads are uniquely able to utilize multiple types of fuel efficiently. Trains can use virtually any energy source, changing as the technology evolves."

Whether or not the line is electrified, NARP urged a more intense focus on eliminating highway/railroad grade crossings. This would enhance safety for road users as well as train passengers and crew, and is a prerequisite for high-speed electric train service.

The *Wolverine* corridor, which currently hosts three daily Chicago-Detroit-Pontiac Amtrak trains (plus a fourth between Battle Creek and Chicago), is Amtrak's 12th-busiest route. Ridership jumped 9.1% in the past four years. The top speed is 110 mph on the Amtrak-owned Porter, IN-Kalamazoo segment. Work is underway to allow that speed from Kalamazoo to Dearborn—a segment the State of Michigan purchased from Norfolk Southern last December (Mar., Dec. 2012 *News*). ■

More information on the Project at [www.greatlakesrail.org](http://www.greatlakesrail.org). NARP's comments are at [www.bit.ly/chidetcmt](http://www.bit.ly/chidetcmt).

For more on Chicago Union Station, go to [www.unionstationmp.com](http://www.unionstationmp.com) and [www.fixunionstation.com](http://www.fixunionstation.com).



Flickr.com user Michael Kappel

Morning rush hour Metra passengers file into Chicago Union Station on a notoriously narrow platform, March 16, 2010. ■

## CHAIRMAN'S CORNER: *Citizen Tenacity Saves Amtrak's Hoosier State*

My trip to Indianapolis was a wonderful experience. It is so good to see so many people from many different groups rally together to fight for something very important in their lives.

Why would someone want to save the [*Hoosier State*]? It seems that there are many folks in Crawfordsville, Lafayette, and Rensselaer that use the train as a lifeline from their towns. We have seen all across America where the airlines and buses have left small-to-medium-size towns and where Amtrak now is the only public transportation.

With 100 million more people in our country by 2050 and an aging population, how are we going to move them?

So what changed Gov. Mike Pence's mind? A lot of individuals and groups became aware of the train's possible demise and started to do something about it. The charge locally was led by NARP Council Representative Steve Coxhead and NARP members Bill Malcolm, Joe Krause, Doug Yerkeson, Liz Solberg and David Drasin. A rally organized by the Greater Lafayette Chamber of Com-

merce was held in Lafayette in August to support the train and was attended by over 200 people.

Kyle Pendergast, President of the Purdue Student Body, and Micah Matlock, President pro-tempore of the Student Senate got the Senate to pass a resolution urging the Indiana DOT to support continuation of the train. The two local unions headed by Brian Connors and Ray Ford got their members out to gather support. They realized the value of the jobs that would be lost if the train was stopped.

The mayors of Indianapolis, Lafayette, West Lafayette, Beech Grove, Rensselaer, and Crawfordsville came out in support of the train and some pledged a considerable amount of money towards the cause. Tippecanoe County Commissioner Tom Murtaugh saw the train as an investment and pledged \$25,000 a month.

We also saw local Chambers of Commerce helping support the train, especially Arvid Olson of the Greater

Lafayette Chamber. The Midwest High Speed Rail Association's Rick Harnish and Christian Ficara also greatly helped the cause, as did the Indiana High Speed Rail Association and the Hoosier Environmental Council. State Rep. Randy Truitt (R-West Lafayette) and Sen. Brandt Hershman (R-Indianapolis) played crucial roles as well. I am sure I am missing many more folks who worked on this grassroots effort.

NARP made a special effort with email action alerts to Indiana members and also publicized it on our website, Hotline, and social media. This shows what's possible when communities unite around one cause.

But the battle is not over. There is only a one year commitment from the state to keep the train operating and something needs to be done to improve the train's schedule and equipment. It will be up to the state of Indiana to come up with the money to keep it running and improve the service.

-- Bob Stewart

### NARP to FTA: Buses Should Connect to Trains, Planes

The Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) guidance for states' use of Section 5311 funds for enhancing rural intercity bus service discourages routes that connect to Amtrak and airports. It requires that they connect with longer-haul intercity buses where feasible.

NARP submitted comments on FTA's proposed revisions to this guidance Nov. 25. We said federally-subsidized rural bus service can attract more riders and provide greater public utility by feeding Amtrak trains and connecting to major airports.

California uses state funds to support its impressive network of "Amtrak California" buses. Maryland uses 5311 funding to support BayRunner Shuttle Service which connect western Maryland and Eastern Shore points with Amtrak and airlines at BWI Airport but also with Greyhound in Baltimore.

FTA should *encourage* states to support bus routes offering interline ticketing with Amtrak, and let a 5311 bus serving a one-train- and one-bus-a-day town connect with the train if demand for it is greater. ■

### California High Speed Rail Court Decision

from page 1

rail's benefits...reduced harmful emissions...efficient movement of people... economic development in downtowns and around stations." The biggest high speed rail cost estimate: \$98 billion.

The court said CAHSRA's finance committee did not establish an adequate factual record for bond approval. CAH-

SRA is working to fix this.

The court said environmental work must be finished on the Merced-Sylmar segment. Also, actual funding—not just potential funding sources—must be shown. Sylmar is just 25 miles from the Los Angeles terminal. ■

Our release is at [www.bit.ly/cajudge](http://www.bit.ly/cajudge)

### GIVE TO NARP — GET BEAUTIFUL BOOK!

It's that time of the year again when you reflect on what's important in your life. That moment of clarity is quickly dismissed when you hear that one question every parent, grandparent, uncle, aunt and Godparent dreads: "what presents am I getting this year?" Let NARP help you answer this year with a gift of passion that will impact your loved one for a lifetime to come.

Elisha Cooper's *TRAIN* is a gorgeously crafted heirloom quality book that is sure to delight adults and children alike.

The *New York Times* calls *TRAIN* "vivid and often singing with poetic



specificity ... Cooper's illustrations ... feel detailed yet impressionistic—no mean feat."

A copy of *TRAIN* is yours for a donation of at least \$75, letting you at once show support for, and share your love of, America's passenger trains. Visit [narprail.org/donate](http://narprail.org/donate) or call 202-408-8362 to order by Dec. 31.



## Amtrak CFO Gerald Sokol

Gerald Sokol, Jr., became Amtrak's Chief Financial Officer from Dec. 3. Since 2010 he has served Vertis Corporation, a direct mail and newspaper insert printing company, as CFO and then President & CEO. Earlier, he held leadership roles at Tele-Communications, Inc. (1987-1996), NTN Communications, Inc., and AOL (1999-2009).

Sokol said he "found myself drawn to this opportunity" after "looking at the strength of the Amtrak brand, the growth in Amtrak's various lines of business, the talented management team, and Mr. Boardman's strategic plan."

Amtrak said Sokol is expected to assist in improving Amtrak's economic performance, reducing costs, increasing revenues and efficiency, and improving Amtrak's operating ratio. ■

## Maine Transport Bond; Transit Wins Nationwide

Maine voters on Nov. 5 approved a \$100 million transportation bond 72% to 28%, for a variety of transportation and freight projects. Of this amount, \$24 million will be available at the state Transportation Commissioner's discretion for ports, harbors, marine transportation, aviation and rail projects. The bonds will match an estimated \$154 million from the federal government.

Overall, nine of thirteen initiatives to fund improved public transit (primarily bus) passed in various localities, including in Michigan, Montana, Ohio, and Washington state, according to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). ■

### DEC. 1 TRAGEDY PTC PREVENTABLE?

The Dec. 1 derailment of a Grand Central-bound Metro-North train at Spuyten Duyvil, NY, came after the train entered a 30-mph curve at 82 mph, according to the National Transportation Safety Board's initial assessment. Four passengers died; about 70 were injured, 11 critically. If human error proves to be the cause, this would be another tragedy that Positive Train Control could have prevented (see April News).

## Fall River, New Bedford, Taunton, MA, to get Trains

Construction has begun to rehabilitate rail lines to bring Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) commuter trains to Taunton, Fall River and New Bedford on the two-branch, 33-mile South Coast Rail Corridor. Gov. Deval Patrick (D) made the announcement Nov. 7.

The three cities—which lost service in 1958—are the only Massachusetts cities within 50 miles of Boston that don't have commuter rail. The project is expected to create nearly half a billion dollars a year in development by bringing economic activity to aging industrial cities struggling with high unemployment. There also will be a short-term economic stimulus from construction and engineering work: 42,000 crossties will be installed, along with thousands of spikes.

## PA Legislature Approves Transportation Funding

The Pennsylvania legislature passed a FY 2014 transportation funding bill. Gov. Tom Corbett (R) signed it into law Nov. 25. The package invests an added \$2.3 billion by its fifth year and supports current service on the *Keystone* corridor. The New York-Pittsburgh *Pennsylvanian* will continue through at least Sept. 30, 2014.

The law gives the Southeast Pennsylvania Transportation Authority \$340 million a year, avoiding severe service

## Court Hands Railroads Another Win

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruled unconstitutional the 2008 passenger train law's provision allowing Amtrak and Federal Railroad Administration jointly to establish standards and metrics to "enhance enforcement of the statutory priority Amtrak's passenger rail service has over other trains" (August News, p. 5). The Court objected that the law gave Amtrak veto power when Amtrak and FRA could not agree.

After this July 2 ruling (*Assoc. of American Railroads v. Federal Railroad Administration*), the US Justice

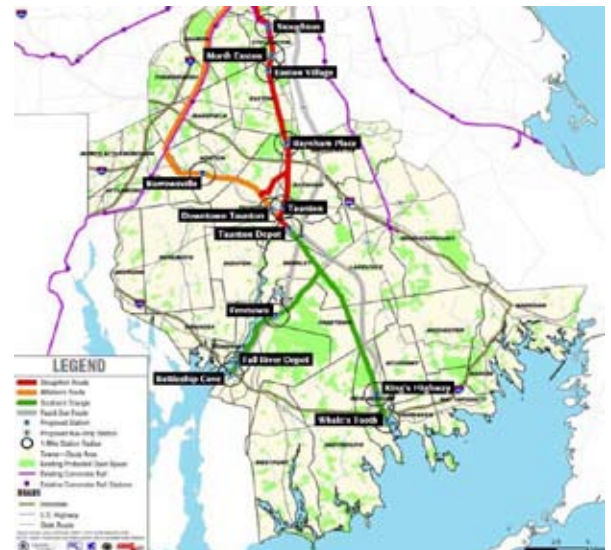


Image: Massachusetts Dept. of Transportation  
**South Coast Rail Corridor trains will use MBTA's existing Boston-Stoughton line and a restored link to Taunton, beyond which the Falls River and New Bedford branches diverge.**

To permit service on the direct route via Stoughton, the project overcame strong neighborhood opposition to restoring the long-abandoned line through Easton. ■

cuts, and reportedly ends threats of Pittsburgh transit service cuts.

The law establishes a multi-modal fund with dedicated funding for bicycle, pedestrian, aviation, rail and port investments. It eliminates the state's 12-cent retail gas tax at the pump. The artificial cap on the Oil Company Franchise Tax (paid at the wholesale level) is gradually lifted; if the increase is fully passed on, this could add 9.5 cents to the state's gas tax in 2014. ■

Department (DOJ) in mid-September petitioned the Court to rehear the case. DOJ said "the Supreme Court has ... sustained the validity of statutes that assign important roles to private parties as long as there is sufficient governmental oversight and involvement."

DOJ argued the metrics and standards don't regulate the host railroads but help Amtrak measure its own performance. The Court rejected the DOJ's petition.

Barring a successful appeal to the Supreme Court, the solution would appear to be to amend the law to make FRA sole creator of the standards. ■

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OUR MISSION: A MODERN, CUSTOMER-FOCUSED NATIONAL PASSENGER TRAIN NETWORK THAT PROVIDES A TRAVEL CHOICE AMERICANS WANT.

### MEMBERS' CORNER

#### December 31 Giving Opportunity

Anyone who is over 70 ½ and has a traditional (not Roth) IRA account must take a distribution from it this calendar year. This distribution is taxable and, depending on your situation, can also increase your Medicare and other taxes

... unless the check is written directly to a Section 501(c)(3) charity like NARP! It is important that the check be issued by your IRA custodian directly to the charity; it will not work if you (or any owner) gets the distribution and then

writes a personal check to the charity. We recommend that you consult your tax advisor for details on how this might work for you.

The check must be dated no later than Dec. 31, 2013, and NARP needs to receive it by the first week or so of January 2014.

We will deposit the check promptly. We recommend that you instruct your IRA custodian to mail the check directly to our office at 505 Capitol Court NE, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20002-7706 rather than to the post office box on some of our business reply envelopes.

This is the same tax rule that applied at the end of 2011, but there is doubt about whether Congress will renew it for future years.

Whatever you decide, we thank you for your support of NARP. ■

#### TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

**Pennsylvanian** went **unreserved Harrisburg-Philadelphia only**, from Dec. 3. Those with unreserved tickets between stations on the *Keystone* line now can use any Amtrak train.

**San Joaquin trains 711 and 718** (4:55 AM from Bakersfield; 5:50 PM from Oakland) **use refurbished ex-New Jersey Transit single-level Comet cars**, instead of bilevel cars. On these trains only, bicycles can't be carried on at unstaffed stations.

#### New State-Level Advocacy Group for Missouri & Illinois

The Missouri-Illinois Rail Passenger Association (MIPRA) was founded in September. NARP members in those states who want to get involved can send dues (minimum \$20 individual; \$25 family; \$15 senior (62+); \$10 student) and contact information to: MIPRA / P.O. Box 6915 / Saint Louis, MO 63123-0215. ■

#### CORRECTION

The figure given in the last issue (p. 4) for the cost of installing bike racks in all Superliner baggage compartments was incorrect. Amtrak has not disclosed the correct figure. We regret the error.

### Follow us @narprail



Sampling of some of NARP's recent Tweets.