

NARP Testifies at House T&I Hearing on Long-Distance Trains

“Understanding the Cost Drivers of Passenger Rail” was the title of a House Transportation & Infrastructure railroads subcommittee hearing. Long-distance trains were a big focus.

NARP President Ross Capon, one of four witnesses at the May 21 hearing, named Amtrak’s major cost drivers: Northeast Corridor (NEC) capital needs and long-distance train operations.

House Unit Slashes Amtrak; NARP Responds

As the impact of sequestration increases, the House Appropriations Committee released 2014 spending levels for transportation which savage Amtrak. Amtrak would get just \$950 million, **down 31% from this year.**

NARP responded with a release June 18, the same day those numbers were announced, and a day before Chairman Tom Latham’s (R-IA) subcommittee approved them by voice vote in a 15-minute session. www.bit.ly/narp-fy14

Amtrak President Joseph Boardman said the \$950 million—\$600 million for capital *and* debt service; \$350 million for operations—“puts every one of our services at risk.” Noting the need to keep operations safe, Boardman said, “If I have to reduce speed, that’s what will happen along the Northeast Corridor, and we think that’s bad for revenue, it’s bad for the economy.” Indeed, capital for both infrastructure and rolling stock will virtually disappear.

For Amtrak to keep running at these low numbers would require everything to go perfectly—no big disruptions (weather, economy, derailments) and all states paying to maintain service under Section 209.

Even as Amtrak’s basic operation is threatened, the Committee proposes to expand the Amtrak Inspector General’s budget—\$25.3 million is a sharp in-

crease from this year’s \$19.4 million and \$20.5 million in 2012.

“Public discourse has overemphasized the difference between capital and operating costs. This has caused many people to believe that the Northeast Corridor is ‘profitable’ in a private sector sense....The reality, of course, is that—without federal capital support—the NEC’s downward drift would accelerate into a death spiral.”

Noting that “long-distance, fully-allocated net cost declined from FY 2011 to FY 2012, Capon emphasized the overall net cost—around \$590 million—“vastly overstates what could be saved by eliminating services, since so many costs are fixed and...would simply be reassigned to surviving services....

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FRA Rule Advances

The Federal Railroad Administration's Railroad Safety Advisory Committee, of which NARP is a member, voted unanimously June 14 to recommend FRA adoption of new passenger train crashworthiness standards to accommodate high-speed rail. NARP's Ross Capon, quoted in *Financial Times*, said "the nature of the modifications that would have to be made [from designs used overseas] is far less onerous than before."

Preparatory to a new rule taking effect, FRA expects to publish a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking later this year.

What RSAC approved would raise the top speed for Tier II equipment (Acela) from 150 mph to 160. Tier III ("nextgen" equipment good up to 220

mph) would be restricted to 125 mph on joint use tracks, including the Northeast Corridor. But, answering a question from NARP's Ross Capon, FRA's Robert Lauby said "we're committed to working with Amtrak" to avoid that problem. That likely means a waiver or "rule of particular applicability" is in the offing. ■



NARP member Joanna Ramos enjoys the view from the northbound *Coast Starlight* as it nears Eugene, OR on May 26.

DOT Nominee Foxx Impresses Senators

"[W]e must build this country's infrastructure to meet the needs of the next generation of Americans. The private sector cannot do this alone, and the federal government has a responsibility to help ensure our global competitiveness by investing in a robust, multimodal transportation system, a stronger national freight network, and key innovations like ... advanced roadway and rail technology. As a mayor who has delivered projects to my constituents, I know too well that future uncertainty at the federal level makes it difficult to do smart, cost-effective, long-term planning and project development."

- Charlotte, NC Mayor Anthony Foxx, at his May 22 confirmation hearing before the Senate Commerce Committee

Mayor Foxx, President Obama's pick to head the US Department of Transportation, made a good impression on Senate Commerce Committee members, who generally were satisfied with his answers to their questions.

DOT of course will see continued emphasis on President Obama's policies friendly to alternative modes that enhance mobility and reduce environmental harm while creating jobs and spurring economic development.

Foxx was introduced by his two U.S. Senators. Kay Hagan (D-NC) noted

his strong backing of Charlotte's Lynx Blue Line light rail and its northeastward expansion, and that the line revitalized the city's South End neighborhood.

Richard Burr (R-NC): "My office has an excellent relationship with the mayor. If he is confirmed, I'm confident he will be up to the challenge of keeping America moving."

Answering a question from Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) regarding the May 17 Metro-North derailment near Bridgeport, Foxx said maintaining existing infrastructure in a state of good repair would be a priority across all modes, particularly with rail and the Northeast Corridor as Congress works on a passenger rail authorization bill.

"Transportation investments have a variety of benefits, and sometimes mobility is the thing that is the most important," Foxx said in answering Sen. Mo Cowan's (D-MA) question about plans to extend commuter rail to Taunton, Fall River, and New Bedford, MA.

"Sometimes it's mobility and economic development. And we've seen this type of progress in Charlotte with the light rail line, which was \$462 million of public money split between the federal, state and local governments. It's now generating \$1.4 billion of private investment." ■

NARP News

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This has news through June 21.

Vol. 47, No. 4 was mailed May 28.

NARP CHAIR SPEAKS AGAIN AT TX INFRASTRUCTURE SUMMIT

NARP Chairman Bob Stewart for the third straight year will be a panelist at the Transportation & Infrastructure Summit in Irving, TX, Aug. 6-9. Along with representatives of BNSF, Texas DOT and the Rockefeller Foundation, Stewart will be on the Thursday 3:15 PM intermodal panel that focuses on how the different modes work together.

Confirmed plenary session speakers include BNSF Chair Matt Rose, House T&I Committee Chair Bill Shuster (R-PA), NTSB Chair Debbie Hersman, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, and US DOT administrators for rail (Szabo), transit (Rogoff), highways (Mendez) and highway safety (Strickland).

"Funding: High Speed Rail" is a panel that includes NARP Council Member Rick Arena, Rep. Corinne Brown (D-FL) and others.

Visit www.transportationsummit.com or call (214) 750-0123 for information or to register to attend.

NARP Endorses Train Projects Vying for TIGER Grants

NARP's top priority endorsement for TIGER grant applications is one from Garden City, KS, which seeks \$15 million towards replacing bolted rail with welded rail between Hutchison, KS and La Junta, CO, to help save the *Southwest Chief* route. We made this our top priority because it relates to saving an existing, threatened service, and because of the *Chief's* critical role in Amtrak's national network.

The US Dept. of Transportation's TIGER (Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery) grant program awards money on a competitive basis to transportation projects that improve mobility and create jobs, regardless of mode. Applications from states, local governments, regional agencies and transit agencies for the next round of TIGER grants were due June 3.

NARP's letter to DOT Secy. Ray LaHood highlighted the Garden City application and urged approval of these other applications that benefit train passengers (alphabetized by state):

- The Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers

Authority (which runs San Francisco-San Jose "Caltrain" commuter trains) seeks \$20 million towards a \$1.5 billion project. "Caltrain Early Investments" eventually will support operation of California High Speed Rail trains over Caltrain route.

- Fairfield, CA seeks \$9 million towards the \$68 million Fairfield Intermodal Station Project—a new transportation hub to be served by *Capitol Corridor* trains and by buses.

- Illinois DOT and Chicago seek \$17 million towards a \$31.1 million 25th Avenue overpass in Bellwood to permit elimination of the Union Pacific grade crossing, improving train speeds on a line heavily used by Metra commuter trains.

- Wichita, KS, applied for \$8.8 million for environmental review and preliminary design work to extend Amtrak's Fort Worth-Oklahoma City *Heartland Flyer* north to Wichita and Newton, offering a connection with the *Southwest Chief* at Newton. Kansas DOT and the Wichita Downtown Development

Corporation also endorse this project, whose total cost is \$12.7 million.

- New Orleans seeks \$10.1 million towards a \$13.5 million project to improve the Amtrak coach yard at New Orleans Union Passenger Terminal.

- New Buffalo, MI, Michigan DOT and Amtrak seek \$58.3 million, to be supplemented by \$14.6 million from the state, for a connecting track between Amtrak's *Wolverine* line and CSX's *Pere Marquette* route at New Buffalo, MI and to extend Amtrak's Dowagiac, MI, siding 10 miles to Niles.

- Cleveland, Cuyahoga County and their Port Authority seek \$17.6 million towards a \$47.6m Intermodal Transportation Center that includes Amtrak.

- Somerset County, PA, seeks \$3.9 million for a new station and platform in Rockwood, a desired stop on the *Capitol Limited* route.

- The Vermont Agency of Transportation wants \$9 million for Rutland-Burlington track repairs so the *Ethan Allen Express* can be extended north to downtown Burlington. ■

Capon Defends Trains' Costs in House Testimony

from page 1

Also testifying were Amtrak CEO Joseph Boardman, Brookings Institution Senior Fellow Robert Puentes and Capitol Corridor Managing Director David Kutrosky.

Subcommittee Chair Jeff Denham (R-CA) in his opening statement said long-distance was the one Amtrak sector where financial performance has not improved. He closed the hearing by saying he wants to make this sector more efficient, not eliminate it.

Subcommittee Ranking Member Corrine Brown (D-FL) emphasized that

Congress should focus as much on ensuring good public service from Amtrak as on cost cutting.

Rep. Richard Hanna (R-NY) pressed Capon on the point that Amtrak's NEC fares are high because the service is capacity-constrained. He wondered why fares needed to be lower if ridership keeps growing. Capon said, "[The NEC is] at capacity, but it's at a ridiculously constrained capacity."

Kutrosky described the policy agreements reached with Amtrak as required by Section 209 of the 2008 law. He also

listed "what Amtrak brings to the table as an operating partner," which can be read as a challenge to those advocating competition for Amtrak as operator. ■

NARP's testimony is at www.bit.ly/caponti. Testimony of all witnesses and hearing video are at <http://transportation.house.gov> (click on Subcommittees, then Railroads..., then scroll down to "Understanding the Cost Drivers..." under "Recent Activity.").

A Cross-Country Innovation Lab on Rails

In India, the annual *Jagriti Yatra* over Indian Railways is sponsored by Dell and Google. This long-distance train journey around the country by Millennial generation people highlights and inspires innovation. As a result, many young Indians associate train journeys as experiences that facilitate creative thinking.

One American who participated as a



Fulbright Scholar is Patrick Dowd, who is trying to create an American version: a ten-day transcontinental trip this August.

More information on the non-profit he founded, Millennial Trains Project (MTP), is at www.millennialtrain.co. Over 45 Millennials have started crowdfunding campaigns to take part in the August San Francisco-Washington, DC trip. ■

FAREWELL, RAY HANNON

Former NARP Board member Ray Hannon died at his home in Panama City Beach, FL, on Apr. 30 at the age of 87. Born in Ohio and raised in Canada, Hannon served on the NARP Board for many years. His career included stints as an Eastern Air Lines flight attendant, the publisher of a Canadian newspaper, an investor relations officer at a US software firm, and the assistant to the chairman of the Canadian National Railway.

National Train Day 2013 Attracts Tens of Thousands

Celebrations held at over 150 locations; NARP volunteers present at 60

Over 600 sign up for NARP email list; thousands of NARP brochures, bookmarks & bumper stickers handed out



Christopher Pariker

Ford Robbins

The westbound *Southwest Chief* unloads at Las Vegas, NM, with several local government officials who had taken a day trip from Trinidad, CO.



Southbound *Vermonter* at Brattleboro, where several tents were set up for Train Day, including one for NARP and the Vermont Rail Action Network.

David Weisman



Above: NARP members Dorothy Brandt (left) and David Weisman, a volunteer station host, at the San Luis Obispo, CA depot.



Paul Vranish

Right: A youngster enjoys model trains at El Paso, TX Union Station.

Bottom Left: The Amtrak crew who brought a display train to Little Rock, AR. At center is NARP member, former NARP intern and current Amtrak intern Peter Roberts.

Below: A man acting as 19th-century Chesapeake and Ohio Railway magnate Collis P. Huntington welcomes the crowd in Huntington, WV (his namesake city).

J. Charles Riecks

Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg

IT'S hard to imagine a more stalwart friend of train passengers than Sen. Lautenberg (D-NJ), who died June 3 at age 89. The only two-time winner of our Golden Spike Award (1988, 2000), for 28-1/2 years in the U.S. Senate, he was an outspoken advocate for Amtrak, the Northeast Corridor and local transit. He led the effort to require airlines to prohibit smoking, and successfully pressed Amtrak to do likewise.



NARP Archival Photo

Lautenberg (right) and Lott at Washington Union Station news conference.

A regular Amtrak rider, he fought repeated attempts to strangle or kill Amtrak. At one hearing, he displayed a poster graphically illustrating NARP's cross-modal energy efficiency statistics based on Dept. of Energy data.

His crowning achievement, working with Sen. Trent Lott (R-MS), was the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008.

Gov. Chris Christie (R) named NJ Attorney General Jeffrey S. Chiesa senator; he is not running in the Aug. 13 primary that leads to an Oct. 16 special election. The Oct. winner would serve through 2014. ■

“Last year we spent more than \$40 billion on highways. And Lord knows we need that. But that’s more than we spent on Amtrak in its entire 40-year history.”

- Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg, quoted October 24, 2011, in a NOLA.com (*New Orleans Times-Picayune*) article



Peter Roberts



Scenes from National Train Day 2013



Courtesy of George Stupski

Flagstaff, AZ Mayor Jerry Nabours (R) flanked by NARP Council Member George Stupski and his wife Kathleen, both of Sedona, AZ.



Jackson McQuigg

Friends of Tampa Union Station Board Member Jim Langston (left) gives plaque to CSX retiree Wally Houston. Tampa Mayor Bob Buckhorn (D) proclaimed May 11, 2013 National Train Day in Tampa.



Both photos (L & R): Malcolm Kenton

NARP's Washington team (L to R): Intern Less Henderson, volunteer Harvard Morehead, and Vice President Sean Jeans-Gail.



Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph Szabo fires up the crowd at Washington Union Station.

Transit Tax Credit Extension Effort

Unless Congress acts to extend it, a federal income tax credit for employer-provided public transportation benefits will drop Jan. 1, 2014 from \$245 a month back to \$125.

Reps. Michael Grimm (R-NY), James McGovern (D-MA), Peter King (R-NY) and Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) have introduced the Transit Parity Act, a measure to extend the tax break.

"Unless Congress and the President extend this tax credit ..., almost 3 million Americans will see a tax increase or transit benefit cut," said AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Dept. President Edward Wytkind. ■



Courtesy of William Strong

Memphis Mayor A.C. Wharton (D, at left) greets NARP Council Member William B. Strong. ■

The day's activities included:

- A celebration at **Flagstaff, AZ's** historic Santa Fe depot included visits from the mayors of Flagstaff and Sedona. Both expressed interest in possible future passenger train service between Flagstaff and Phoenix.
- In **Tampa, FL**, Friends of Tampa Union Station, during well-attended festivities, was recognized for preserving original architectural plans for the depot.
- NARP's table next to the speakers' podium at **Washington, DC** Union Station saw hundreds of visitors, with 90 people signing up for NARP's email list and over 200 taking brochures and bookmarks.
- At **Memphis, TN** Central Station, the Tennessee Assoc. of Railroad Passengers tabled next to the NARP display.

"Bringing [a demonstration] train down to Memphis and allowing it to be open for inspection by potential passengers made for a knock-out event," NARP Council Rep. Bill Strong reports. "I thought it was a class act all the way around and now there are many more potential Amtrak passengers in the Memphis area because of it. Amtrak probably needs to add another coach and sleeper to the *City of New Orleans* to handle the increased demand for tickets. ■

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

Amtrak Gets \$185 Million “Down Payment” Towards Gateway Tunnel

A \$185 million grant from the US Department of Transportation to Amtrak will pay for installation of a concrete casement (or “tunnel box”) underneath a new mixed-use development on Manhattan’s west side to secure the position of two future tunnels under the Hudson River. Part of Amtrak’s Gateway Project to relieve congestion and secure the section of track that sees the second-most daily passenger trains in North America, the work will start this summer.

The “tunnel box” will be put in as part of the foundation-laying for an big housing and retail development, dubbed Hudson Yards, atop the Long Island Rail Road’s West Side Yards between 10th and 11th Avenues. It

will ensure that Amtrak can use this space as part of two additional planned trans-Hudson tunnels. Completion of Gateway will eliminate the Northeast Corridor’s biggest chokepoint, New York-Newark, where hundreds of New Jersey Transit and Amtrak trains squeeze onto a two-track railroad (where one track is out for maintenance nights and weekends). Gateway will take over ten years to complete, funding permitting. Estimated cost: \$10 billion.

The \$185 million is in an emergency appropriations law enacted in response to Superstorm Sandy. The two existing, century-old trans-Hudson tunnels filled

with 3.25 million gallons of brackish water for roughly five days, halting all train service between Manhattan and points south and west.

“We are fortunate that these tunnels were not destroyed during the hurricane, and providing Amtrak with funds to preserve its ability to build a second tunnel will provide much-needed resiliency to the Northeast Corridor in case of future disasters,” said Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. He was joined by US Senators Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) and Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) to announce DOT’s plan to distribute the funds on May 30. ■

TRAVELERS’ ADVISORY

Southbound Capitol Ltd.-Silver Star connection restored for same-day connections, shortening trips to Savannah/Florida points and re-establishing connections to Raleigh, Columbia, and other Star-only points. Star-to-Capitol connection still is not sold due to short (51 minutes) layover time.

Michigan Thruway connection at Kalamazoo added allowing same-day travel from Sault Ste. Marie & intermediate points to train 354 (evening run to Detroit/Pontiac).

ABE ZUMWALT JOINS NARP STAFF

James Abram “Abe” Zumwalt, a Seattle native, joined NARP on June 3 as Resource Development Coordina-



Zumwalt in a Besançon, France, switch tower in 2010, during a year of study abroad.

tor. A 2011 graduate of Knox College in Galesburg, IL, with BA degrees in Economics and French, Zumwalt was an intern with the Galesburg Regional Economic Development Association. His independent study on railroad history and economics so interested BNSF officials that he enjoyed a dinner on their business train.

Since graduating, he was in the wine business in Washington State, a tour guide on Bill Spiedel’s Underground Tour in Seattle, and active in All Aboard Washington. He has enjoyed train travel since his early childhood, and ‘commuted’ to school via the *Empire Builder* between Galesburg and his home in Seattle.