



# PASSENGERS Voice

DECEMBER 2017 | VOL. 51, NO. 11

## CONGRESS DELAYS SHUTDOWN

Congress delayed a government shutdown for two weeks by passing a Continuing Resolution on December 7th, with only 24 hours left to spare. The CR will give Congressional leaders precious little room to hammer out differences between House and Senate spending packages before the next deadline on Dec. 22nd, which leaves significant increases in rail investment in doubt.

While advocates have won a significant victory over securing funding boosts for rail in both the House and the Senate—though there are real differences in how much each individual rail grant programs would receive in the two different versions—there are larger spending battles between Republicans and Democrats. The Republicans seek to increase military spending while flatlining domestic discretionary spending, while Democrats want a 50-50 increase in spending on military and domestic spending. Democrats have also signaled they will put up a fight to force a resolution over the Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals program.

And while Republicans control the Senate, the House, and the White House, internal divisions between Republican leadership and the House Freedom Caucus along with a 60-vote threshold in the Senate may well force GOP leaders to rely on Democratic votes.

This complexity suggests that Congress won't beat the Dec. 22nd deadline, requiring another CR—either into January 2018, or even the spring. If that happens, the battle our members won in securing funding for FAST Act Rail programs will pay even more dividends, with the newly-funded rail grant programs receiving the funding levels we secured in Spring of 2017.

### Layers of Frustration for Infrastructure Advocates

It will mean, however, that the increases we fought for in Summer 2017 won't go into effect. And with the Trump Administration promising to launch a detailed set of "infrastructure principles," the White House campaign for future legislative investment could take up limited legislative bandwidth from present-day infrastructure investment laid out in the FY2018 appropriations bill.

DELAYS, p. 7

## RPA CALLS ON CONGRESS

During the Surface Transportation Board's public listening session on CSX Transportation's rail service meltdown in October, Rail Passengers Association President Jim Mathews warned regulators that a legislative fix will be required to ensure that passengers are able to enjoy the full rights granted to them under current law.



Amtrak passengers board the train in Champaign. Photo Credit: The News-Gazette

"It's often said that passenger trains serve as the canary in the coalmine for railroad operations—when host operations degrade, passengers are the first to notice

### LISTENING SESSION, p. 2

**“We are making investments in tracks and stations, on our trains, and in the delivery of customer service so that we can serve more customers with a better experience.”**

Amtrak Board Chair  
Tony Coscia



# RAIL PASSENGERS

ASSOCIATION

## National Association of Railroad Passengers®

1200 G Street, NW, Suite 240  
Washington, DC 20005-3818  
202-408-8362 / 202-408-8287 (fax)

[www.railpassengers.org](http://www.railpassengers.org) | [narp@narprail.org](mailto:narp@narprail.org)

### Volunteer Leadership

Peter J. LeCody Chairman  
Ken Briers Vice Chair  
Carol Haslett Vice Chair  
James L. Loomis Vice Chair  
J. Charles Riecks Vice Chair  
Kenneth T. Clifford Treasurer  
William C. Dunn Secretary

### STAFF

Jim Mathews (Ext. 3200) President & CEO  
Sean Jeans-Gail (Ext. 3201) Vice President, Policy  
Bruce B. Becker (Ext. 3202) Vice President, Operations  
James Abram Zumwalt (Ext. 3123) Dir. Policy Research  
Carolyn Cokley (Ext. 3203) Dir., Customer Advisory Programs  
Samantha Brown (Ext. 3208) Office Manager  
Alicia Guinn (Ext. 3205) Executive Assistant  
Betsy Nelson - Southeast Field Organizer  
Donna Thomas Production Editor

This issue has news through December 11, 2017.  
Vol. 51, No. 11 was mailed December 22, 2017.

## LISTENING SESSION, from p. 1

and suffer disproportionately,” Mathews told Acting Chairman Ann Begeman and Board Member Deb Miller. “This is true of the recent CSX service degradations, and while we’re deeply sorry that CSX freight customers face these troubles, we welcome allies in the fight to restore service quality. With that fact in mind, our organization is sounding an alarm—not just about CSX’s network, but about host railroads across the National Network.”

“Unfortunately, many host railroads have demonstrated repeatedly that when there is insufficient enforcement of their statutory obligation to grant preferential dispatching to Amtrak trains, they will default to treating passengers as simply another form of freight. Without some kind of action, this will happen again—and is already happening... The evidence is in, and self-regulation hasn’t worked,” Mathews said. “[We] believe Congress needs to step in and expressly delegate regulation of on-time performance to the Federal Railroad Administration, and needs to define that OTP as all-stations OTP. We’re advocating for Congress to strengthen protections for passengers by enshrining metrics and standards into law, and providing clear thresholds that will allow Amtrak to trigger STB investigations into dispatching practices. These investigations should have clearly defined timelines and, in the event of findings of malpractice, meaningful and significant consequences.”

It was a point that was echoed in testimony given by CSX CEO Hunter Harrison. “Amtrak...we need to...live up to the contracts... We need to do what we say we’re going to do,” Harrison said, before adding: “Now, do

LISTENING SESSION, p. 4

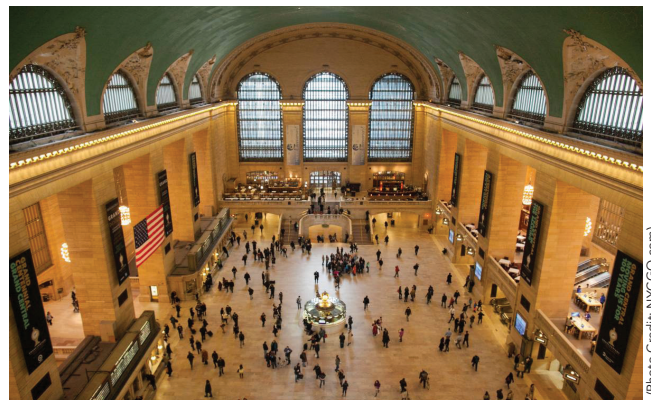
## A LOOK AT NY’S REGIONAL PLAN ASSOCIATION REPORT

The New York Regional Plan Association (RPA) released its report titled “Crossing the Hudson-How to Increase Transit Capacity and Improve Commutes” on November 30, 2017.

Several organizations have provided ideas on improving commutation between New Jersey and New York. These include organizations created for the purpose of developing plans, like: The New York Metropolitan Planning Council (NYMTC), the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), and the Port Authority (PA) among

others. The RPA is an independent, 501 c 3 which advances its ideas in their role as advocates. The New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers (NJ-ARP) has its “wish list” and ideas. With so many “cooks in the kitchen” come two problems.

The first problem is the most significant. NJ-ARP agrees with the RPA that for any meaningful planning to occur, planning must come under one body to plan and, possibly operate, the transit



Grand Central Terminal in New York City.

assets of the region. Without such a body, the balkanization of current planning will continue with no thought as to how system

REPORT, p. 4

# SUPREME COURT PETITIONED ON OTP STANDARDS

The Rail Passengers Association petitioned the Supreme Court in November to review a case that would pave the way for enforcement of on-time performance standards for passenger rail. Without these defined standards, freight is systematically prioritized over passenger trains, leading to chronic delays for long distance riders. The petition was filed by the Environmental Law & Policy Center (ELPC) on behalf of the Rail Passengers Association and other passenger advocacy organizations, and it seeks to overturn a lower court's decision that flies in the face of the "Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act" (PRIIA), a law passed by Congress in 2008 that included provisions to make sure trains run on time.

"When the DC Circuit nullified Section 207 last year, it took away FRA's power to develop on-time performance standards. Then the Eighth Circuit this summer interpreted Section 213 in a way that eviscerated the power of the Surface Transportation Board,

which was the only agency left to carry out Congress' assignment to improve on-time performance. The two courts' moves together have left no agency remaining to fulfill Congress' statutory mandate in PRIIA to enforce those standards," said Jim Mathews, President of the Rail Passengers Association. "That gap thwarts Congress' core intent in PRIIA, and leaves passengers without any recourse."

ELPC's "petition for a writ of certiorari" asks the United States Supreme Court to review the July 2017 judgment by an Eighth Circuit court panel. In that finding, the Circuit court rejected the Surface Transportation Board's (STB) interpretation of Section 213 of PRIIA which created two separate "triggers," each of which require the STB to investigate sub-standard on-time performance. Even though Congress plainly gave STB the authority to regulate these specific aspects of on-time performance, the freight railroads objected and sought judicial review. The Circuit court agreed. Oddly, in 2015, the Association of American Railroads—the trade group for freight

rail carriers in North America—asked the STB to create the regulation that defined on-time performance in the first place. It was only when STB sided with passengers that the group challenged STB's authority to regulate the issue.

"This fight has gone on long enough," said Mathews. "For decades, rail passengers have been left waiting for freight trains to clear the rails. Even acts of Congress haven't been able to budge them out of the way. We need the courts to now recognize and allow Congress' goal to be carried out. The law creating Amtrak in the early 1970s codified a deal these railroads made with the American taxpayer: we'll relieve you of your common-carrier responsibility for passenger service, and in exchange you'll ensure those passenger trains get where they need to go on time. It has been a battle ever since."

The ELPC has been a strong partner in this fight, and the Rail Passengers Association greatly appreciates their continued support as we pursue passengers' rights to efficient travel.

## DESTINATION OF THE MONTH: DENVER

As many of you make plans for your winter vacations, keep in mind the great city of Denver, CO. It has many great sights and attractions to see in and around the city, and is only a short train ride away from Winter Park Resort.

- 1 - The Mile High City, is exactly one mile, or 5,280 feet, above sea level.
- 2 - Denver is surrounded by mountains, with 200 named peaks that are visible from the city. Some of these peaks stand 13,000 feet tall.
- 3 - The city has more than 200 parks within city limits, and another 20,000 acres of parks in the

### Take A Winter Break To Denver!



The Denver skyline in winter

nearby mountains.

- 4 - In 1935, Denver's Louis E. Ballast, owner of the Humpty-Dumpty Barrel Drive-In, trademarked the cheeseburger (Unfortunately the restaurant is no longer open).

- 5 - Denver is home to a growing food and drink scene, with new restaurants that serve local food, and new breweries, wineries and distilleries opening monthly.



# ON THE MOVE

Local, state and federal transit agencies, as well as our own association, have seen several new hires and appointments in November. A few of them include:

- **Samantha Brown** was hired as the new office manager for the Rail Passengers Association. Samantha previously spent 10 years in customer service in the banking industry.
- **Andy Byford** was named president of the MTA New York

City Transit (NYCT), and he will begin this new role in January 2018. Byford most recently worked as the CEO of the the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) for five years.

- **Paul Skoutelas** will assume the role of president and CEO at the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) on January 8, 2018. Skoutelas currently serves on APTA's board, and was most recently the senior vice president at WSP USA.



(Photo Credit: Toronto Star)

Andy Byford has been appointed the new President of the MTA New York City Transit (NYCT).

---

## LISTENING SESSION, from p. 2

freight railroaders love Amtrak? No, probably not. And the groups, to some degree, clash, because it's almost designed that way. You know you're not, in my view, you're not going to solve the problem with Amtrak in some public-private partnership unless there's something in it for somebody."

The Rail Passengers Association supports common-sense metrics and standards to quantify quality service, combined with effective oversight, that can ensure that host railroads have skin in the game—and that passengers get to their destinations on-time.

---

## REPORT, from p. 2

fixes affect the whole.

The second problem is that the RPA, NYMTC and NJTPA have all bought into the mantra of the elusive "one seat ride". That can never exist for all. The question becomes where will the commuter transfer to another mode of transportation, New York or New Jersey? Riders value speed and reliability over a "one seat" ride. If the "one seat" ride gets you home in one hour versus a "two seat" ride getting you home in 30 minutes, commuters will opt for the latter. Nearly 50 percent of riders already have a "two-seat" ride; the seat change happens in Manhattan. If it were to occur in New Jersey significant benefits are derived in shortening the length of the commute and improving its reliability.

NJ-ARP has advocated the extension of the #7 New York City subway from Hudson Yards to Secaucus Rail Station. This would provide much needed

capacity and allow New Jersey commuters access to New York's east side by creating a 17-minute ride to Grand Central Terminal. The RPA gives the #7 proposal a passing glance, opting instead to back the waste of \$10 Billion, proposed by the Port Authority, to replace the aging Port Authority Bus Terminal (PABT) in Manhattan. Such a bump in bus capacity is folly as the Lincoln Tunnel currently operates at 115% capacity during rush hours. At least the RPA didn't totally dismiss the #7 extension and allowed that such an extension should not be "precluded". The RPA is not dealing with reality. The RPA cites the "high cost" of a #7 extension without so much as any study as to what the potential cost might be. Both NJ-ARP and Community Board #4 in Manhattan have been advocating for the #7 extension; so, there is support across the "Hudson Ocean". NJ-ARP urges the RPA to reconsider and re-issue their report.

Len Resto  
President, NJ-ARP

# STATE NEWS

**COLORADO'S PASSENGER RAIL COMMISSION** is working on a bill to expand passenger rail service to Front Range communities between Fort Collins and Pueblo. On Saturday, November 18, state lawmakers and rail advocates spoke at a transportation forum to discuss the possibility of a bill to create a new extension, with the hopes of decreasing the number of cars on the road.



(Photo Credit: Steve Wilson)

Amtrak's Southwest Chief runs along southern Colorado, through Trinidad, La Junta, and Lamar.

While the bill is still in the early stages of development, if passed this would be a huge victory for not just Colorado transportation, but a victory for U.S. passenger rail as a whole.

**THROUGH DECEMBER 20**, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) collected

public comments on its draft 2018-2021 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for federally funded, multimodal transportation improvement projects. Under the draft plan, WSDOT will focus on state, tribal and local roadway, bridge, safety, bicycle, pedestrian and transit improvements. These projects would be funded with revenue from federal, state, tribal and local sources. More than 1,400 statewide transportation improvement projects, using \$3.5 billion in federal funds, are included in the 2018-21 STIP.

## MEMBER BENEFITS

**1** If you haven't done so already, claim your Travelers United Advocate Membership, and broaden support for consumer focus, at: <https://travelersunited.org/welcome-narp/>

**2** Review the full and growing list of Rail Passengers Association benefits by logging into: <https://www.railpassengers.org/all-aboard/join/give/>

## RAIL STATION OF THE MONTH: DENVER — UNION STATION

With winter here, people are gearing up for a season full of snow and skiing, and Colorado is the state for both. This is why Denver Union Station, which can connect people to Winter Park Resort thanks to Amtrak's Ski Train, is our Station of the Month.

**1** - Today's Denver Union Station is not the original Union Station for the city. It was built in 1914 after the original station, built in 1881, burned down in 1894.

**2** - Several notable names have traveled through Denver Union Station, including Presidents Eisenhower, Taft and Theodore Roosevelt, as well as Queen Marie of Romania.

**3** - To keep the service of trains running on schedule, a "no kissing rule" on the station's platforms was enforced starting in 1902.

**4** - In 2012, the station underwent significant



(Photo Credit: USA Today)

The Winter Park Express ski train sits in Denver's Union Station as snow falls.

renovations to become a transit-oriented hub with mixed-use development, including a hotel, restaurants and stores.

**5** - By 2030, the station is expected to serve 500 trains daily, which equates to 200,000 passengers a day or 50 million passengers a year.

# END OF YEAR DONATIONS KEEP ADVOCACY WORK STRONG

**We earned laurels for 2017**, having launched the single largest campaign in the Association's history—"Towns Without Trains" including the #Rally4Trains across 30 cities, which reached **17 million Americans**, ensuring the national network's service to 220 stations' safety into 2018 in the face of a disastrous proposed White House budget that would have seen it cut.

However, just as the trains that we ride run 365 days per year, there is no rest for passenger advocacy.

Has a freight train delayed your Amtrak trip lately? In the past year statistically more than half of passengers nationwide were outside of the North East Corridor.

**Your association has petitioned the Supreme Court** to review a case that would pave the way for enforcement of on-time performance standards for passenger rail. Without these defined standards, freight is systematically prioritized over passenger trains, leading to chronic delays for long distance riders. This is yet another dramatic chapter in our long standing fight for on time trains. **Something that we need you to take part of.**

**DONATE.** There are so many ways to help your Association. Donate to make sure that your legacy of a CONNECTED AMERICA becomes reality. Donations to us are tax deductible (!), so even if the Feds aren't spending what they should on passenger trains, you can

force the issue.

**Directly**, you can log onto [www.railpassengers.org/donate](http://www.railpassengers.org/donate), or send a check to our office. As a thank you for a great year of Advocacy, we're also offering double



**DONATIONS**, p. 8

## DEALS! DEALS! DEALS!

Get your tickets for **Amtrak's Winter Park Express**, which travels between Denver's Union Station and the Winter Park Resort in just two hours. For those traveling to Denver by plane, you can now take the commuter line from Denver International Airport to Union Station, and from there hop on the Winter Park Express and head directly to the resort.

In addition, Winter Park Resort, Amtrak and Lyft are now offering people an easy way to get around the slopes. New Lyft customers can use the **"AMTRAKLYFT"** promo code for \$5 off their first four rides beginning January 5.

The Winter Park Express will run on the first Friday of the month, and every Saturday and Sunday, between January 5 and March 25, 2018. Get your tickets at [www.amtrak.com/winterparkexpress](http://www.amtrak.com/winterparkexpress).

---

## PASSENGER VOICE: PASSENGER RAIL ALLOWS FOR 'CHILLIN-OUT' TIME

We enjoy hearing from our members on why they enjoy taking the train to get where they need to go. To share your stories with us, please email them to [narp@narprail.org](mailto:narp@narprail.org).

### Troy Kicklighter; Dayton, OH

I would like to begin by stating how much I appreciate all who have been involved in passenger rail advocacy over the last three decades - actually Amtrak helped pay for my college tuition. I attended music school in Princeton, NJ and because of excellent passenger rail in the area I never had to worry about the expenses associated with owning an auto. I was able to take Amtrak from Princeton Junction (via the 'dinky') and took to my hometown of Jesup, GA.

Not only did I have great form of transportation, but

the most wonderful aspect was my being able to 'debrief' from all the school work and related activities. I typically had a roomette and I could sit back listen to my music while sipping on some very good wine fellow students had donated for my 'chillin-out' time. I was so disappointed when I got stationed at Wright-Patterson AFB in Dayton, OH as there was no passenger rail system going north or south and very few trains in the area going east or west. I truly miss those days of boarding the train allowing others to do the driving for me, having hot meals and other conveniences while traveling the rails.

Sometimes I think how if I could use my 'magical wand' to have excellent passenger rail service appear in the Midwest to all points in the USA. There are times I truly think the politicians in the state of Ohio believe having excellent passenger rail is some form of a communist plot.

## AMTRAK SETS RIDERSHIP, REVENUE RECORDS

Amtrak achieved several new records for its 2017 fiscal year, which ended on September 30, in regards to its ridership, revenue and earnings. As a result, the agency is on its way to meeting its goal of covering all operating costs through ticket sales and other forms of revenue.

"Amtrak had a record-breaking year in 2017. To our customers and partners, we thank you for your business. To our employees, we commend you on your dedication and service," said Amtrak Co-CEO Wick Moorman. "More and more people are choosing rail travel and for good reason. Amtrak offers a more comfortable and convenient travel experience with great amenities such as free Wi-Fi on most trains, plenty of legroom, and no middle seat."

From FY2016 to FY2017, Amtrak's ridership notched up 1.5 percent to 31.7 million passenger trips. In addition, Amtrak's total revenue increased 1.1 percent over FY2016, to \$3.2 billion. Amtrak officials also said that the railroad saw a 15.7 percent decrease in its operating loss (\$194 million) from FY2016. This means that Amtrak was able to recover 94.7 percent of its operating costs with ticket sales and other forms of revenue.

"Amtrak's recent success is a testament to meeting the growing demand for passenger rail in the U.S. with reliable and quality service," said Rail Passengers Association President Jim Mathews. "There is still a while to go before Amtrak isn't operating at a loss, but these records show that the agency can get there."

---

### DELAYS, from p. 1

Infrastructure advocates are also frustrated that the Trump Administration waited until after the GOP tax bill to take this up, which has limited a number of avenues to secure funding.

"If they'd taken up infrastructure, we'd have a bill today and have the money to fund it," said Ray LaHood, a Republican and former transportation secretary in the Obama Administration, renowned for his support of high-performance rail.

"Nothing happened this year, so the prospects of anything happening next year I think are pretty slim."

## Upcoming Rail Passengers Association Events

### Sunday, April 15 - Wednesday, April 18

- RPA's Spring 2018 Advocacy Summit & Day on The Hill - Washington, DC

- Host Hotel - Hilton Old Town Alexandria (VA) - Discounted Group Rate Rooms Are Now Available!

- RPA's Annual Day on The Hill & Congressional Reception - Tuesday, April 17

---

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

### Saturday, January 13

- Empire State Passengers Association Working Group Meeting - Schenectady, NY

### Friday, January 19

- Southwestern Rail Conference - Dallas, TX

Please contact Bruce Becker ([bbecker@narprail.org](mailto:bbecker@narprail.org)) to have a local, state or regional meeting added to the Rail Passengers calendar (print and on-line) of upcoming events!

Industry analysts are also concerned that the Trump Administration's plan to only invest \$200 billion in direct federal investment—across all infrastructure sectors, not just transportation—would not be able to meaningfully address the crisis facing America's aging infrastructure.

"While we're all for leveraging limited federal dollars, the federal government can start by increasing its own investment," said Ed Mortimer, executive director for transportation infrastructure for the conservative business group, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, who added he hopes \$200 billion is "a floor, not the ceiling."



## BE PART OF OUR NEW BRAND

The Rail Passengers Association is asking passengers like you to be a part of our new identity. A great way to do this is through our ongoing social media contest that will give nine lucky passengers 10,000 Amtrak Guest Rewards® Points, while dozens more will win other prizes. Throughout the past few weeks we have received more than 120 amazing photo submissions. Based on these, we have announced two Grand Prize Winners, but we're still looking for more, as well as runner-ups. To enter the contest, we are asking you, along with your friends and

family, to share your favorite train-view photos via Instagram, Facebook or Twitter using the hashtag [#RailPassengers](#) and [@RailPassengers](#). The pictures should be your own, and should depict what you see outside your train window, whether it's a photo of countryside, oceans, forests or cities.

For additional information on how to enter, as well as guidelines for photo submissions, please visit [www.railpassengers.org/happening-now/news/blog/contest-your-view-from-the-train](http://www.railpassengers.org/happening-now/news/blog/contest-your-view-from-the-train).

### DONATIONS, from p. 6

Amtrak Guest Rewards Points for renewals through the end of the year—visit [www.railpassengers.org/renew](http://www.railpassengers.org/renew).

**Does your company match donations?** If you're not sure, check with your Human Resources Department. Once you make your donation, all you have to do is fill out a form and NARP will receive matching funds from 2-4 times your donation amount depending on your company's policy.

You can also make the ultimate symbolic donation for Rail Passengers: **consider donating your old car, RV, or boat!** It's easy and a great way to give! Just go to [www.railpassengers.org/cars](http://www.railpassengers.org/cars). All the information you need is right there.

Feel free to contact us with any questions!

Thank you for everything you do. Wishing you a Happy Holiday Season!! Visit:

[railpassengers.org/donate](http://railpassengers.org/donate)  
or send your check to:  
Rail Passengers ATTN: Sam  
1200 G Street NW STE 240,  
Washington D.C. 20005



RAIL PASSENGERS  
ASSOCIATION

1200 G Street, NW, Suite 240  
Washington, DC 2005-3818  
202-408-8362 | 202-408-8287 (fax)  
[www.railpassengers.org](http://www.railpassengers.org) | [narp@narprail.org](mailto:narp@narprail.org)