



RAIL PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION

# PASSENGERS Voice

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## ADVOCACY EFFORT STILL UNDERWAY TO SUPPORT NATIONAL NETWORK

With the end of fiscal year deadline bearing down on them, Congress once again left passage of next year's budget to the final few days, leaving passenger advocates in a state of high anticipation over passage of the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (T-HUD) appropriations bill.

In addition to funding for rail, this legislation includes several policy provisions that will play a pivotal role on the future of America's national passenger rail network. The Rail Passengers Association has been organizing in support of this bill, with the national effort led by volunteer leaders from our Council of Representatives.

### FUNDING, SOUTHWEST CHIEF FUTURE STILL IN QUESTION

Your Rail Passengers staff has learned from our allies on the Hill that House and Senate negotiators began finalizing the details of the Fiscal Year 2019 transportation budget.

This bill would fund rail transportation projects and operations across the U.S., with \$1.29 billion for Amtrak's National Network and \$650 million for the Northeast Corridor. It also includes policy language that

would require Amtrak to preserve that National Network in its entirety--including the Southwest Chief.

With the September 30th deadline only a week away (at the time of writing), Congressional negotiators are still deadlocked over several sticking points in a three-bill omnibus that leadership is using as a vehicle for T-HUD appropriations. Unfortunately, while negotiators from the House and Senate have reportedly reached an agreement over funding levels, several non-transportation policy provisions are preventing a final agreement.

If negotiators are unable to find a compromise before the end of September, they will likely punt the question until December 7, after the midterm elections. That will leave precious little time for Congress to bind Amtrak's management on the Southwest Chief through legislation.

While the fate of the larger omnibus may be beyond our control, it appears that our advocacy work is having an impact on the transportation bill. Rail Passengers' DC staff is hearing rumblings from allies on the Hill that good things

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## RAILNATION MIAMI, RPA'S FALL 2019 ADVOCACY SYMPOSIUM, IS RAPIDLY APPROACHING!!

Friday, October 19 - Sunday, October 21, at the Hyatt Regency in downtown Miami. **Registration is open, but filling fast. Don't delay...sign-up TODAY!**

This is your opportunity to gather with rail advocates from across the country to learn how you can best make an active difference in your local community. You will hear from an impressive lineup of rail advocacy and industry experts!

### Notable confirmed speakers and presentations include:

**Friday, October 19 - 6:30pm - 8:00pm - A Fireside Chat** with former Amtrak Presidents Joe Boardman (in person) and David Gunn (via video), who will be joined by Massachusetts

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“Once they take apart the Southwest Chief, we'll never be able to put it back together. The ridership, I think a good deal of it, will disappear.”

Galesburg, IL Mayor John Pritchard



# RAIL PASSENGERS

ASSOCIATION

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This issue has news through September 20, 2018.  
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## ADVOCACY, from p. 1

are happening behind closed door negotiations. That could pay dividends with Amtrak's management, who will be looking to maintain good relationships with Amtrak-served Members of Congress.



(Photo Credit: Amtrak)

Amtrak trains outside Chicago.

## AMTRAK ATTEMPTS TO SOOTHE PTC IN CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

While the Southwest Chief's future remains an open question in writing, in a September 13th congressional hearing Amtrak asserted in the clearest language yet that train service will continue on Positive Train Control-exempt routes in 2019. This statement again contradicts earlier reporting by Trains that the Amtrak Board was requiring PTC on those lines. Amtrak's statement is good news

for passengers that rely on the routes in question, including the Cardinal, California Zephyr, Texas Eagle, Downeaster, Vermonter, Ethan Allen, and City of New Orleans.

In testimony before a House Transportation & Infrastructure Rail Subcommittee hearing on PTC implementation, Amtrak's Executive Vice President and COO Scot Naparstek said the railroad is developing alternative

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## SYMPOSIUM, from p. 1

Governor Michael Dukakis (via video) and *Trains Magazine* Columnist Fred Frailey (via video). Jim Mathews will moderate this session, which will explore the future of Amtrak and U.S. passenger rail from the perspective of the panelists.

### SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20

**Former Federal Railroad Administrator and Amtrak President Joe Boardman** will kick-off the day's program with a look at railroad safety; past, present and tomorrow. With the year-end deadline for PTC installation approaching, Joe's comments are sure to be informative and timely.

### Other sessions include:

**'Why The Swiss Can Build Big Projects Cheap And We Can't'** moderated by RPA's Sean Jeans-Gail with panelists Gene Skoropowski, noted U.S. passenger rail project authority; Marie Corado, Amtrak's Senior Director for the Gateway Project and Ken Sislak, AECOM's VP - Manager Transit/Rail Planning. Why major infrastructure projects cost so much in the U.S. and possible ways to overcome these mind-numbing estimates will be explored.

**'How To Pay For Infrastructure; Unlocking The Value Of Real Estate'** moderated by

RPA's James Zumwalt with panelists Albert Hernandez, Assistant Director Planning and Development for Miami-Dade Transit and Jose Gonzalez, Senior VP Business Development for Florida East Coast Industries. The panel will look at the often untapped potential of increased real estates values surrounding planned transit hubs as a means of leveraging project funding.

**'RPA's Envisioning Of The Future Of The U.S. Rail Network'** led by Jim Mathews, will explore what current and future travelers need & desire in truly 'A Connected America' transportation network. A representative from the Federal

**SYMPOSIUM, p. 6**

## BRIGHTLINE'S STRONG LAUNCH SETS STAGE FOR EXPANSION BEYOND FLORIDA

Florida's rapidly expanding Brightline city-to-city rail service, which launched early this year to great fanfare and even greater crowds, is turning heads with the success of its "back-to-the-future" business model linking rail service and real-estate development.

The first paying passengers only set foot in one of the system's three current South Florida stations early this year. But today, total ridership is up 42% between the first and second quarter of 2018, and revenue is up 72% over the same period. The opening weekend in Miami was sold out, Brightline reports, and since then they've seen several cars simply sell out, especially in Select class.

With beautiful new stations in Miami, Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach serving as hubs for further mixed-use development, Brightline is turning its attention

to Phase 2 construction of its system later this year, which will extend service all the way to Orlando and its famous family attractions.

"Each month has beaten the previous month in ridership, and we are on track to meet our expected ramp-up and that of comparable private intercity rail systems," Brightline says in a prepared statement.

The company is setting its sights on expansion beyond Florida, announcing last month that it will acquire XpressWest to build what will be the nation's second privately funded intercity passenger rail system after Brightline itself—this time, linking Southern California and the robust tourist markets of Las Vegas, Nevada.



Brightline looks to expand outside Florida. (Photo Credit: Brightline)

Brightline reaches back to the roots of rail development, harnessing the stimulating power of fast, reliable transportation and mixed-use development to generate the investments needed to build office complexes, shops and, of course stations, while also launching new, higher-speed rail service to link these complexes and foster economic growth.

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## RAIL PASSENGERS LAUNCH JIM HAMRE SCHOLARSHIP FUND

A Benefit Reception for the 'Jim Hamre Scholarship Fund' will be a highlight of the upcoming RailNation Miami Advocacy Symposium. On Saturday evening, October 20, from 6:30pm - 8:30pm at Brightline's MiamiCentral Station, the reception will formally kick-off the initial phase of donations to the Scholarship Fund. It was named in the honor of longtime Rail Passengers Association volunteer leader Jim Hamre, who tragically lost his life in the December 2017 rail accident near Dupont, Washington.

The goal of the initial phase is to raise \$100,000 of what will ultimately be a \$1 million fund, which will provide scholarships to young adults who

are seeking an education and career in railroad engineering and safety.

**Tickets to the Benefit Reception** are now available for \$75.00 per person. You don't have to be registered for the Advocacy Symposium to attend the Reception.

If you will be unable to attend the Miami Benefit Reception, you may still contribute by mailing a donation check, made payable to the 'Jim Hamre Scholarship Fund', the Rail Passengers Association at 1200 G. Street, NW, Suite 240, Washington, DC 20005.

# DESTINATION OF THE MONTH: KANSAS CITY

**Kansas City: - The City of Fountains Has More To Offer Than Just Barbeque**

The Midwest is a vast portion of the United States with many great cities that are easily connected by passenger rail service. Kansas City is one such city. People know Kansas City for its barbeque (it has more barbeque restaurants per capita than any other city in the U.S.), but it has an important history in the U.S. like great sporting events, a unique culture and other great food spots to enjoy. When combined, Kansas City has more to offer than most people know. So, when traveling through Kansas on your next rail adventure, make a stop in Kansas City and plan to have a great time.

1 - Kansas City was designed with Paris and Rome in mind. The city is said to have "more boulevards than Paris." It is also filled with more than 200 fountains, and city officials say Rome is the only city in the world with more.

2 - Union Station in Kansas City opened in 1914, and it is estimated that one million travelers passed



Kansas City skyline  
(Photo Credit: Wikipedia, Enorton08)

through the station during WWII. The station was closed in the 1980s, but was later renovated and opened again in 1999.

3 - There has been a major push in recent years to revitalize Kansas City's downtown neighborhoods. In 2008 restaurants, retailers and entertainment popped up in the Power and Light District to attract people to live, work and play.

4 - Sports are big in Kansas City. The city is home to the Kansas City Royals (MLB), Kansas City Chiefs (NFL), Sporting KC (MLS), the Kansas Speedway for auto racing and more. The Negro Leagues Baseball Museum is also in Kansas City. The privately-funded museum contains historic exhibits on African-American baseball in the U.S.

5 - Being in a major metropolitan city doesn't mean you can't get outdoors and enjoy nature. Located in Kansas City is Swope Park, which covers 1,805 acres and is more than twice the size of New York's Central Park.

## ON THE MOVE

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

• **Jessica Mefford-Miller** - Metro Transit-St. Louis has named Jessica Mefford-Miller the agency's new executive director. Since July 1, Miller has served as the interim executive director. In her role, Miller will oversee all three of Metro

Transit's public transportation services: MetroLink light-rail service, MetroBus and Metro Call-A-Ride.

• **Ian Jefferies** -The Association of American Railroads (AAR) has appointed Ian Jefferies as the freight railroad association's newest president and CEO. Jefferies will officially head AAR on January 1, 2019 and will replace current AAR President and CEO Edward Hamberger.



Ian Jefferies was named president and CEO of AAR.

(Photo Credit: AAR)

# STATE NEWS

**PRIVATE PASSENGER RAILROAD BRIGHTLINE HAS AGREED TO PURCHASE XPRESSWEST** in an effort to connect Southern California and Las Vegas with high-speed rail. Brightline is based in Florida and opened its higher-speed rail service in January, and the acquisition is the company's first venture outside the state. Brightline will now lead the development, construction and operation of the project, with initial service connecting Las Vegas to Victorville, CA, and a proposed later extension to connect to Los Angeles. Construction is expected to begin in 2019, and Brightline officials said service could begin as early as 2022.

**A \$300 MILLION LOAN HAS BEEN OBTAINED BY TEXAS CENTRAL PARTNERS** for the construction of the high-speed rail line between Dallas and Houston. The loan is backed by Japanese sources, including Japan's only public-private fund which specializes in overseas infrastructure. Texas Central plans to use



Texas Central Partners obtained a \$300 million loan  
(Photo Credit: Texas Central Partners)

Japanese Shinkansen technology for the train. Texas Central will use the loan for permitting, design and engineering on the 240-mile train.

## RAIL STATION OF THE MONTH: NEWTON DEPOT

### Newton Depot: A Station Rich in History Along the Southwest Chief

At a time when major metropolitan cities are building grand transit centers to be major city-destinations, historic stations and depots can easily be overlooked. Take the current depot in Newton, KS, known as the Santa Fe Depot and the Newton Depot. The depot is the fourth building to serve as a railroad station, but it has a long and storied history that dates back to 1871. It was designed in a Tudor Revival style between 1929 and 1930. E.H. Harrison designed the depot between 1929 and 1930 in a Tudor Revival style. The late medieval motif was carried into parts of the interior with beamed ceilings and arched doorways.

If you take a ride on Amtrak's Southwest Chief, make sure you stop in Newton to see and learn firsthand the rich history of the current station, and those that came before it.

1 - Although the original wooden depot is no longer around, its legend continues. Built in 1872 the first building was lined with heavy metal boiler plate to protect against the stray bullets of cowboys.

2 - Teddy Roosevelt made a stop in Newton on July 2, 1900, while on a railroad tour campaigning



View of the Newtown Depot

(Photo Credit: Newton Convention & Visitors Bureau)

for vice president on the ticket with William McKinley.

3 - Today, the depot is privately owned and space is leased to Amtrak, BNSF, and a handful of local businesses. It is also the busiest Amtrak station in Kansas, serving nearly 16,000 passengers in 2017.

4 - In 2016, bus service was established to link the Southwest Chief in Newton with the Heartland Flyer in Oklahoma City.

5 - Renovations to the depot's lobby and waiting room were completed in 2017. Renovations included moving the location of the ticket counter across the lobby and improving handicap accessibility of the building.

## SYMPOSIUM, from p. 2

Railroad Administration will participate with Jim in this session.

**'Passenger on Freight - How To Address The Challenge'** moderated by RPA Chairman Peter LeCody, with panelists Patrick Goddard, President/CEO Brightline; Gene Skoropowski and Jay Westbrook (invited), General Manager - Florida Dispatch Company.

**'The Next Opportunity & Challenge: Amtrak's Upcoming Re-Authorization'** moderated by RPA's Sean Jeans-Gail with panelists Art Guzzetti, Vice-President Policy at the American Public Transportation Association and Rick Harnish, Executive Director of the Midwest High Speed Rail Association.

The panel will examine the opportunities to codify Amtrak's National Network into law as part of the upcoming reauthorization.

**'Introducing RPA's Station Host Volunteer Program'** moderated by RPA's Carolyn Cokley with panelists Patrick Kidd of Amtrak's Corporate Communications Department, Bryan Sawyer, Amtrak's Southeast Region District Station Manager, and Carey Maynard-Moody, chairwoman of Depot Redux in Lawrence, KS. With Amtrak's continued reduction in staffed stations, RPA is stepping up to the plate to coordinate Station Host Volunteer Programs across the country. Learn how you can get involved in your local area.

Don't miss out on the optional chartered **Brightline Round Trip** Miami to West Palm Beach on Friday afternoon. Tours of the Brightline MiamiCentral Station will start at 1:15pm, followed by boarding the train at 2:00pm. Brightline representatives will be on board to describe the service and the Siemens-built train sets. Lite snacks and beverages will be served on route. The trip returns to MiamiCentral at 5:15pm. Advance reservations are required!

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18. I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions and/or civil sanctions.  
Jim Mathews, RPA President and CEO

## **ADVOCACY**, from p. 2

ways to reach elevated levels of safety.

“While this risk analysis process and mitigation plan development is still underway, let me be clear that Amtrak’s goal is to continue to operate all of our services over all of our current routes come January 1, 2019,” he told the gathered representatives.

“Exactly how we accomplish this will vary across our network, based on the specifics of each route, but I want to assure the Committee that, at this time, we believe we will have strategies in place that will permit us to continue operations until operational PTC or PTC-equivalency is achieved for all of our network.”

Rail Passengers was glad to hear the increased communication coming from the railroad, and encouraged Amtrak to keep passengers up-to-date on work being done on the affected routes. “It’s good that Amtrak is beginning to demonstrate more transparency to Congress and to the public about its plans for the National Network,” said Jim Mathews, President & CEO of the Rail Passengers Association.

“There’s no denying that the implementation of PTC on 58,000 route-miles is a huge challenge, but it’s a necessary challenge that we must meet. As we go about that task, we can’t afford to forget passenger rail is still ten times safer than driving, and the traveling public will be less safe if we reduce access to train service. As complications arise, we encourage Amtrak to keep the channels of communication open to help passengers better understand the evolution of the Network they depend on.”

As previously indicated, this does NOT mean that Amtrak has pulled back from its proposal for a Southwest Chief bus-bridge. Critically, however, Mr. Naparstek’s testimony does appear to undermine one of the central rationales Amtrak has put forward for breaking up the Southwest Chief route with a bus-bridge.

In its presentation to local officials, Amtrak stated it would “require PTC for this segment for long-term operation,” with an estimated \$23 million in installation costs and \$3.5 million in annual operating costs.

By identifying “PTC-equivalencies” for main track exemptions, Amtrak is admitting what Rail

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

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**Friday, October 12**

**Kansas – Oklahoma Passenger  
Rail Summit - Topeka, KS**

**Saturday, October 27**

**Wisconsin Association of Railroad  
Passengers Fall Meeting - Pewaukee, WI**

**Thursday, November 8**

**Vermont Rail Action Network Annual  
Dinner - Montpelier, VT**

**Friday, December 14**

**TrainRiders Northeast 30th Annual  
Meeting & Lunch - Portland, ME**

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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 online) of upcoming events!

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Passengers has been arguing all year: there are lower-cost alternatives to ensuring the safety of the Chief’s passengers.

That message was echoed by top Congressional leaders, including Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) who believes Amtrak has “sent too many mixed signals” about the future of lines without PTC, according to spokesman David Carle.



## JOIN RAIL PASSENGERS AS AN ORGANIZATION

RPA has created new Organizational Membership categories to allow Businesses & Corporations, Professionals, Public Agencies, Non-Government Entities, Foundations, Educational Institutions and Government & Policy representatives the opportunity to participate in and support RPA communications and educational activities.

“A Connected America” - Membership Supports the Work That We Do.

### Organizational Members Benefits Include:

- Membership status for multiple staff members

- Access to RPA’s extensive policy document library and professional analysis
- Consultations with RPA’s professional staff on transportation policy issues
- Access to RPA’s extensive policy analysis capabilities and research expertise
- Marketing, Sponsorship and Underwriting opportunities

For additional information on standard or custom memberships contact: Mark Colucci, VP Resource Development, [mcolucci@narprail.org](mailto:mcolucci@narprail.org).



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