



RAIL PASSENGERS
ASSOCIATION

PASSENGERS Voice

MAY 2019 | VOL. 53, NO. 5

RAIL PASSENGERS' MEMBERS ON THE HILL

Over 140 members of the Rail Passengers Association stormed Capitol Hill on April 2nd as part of the ongoing campaign to educate Members of Congress on the importance of Amtrak, intercity trains, and transit for Americans and the U.S. economy.

These dedicated passengers were drawn from both our Council of Representatives and our general members, meeting with over 280 Members of Congress and their staff.

Rail Passengers advocates asked for increased funding for rail transportation in Fiscal Year 2020 appropriations bill, including:

- Amtrak - National Network - \$1.4 billion
- Amtrak - NEC - \$750 million
- Consolidated Rail Infrastructure & Safety Grants - \$600 million
- Federal State Partnership for State Of Good Repair - \$500 million
- Restoration & Enhancement Grants - \$20 million
- Transit Formula Grants - \$11.4 billion
- Capital Investment Grants - \$3.8 billion
- WMATA - \$150 million
- BUILD Grants - \$1.5 billion



(Photo credit: Joe Aiello)

Passengers also supported the following funding items and policy changes to create a better, more efficient intercity rail network for all Americans:

- Rail Passengers is asking Congress to work with States and Amtrak to establish a stable funding mechanism to allow for critical investments in equipment that will meet public demand for reliable, energy-efficient equipment with modern amenities. In particular, we encourage

SUCCESS, p. 2

COMPETING INFRASTRUCTURE PROPOSALS EMERGE

A diverse cast of politicians are putting forward competing infrastructure proposals to address the growing investment deficit that threatens to swamp America's transportation system. And while there is no lack of ambition, there is still uncertainty over how the timeline for enactment will play out.

Rail Passengers has already reported that Representatives Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) and Peter DeFazio (D-OR)—chairs of the committees on Ways & Means and Transportation & Infrastructure, respectively—have said they are looking for floor time for an infrastructure bill within the next 100 days. The size and structure of the infrastructure proposal is still largely unknown, however.

PROPOSALS, p. 2

“I’m so proud that we came together in bipartisan fashion in the Senate to keep the Southwest Chief chugging along, and I’m grateful for this recognition from the Rail Passengers Association.”

Senator Tom Udall
on receiving the Golden Spike Award



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 • narp@narprail.org

Volunteer Leadership

Peter J. LeCody, Chairman

Ken Briers, Vice Chair

Carl Fowler, Vice Chair

Thomas Girsch, Vice Chair

W. David Randall, Vice Chair

Kenneth T. Clifford, Treasurer

William C. Dunn, Secretary

STAFF

Jim Mathews (Ext. 3200), President & CEO

Sean Jeans-Gail (Ext. 3201), Vice Pres., Policy

Bruce B. Becker (Ext. 3202), Vice Pres., Operations

James Abram Zumwalt (Ext. 3123), Dir. Policy Research

Jonsie Stone (Ext. 3207), Dir. Resource Development

Carolyn Cokley (Ext. 3203), Dir. Customer Advisory Programs

Samantha Brown (Ext. 3208), Office Manager

Alicia Guinn (Ext. 3205), Executive Assistant

To The President

Joseph Aiello (Ext. 3210), Northeast Field Coordinator

Donna Thomas, Production Editor

This issue has news through April 13, 2019.

Vol. 53, No. 53 was mailed April 26, 2019.

SUCCESS, from p. 1

the full granting of Amtrak's supplementary equipment request:

- Full funding for Amtrak's \$533 million grant request for new equipment for the National Network.
- Full funding for Amtrak's \$374 million grant request for new equipment for the NEC
- Given the dramatic rise in host railroad interference and passenger delays, Rail Passengers is asking Congress to grant Amtrak a Private Right of Action to enforce dispatching preference (as described in Amtrak's Fiscal 2019 Grant Request).
- Rail Passengers is asking Congress to provide advance appropriations for passenger rail grants, which would improve the ability of Amtrak and states to plan capital expenditures and manage infrastructure projects.
- Given the vital importance

of the NEC-whose passengers contribute \$50 billion to the U.S. economy each year-replacing the Hudson River rail tunnels is a project of national significance. Rail Passengers is asking Congress to pass the Gottheimer/King rail bill (H.R. 1667), which directs the U.S. DOT to determine the effects to the economy of the U.S. if the North River Tunnels fail and requires the DOT to issue a contingency plan in the case failure.

A fuller explanation of our ask can be found here and at www.RailPassengers.org/Blueprint.

Feeling left out of the action? Even if you weren't able to participate in our Passenger Day on the Hill you can still take part—just head to www.RailPassengers.org/Action!

PROPOSALS, from p. 1

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) jumped into the discussion by talking about a \$1 trillion infrastructure boost to address, among other things, crumbling roads, bridges, airports, schools, and water systems.

"This has always been bipartisan until recently," said Speaker Pelosi in a speech to the North America's Building Trades Union. "But now hopefully again it will be nonpartisan, and it will be at least \$1 trillion."

Finally, Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) rolled out a \$1 trillion infrastructure investment proposal as part of her campaign for president, with rail and transit identified as one of her seven

"This has always been bipartisan until recently ... But now hopefully again it will be nonpartisan, and it will be at least \$1 trillion."

—House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)

areas of focus:

"Expand reliable public transit options and update rail infrastructure. Our country's investments in public transit have not kept pace with the demand for reliable public transportation, particularly for low-income communities and communities of color. Amy will increase investments in public transit with a focus on decreasing barriers to

opportunity and reducing our energy consumption, overhaul our rail infrastructure when it comes to freight and passenger rail, and bring high-speed rail to more communities. These investments will strengthen our communities and make it safer and easier to get to work and school."

Given the widespread acknowledgment of the need to spend more on infrastructure—and the idea's relatively popularity among the voting public—Sen. Klobuchar is sure to be joined by other 2020 hopefuls.

RAIL NATION DC 2019 – RECORD ATTENDANCE & BROAD BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR RAIL

Over 140 passenger rail advocates and supporters (a record attendance) traveled to Washington in early April to take part in the Rail Passengers' 2019 Advocacy Summit & Day on The Hill.

Attendees learned from a variety of presenters, including Roger Harris, Amtrak's new Executive Vice President, Chief Marketing and Commercial Officer; Ken Hylander, Amtrak's Executive Vice President and Chief Safety Officer; Chris Zappi, Amtrak's Director of Host Railroads and Fritz Plous, the noted rail industry historian and observer from Chicago.

Panels included presentations on important regional rail initiatives and an overview of the Association's new economic modeling resources.

The Rail Passengers' Day on The Hill saw supporters directly engage with over 280 House and Senate offices (also a new record).

That evening's Congressional Reception was attended by many industry leaders and Washington power brokers, who gathered to honor the six recipients of the Association's **George Falcon Golden Spike Award**: U.S. Senators Jerry Moran (KS), Pat Roberts (KS), Michael Bennet (CO), Cory Gardner (CO), Martin Heinrich (NM) and Tom Udall (NM), who were collectively recognized for their recent efforts to save the Southwest Chief.

During the business session,



Jim Mathews, Peter LeCody With Bruce Ashton (Photo credit: Carolyn Cokley)

the Association's Council Members elected Richard Bruss of Wynnewood, PA and Michael Christensen of Salt Lake City, UT to three-year terms as Board Directors.

And the Association presented **John R. Martin Passenger Train Advocacy Awards** to Bruce Ashton of San Antonio, TX and to Doug Kerr of Healdsburg, CA, for their many years of exceptional service to our cause and to America's rail travelers.

Next year's Rail Nation DC Advocacy Summit and Day on The Hill is tentatively scheduled for Sunday, March 29 – April 1, 2020.

RAIL NATION CALIFORNIA IN SACRAMENTO

Make plans now to attend the Rail Passengers' **Rail Nation California Advocacy Symposium** being held in Sacramento Friday, October 18 – Monday, October 21, 2019.



Doug Kerr & Peter LeCody (Photo credit: Carolyn Cokley)

This event will bring together rail advocates & supporters from across the nation to California's beautiful capital city for four days of educational activities to include multiple regional tours & trips; a full day of Advocacy Symposium sessions and plenty of free time to explore America's premier Farm to Fork destination.

Discounted group rate rooms are now available at the host hotel, the historic Sheraton Grand Downtown (only two blocks from the state capitol); space is limited so don't delay.

And **event registration and to trip ticket purchase** is also now open!

#RAIL PASSENGERS TRAVEL REVIEW

Feedback on your recent Amtrak travel experience is very important to us! Please take a moment and tell us the good & the



bad of your journey. Share your thoughts at railpassengers.org/travelreview or scan the QR code from your mobile device.

Remember, the progression of the data we collect depends upon the feedback you provide as well as your outreach to other rail passengers. Please help us to keep this going. If you have any constructive feedback or suggestion, please send an email to TravelReview@narprail.org.

#VIEWSONATRAIN

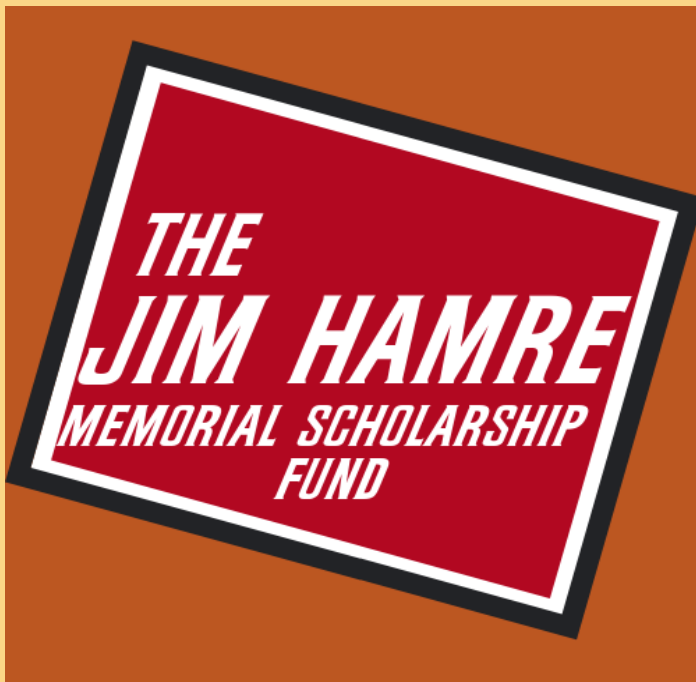
We are sharing many of the great photos we have received on Instagram (www.instagram.com/railpassengers).

We are also still looking for more submissions. Photos can be submitted via Instagram, Facebook or Twitter depicting your experience as "The Rail Passenger" and your views from a train.

Rail Passengers Association staff will select images, which we will use as part of our new visual identity on our website, in our monthly newsletter, on social media, and more!

When submitting your photos on social media, be sure to use the hashtag [#ViewsOnATrain](https://twitter.com/ViewsOnATrain) and tag [@RailPassengers](https://twitter.com/RailPassengers).

JIM HAMRE MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND



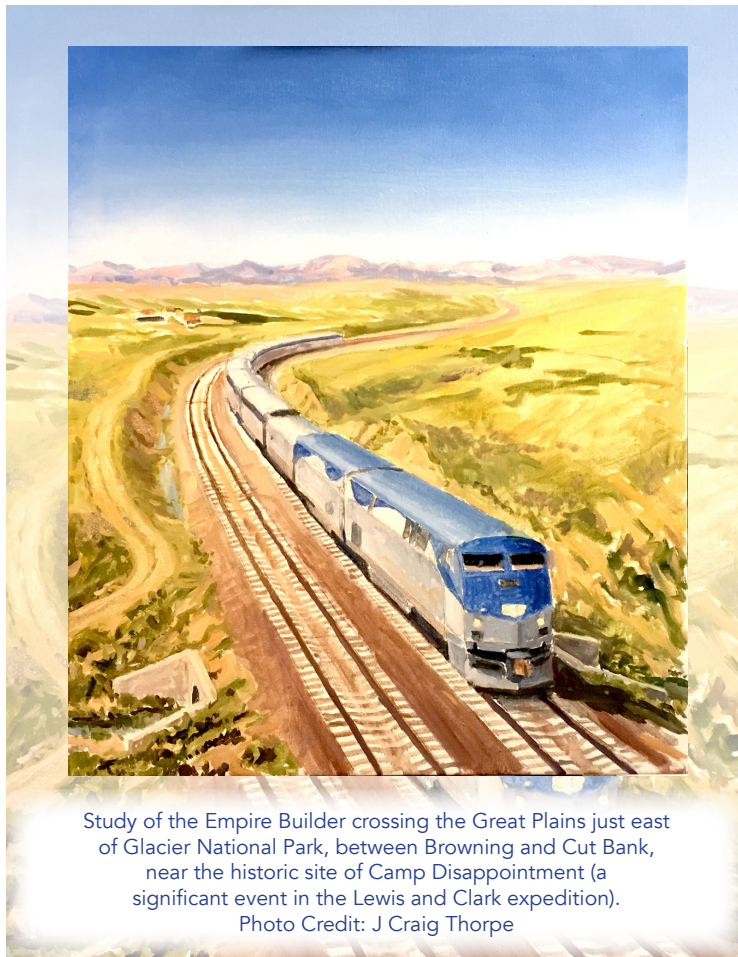
With the gracious support of Jim Hamre's family, the Rail Passengers Association has established The Jim Hamre Memorial Scholarship Fund. The scholarship will benefit engineering graduate students interested in rail and transit. Preparing the next generation of rail transit professionals is a necessity to the viability of rail travel and the Rail Passengers Association can't think of a better way to honor Jim's memory than looking to the future.

During a March fundraising campaign to celebrate Jim's life \$3,758 was raised to benefit the Jim Hamre Memorial Scholarship Fund. Thank you to all who donated!

If you'd like to honor Jim's life by donating to The Jim Hamre Memorial Scholarship Fund, contact Jonsie Stone via email jstone@narprail.org or phone 202.408.8362 Ext. 3207.

EMPIRE BUILDER COMMUNITIES GEAR UP FOR 90TH ANNIVERSARY OF SERVICE

Ninety years into its continuous operation come June of 2019, it is fittingly appropriate that the Empire Builder—the second-longest continuously-operated passenger train in the United States – is named for a person because passenger trains really are all about people: Who they serve, How they serve, Where they serve, and Why. James J. Hill – the original “Empire Builder” knitted together the Northern Tier of the United States from the Great Lakes to the Pacific Northwest and beyond with his empire and is generally considered to be the most influential railroader in American history.



Study of the Empire Builder crossing the Great Plains just east of Glacier National Park, between Browning and Cut Bank, near the historic site of Camp Disappointment (a significant event in the Lewis and Clark expedition).
Photo Credit: J Craig Thorpe

When a new streamlined version of the Empire Builder was launched in the 1950s, the Great Northern Railway touted the train as “Incomparable.” Today, with continued service to world-class tourist destinations such

as the Columbia River Gorge, Glacier National Park, Puget Sound and the Wisconsin Dells, and continuing to link transportation-starved communities in Idaho, Montana, and North Dakota to the medical and commercial centers of Portland, Seattle, the Twin Cities and Chicago, the legacy of James J. Hill and his empire lives on in the Empire Builder— Amtrak’s most-ridden long-distance train in 13 of the past 15 years. That’s why in 2019 – as has been the case for most of the past 90 years – the Empire Builder remains “Incomparable.”

A new painting to commemorate and promote the milestone in Empire Builder served communities is in the process of being commissioned by Rail Passengers Council Member At-Large Mark Meyer, and will be available through the Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates (AORTArail.org).

PASSENGER ADVOCATES HELP VIRGIN TRAINS USA SCORE MAJOR WIN FOR ORLANDO PHASE

Virgin Trains USA received approval from the Florida Development Finance Corp to raise \$950 million in Private Activity Bond sales for West Palm Beach – Orlando phase of the innovative passenger rail project, better known under the Brightline brand.

Rail Passengers asked our members to show up and support the train, and you delivered! First hand reports from the April 5 confirm that the project’s proponents handily outnumbered the anti-rail crowd at the well-attended meeting.

FDFC’s green light will be in addition to \$1.75 billion

in previously approved Private Activity Bonds, which the company had no difficulty selling to financiers earlier this year.




The bonds will fund the completion of the service to Orlando, including construction of a new heavy maintenance facility at Orlando International Airport.

In addition to passengers, the pro-Virgin Rail USA crowd was joined by representatives of Walt Disney World, an indication that Disney is looking at ways to use the train to bring visitors to its theme park.

Upcoming Rail Passengers Association Events

Friday, October 18 through
Monday, October 21

Rail Nation California Advocacy Symposium- Sacramento, CA

- Event Registration &  Trip Sign-Ups Are Now Open!
- Host Hotel - Sheraton Grand Downtown Sacramento 
- Discounted Group Rate Rooms Are Now Available! 

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

Saturday, May 4

Rail Passengers Northeast Division Meeting - Haverhill, MA

Saturday, May 18

Rail Passengers Northwest Division Meeting - Cut Bank, MT

LEAVE A LEGACY

Please consider the Rail Passengers Association in your will. If you have already included us in your estate plans, let Jonsie Stone know at jstone@narprail.org or 202.408.8362 Ext. 3207. We'd like to

thank you for your generosity and make sure the purpose of your gift is understood.



RAIL PASSENGERS MEMBERS SHARE THOUGHTS, POLL RESULTS

QUESTION...

IF YOU HAD TRUE HIGH-SPEED RAIL WHERE YOU LIVE, WOULD YOU TAKE IT?



A. Yes - Yes, it's 21st century travel!

B. No - No, I prefer a relaxed pace.

Click here to submit your answer to this poll on social media at <https://www.facebook.com/narprail>, or send in your response via email to: survey@narprail.org.

Late last year we began conducting polls on social media and in our newsletters to spark conversation and provide another outlet for you to share your thoughts on rail. For last month's poll question, we asked: **"Do you wish your cell service worked everywhere, even on the most remote train journey?"** Not surprisingly, this question garnered a big response! By a narrow margin, 56% felt that they can live out cell service, particularly on the longer-distance trains. The 44% who need to be more connected, even in remote areas, expressed the importance of being able to do work on the train and staying in touch with family & friends.

The submitted comments included:

- **Steve Cox:** "I've noticed that "dead spots" usually occur where you can see the best kind of scenery."
- **Jim Norton:** "No. Ban them from everywhere except platforms like smoking!"
- **John Christoph:** "Some of us take the train for business as well as leisure, and thus need our phones for communication rather than just to fiddle with...If you want more people riding the trains, accommodate their needs as customers."

STATION OF THE MONTH: CUT BANK

Like most cities and towns in the American West, Cut Bank owes its existence to the railroad. The Great Northern Railroad's westward progress was paused here in 1891 when necessary to build a large bridge over Cut Bank Creek, less than two years after Montana achieved statehood. Once the railroad was completed to Seattle in 1893, Cut Bank enjoyed access to fine Great Northern passenger trains, including the Empire Builder, which debuted in 1929.

Amtrak assumed operation of the Empire Builder on May 1, 1971. Cut Bank was not initially a stop, but it was the first stop added on the route in June of that same year. Cut Bank became an unstaffed station in October of 1983.

The community raised money to restore the exterior of the Cut Bank station in 2010, and Amtrak installed a lengthy ADA-compliant platform and new lighting in 2011. In 2017, Amtrak upgraded the waiting area with ADA-compliant bathrooms. Cut Bank is the Northernmost stop in Amtrak's Long-Distance network, and the Northernmost point in North America served by a daily passenger train featuring traditional dining and sleeping car service.



Photo Credit: Mark Meyer

Cut Bank, MT

Located just east of the Continental Divide and but 25 miles from Canada, Cut Bank is famous for often reporting the coldest temperature in the 48 contiguous states.

Once Montana's "Oil Capital" and a training site for B17 bombers in World War II, Cut Bank's average high temperature in January exceeds that of Madison, in Southern Wisconsin due to prevailing Chinook winds.

STATE NEWS

By Jim Smith, Executive Committee- Baltimore County, Rail Passengers Maryland

We had 13 people come to our kick off meeting held on 3/31/19 at True Respite Brewing Co in Rockville, MD. We netted two volunteers to our executive board.



This has been years in the making with a lot of fits and starts and we are excited to be pushing ahead!


We discussed our chapter structure: being legally a part of the national organization, enjoying the scale and synergies, yet have full autonomy to focus on local issues.

We discussed our need to grow rail advocacy and engage local members, be a presence during our state's General Assembly session, and our need for volunteers to administer our local group. We have 85 active members.

Currently, we have a number of local priorities we want Rail Passengers members to be aware of:

- Advocating for an agreement between Maryland and West Virginia to keep MARC service in West Virginia
- Expanded MARC service on the Brunswick and Camden Lines
- MARC service through to Crystal City, VA
- MARC and rail playing a role in the plans to alleviate congestion on I-270 and the Capitol Beltway

Anyone interested in volunteering, or joining can visit our website mdrail.org  email me at jim.smith@mdrail.org 

** If you have a statewide or local event, project, or story that you would like to highlight - email our Northeast Field Coordinator Joe Aiello at jaiello@narpail.org  and ask to submit **



ON THE MOVE

There have been several key rail industry appointments in recent months. A few of them include:

- **Patrick J. Fuchs** and **Martin J. Oberman** have been sworn in as members of the Surface Transportation Board (STB); the rail industry’s economic regulatory agency charged with resolving railroad rate & service disputes and reviewing proposed railroad mergers.

Fuchs previously served as senior professional staff member working on surface transportation issues for the United States Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation under the leadership of Chairman John

Thune of South Dakota. In this role, he was instrumental in the development and enactment of major railroad legislation, including the first reauthorization of the Surface Transportation Board since its creation in 1996 and the first passenger rail reauthorization in over seven years.

Oberman most recently served on the Board of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) until November 2018.

- **Roger Harris**, has been appointed Amtrak’s new Executive Vice President, Chief Marketing and Commercial Officer. Roger will succeed Tim



Patrick J. Fuchs

(Photo Credit: STB)

Griffin, who retired from Amtrak on April 12. Roger joined Amtrak in late 2018 as Vice President, Long Distance Service Business Line after more than 25 years of experience in the transportation industry, including leadership roles at Aeroméxico, Delta Air Lines, Sun Country Airlines, GMAC Financial Services, Northwest/KLM Airlines and Chrysler Motors.

AMTRAK IS ISSUING A REPORT CARD - AND TAKING ITS GLOVES OFF

According to Amtrak, the nation’s Class I freight railroads got a ‘C’ average for handling trains on time last month. Canadian Pacific was head of the pack with an ‘A’ grade, while Norfolk Southern has grounded the curve for this heavyweight class with an ‘F’ grade for service. Those of you that were on the Crescent last month, a train that runs on NS tracks with an abysmal 29% on time performance rating, no doubt know why.

Amtrak has been aggressively broadcasting its new ranking system, with exchanges of note coming from the @AmtrakAlerts twitter account. Norfolk Southern took umbrage at this approach, demanding that the tweets cease or else threatening that the railroad would “be forced to consider further action.” The passenger carrier responded that “our passengers have every right to know why they are being delayed, and Amtrak is duty-bound to tell them.”

17 out of 28 State supported routes were less than 80% on time, as were 14 out of 15 long distance trains. To highlight the very real effect that host railroad operations

have on this performance, Amtrak has adopted this simple ‘report card’ grade to call greater attention to a problem that will be all too familiar to passengers.

Freight Railroads have responded in the past to direct legal action, but larger public perception of the issue has been murky at best – a problem Amtrak’s “report card” looks to solve. Rail Passengers’ formal ask to your federal legislators for Amtrak’s upcoming 2020 reauthorization has included what is called a ‘Private Right of Action’ which would establish an enforcement mechanism of Amtrak’s preference. It would establish a precedent not unlike the passage of PRIIA, as illustrated in the accompanying graph.



RAIL PASSENGERS
ASSOCIATION

1200 G Street, NW, Suite 240
Washington, DC 20005-3818
202-408-8362 | 202-408-8287 (fax)
www.railpassengers.org | narp@narprail.org