



President Expected to Sign Amtrak/Safety Bill

H.R. 2095, the Federal Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008—consisting of a major rail safety bill (Division A) and the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (Division B, formerly S.294/H.R. 6003)—passed the House by voice vote Sept. 24.

On Sept. 29, the Senate voted 69-17 for cloture (to cut off debate). The vote on final passage was 74-24 (nay votes and absent Senators in box at right) and came late Oct. 1, shortly before the Senate approved the financial rescue package.

Momentum for action came from the tragic Sept. 13 California train collision (p. 2), introduction of the Rail Collision Prevention Act (mandating Positive Train Control) by Sens. Diane Feinstein and Barbara Boxer (both D-CA) on Sept. 16, and authorization committee leaders' decision to combine a broader rail safety bill and the passenger train reauthorization.

The Wall Street Journal, *Los Angeles Times*, AP and Gannett have reported

that President Bush plans to sign the bill, Amtrak's first reauthorization since 1997 and what Rep. James Oberstar (D-MN) called "a major rewrite" of rail safety laws, including Hours of Service reform and the Positive Train Control mandate (p.2).

The bill "authorizes \$13 billion over five years for federal passenger rail programs, including expansion of Amtrak" (quoting Senate committee's press release). An authorization bill does not guarantee funding, but—at an Oct. 2 news conference—Oberstar and Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) were optimistic about chances the appropriations committees would fully fund the bill.

The bill also provides "methodologies for Amtrak route and service planning decisions" (sec. 208). It also has mandates for Amtrak within nine months of enactment to prepare a plan to restore New Orleans-Sanford FL service (Div. A, sec. 226), and within a year to study feasibility of restoring the *Pioneer*, *North Coast*

Hiawatha, a *Capitol Limited* stop at Rockwood PA, and expansion of Cornwells Heights PA-New York, Princeton Jct.-Philadelphia, and Harrisburg-Pittsburgh service (sec. 224a).

Within a year, the DOT secretary must analyze expansion of the South Central

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Final Roll Call, Roll Call #210

Votes Against (24): Sessions & Shelby (both AL), Kyl & McCain (both AZ), Allard (CO), Martinez (FL), Chambliss (GA), Craig (ID), Brownback (KS), Bunning (KY), Vitter (LA), Bond (MO), Ensign (NV), Gregg & Sununu (both NH), Burr (NC), Voinovich (OH), Coburn & Inhofe (both OK), DeMint & Graham (both SC), Thune (SD), Barrasso & Enzi (both WY)

Not Voting (2): Biden (DE), Kennedy (MA)

Amtrak Helps Evacuate New Orleans Ahead of Hurricane Gustav

Nearly 2,000 evacuees rode three special Amtrak trains to Memphis—two on Aug. 30 and one Aug. 31 (one trainset made two trips). Gustav made landfall west of New Orleans on Sept. 1.

Evacuees stayed in shelters for the week. Amtrak returned evacuees to New Orleans on two overnight runs departing Memphis Sept. 4 and 5, running via Jackson and Hattiesburg due to disruptions on the direct Jackson-New Orleans line.

Over 50 Amtrak volunteers came from across the country to care for the evacuees. Amtrak used ten federally leased Connecticut DOT coaches, plus cars from trains that serve New Orleans but were canceled during this period. Amtrak's operation was under contract to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

This reflected lessons learned from the 2005 Katrina tragedy, where trains were not used in advance of the hurricane and carried only 97 evacuees on Sept. 3, five days after Katrina hit (Sept. 2005 News).

Sadly, rail played no role in the limited Houston area evacuations before Hurricane Ike. In 2005, Amtrak and BNSF/Trinity Railway Express trains evacuated

738 people before Hurricane Rita (298 to San Antonio and 440 to Dallas; Oct. 2005 News). ■



—Martin Yurth

Passengers board a Gustav evacuation train in Memphis on September 5 to return to New Orleans. Local media turned out to cover the train's departure.

Robert Wesley Glover: Dedicated Advocate for Trains

"The store is open with a high fixed cost, so sell as much product from it as you can. Reducing capacity may force sales of remaining seats/beds at higher passenger yield, but still at lower total revenue. Every seat/bed lost will have an impact on other trains too because there will be fewer passengers and thus fewer connections. It is a recipe for closing the system."

"NARP should be publicly and relentlessly critical of such actions by Amtrak. Let's tell every on-line community what is happening."

—Bob Glover, Oct. 12, 2006, e-mail to NARP Executive Committee, commenting on Amtrak consideration of plans to run shorter long-distance trains

NARP Treasurer Robert W. "Bob" Glover, 72, died August 26, following a brief illness. Bob was in control until the very end; he emerged from a coma and specifically asked that his respirator be removed. He understood what that meant and his passing was peaceful, with friends and family at his side.

His many years of contributions to the Association's work inspired these comments from NARP leaders.



Bob Glover, of Oakland, California, delivering his Treasurer's report at the NARP Board's October 2006 Meeting in Austin, TX

NARP President George Chilson: "Bob was a NARP member almost from its inception. He joined the Board in 1977 and became Secretary in 1988. He served in this position until 2004 when he became Treasurer.

"He served NARP and our cause faithfully and tirelessly all the way to the last days of his life. We will greatly miss his energy, his wit, his insights, his knowledge and his enormous dedication to our

cause."

NARP Vice President Art Poole: "Bob was a mentor concerning railroading and passenger train advocacy. With his passing, NARP has lost a great deal of institutional memory and intellectual ability. Bob was also part of the team that is trying to position NARP for future growth, sustainability and accomplishment. It was a privilege to know him. His knowledge, humor and friendship will be missed."

NARP Executive Director Ross Capon: "Bob's advocacy for passenger trains in general and especially the long-distance trains was particularly valuable due to his great ability to distinguish between things that are practical and those which remain on advocates' wish lists.

"His generous responses to NARP's appeals for financial support also were much appreciated."

Contributions in Bob's name may be sent to the Western Railway Museum, 5848 State Highway 12, Suisun, CA 94585. In the fall, Bob will take his last train ride to his final resting place in the family plot at Evergreen Cemetery in Yreka, CA. ■

Positive Train Control for Safety and Efficiency

A Sept. 13 Metrolink/Union Pacific collision near Chatsworth, CA, claimed 25 lives and caused hundreds of injuries. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) reported that the commuter engineer sent text messages on his cell phone as late as 22 seconds before impact.

NARP staff did several media interviews following the collision, and brief parts of Ross Capon's Sept. 14 *NBC Nightly News* interview appeared on that program Sept. 14 and 15.

The tragedy led to the Oct. 1 announcement of an emergency federal order banning use of personal electronic devices in cabs, and a renewed national focus on the railroads' need for Positive Train Control (PTC).

Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph Boardman said in a Sept. 23 Senate Commerce hearing, "Positive Train Control would have prevented this collision."

The same day, **NARP issued a release calling upon "Congress and the Bush Administration, regulators, and the railroad industry to move ahead as quickly as possible with PTC..."**

H.R. 2095 (lead story) requires instal-

lation of PTC by Dec. 31, 2015, by all Class I railroads and intercity passenger and commuter railroads on all main-line track where passenger trains operate, where toxic-by-inhalation hazardous materials are transported, and on such other lines as the DOT Secretary may designate. The bill authorizes \$250 million to assist with the process. The Association of American Railroads endorsed the bill.

PTC systems that can stop or slow trains to correct human error have been on NTSB's "most wanted" list of safety improvements since 1990. NTSB cites numerous crashes caused by human error that PTC could have prevented.

PTC systems are integrated command, control communications, and information systems for safely and efficiently controlling train movements. The systems have digital data link communications networks, continuous positioning systems such as GPS augmented by odometers, on-board computers with digitized maps, in-cab displays, throttle-brake interfaces, sensors and wayside interface units at switches (powered and manual) and wayside detectors, and train control center computers and displays.

PTC can overlay existing signaling and/or train control systems or be installed on previously "dark" (unsignalled) lines.

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has estimated nationwide installation costs at \$2.3 billion to \$4.4 billion (2004 dollars, but "learning curve" effects on electronics costs may offset inflation).

FRA's 2004 report also found that PTC business efficiencies would save the railroads \$2-\$3.6 billion a year. These involve improvements in line capacity, service reliability, trip times, car and locomotive utilization, fuel consumption and CO2 emissions, as well as longer times for track maintenance.

PTC also will benefit security by working with next generation grade-crossing systems, closed-circuit cameras, infrared sensors and other asset condition monitors railroads will deploy.

The bill requires each railroad to submit to DOT 18 months after enactment a plan describing how its PTC system will provide for interoperability with movements of trains from other railroads over its lines. A progress report from DOT is

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NARP To Presidential Candidates: Support Passenger Trains

NARP Executive Director Ross B. Capon wrote to Presidential candidates Sept. 12, urging them to make passenger trains an important part of their potential administrations.

"Amtrak is reaching capacity limits on its aging, inadequate fleet. Federal policy must empower Amtrak to invest in a renewed, expanded fleet," Capon said.

He said new federal aid to highways and the Big Three automakers "make it even more important for a balancing action that puts people to work

building energy-efficient passenger train systems."

Back on December 12, 2007, NARP President George Chilson wrote in a similar vein to the then-much-longer list of Presidential hopefuls.

The September 12 letter is linked from our September 16 news release at www.narprail.org and the Dec. 2007 letter is available at the same website, click on "Info and Links" and then "NARP Reports, Comments and Letters to Officials."

First Federal Intercity Passenger Train Grants Issued

Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters and Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph Boardman took the train to Richmond, VA on Sept. 30, where Peters announced the first ever federal grants for passenger train projects at a news conference at Richmond's downtown Main Street Station.

The \$30 million worth of grants are listed in the box at right and—in greater detail—at www.dot.gov (Sept. 30 news release).

Secretary Peters also said Americans drove 3.6% less or 9.6 billion fewer miles in July, 2008, than in July, 2007. "Since last November, Americans have driven 62.6 billion miles less than they did over the same nine-month period last year. Meanwhile, transit ridership is up 11%, and in July, Amtrak carried more passengers than in any single month in its history." (DOT news release)

She noted the emergency law that recently added \$8 billion in general funds to the Highway Trust Fund so it would not run out of cash: "A few weeks ago, we saw the folly of our antiquated federal transportation policies when the highway trust fund almost ran out of money. If we

don't evolve our policies, we will leave a sad legacy of old roads, crowded highways, and unfulfilled transit ambitions."

The grant program was part of the Department of Transportation's Fiscal 2008 appropriation from Congress.

With DOT under a continuing resolution through March 6, Fiscal 2009 grants likely will total at least \$30 million, but the DOT is not currently accepting new applications pending a review of "lessons learned" from Year One.

Uncompleted FY09 appropriations bills would increase grant funding to \$60 million (House) and \$100 million (Senate). ■

Thanks, Peter!

NARP member Peter Roberts (June News), a 9th grade student in suburban Washington, DC, spent part of his summer volunteering at the NARP office. Peter's main focus was cataloguing and organizing our library. He also helped out in several other areas. Peter, thanks so much for your help!

Reauthorization

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High Speed Rail Corridor to Memphis, Houston, "through Killeen TX" and "south of San Antonio"; Cleveland extension of the Keystone Corridor; and extension of—and alternative routings for—the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor.

Expanding on Rep. John Mica's (R-FL) ideas, within 60 days DOT must issue a request for proposals for high speed systems on all DOT-designated high speed corridors (sec. 502). ■

Oct. 1 releases from the Senate committee and Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) are at <http://commerce.senate.gov> and the bill, a summary and a Sept. 24 release are at <http://transportation.house.gov> — for our statement hailing Hill action go to www.narprail.org

	Description	Grant
WA	Pt. Defiance bypass (Tacoma)	\$6.0
CA	San Joaquin route 4.5 mile double tracking and switch improvements near Hanford	\$5.0
WI	Installation of welded rail, Rondout-Sturtevant	\$5.0
IL	CTC installation, Joliet-Dwight and cab signals on full route, Joliet-Springfield (two grants)	\$3.4
MO	St. Louis-Kansas City: build one siding, engineer another	\$3.3
VA	Third track, Fredericksburg-Spotsylvania	\$2.0
NY	Albany-Rennselaer: Engineer reconfiguration of switches and addition of station track	\$1.25
MN	Preliminary Environmental Impact Statement, Minneapolis-Duluth high speed rail	\$1.1
VT	Rail and bridge work, Ethan Allan and Vermonter routes (two grants)	\$1.03
AZ	Phase 1 EIS, Tucson-Phoenix	\$1.0
ME	Portland track improvements	\$0.5
	Midwest Reg. Rail Initiative Phase 7 alternatives analysis	\$0.29
OH	3C Corridor planning & analy.	\$0.06

New Mexico's Successful Commuter Train Service Could Reach Santa Fe Late This Year



Belen-Albuquerque-Sandoval train service will be extended 18 miles to Santa Fe by year's end. Some construction is new (including 12 miles of median running on I-25; "duck under" pictured at left) and some parallels or uses Santa Fe Southern Railway right of way (right, at site of new Arroyo River Bridge; former Santa Fe Southern right-of-way visible at extreme left). Rail Runner started July 14, 2006, as a 15-mile Albuquerque-Bernalillo service. It expanded 30 miles south to Belen in December 2006, and celebrated its millionth rider last June. It has expanded quickly since it is not built with federal funds.



—Both Photos: Mike Weber



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our mission: a modern, customer-focused national passenger train network that provides a travel choice americans want.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Chicago Union Station—

Amtrak from Oct. 1 ends ticket sales 10 minutes before departure, closes gates five (instead of two) minutes before departure. Exceptions: certain cases where a train is being held for connections or a long mechanical delay is known in advance. Safety concerns are said to be the cause, but the policy was developed without passenger or state DOT input. Advance publicity was inadequate.

Oct. 27 Amtrak Timetable—

Through, Lake Shore Ltd. Boston-Chicago coaches and sleeper restored. Afternoon southbound San Luis Obispo train on new weekend schedule, 25 minutes earlier Oxnard-Los Angeles. Other changes are minor.

Sept. 15 NEC Change—

10 am Acela Express from Washington was extended to Boston and the 11 am discontinued east of New York.

Palmetto—

Northbound train bypasses Fayetteville (which gets bus connection) Oct. 6-9, 13-16, 20-23, 27-30, Nov. 3-6.

Santa Cruz-San Jose Thruway (Connecting Bus) Service—

Additional departures now running: weekday—one north, two south; weekend—three in each direction.

Memphis sinkhole recovery—

City of New Orleans may resume its normal route as early as Oct. 17 (Sept. News, page 3).

PTC

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due Dec. 31, 2012.

Good prospects for a common, nationwide system also stem from the fact that the same vendor, Wabtec, has PTC demonstration contracts with the biggest railroads -- BNSF, CSX, NS, UP -- and Chicago's Metra. Thus a de facto standard for interoperability exists, although railroads continue to discuss details. Also, with true interoperability, PTC system costs will be lower for everyone.

Railroads will want to make sure that their system integrator prepares specs for each of the components—data radio, GPS receiver, throttle-brake interface, etc.—so those boxes can be competitively procured from multiple vendors.

Significantly, 60% of PTC system costs

are equipment on locomotives and maintenance vehicles, 20% in control centers, and just 20% for wayside equipment, meaning that—if traffic switches from one line to another—the bulk of investment follows the traffic, unlike with conventional signal systems.

It is assumed that each railroad is responsible for equipping its own rolling stock and its own rights-of-way. Transit agencies have concerns about the high costs to equip commuter train fleets.

NARP's release is at www.narprail.org (click on "News Releases"). A search on "Positive Train Control" at www.fra.dot.gov yields FRA's 2004 report, Benefits and Costs of Positive Train Control, and much more data. NARP thanks longtime NARP member Steven R. Ditmeyer for much of the information in this article.

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