



“These are places like Salt Lake City and Denver, Colorado, [and] Little Rock, Arkansas, that are really demanding new investments in public transportation.”

JAMES CORLESS, TRANSPORTATION FOR AMERICA

Report: 2015 Was Good Year for Transportation

2015 was a good one for transportation across the United States and 2016 is predicted to be even better, says a report from the Center for Transportation Excellence (CFTE). Twenty-four of the 34 total transportation-related measures in 2015 won at the ballot box, meaning transit initiatives enjoyed a 71 percent success rate, up two percent from 2014.

With 34 measures, 2015 also saw the highest number of transit elections in an off-cycle year since CFTE started tracking measures in 2000. This indicates that transit measures remain a popular method of seeking support for local projects and operations, said the center report.

In breaking down the numbers, ballot measures on sales tax were the most popular, followed by property taxes measures, the two most common types of transit measures on ballots nationwide. The center noted that in 2015, voters continued to support transit at a high rate, citing successes in Phoenix and a six-county region in Utah.

Looking at 2016, CFTE sees a large

number of ballot measures for transit, including: a Pulaski County (Little Rock), Arkansas, referendum for a 0.25 percent sales tax to provide dedicated funding for Rock Region Metro; Wake County, North Carolina, has proposed a half-cent sales tax for a regional transit plan; Los Angeles County will ask voters to decide on renewing and increasing the current sales tax for transit; and Sound Transit in the Seattle metropolitan area is in the process of putting a measure before voters that would expand the existing mass transit system, which includes light rail, commuter rail and bus service, specifically working to increase the service area and frequency for passengers in the Puget Sound using a mix of sales and property taxes, along with car registration fees collected for 15 years.

NARP’s ‘A Connected America’ vision encourages states and local communities to create true multimodal transportation systems for citizens. The association will monitor these and other efforts to improve public transportation, including rail, during 2016. ■

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Government Council Group Lists Transportation Priorities for 2016

The Council of State Governments (CSG) released its list of the top five issues in transportation policy for 2016, including federal funding uncertainty and underinvestment in infrastructure, transportation revenue options, tolling and public-private partnerships, and public transit challenges. The list was compiled by Sean Slone, CSG’s director of Transportation and Infrastructure Policy.

“While the FAST Act will give states the greater certainty about federal transportation funding levels they haven’t had, which may give them greater confidence to authorize investment in long-term transportation projects, it mostly maintains a status quo many say has been inadequate for many years,” wrote Sloan.

“With no significant increases in funding, no new revenues identified to

sustain the Highway Trust Fund long term and little in the way of transformational policy changes, the bill appears likely to challenge states anew to address their backlogs of deferred maintenance and delayed projects and to meet future needs.”

Eight states—Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Michigan, Nebraska, South Dakota,

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• • • M E M B E R S P O T L I G H T • • •

Bruce Ashton: Texas-Sized Volunteer

In 2015, NARP launched a program to send 30-second public service radio announcements to hundreds of radio stations all along the original route of the Sunset Limited. One spot called for restoring passenger service between Orlando and New Orleans; the other urged that the Sunset Limited be upgraded from three days a week to a daily train.

When the call went out for volunteers to help compile names and addresses of radio station program directors, NARP member Bruce Ashton was one of the first to respond. He was given a list of almost 40 stations and, going to each station's web site, he compiled a list of addresses and phone numbers.

Ashton then personally called each radio station to explain the purpose of the campaign. Once he got a commitment to air the NARP spots from an individual program director, he followed up with a personal letter of thanks.

With his interest in train travel starting in the 1940s, Ashton has since traveled on at least eight of Amtrak's long distance trains, including the Sunset Limited, the Empire Builder, the Coast Starlight, the City of New Orleans, the Texas Eagle, the Crescent, the Capitol Limited and the Lake Shore Limited. He's also ridden on France's TGV and hopes to travel to New England by train in 2016.

First becoming a member of NARP in the late 1970s, Ashton attended his first NARP meeting -- the Fall event in Indianapolis -- and he came away enthusiastic and ready to continue his advocacy efforts. He has just finished designing and printing his own brochure to promote passenger rail and NARP membership. He is seeking Amtrak approval to have his brochures available at the San Antonio station and he will be handing them out to public officials and individual citizens as he continues to promote our goal of more and better and faster passenger trains.

During the Indianapolis meetings, someone suggested to Ashton that he run for a seat on NARP's Council of Representatives, and he is. ■

Save the Date: NARP 2016 Spring Meeting

NARP's Council Representatives and members are preparing to come to Washington D.C., for the Spring Council & Membership Meeting April 10 -13, 2016. The meeting will be held at the Sheraton Hotel in Silver Spring, Maryland. Highlights on Monday, April 11 include industry-related presentations, training for NARP's Day on the Hill and association committee meetings.

On Tuesday, April 12, members will have the opportunity to meet members of their Congressional delegation and personally make the case for giving Americans the passenger rail system they deserve. The day will end with the Annual NARP Congressional Reception on Capitol Hill, where NARP President and CEO Jim Mathews will present the annual Golden Spike Award and the Dr. Gary Burch Memorial Safety Award.

Sessions on Wednesday, April 13 will focus on NARP-related business matters including the election of 'At-Large' Council Representatives and the Association's Officers and Directors for the next two years.

Please check the NARP website for the most up-to-date information on NARP's discounted guest rooms at the Sheraton Silver Spring; the meeting's complete agenda and details on registering for NARP's signature springtime event. <http://bit.ly/1SxCKPe> ■



Bruce Ashton



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Transit Oriented Development: A Trend To Watch in 2016

NARP's vision for A Connected America' calls for a system that links states and regions together with a high-quality, balanced intermodal and multimodal transportation system that serves all citizens. To that end, cities and communities across the country continue to work on creating robust public transportation options.

One of the trends that will continue to grow is transit oriented development (TOD), which focuses on building walkable, mixed-use communities centered around high-quality train systems where residents don't have to depend on having a car for mobility and survival.

"We've seen a resurgence of people moving back to cities, even inner suburbs urbanizing and a new demographic demanding a different kind of transportation option and that has led to a lot of demand out there for new public transportation investments all across the U.S.," said James Corless, director of Transportation for America at an event in October.

"This is not just New York and D.C., and San Francisco anymore. These are places like Salt Lake City, Denver, [and] Little Rock, Arkansas, that are really demanding new investments in public transportation."



The Lakeline Capital MetroRail commuter rail station in Austin, Texas, United States

Photo by Larry D. Moore/Wikipedia. 101

The National League of Cities' Sustainable Cities Institute has studied community efforts to implement TOD. Kentucky's Move Louisville initiative is a long-range multimodal transportation plan that will focus on TOD that includes travel by foot, bicycle, transit, paratransit and automobile, and will be folded into both regional and statewide transportation plans. The plan will look at light rail, commuter rail, streetcar and bus rapid

transit and will focus on balancing cost, expected utility and the special characteristics of each type of transit to find the right fit for the city.

Funding for Move Louisville will come from a mix of sources, including the Louisville Metro capital improvement budget, the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, the city's Transit Authority of River City, and the Federal Highway and Transit Administrations. The city also expects to receive infrastructure contributions from private developers as projects are built.

The city of Austin, Texas, is including TOD as part of its Imagine Austin plan, which is coordinating transit and development for the next 20 years by creating transit-supportive communities by optimizing land use around high-quality transit. ■

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Utah and Washington—raised their gas taxes in 2015, while Kentucky and North Carolina made adjustments to their gas tax to make revenues more reliable. Delaware, Maine and Texas enacted legislation and passed ballot measures that will result in more money going to transportation.

"A large number of states could join the club in 2016, particularly if states that have come close to passing revenue-raising legislation or examined revenue options in recent years move forward," wrote Sloan.

CSG noted a transitional couple of years for public-private partnerships (P3) and tolling. Despite the successful closing of P3 deals on key projects in a handful of states, continued progress has been erratic due to factors including: political turnover in governorships, a P3 knowledge gap among state officials and a lack of uniformity among state P3 laws.

Public transit ridership was at an all-time high in 2014, with 10.8 billion trips taken in the U.S. "Recognizing the value put

on transportation choice by millennials and businesses alike, even car-centric states and cities are making investments in light rail, bus rapid transit, bike lanes and other upgrades and reaping the benefits of development around transit hubs that are building new communities and revitalizing old ones," said Sloan. "But in some places, aging, deficient and deteriorating transit systems threaten to turn off riders and challenge the resources of policymakers to maintain a high level of service while keeping transit's winning streak alive."

Finally, states continue to grapple with current insurance and regulatory concerns presented by rideshare companies like Uber and Lyft, along with the promise of driverless cars that communicate directly with the transportation infrastructure. "Policymakers and planners will have their work cut out for them as they seek to stay one step ahead of technology, population growth, demographic shifts, increasing freight volumes, generational preferences and other factors that are reshaping the transportation landscape," wrote Sloan. ■

• • • STATES NEWS • • •

Rail service in the Dallas-Fort Worth metro area took a big leap forward after representatives of the rail companies gathered in Fort Worth to sign eight agreements that collectively clear the way for the Fort Worth Transportation Authority, also known as the T, to begin operating TEX Rail from downtown to Grapevine and Dallas/Fort Worth Airport, possibly by late 2018, reports the *Star-Telegram*. The sticking point was that four railroads refused to give permission for the T to use their tracks.



Gov. Chris Christie, left; Gov. Andrew Cuomo, right.

U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) is calling for the installation of PTC between New Haven and New York City, reports *CBS News*. It is the final deficient stretch of the Northeast Corridor. He indicated an expectation of stiff competition for the \$200 million recently provided for in the FAST Act to help commuter railroads install such technology; Boston plans to equip its sprawling network within five years.

The Metro Atlanta Chamber made securing transit funding a top priority during the General Assembly session that began last month, said Chairman Larry Gellerstedt in the *Atlanta Business Chronicle*. The chamber successfully pushed for passage of a \$900 million transportation funding bill aimed at highway, bridge and transit projects in 2015. Priorities for 2016 include asking the legislature to let voters in Fulton and DeKalb counties decide whether to add a half-penny to the current one-cent MARTA sales tax to support expanding rail service.

NARP Council Member Mark Spada was among the guests on the “*Essential Pittsburgh*” show on WESA-FM for a program discussing the prospects for more rail service in Western Pennsylvania. Spada, who also serves on the board of the Western Pennsylvanians for Passenger Rail, says there is great interest for more service to western Pennsylvania, but there’s only one daily train between Harrisburg and Pittsburgh. “Fifty years ago, there was much more train service in Pennsylvania, said Lucinda Beattie, vice president of transportation for the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership. Spada was also featured in a *Newsworks* story that looked at the prospects for more rail service in the Keystone state, which faces a dearth of service options. The Lehigh Valley and Northeast Pennsylvania want to create passenger rail lines into New York and New Jersey. And some western Pennsylvanians are pushing for more frequent trains between Pittsburgh

and Harrisburg, which currently has only one roundtrip a day.

In the Quad City region — four counties located in northwest Illinois and Southeastern Iowa -- residents attended a second public session to discuss their hopes for improving traffic in the bi-state region, reports the *Quad City Times*. While planning for the 2045 transportation plan has been ongoing for nearly five years, Gena McCullough, Bi-State’s planning director, said “This is the last effort to see if we missed anything.”

Replacing an antiquated rail tunnel under West Baltimore could displace people in dozens of homes and subject those in hundreds more to noise and vibration during and after construction, a federal draft environmental impact study warns. Built in 1873, the two-track, 1.4-mile Baltimore & Potomac tunnel is one of the oldest in Amtrak’s busy Northeast Corridor, handling more than 21,000 passengers on 85 Amtrak trains and 57 MARC commuter trains daily, reports the *Baltimore Sun*. The Federal Railroad Administration is working with the Maryland Department of Transportation to study replacing it because it is considered a major hindrance to increasing rail traffic between Washington and Boston. “The existing tunnel has reached the end of its useful life,” said Jacqueline Thorne, project manager for the state Transportation Department. “We don’t want Maryland to be a bottleneck.”

The Southwest Chief appeared in two positive news stories last month. A piece in *USA Today* covered how badly needed repairs to tracks used by the Chief will eventually allow it to run faster. It also covered the staff and riders that depend on the service provided by the Chief. The *Denver Post* noted that ridership and ticket revenues on the Southwest Chief rose slightly in 2015, crediting efforts by small towns along the train’s route to get a \$15 million grant for track repairs. ■

Nominations Now Open For 2016 'At-Large' Council Seats And Officer & Director Positions

NARP is inviting members in good standing to consider running for the 10 'At-Large' seats on the Council of Representatives, the association's volunteer governing body, for a two-year term starting at this April's Spring Council and Membership Meeting.

Any NARP member who has paid dues for at least one year, is at least 18 years of age and is a U.S. resident is eligible to run. The Council consists of 112 elected state representatives and the 10 'At-Large' seats.

The Council of Representatives represents the NARP membership in setting and approving the overall policy and direction for the association. For more information, go to <http://bit.ly/1MPFruQ>. For an 'At-Large' Representative

Candidate Information Statement form, go to <http://bit.ly/1OHZAZD>.

In addition, nominations are now being sought from those members interested in being elected as an association officer (Chair; four Vice-Chairs; Treasurer & Secretary) and for the eight Director positions. The Officers and Directors are elected by the Council of Representatives at the April meeting. For more information on these positions including the duties, responsibilities and required qualifications, go to <http://bit.ly/1P4h0eB>. For an Officer & Director Candidate Information Statement form, go to <http://bit.ly/1Rit8z9>.

The deadline to submit Candidate Information Statements is March 31, 2016.. ■

WEB EXCLUSIVE: Ways To Help NARP in 2016

Thanks to NARP members, 2015 was a very successful year for rail supporters. The association's hard work will continue in 2016, so we hope you'll consider using your New Year resolutions to help NARP continue its work advocating for a strong rail system as part of the national transportation network. To that end, are a few things you can do to help the NARP staff during the year. You can see the full list here: <http://bit.ly/1PNFwFR>

1. Contact your congressional delegation. In 2015, we asked members to contact key legislators that led to, among other things, the defeat of anti-Amtrak provisions in the rail and transportation bills. If you didn't send an email or make a call in 2015, pledge to do it in 2016 when NARP sends eBlasts asking for your help.

2. Work with your local government. Now is the time to focus on grassroots outreach across the national network to ensure that passenger advocates, mayors and state and local officials are educated on the importance of rail as part of a multimodal transportation system.

3. Encourage others to join NARP. "Over the long term, NARP should have at least 100,000 members nationwide to amplify the voices of all of our citizens who support passenger rail as one of the most effective economic engines

ever devised," said President and CEO Jim Mathews. Tout the benefits of NARP membership and have them join here: <http://bit.ly/1mCmqXY>

4. Make a donation. Your donations in 2015 helped us achieve major victories, and we need to keep the momentum going. You can do this with cash donations, securities and stock gifts. Go here — <http://bit.ly/1OOoX7o> — to see all the ways you can contribute to NARP in 2016. And remember -- it's all tax deductible!

5. Become a NARP leader. Applications are now being taken for those interested in being elected to the Council of Representatives as an At-Large Representative or those interested in running for the NARP board (see page 5). The deadline to apply is 11:59 p.m. (local time), March 31, 2016.

6. Join a local rail organization. NARP President and CEO Jim Mathews has emphasized the importance of grassroots efforts in the coalition for better rail. Check out this list of local groups to join.

7. Become a NARP volunteer. Are you looking to build your resume, add to your creative portfolio, develop new expertise or just trying to make a difference? We have a variety of volunteer openings available across the country right now. Click here to see the complete list of available opportunities. ■

NARP Traveler's Advisory

❖ Due to track work being performed by Union Pacific Railroad and BNSF Railway, Sunset Limited Trains 1 and 2, along with Texas Eagle Train 2/422 will operate on adjusted schedules between January 8 and March 13, 2016. Eastbound Train 2/422 will depart Los Angeles six hours earlier than the times shown in Amtrak printed timetables, and operate six hours earlier at all stations through its arrival in San Antonio. From San Antonio to New Orleans, Train 2 will operate five hours and 10 minutes earlier. The schedule for Train 22 from Fort Worth to Chicago will not be affected. With the earlier departure of Train 2/422, Coast Starlight Train 11 will not arrive in Los Angeles in time for passengers to make connections with Train 2/422. Therefore, Coast Starlight passengers connecting with Train 2/422 will detrain in Sacramento and board a bus to Los Angeles that will arrive in time to board Train 2/422.

❖ Effective Monday through Thursday Only, through February 4, 2016, track work being performed by Norfolk Southern Railway will affect Crescent Trains 19 and 20. Bus service will be provided between Atlanta and New Orleans. Southbound Train 19 from New York to Atlanta only, the train will terminate in Atlanta and passengers will be provided bus service from Atlanta to Anniston, Birmingham, Tuscaloosa, Meridian, Laurel, Hattiesburg, Picayune, Slidell and New Orleans. Northbound Train 20 from Atlanta to New York only will originate in Atlanta. Passengers will be provided bus service from New Orleans to Slidell, Picayune, Hattiesburg, Laurel, Meridian, Tuscaloosa, Birmingham, Anniston and Atlanta. ■