



## Transport Funding Agreed; Guns To Be Checked on Amtrak

A House-Senate conference committee agreed on funding much of the federal government—including transportation—through Sept. 30, 2010. The House and Senate approved it Dec. 10 and 13. Pres. Obama is expected to sign the bill.

Amtrak's \$1.565 billion (p. 2 table) is 14% below the authorized level and 5% above regular 2009 funding; a \$144 million set-aside for ADA work will cut into basic capital investment.

There is \$2.5 billion for high-speed and intercity passenger rail (HSIPR) grants, of which:

- \$50 million is available to fund the award and oversight of HSIPR grants;
- Up to \$30 million is for research and technology demonstrations including next-generation rolling stock, and implementing the Rail Cooperative Re-

search Program; and

- Up to \$50 million is for planning passenger rail corridor investment plans and for completion of the National Rail Plan

by Sept. 30, 2010.

Conferees largely endorsed the Senate-passed mandate for Amtrak to accept

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## Coscia, DiClemente Nominated to Amtrak Board

President Obama has nominated Albert (Bert) DiClemente of Delaware and Anthony (Tony) R. Coscia of New Jersey to fill two of the four vacancies on Amtrak's Board of Directors.

They testified at a November 18 hearing of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee. DiClemente, a longtime aide to then-Sen. Joseph Biden (D-DE), is Vice-President—Brokerage Services with CB Richard Ellis in Wilmington. DiClemente's father was a lifelong railroader who retired from Amtrak in 1976.

He said, "Amtrak has always held a special place in my heart, indeed is part of my DNA...The role of a national rail system is central. I think there's a general recognition of rail's importance for those distances traveled where rail makes the most sense."

Coscia has chaired the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey since April 2003. He noted

the "enormous opportunity in renewed investment...to bring up new business...especially for trips of 500 miles or less where air and auto currently dominate...I need to learn a lot more about Amtrak. Amtrak needs to develop more corridors, and to explore routes that...don't currently have service."

Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) said, "I have been a strong supporter of Amtrak. It is a partnership that is based on the national concept. Are you committed to the national system, not just the Northeast Corridor, which has gotten most of the resources and where Amtrak owns the tracks and it's easier?"

Coscia: "Yes. There are many metro areas outside the NEC..."

DiClemente: "When Amtrak was chartered, it was to be a national system. I agree with that."

## Faster Chicago-St. Louis Trains In the Works

Major improvements to this line are long overdue. Track improvements, two round-trips added in 2006, and St. Louis's multimodal Gateway Transportation Center opened in 2008 should be just the beginning.

Two speakers addressed the prospects for improved Chicago-St. Louis service at the NARP Council of Representatives' October 16 meeting in St. Louis: Mark C. Walbrun, Senior Vice-President, Tran-



The lighter-shaded route is the current one, proposed for 110 mph; Champaign proposal is for 220 mph. (Courtesy Midwest High-Speed Rail Assoc.)

Systems Corp., and NARP Council Member Rick Harnish, who is also Executive Director of the Midwest High Speed Rail Association.

The existing line has five daily round-trips, including the Chicago-San Antonio *Texas Eagle* and a mix of through and local freight traffic. It is mostly single track.

Amtrak and Union Pacific (UP) are collaborating on a performance improvement

effort that so far has

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## Amtrak's Fiscal 2009: Second Highest Ridership

Amtrak's Fiscal 2009 ridership of 27.2 million was second only to 2008's 28.7 million and 5% above the 2007 level. (The Amtrak and federal fiscal years end Sept. 30.)

On the Washington-New York-Boston line, with a lot of business travel that the recession hit especially hard, ridership and passenger-miles both fell 9%. (A passenger-mile is one passenger traveling one mile.)

Long-distance trains saw ridership increase 1% while passenger-miles were flat. Ridership grew 10% on the much-maligned *Sunset Ltd.*

Amtrak lumps everything else into "State corridors," where ridership fell 4% and passenger-miles fell 5%.

Amtrak CEO Joseph Boardman called the figures consistent with steady growth

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## Pew Distorts Amtrak Funding, NARP Responds

Pew Charitable Trusts' Subsidyscope project ([www.bit.ly/ui3zn](http://www.bit.ly/ui3zn)) in late October issued a report claiming that Amtrak understates costs of its routes.

The media uncritically trumpeted this defective report.

Pew relied exclusively on "publicly available" data, although that data was insufficient to support Pew's detailed listing of route-specific losses, and Amtrak would have provided the necessary data on request.



Thus, 75% of the claimed \$32.31 systemwide per-passenger loss is attributed to "depreciation and other overhead costs" that Amtrak for good reason does not allocate.

**Pew spread depreciation and overhead evenly over all routes** although 57% of Amtrak's depreciation relates to property, mostly in the Northeast.

In 2001, Amtrak mortgaged part of New York's Penn Station. Also around that time, Amtrak did sale-and-leaseback deals on much of its rolling stock.

It makes no sense to analyze costs of those deals, which were done to meet

payroll, as ongoing operating costs.

Amtrak and U.S. DOT are developing a more accurate reporting method which likely will include a synthetic capital charge calculated for *both* routes and other business lines, including real estate and contract commuter work.

NARP Pres. & CEO Ross Capon covered these and other points in a letter to Pew President & CEO Rebecca W. Rimel. Capon complained that Pew's report was "largely a rear-view mirror look [that] was silent on improvement over the years...The Amtrak Reform Council, using 2001 'total costs,' found a subsidy per passenger that, when adjusted for inflation, was 19% higher than you reported. (\$33.09 in 2001 dollars is \$39.97 in current dollars.)"

Subsidyscope issued its highways report Nov. 25. It reveals that "in 2007, non-user revenues [mostly general tax money] contributed \$70 billion to the highway system."

The reports are at [www.subsidyscope.com/transportation](http://www.subsidyscope.com/transportation). Project Director Marcus Peacock is married to Amtrak Board Member Donna McLean.

## 2010 Funding

unloaded guns as checked baggage, but the effective date is one year after enactment rather than March 31, 2010. Also, within 180 days of enactment, Amtrak in consultation with the Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security, must submit to Congress a report that includes "proposed guidance and procedures necessary to implement" carriage of firearms.



Highways received \$41.8 billion, and

\$600 million was awarded to 'significant' transportation infrastructure projects, including transit, railroads and ports.

At least part of the highway funding will come from yet another infusion of general funds rather than from user fees. States will *not* get the flexibility to spend even the general-fund money on rail projects. ■

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## Texas TEMPO & NARP Council Members Honored

The Amtrak President's Service and Safety Award as a Champion of Rail, honoring citizens who work to improve passenger train service, was given to the leaders of the Texas Eagle Marketing and Performance Organization (TEMPO), a team of volunteers along the San Antonio-St. Louis line. TEMPO was formed in 1997 with support from NARP.



Amtrak CEO Joseph Boardman presented the 2009 award Oct. 8 in a Los Angeles ceremony. He praised the work of the assembled TEMPO members, including NARP Board member Bill Pollard, Council members Matt Fels, Peter LeCody and Christina Anderson, former Board members Will Bozeman and Ray Dunbar, and the late Dennis Glaze, a NARP member.

"[Honorees are] nominated and selected by Amtrak employees [...] across the country" said Boardman. "[The award] recognizes employees and external business partners who have made outstanding contributions toward improving Amtrak's service, productivity and safety and who have brought extraordinary credit to Amtrak."

TEMPO has brought elected officials and community leaders together to generate political support for the *Texas Eagle*, and also provides a local revenue management team for the *Eagle* and *Heartland Flyer* and a route specific website ([www.texaseagle.com](http://www.texaseagle.com)). TEMPO organizes a station host program and encourages station renovations. Its example has led to the formation of route support teams for other Amtrak routes. ■

| FY 2010 Transportation Spending Detail<br>(in millions of dollars) | 2009 Enacted  | 2010 Obama Request | 2010 Authorized (***) | 2010 Enacted*  | 2010 vs. 2009  |
|--|---------------|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Operations   | 550           | 572                | 580                   | 563            | +2.4%          |
| Capital & Debt Service*  | 940           | 930                | 1239                  | 1002           | +6.6%          |
| <b>AMTRAK SUBTOTAL</b>   | <b>1,490</b>  | <b>1,502</b>       | <b>1,819</b>          | <b>1,565**</b> | <b>+5.0%</b>   |
| Other Passenger Rail   | 90            | 1,000              | 1,000                 | 2,500          | +2,677%        |
| <b>PASSENGER RAIL TOTAL</b>  | <b>1,580</b>  | <b>2,502</b>       | <b>2,819</b>          | <b>4,065</b>   | <b>+157.3%</b> |
| Federal Highway  | 41,616        | 41,816             |                       | 41,846         | +0.6%          |
| Federal Transit  | 10,270        | 5,335              |                       | 2,389          | -76.7%         |
| Federal Aviation   | 13,162        | 12,441             |                       | 12,082         | -8.2%          |
| <b>TRANSPORTATION TOTAL</b>  | <b>61,599</b> | <b>62,626</b>      |                       | <b>21,455</b>  | <b>-65.2%</b>  |

Table Notes:

\* Includes Americans with Disabilities Act compliance

\*\* Excludes Office of the Inspector General

\*\*\* From the 2008 Passenger Rail Investment & Improvement Act.

*Table excludes 2009 Recovery Act funds (\$8 bil. for HSIPR & \$1.3 bil. for Amtrak)*

## Help NARP Reach Out

Festivals, fairs, parades, carnivals, hobby shows and other gatherings present wonderful opportunities for nonprofit organizations like NARP to reach out to the public by setting up a display table or simply handing out literature. It's a great way to share your interest in train travel and spread the word about our work. Ask your friends and family to help you, and don't forget to bring some fun kids' activities! Contact NARP for more information and help in getting started.

## Midwest

seen on-time performance rise from 43% in FY 2008 to 73% in FY 2009.

From 1999 to 2005, \$164 million in federal (\$58m), state (\$86m) and rail industry (\$20m) funds were invested in the 123-mile segment between Springfield and Mazonia, 25 miles south of Joliet.

The goal of this North American Joint Positive Train Control project was 110 mph train operation and the tracks now can support that speed.



But trains remain limited to 79 mph because “the [signal] system did not prove viable as then conceived,” to quote a July Federal Railroad Administration report.

Also, there are delays at rail-rail grade crossings between Alton and St. Louis and in and near Chicago. CREATE will eliminate some of the latter.

Illinois has applied for Recovery Act funds to upgrade signaling and fully double-track the line—\$1.1 million for the initial environmental impact study, \$3.22 billion for the actual work. The applications are at [www.bit.ly/ilapps](http://www.bit.ly/ilapps).

This would yield Chicago-St. Louis travel time “under four hours,” and permit top and average speeds of 110 and 72.6 mph, respectively, the latter up from today’s 52.9 mph. Illinois DOT’s short-term goal is eight daily round-trips. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) strongly supports this plan and has helped mediate a dispute in Springfield regarding the improvements.

UP has a new intermodal facility at Joliet and appears to be eyeing the existing route via Bloomington as a possible competitor to BNSF for intermodal freight between the Mississippi and Chicago.

The state also has applied for federal funds to study building an entirely new railroad with a top speed of 220 mph (costing \$10 million).

One 220-mph proposal would run via Kankakee, Champaign and Decatur instead of Joliet and Bloomington. A Chi-

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cago-St. Louis travel time of 1:52 is envisioned. But France’s SNCF proposes a 220-mph line parallel to the Bloomington route, with slower trains feeding passengers to and from the communities the 220 mph trains would skip.

The state’s “110 mph” applications seek 95 to 100% federal funding; the 220 application is for 50%.

Gov. Pat Quinn (D) supports the 110 mph work and 220 study. He has called high-speed rail a “mission for America.”

The case for both lines is strong. Work should begin as soon as possible, and study of the 220 mph option should not become an excuse for delaying investments in the current route to provide the faster and more frequent and reliable service that travelers need. ■

## Ridership

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since 2002. A gasoline-price spike contributed to the all-time high in 2008.

NARP’s Oct. 23 weekly on-line hotline news said Amtrak’s current fleet expansion plans are inadequate to meet the anticipated growth in train patronage. NARP Communications Director Sean Jeans-Gail said “it is incumbent on Amtrak to start thinking about 2009’s numbers as the new minimum for passenger train demand in the U.S.” ■

### NARP’s Office Has Moved

Our new address is:

505 Capitol Court, N.E., Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20002-7706

Our phone and fax numbers have not changed.

❖A Feb., 2009, Accenture survey “rated Amtrak in the bottom 10% of over 400 companies surveyed in ‘supporting employee growth.’” ■

Read the full report at [www.bit.ly/oigreport](http://www.bit.ly/oigreport) [PDF file].

### AMTRAK INSPECTOR GENERAL THEODORE “TED” ALVES

Theodore Alves, who has worked in public service over 35 years—including with US DOT, Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Government Accountability Office—became the second Inspector General in Amtrak’s history Nov. 16.

He “is highly respected in the inspector general community and will

provide the leadership, integrity, independence and objectivity required for the position,” said Amtrak Chairman Thomas Carper in a statement.

Amtrak’s OIG conducts audits and evaluations and investigates waste, fraud and abuse. The office’s work is at [www.amtrakoig.com](http://www.amtrakoig.com)

### Discount on NARP Gifts

Consider giving NARP membership—and our 10% Amtrak discount—as a gift! Through Jan. 12, we offer a \$5 discount for new gift memberships—thus \$30 for individual, \$40 family, \$20 senior. Use regular mail or do it all on-line. Go to [www.narprail.org/gift](http://www.narprail.org/gift) to learn more.

## Key FRA Ruling Needed to Save Many Services

Costs of installing positive train control systems on lines Amtrak uses but which have light freight traffic may jeopardize service to some communities or even on entire routes.

PTC in general must be installed by Dec. 31, 2015, but DOT could—and, Amtrak and NARP believe, should—use its authority to define “main lines” to exclude

light density freight lines Amtrak uses.

Absent such an exclusion, Amtrak said in an Aug. 2009 filing with the Federal Railroad Administration that certain services could be at risk in California, Colorado, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Vermont and Virginia. ■

## AMTRAK OIG ISSUES HARSH EVALUATION

The Amtrak Office of Inspector General (OIG) publicly released on Nov. 25 an evaluation, *Training and Employee Development*. This work had been launched by Fred Weiderhold, Amtrak’s first IG.

The evaluation has recommendations that flow from a set of findings that should serve as a wake-up call for management. Here are some of the findings:

❖Job-specific initial—and subsequent—training is inconsistently delivered...

❖“There is no comprehensive, corporate-wide strategy linking employee development and training with Amtrak’s strategic goals and objectives.”

❖“Amtrak does not have a comprehensive, integrated, corporate-wide development strategy for management (non-agreement) employees.”

❖“Amtrak’s middle and senior managers (particularly in the operating departments) lack the education levels normally found in similar organizations.”

❖“Amtrak has few middle and senior managers [with] experience in more than one department...”



George Chilson, Chairman; James Churchill, John DeLora, Albert L. Papp, Jr., Arthur Poole, David Randall, Robert J. Stewart, Vice Chairs; Nicholas Noe, Secretary; Kenneth T. Clifford, Treasurer

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

### All Members Welcome at NARP Membership Meetings

Meetings, organized by state or groups of adjacent states, often feature an interesting guest speaker as well as a NARP officer or staff member. There are updates and discussions on the latest rail and transit developments, including actions members can take to advance our mission. An updated list is at [www.narprail.org/membermeet](http://www.narprail.org/membermeet)

**Boston**—Sat., Mar. 6; 11:30-4:00; John Hancock Hotel & Conference Center, 40 Trinity Pl. nr Back Bay sta. Visit [www.bit.ly/marchmtgs](http://www.bit.ly/marchmtgs) or call 401-463-5159.

**Schenectady, NY**— Sat. Mar, 13; 11 AM to 4 PM; Holiday Inn Downtown, 100 Nott Terr. (5 blocks east of Amtrak station) Info: [www.esparail.org](http://www.esparail.org) or call 716-741-6384.



**Washington, DC**—Sat., Mar. 20, 10 AM, Union Station (Starlight Room at Gate C), 40 Massachusetts Ave. NE. Visit [www.bit.ly/marchmtgs](http://www.bit.ly/marchmtgs) or call 202-775-3397.

**Dallas**—Sat. Jan. 30; Magnolia Hotel, 1401 Commerce St., Dallas, Tex. (Follows 6th Annual Southwestern Rail Conference, same location, Jan. 28 dinner and Jan. 29.) More info: [www.bit.ly/15nGXa](http://www.bit.ly/15nGXa)

**Seattle**—Sat., Mar. 13; 12 noon to 4:30 PM; The Red Lion, 5th Ave. & Pike St. Info: [www.bit.ly/35GSjm](http://www.bit.ly/35GSjm) or call 360-943-8333.

**Sacramento**— Sat., Jan. 16; 1 to 4 PM; California State Rail Museum meeting room, 111 I St. (adjacent to Amtrak station). Visit [www.bit.ly/sacmeet](http://www.bit.ly/sacmeet) or call 916-833-4218.

### Short Takes

❖ NARP, led by Vice Chair Al Papp, is pushing Gov.-elect Christie (R-NJ) to change the Hudson River tunnel plan, including connecting the new tunnels to NY's Penn Station. Papp met with Christie officials Dec. 9.

❖ NARP co-signed a OneRail Coalition ([www.onerail.org](http://www.onerail.org)) letter urging strong rail investment in any new job-creation bill.

❖ Amtrak's Board voted Dec. 10 to begin negotiations with Union Pacific towards converting its tri-weekly Los Angeles-New Orleans Sunset Ltd. to a daily Chicago-L.A. run with a daily San Antonio-New Orleans connector. (*News*, 6/09).

❖ The Florida legislature approved \$1.2 billion and a green light for SunRail (DeLand-Orlando-Poinciana commuter rail;

*News*, 3/09), extra funding to Miami's Tri-Rail and may boost Florida's chances of getting federal high-speed rail funds.

❖ The White House proposed federal safety oversight for mass transit systems. (Commuter, Amtrak and freight *railroads* have federal safety regulation now.)

### VRE Goes, Metrolink Returns

Amtrak is losing its operating contract with Virginia Railway Express (VRE) and regaining one with Metrolink, the Los Angeles-area commuter railroad. Both changes are set for June, 2010.

Keolis Transportation, a company based in Paris that is partly owned by SNCF, the French national railway, won a contract to operate trains for VRE, which runs the Washington-Manassas and -Fredericksburg commuter rail links. The move was finally approved Nov. 12. Amtrak has operated VRE trains since their inception in 1992.

Southern California Regional Rail Authority, Metrolink's board, voted unanimously in late August to restore Amtrak after having used Connex since 2004.

"Board members said they thought switching to Amtrak would [let them] do a better job of implementing new safety measures they have been discussing since the Sept. 12 [2008] crash that killed 25 people and injured more than 100 others. 'Amtrak brings a certain integrity to the table that we desperately need...,' said Robin Lowe," an alternate board member and Hemet councilwoman (Ventura County *Star*, Aug. 28).

### TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

**Trackwork west of Atlanta:** Norfolk Southern's annual work means Amtrak's *Crescent* will not run Atlanta-New Orleans Jan. 18-21, 25-28 and Feb. 1-4, 8-9. No alternate service. This affects trains leaving New York the day before, and trains that would have originated in New Orleans on days shown.

**Wolverine consist change:** The first eastbound and last westbound Chicago-Detroit-Pontiac trains again this winter (starting Dec. 9) are running with Superliner cars and no business class.