



## President Seeks More Rail Funds

*Tell Congress to deliver!*

President Barack Obama called for \$50 billion more in federal investment to create good jobs rebuilding America's "roads, rails and runways." This was in a Labor Day speech and signaled his commitment to treating rail as a true partner in the national transportation network.

"We're going to lay and maintain 4,000 miles of our railways — enough to stretch coast to coast," the President told a large crowd at Milwaukee's Laborfest.

He expressed a desire to build on the momentum created by public support for the high-speed rail program in the Recovery Act. "We're going to continue our strategy to build a national high-speed rail network that reduces congestion and travel times and reduces harmful emissions," said the President.

The White House statement says the

President's plan would "invest in a long-overdue overhaul of Amtrak's fleet." Obama also recognized the need to expand public transit systems and dedicate significant new funding to support locally planned, implemented, and operated major transit projects.

The Administration again suggested establishing a National Infrastructure Bank to tap private financing for projects in all modes and the integration of high-speed rail into the surface transportation program, stressing that transportation policy should work to enhance the livability of communities and environmental sustainability in addition to safety and economic competitiveness.

State transportation departments were quick to express their support for the pro-

*(continued on p. 3)*



-David Banks / Getty Images

**President Obama speaks in Milwaukee on Sept. 6.**

### *Your Voice is Needed*

Tell your Senators and Representatives to commit to the additional rail infrastructure investment the President has called for.

Take action online at [www.bit.ly/obamarails](http://www.bit.ly/obamarails) or call the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121.

## Bi-level Car Design Agreed

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Amtrak and state departments of transportation have agreed on the performance and technical design specifications for the next generation of bi-level intercity passenger railcars, Amtrak announced Aug. 31.

There are coaches, cab/baggage and cafe/lounge cars, but there is also flexibility on interior design and the same "shells" are envisioned for the next generation of bi-level long-distance cars. A "cab" car has an engineer's compartment for when the train is in "push" mode, with locomotive at rear.

The design is an update of the California Car introduced in the 1990s and advanced with Amtrak's Surfliner equipment.

The specs (at [www.bit.ly/bilevel](http://www.bit.ly/bilevel)) were



**Coach/cab No. 8304, Mount Wilson, seen in Stockton, CA in March 2007, is one of the original California Car fleet upon which the new bi-level design standards are based.**

the first to be issued by the Next Generation Corridor Equipment Pool Committee established under Sec. 305 of the 2008 Passenger Rail Investment & Improvement Act (PRIIA). The decision was made with input from host railroads, equipment manufacturers and passenger train operators other than Amtrak.

*(continued on p. 3)*

## Christie Halts Tunnel Work

*NARP Presses Project "Right Sizing"*

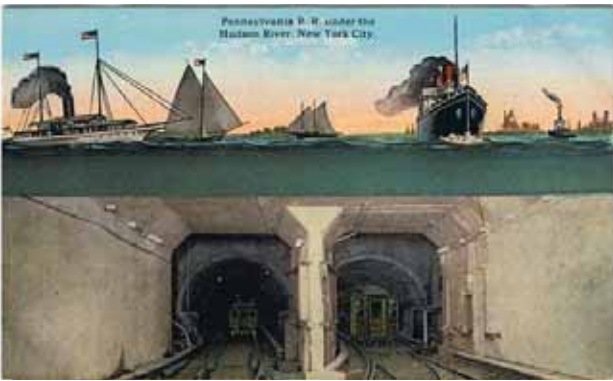
"New Jersey is temporarily [for 30 days] shutting down all new work and suspending additional contract bids on an \$8.7 billion railway tunnel to New York because federal officials say the project may go as much as a billion dollars over budget" (Newark *Star-Ledger*, Sep. 12).

Though the halt was based on budget worries, it is another chance to get the project right. NARP Vice Chair Albert Papp said, "It's time for Gov. Chris Christie to 'Right Size the Rail Tunnel' and make it one that the state can afford."

NARP and our allies continue to work towards restoring to the project a connection between the new tunnels and New York's Pennsylvania Station (NYP).

NARP has pressed our views with the Christie Administration, including in a Dec. 7 letter from then-Chairman George Chilson and Pres. Ross Capon to Gov.-Elect Christie. Capon's Jan. 26 letter to Gov. Christie said "two obvious solutions to

*(continued on p. 2)*



An early 1920s postcard view of then-new Hudson tunnels. Under NJT's plan, these will remain indefinitely as Penn Station's only trans-Hudson links.

consider are (A.)...restore the track connection [to NYP] or (B.) abandon the plan for a separate, \$3 billion [34th Street] terminal, run the new tunnels only to [NYP], and expand capacity at [NYP] while restarting planning for an eventual extension to Grand Central Terminal (GCT)..."

**There's Still Time!**

To date, only one small contract—for construction of a NJ road underpass—has been let. New Jersey does not have its share of financing in place, so the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has not issued a Full Funding Grant Agreement for \$3 billion.

**NARP/Vuchic Letter**

Capon and University of Pennsylvania Transportation Prof. Emeritus Vukan Vuchic co-signed an Aug. 24 letter urging NJ Transportation Commissioner James Simpson to restore the link.

The letter said the project was developed before President Obama unveiled his high-speed rail vision. An NYP link could make the tunnels eligible for federal high-speed rail funding.

NJT plans a new 34th Street terminal as the tunnels' only Manhattan destination. The letter suggested eliminating the terminal for "both transportation and cost-saving benefits (with comparable combined capacity at an expanded Penn Station or by proceeding directly to Grand Central)" or deferring construction of the new terminal, since "NJT does not expect to fully utilize total Hudson River tunnel capacity" at first.

Vuchic and Capon emphasized that "connecting tracks between the new tunnels and NYP are vital **both to improve overall reliability** of NJT, NYP and the Northeast Corridor as well as to provide **added trans-Hudson capacity.**"

Their letter noted that, with a 2.5% grade, the NYP link would be compatible even with NJT's planned 34th St. terminal. (NJT has a 2.7% grade at Rahway but has opposed building any new grades steeper than 2.1%).

Today's tunnels, opened in 1910, are at capacity and demand for commuter and intercity train service is growing.

If the project goes forward as is, wrote Capon and Vuchic, "the danger increases that the default solution will be new highway investments that are costly in finan-



- New York Historical Society

Site of New York's Penn Station in 1904. Although modern tunneling techniques would mean a relatively tiny surface footprint, NJT used this photo to counter advocates' case to reinstate the crucial link between planned ARC tunnels and Penn Station platforms.

cial, environmental/quality-of-life as well as energy consumption terms."

**Two Tunnels "Done Right"**

In light of the design of NJT's project, fifth and sixth tunnels—to be used by both NJT and Amtrak—are in the multi-agency Northeast Corridor Master Plan (May-June News), but prospects for funding these are dim.

Instead of considering four new tunnels when two are not assured, "[NJ] State Senator Mike Doherty...suggests that **New Jersey's congressional delegation should knock some heads together to force Amtrak, NJ Transit and the other transit agencies to cooperate on**

a plan that would accomplish the [tunnels'] original goals," wrote *Star-Ledger* columnist Paul Mulshine on Sept. 14.

**More Efforts to Right-Size Project**

NARP Members Joseph Clift (former Long Island RR planning director) and Jim Raleigh met in late spring with New Jersey state legislators of both parties to explain shortcomings of NJT's plan, proposing a more passenger-friendly and less costly alternative called "Moynihan/Penn Station First." Clift conducted walking tours of the NYP and GCT areas for legislators and reporters.

Under the headline "ARC comes under fire," the July *Railway Age* had letters from Clift, Capon, and Phil Craig, a professional with 50 years in the industry, answering an 8-page April article, "Reconquering Gotham," that touted the current NJT project. The July *International Railway Journal* had the same article; Aug. *IRJ* included Papp's response, "Manhattan project: a missed opportunity."

**Take Action!**

**New Jerseyans: please tell Gov. Christie and your legislators—state and federal—that the tunnels are vital but must go to Penn Station. Both points are key, due to speculation that Christie is preparing to kill the entire project. All Northeasterners should take similar steps in their states. To act now, go to [www.bit.ly/fixarc](http://www.bit.ly/fixarc). ■**

Capon's Sept. 13 statement is at [www.bit.ly/archold](http://www.bit.ly/archold).

NARP's letters are at [www.narprail.org](http://www.narprail.org), click on "Info & Links," then "NARP Reports, Comments & Letters to Officials."

**Correction**

The August *NARP News* should have said that the Senate Appropriations Committee's FY 2011 transportation/housing appropriations bill (S. 3644) has \$250,000 for three new positions *in addition to* the 62 added positions (31 full time equivalents) the Administration requested.

## Fares, Taxes, Trains, Politics, Bad Signs

The need to tell all political leaders about the importance of passenger trains and mass transit is as great as ever.

Substantial parts of the business community long have recognized the need to increase these “user charges” just to avoid further deterioration of the existing transportation network. Nonetheless, strong opposition to raising taxes even includes gasoline taxes (a.k.a. user charges).

Transit fares, however, don't seem to register as taxes. New Jersey's transportation funding crisis stems in part from Gov. Christie's insistence that he will not raise the state gasoline tax. The Tri-State Transportation Campaign says it was last raised seven years ago. By contrast, NJ Transit in April approved its largest-ever fare increase (25% except for local bus and light rail riders whose fares rose 10%). This followed a 9% increase just three years earlier.

### President Obama

positional. More than 90% of Recovery Act transportation projects have advanced to the contract phase, but an American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials survey found that there are still 9,800 ready-to-go transportation projects, valued at nearly \$80 billion, which haven't begun due to lack of funding.

Paul Weyrich, the late conservative leader and transit advocate, said “choice” is an important conservative value, and transit is an important choice.

Meanwhile, key politicians in Ohio, Wisconsin and Kansas have come out against passenger train investments.

Former Amtrak Chair and Gov. Tommy G. Thompson (R-WI), a longtime supporter of the Milwaukee-Madison passenger train project, now says the state should lobby Congress to use its federal \$810 million for highways instead. He did not go as far as some Wisconsin Republicans who recommended turning down the federal high speed rail money if it can't be switched to roads (*Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, Sep. 13).

Sen. Sam Brownback (R-KS) passenger train service in Kansas, which is considering extending service between Oklahoma City, Wichita and Kansas City. “The

White House leadership is key to the success of efforts to improve railroad infrastructure. While Congressional action is unlikely before the Nov. 2 election, it is important to tell your Senators and Representative, while they campaign, that you want to see the President's rail investment plans enacted.

ubiquitous passenger rail service is not necessarily the best use of transportation funds...I believe we should focus our limited resources funding” highways. ■

### Bilevel Design

from page 1

Amtrak's release called the agreement “a major achievement that supports Amtrak's plans to advance and support the growth of new or existing state-supported corridor service, renew and replace its national fleet, and foster the development of a domestic rail manufacturing industry.”

Amtrak Pres. Joseph Boardman said the new cars will be “designed with updated passenger comfort, conveniences and safety features to meet the ever-increasing demand for more rail service.”

Section 305 aims to encourage FRA, the states, and operators to develop standardized, interoperable equipment for corridor service to improve maintainability, lower design and acquisition costs, and support domestic manufacturing capacity.

However, some are concerned that—when the committee gets to designing a single-level car—a “one-size-fits-all” approach may stifle innovation or bypass technology like Talgo's passive tilt and passive steering that permit higher speeds on curves and have helped develop the Pacific Northwest market. ■

from page 1

## New Michigan Train Tested for Labor Day



- J.R. Valderas, RailPictures.net

Passengers in Kalamazoo disembark on a rainy night from the inaugural test run of the *Michigan Owl*, a state-sponsored Chicago-Kalamazoo round-trip that ran Labor Day weekend, Thurs. PM-Tues. AM. Offering real alternatives to other trains, the *Owl* left Chicago at 10 PM and reached Kalamazoo 1:29 am; return left Kalamazoo 5:50 am, arrived Chicago 7:30 (local times). Amtrak and the state are considering whether to make this extra service permanent. The *Owl* moniker was used locally; Amtrak considered this simply an additional *Wolverine Service* train.

## NARP Educates, Engages Students



- J. Charles Riecks

NARP member Alice Riecks talks with a student at the University of Charleston (WV) about the importance of passenger trains and their improvement. As students return for the fall semester, NARP volunteers are visiting 24 colleges and universities across the country (a number we plan to increase) to engage the next generation in a cause that will help shape the America they inherit for the better. To join in this important outreach work, contact NARP Transportation Assistant Malcolm Kenton at 202-408-8362 or mkenton@narprail.org.



National Association of  
Railroad Passengers

NARP NEWS

Vol. 44, No. 7

September 2010

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Robert J. Stewart, Chairman; John Delora, Albert L. Papp, Jr., Arthur Poole, David Randall, Vice Chairs; Stephen J. Salatti, Secretary; Kenneth T. Clifford, Treasurer

Ross B. Capon, President & CEO; Sean Jeans-Gail, Communications Director; Tiffanie H. Childs, Coordinator of Resource Development; Malcolm M. Kenton, Transportation Assistant

National Association of Railroad Passengers *NARP News* (ISSN 0739-3490), published monthly (except Nov.) by NARP; 505 Capitol Ct. NE, Suite 300; Washington, DC 20002-7706; 202/408-8362, fax 202/408-8287, [narp@narprail.org](mailto:narp@narprail.org), [www.narprail.org](http://www.narprail.org). ©2010 National Assoc. of Railroad Passengers. All rights reserved. Membership dues \$35/year (\$20/student, \$25/senior), of which \$5 is a subscription to *NARP News*. Periodicals Postage Paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to National Association of Railroad Passengers NARP News; 505 Capitol Ct. NE, Suite 300; Washington, DC 20002-7706.

(This has news through September 17. Vol. 44, No. 6 was mailed August 24.)



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

## Niagara Falls, Pontiac Get New Terminals



- John DeLora

Dignitaries—including Amtrak Chairman Carper (5th from left), Mayor Jukowski (4th from right) and DOT Director Stuedle (center)—break ground on the Pontiac Transportation Center July 12.

Pontiac, MI, and Niagara Falls, NY, are getting intermodal transportation centers serving Amtrak and intercity and local buses. Both stations should open in two to three years.

“Pontiac is a key transportation crossroads,” Michigan DOT Director Kirk Stuedle told the crowd of 50 assembled for the July 12 groundbreaking. Pontiac Mayor Leon Jukowski: “I’m looking forward to buying the



- Courtesy of Bruce Becker

An artist’s rendering of the intermodal transportation hub now being built in Niagara Falls, NY.

first ticket [at] the new station.” Amtrak Board Chair Thomas Carper and Rep. Gary Peters (D-MI) also spoke.

Niagara Falls’ new station will also house U.S. Customs and Immigration officers who inspect passengers entering the U.S. from Canada. ■

### TRAVELERS’ ADVISORY

**Amtrak no longer accepts** debit cards requiring PIN, traveler’s checks or money orders when selling tickets. Only credit cards, debit cards that can be processed as credit cards, US currency, and corp. & gov’t checks are accepted. Personal checks and bank cashier’s checks are accepted only for group deposits and group final payments. On board, cash and credit cards only.

**Track work is closing the St. Louis-Springfield, IL, segment to most trains** Sept. 16-24, Oct. 1-9 & 16-23, and Nov. 1-9. Most *Lincoln Service* trains will run Chicago-Springfield only. On the same days, *Texas Eagle* will detour, missing Illinois stops other than Chicago. Many substitute buses will run. **The *Palmetto* south of Selma will have track work-related schedule changes** Mondays through Thursdays, Sept. 20-Oct. 7. Call Amtrak or check [www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com) for impact on your travel plans.

**Amtrak’s Great Dome car is to run on *Adirondack* (Albany-Montreal) Sept. 23-Oct. 24 (north Thurs./Sat./Mon.; south Fri./Sun./Tues.); on *Cardinal* (Washington-Chicago) east from Chicago Oct. 30, Nov. 6; west from Wash. Nov. 5, 12).**

### MT Cities Asked to Join Call for *Hiawatha’s Return*

NARP has written to cities and counties along the former *North Coast Hiawatha* route in Montana asking them to follow Missoula’s lead and pass resolutions urging Congress to mandate and fund the train’s restoration.