



Faster, More Reliable Trains for North Carolina, Illinois

*NS, Amtrak, NC DOT Agreement Paves Way for Raleigh-Charlotte Work, 4,800 Jobs
Illinois DOT, UP to Bring 110-mph Chicago-St. Louis Trains, Generating over 6,000 Jobs*

In two more wins for the federal High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) program, U.S. DOT reached agreements with Norfolk Southern (NS) and the state of North Carolina, and with Union Pacific and Illinois.

The Federal Railroad Administration soon will release \$461 million in Recovery Act money to the North Carolina DOT and \$610 million to the Illinois DOT. Both agreements will improve trip times and reliability; in Illinois the top speed will rise from 79 to 110 mph.

North Carolina: NCDOT expects the work to create at least 4,800 jobs in the state. There will be 24 construction projects in 11 counties.

On the Greensboro-Charlotte mainline used by Amtrak's *Piedmonts*, *Carolinian* and *Crescent*, 28 miles of second main track will be restored, returning the entire 92-mile run to double track. The single-

track Greensboro-Raleigh line will get two passing sidings for a total of five miles. Curves will be straightened to allow faster speeds, and for the introduction of a fourth Raleigh-Charlotte frequency by 2013.

The project has a big safety element: building 12 new bridges and eliminating 30 highway/road grade crossings.

Travel time reductions will average 10 minutes, for a Raleigh-Charlotte running time of about three hours. A longer-term goal—running time well under three hours—awaits a future phase in which 90 mph top speeds will knock off 10-15 more



- Illinois Dept. of Transportation

A work train lays new track in Illinois over which St. Louis-Chicago Amtrak trains will operate at 110 mph next year.

minutes.

"Rail is a critical component in North Carolina's economic development infra-

(continued on p. 2)

Wisconsin, 24 others, seek "Ex-Florida" \$s

Threat to Rescind All Unspent HSR Money Remains

Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood said Apr. 6 that he has received applications "totaling nearly \$10 billion" from 24 states, the District of Columbia and Amtrak. This is for the \$2.4 billion in Recovery Act high speed rail funds that Florida rejected (March News).

The Amtrak application was for \$1.3 billion to advance the Gateway Project (Feb. News) that includes new Hudson River rail tunnels. LaHood on March 14 had designated the Northeast Corridor as 11th and final high-speed rail corridor authorized under current law.

Among the states vying for a share of the \$2.4 billion is California, which would use the funds to extend the initial Central Valley segment of its new high-speed line all the way to Bakersfield. New York Gov.

(continued on p. 4)

Texas Advocates Buy Highway Billboards



Desmond Clark

Four Texas rail organizations are participating in a billboard campaign on Interstate 35 in the Lone Star state.

Texas Rail Advocates, Texas Association of Railroad Passengers, TEMPO and Lone Star Rail District have jointly funded three billboards north and south of Austin to capture the attention of legislators meeting at the state capitol.

This is part of an effort to transform Texas from laggard to leader in intercity passenger train development. The

billboards already have caught the attention of the traveling public and some officials.

Initially planned for six weeks during the current biannual session of the Texas legislature, the billboards will stay up through the end of May and longer if funding permits. The NARP Board voted to contribute towards the effort.

NARP can share the design template. Email narp@narprail.org or call 202-408-8362.

“Decoding” Federal Funding

Most surface transportation dollars other than for intercity passenger trains come from the Highway Trust Fund (HTF), which has highway and transit accounts. The HTF is funded primarily by fuel taxes.

The federal gasoline tax is 18.4 cents per gallon (24.4 cents diesel), used for:

- Roads: 15.44 cents (21.44 diesel);
- Transit: 2.86 cents; and
- Leaking Underground Storage Tank Trust Fund: 0.1 cents.

Spending has been rising but the tax has not increased since 1993. Thus, general-fund infusions totaling \$35 billion have been needed to “bail out” the HTF over the past three years.

Federal transportation funding is measured in three ways:

- annual appropriations and obligation limitations (table in *March News*)—money that will actually be spent, though not all in the same year;
- outlays—cash shelled out in a given year; and
- authorizations—funds authorized but not necessarily appropriated.

In dividing federal highway funds among the states, D.C. and territories:

- 10% is allocated by annual discretionary appropriations and—at least until recently—Congressional earmarks; and
- 90% is apportioned based on formulas reflecting factors such as the state’s Interstate Highway mileage, population, air quality readings, number of bridges, vehicle-miles traveled (VMT) and gas tax revenues.

The VMT and gas tax metrics reward states for high auto use and penalize states with high transit use.

Also, thanks to an “equity bonus allocation,” states are assured a certain percent of their contributions to the HTF.

For most highway, as well as a portion of the transit, funds, states and transit agencies have the ability to commit (obligate) funds on a reimbursement basis rather than being dependent on annual appropriations from Congress.

States can obligate these funds and enter directly into contracts without getting an appropriation—subject to the “obligation limit” that Congress, to manage overall spending, has set annually for many years. That limit is usually lower than the authorized level.

Most formula dollars have a four-year

life, and states seldom let authority expire.

However, most states have been slow to use all their Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) allowances. Pressure on state DOTs to build roads and to address growth in exurban areas makes it difficult for the U.S. to move away from its auto-centric transportation system.

Fortunately, some progressive states have spent CMAQ money on passenger train and transit projects.

Indeed, states have great flexibility to shift “highway” funds to transit and commuter rail, though not to intercity passenger trains.

“New Starts” money for new transit

N.C., Ill. Agreements

structure,” N.C. Gov. Bev Perdue said in announcing the agreement Mar. 22. “Improving speed and efficiency for both passenger and freight services demonstrates our commitment to the future.”

NS CEO Wick Moorman said, “Norfolk Southern joins with the North Carolina Railroad [NCRR] in supporting improvements to North Carolina’s rail network, for the benefit of passengers and long-term economic development.”

State-owned NCRR owns the tracks, leasing them long-term to NS. NCRR Pres. Scott Saylor: “Improved passenger rail will play a role in shaping mobility and economic development in our state and beyond. That’s why NCRR is contributing substantial non-taxpayer capital for higher speed tracks between Raleigh and Charlotte to improve the rail network.”

Illinois: Union Pacific (UP) crews started laying new premium rail and concrete ties last September on a 90-mile segment from just north of Alton to south of Springfield, and from north of Springfield to just south of Lincoln.

The new agreement with UP means that, starting in April 2011, the second round of construction will upgrade about 96 miles of existing track Elkhart-Dwight.

The plan also includes enhancing grade crossing warning systems with four-quadrant gates and pedestrian gates, implementation of a new signal system, station improvements, and the purchase of new locomotives and passenger cars.

The public will get a first glimpse of trains operating at 110 mph between

systems or extensions is appropriated directly (from the General Fund) to those projects with Administration recommendations and Congressional approval.

Federal transit dollars from the HTF’s transit account go straight to “designated recipients”—transit and metropolitan area agencies and cities.

The money goes to state DOTs for cities under 200,000. In some cases, states act as the designated recipient for urban areas. PennDOT, for example, administers Philadelphia-area rail transit modernization funds. The agency used that program for its share of the Amtrak/Keystone Corridor upgrades, since that met the definition of a “commuter” project. ■

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Dwight and Pontiac in 2012. The entire project is expected to be done in 2014.

The current part of the project should generate over 6,000 jobs. The entire \$1.2 billion project is expected to create and/or retain 24,000 jobs.

Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn and U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) joined in the Mar. 23 announcement. Durbin said, “High-speed rail is more than just an alternative mode of travel—it is a shot in the arm to today’s recovering economy, and an infrastructure investment that will serve us for generations to come.”

Gov. Quinn: “Bringing high-speed rail to Illinois has been a top priority of my administration because of the thousands of jobs and long-term investment it will bring to our state.” ■

ILLINOIS SEGMENTS “TBD”

Investments between Alton and St. Louis, through Springfield, and north of Joliet must await the outcome of an alternatives analysis currently under way as part of the “Tier 1” Environmental Impact Statement.

N.C. BILL WOULD KILL TRAIN

Some Republican N.C. state legislators want to forbid use of federal rail funds without explicit legislative approval. North Carolinians can act by going to www.bit.ly/nch422

SEE YOU ON NATIONAL TRAIN DAY, MAY 7th!



Many cities are hosting events this year to celebrate and promote train travel. All events are free to attend.

Amtrak will host major festivities **May 7th**, 10:00-4:00, in **Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia and Washington**, including equipment displays. NARP volunteers will be present at each. See www.nationaltrainday.com for details on these and others.

NARP is involved in the following (May 7 unless otherwise noted):

Toledo—April 30: 10:00-3:00. Amtrak Station, Upstairs Exhibit Hall. Equipment displays.

Depew, NY: 7:00-3:00. Buffalo/Depew Amtrak station.

Saco, ME: 10:30-3:30. TrainRiders/Northeast display at Amtrak station.

Vermont: 11:30 AM events at Bennington and Brattleboro. Official celebration aboard southbound *Vermont* from Essex Jct. to White River Jct.

Tampa: Noon-5:00. Tampa Union Station. Sponsored by Friends of Tampa Union Station and the Florida Coalition of Rail Passengers.

Dallas: 10:00-3:00. Union Station. Equipment displays, NARP and Texas Rail Advocates information.

Ogden, UT: 10:00-5:00. Union Station, 2501 Wall Ave. (accessible via FrontRunner rail from Salt Lake City)

Portland, OR: 10:00-4:00, Portland Union Station.

Cleveland—May 21.

Charleston, WV—May 22. Friends of the *Cardinal* display at the West Virginia Power baseball game.

Contact NARP if you want to be involved in your local event. A full listing of celebrations NARP is involved in is at www.narprail.org/trainday

“Transportation Thursday”

The Jeff Santos Show, heard in the Boston area at 1510 AM, is streamed (and archived) at www.bit.ly/jsantos

NARP President Ross Capon and Boston-area passenger train advocates are regular guests. The show airs live daily but focuses on transportation on Thursday mornings.

Ryan Budget; NARP Response

House Budget Chair Paul Ryan (R-WI) on April 5 released a FY 2012 budget plan which zeroes out the high speed and intercity passenger rail program and makes undetermined cuts to Amtrak.

The plan’s narrative says “high-speed rail and other new intercity rail projects should be pursued only if they can be established as self-supporting commercial services. The threat of large, endless subsidies is precisely the reason governors across the country are rejecting federally-funded high-speed rail projects.”

In an April 6 release, NARP said many governors want rail funds and noted the costs of *not* expanding rail. ■

Membership Meeting Notes

In Washington, DC, Mar. 19: Amtrak CEO Joseph Boardman said he found that many people west of the Appalachians think Amtrak only pays attention to the Northeast Corridor.

But he said Amtrak’s California operations have “never run better than today. We are paying attention. We have an almost entirely new management team on the West Coast.”

David Kutrosky, Managing Director of the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Auth., confirmed that Amtrak’s performance is

Amtrak’s 40th Anniversary Exhibit Train

Amtrak operations began May 1, 1971. To commemorate 40 years of service to the American public, Amtrak plans a special exhibit train with displays at various locations on weekends for up to a year.

NARP volunteers will be at many stops to engage and involve people in working for more passenger train service.

To participate, contact the NARP office.

Three baggage cars will showcase Amtrak’s decades with china, posters, etc. And, in a rehabbed ex-*Regional* Bistro car, Amtrak will sell special 40th anniversary merchandise. The train will start in Washington, DC,

steadily improving. CCJPA and Amtrak’s new Western management meet regularly to improve the Corridor’s performance.

In Englewood, CO: People who actually run passenger trains understand that people will ride them and know how to make the systems work, HNTB con-
(continued on p. 4)

QUICK FACTS

60% of Americans polled think, incorrectly, that the federal gas tax is already indexed to inflation. Can Washington summon the political will to do something the public thinks is already happening?

Source: June-July 2009 survey by Building America’s Future (www.bit.ly/gastaxpoll)

60% of Association of American Railroads (AAR) focus group participants think U.S. railroads use publicly-owned tracks. The Dec. 2010 group consisted of college-educated, “inside-the-Beltway” influentials.

Actually, most tracks are privately owned and the industry spends more than \$10 billion a year on track-related capital and operating expenses.

as part of National Train Day festivities.

Along with the train, Amtrak is producing a special anniversary book and DVD documentary. Both will be available for purchase on the train and online, including via www.kalmbachstore.com. ■

Brunswick Depot Takes Shape



- Jim Nawrocki, Amtrak conductor & TrainRiders/Northeast member

With snow gone, construction work continues on the future Brunswick, Maine, Amtrak station, which is slated to begin serving *Downeaster* passengers in the fall of 2012. Paid for with Recovery Act funds, it will become Amtrak’s easternmost station.



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

WHERE'S THE MONEY?

The disconnect between the President's ambitious spending blueprint and White House silence on how it will be funded continues to frustrate lawmakers.

At a March 10 **Senate appropriations subcommittee** hearing, Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood would not say how additional revenue should be raised, only that the Administration is eager to work with legislators to find a solution. The White House opposes increasing the gas tax or imposing a vehicle-miles traveled tax while unemployment is high.

At the **counterpart House subcommittee's** March 29 hearing, LaHood several times said, "We want to sit down with you and work it out." Chair Tom Latham (R-IA) took it in good humor. Next day, however, Federal Highway Administrator Victor Mendez said the same thing. Latham responded, "I'm going to adjourn the hearing. This is just ridiculous."

Asked Mar. 10 how he would prioritize projects with a smaller budget, LaHood said the Administration wants to do what Eisenhower did with interstate highways; high-speed rail (HSR) would be that next generation of transportation.

Chair Patty Murray (D-WA) pressed LaHood on the importance of a National

Rail Plan with clearly defined objectives and metrics for success. LaHood promised that the plan—due Sept. 15, 2010—would be completed "soon."

The House Transportation & Infrastructure Railroads Subcommittee had a March 11 hearing on private passenger train operation.

Rep. John Mica (R-FL), full committee chairman, again called Amtrak a "Soviet-style" railroad. He lauded efficiency gains that he said opening passenger train routes to private operators would bring. His interest is in 220 mph HSR. He called launch of the President's HSR program "an absolute disaster".

Amtrak V.P.—Policy & Development Stephen Gardner argued that, while competition sometimes reduces costs, it can also increase fragmentation and reduce network efficiency: "[I]ncreased private sector involvement is not a substitute for adequate, consistent and assured federal funding...federal funding for intercity passenger rail service is the only way to attract—and maintain—private sector participation and financing."

Subcommittee Ranking Member Corrine Brown (R-FL), Laura Richardson (D-CA), and Edward Wytkind, Pres.—

Transportation Trades Dept., AFL-CIO questioned the push for more private sector involvement. In a heated exchange with Mica, Brown blamed the failure of Tampa-Orlando HSR on Florida Gov. Rick Scott's "lack of leadership." ■

Spring Member Meetings *cont'd*

sultant Gene Skoropowski told the Mar. 5 NARP/ColoRail meeting. Pundits and policy types have theories, but rarely understand how to make systems succeed, he added.

In Schenectady: New York State DOT's Director of Major Projects gave an update on high-speed rail initiatives and projects. For a complete list prepared by the Empire State Passengers Assoc., see www.bit.ly/nyhsr (PDF).

Amtrak's Kevin Chittenden overviewed several customer service initiatives underway on the New York-Albany-Niagara Falls corridor.

Florida Funds *from page 1*

Andrew Cuomo wants some for higher-speed New York-Albany-Buffalo service.

The application deadline was April 4. "A merit-driven process will be used to award the [\$2.4 billion] to projects that can deliver public and economic benefits quickly. A project's ability to reduce energy consumption, improve the efficiency of a region's overall transportation network, and generate sustained economic activity along the corridor are among the selection criteria" (LaHood's Apr. 6 statement).

But House leaders want to rescind (remove) unobligated money from the rail grant program. ■

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Chicago-St. Louis and Texas Eagle changes April 16-24 & May 1-9.

Chicago-St. Louis trains run Chicago-Bloomington only; buses serve Bloomington-St. Louis stations. *Eagle* detours, skipping Illinois stations except Chicago (taxis to/from St. Lou-

is for Alton, Carlinville passengers). South, leaves St. Louis-Walnut Ridge points 30 mins. later. North (trips departing Texas day before days shown) lvs. Malvern-St. Louis points earlier.

Major Caltrain cuts: Fewer trains; station closures: www.bit.ly/calcuts