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# NARPnews

*The high-speed rail links us from the past to the future, from the south to Fresno and north. This is truly a California project bringing us together today.*

GOV. JERRY BROWN, SPEAKING AT THE CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY IN FRESNO

## One Small Track Segment for California, One Giant Leap for U.S. Passengers



FRA Admin. Joe Szabo, EPA Admin. Gina McCarthy, Governor Jerry Brown, and others signed the inaugural section of track to commemorate the start of construction for the state's high-speed rail system. Read more on Pg. 4.

## On Time Trains Get Their Day in Court

Arguments on Dec. 8 in the case of Association of American Railroads v U.S. Department of Transportation revealed a Supreme Court divided over the fundamental role Amtrak plays. Some justices sided with NARP's argument that—as a public transportation provider—Amtrak is legally able to set metrics and standards to ensure that Americans have access to a well-functioning passenger rail system. Other members of the court expressed concern that the law in question violated host railroads rights.

NARP joined with the Environmental Law & Policy Center, All Aboard Ohio and Virginians for High Speed Rail to petition the court on the behalf of America's train passengers who have been hurt by the protracted delays.

"Passenger rail offers an indispensable transportation option for tens of millions of Americans—but the system only works if peo-

ple can count on the train to get them where they need to go, when they need to be there," said NARP President Jim Mathews in a public statement issued the day of the hearing. "Skyrocketing delays are eating into Amtrak's ridership and revenue, and turning off hundreds of potential new rail riders each day. America's passengers need the court to help get our trains moving again."

Justice Elena Kagan was the most vocal proponent of NARP's view, asking "what about Amtrak is not governmental?... [T]here is government all over this at every step."

As NARP President Jim Mathews predicted in October, Justice Antonin Scalia was hemmed in by an earlier decision wherein he argued that Amtrak was a governmental entity. But he still advanced an argument opposing the idea of Amtrak establishing metrics and standards, albeit along a different line of reasoning.

"[W]hat difference does it make whether it's a governmental entity or not, so long as it is operating on a for-profit basis and is giving—is given the last word on some regulatory matters that disadvantage its competitors, there's a violation of due process," argued Justice Scalia. "I — I don't see how it makes any difference whether you call it governmental or not."

That may put Scalia, a prominent voice on the court, in opposition to Amtrak's case. There were other points where he seemed to take Amtrak's side, however, so passengers will have to wait until early 2015 to see a decision. In the meantime, Amtrak's Midwestern and long-distance trains continue to see abysmal on-time performance. (Most delays are diminishing from the worst extremes, however, where trains would arrive 10 to 12 hours late; now a passenger can expect to only arrive around two hours behind schedule). ■

# Senate Receives NARP Plan for Rail Revolution

The U.S. Senate committee in charge of surface transportation held a hearing in December on the future of passenger rail, with Senate leaders pointing to the potential for trains to act as a catalyst for growth for the U.S. economy.

NARP submitted testimony to the hearing, urging Congress to seek a fresh approach that moves beyond old arguments, focusing on legislation that will encourage and support improvement and expansion of service across the national network. NARP outlined a plan that would integrate passenger rail into a broader surface transportation program, including rail investment in a unified transportation fund. By providing \$50 billion in investment over a six year span, Congress would create a predictable, dedicated endowment for investing in the improvement and expansion of the U.S. rail network.

Amtrak Chairman Anthony Coscia, who appeared as a witness, echoed many of

NARP's arguments in his testimony. He stated that while the Northeast Corridor (NEC) is the biggest success story in the national rail network, this is mainly due to the fact that it is the one corridor in which federal and state governments have made significant investments.

"Record Amtrak ridership in the country's mega-regions—not only the NEC, but also the Chicago Hub area, California and the Pacific Northwest—hints at the tremendous opportunity for truly modern passenger rail service links between dynamic city pairs," said Coscia. "Passenger rail could be so much more, our economies could be stronger, and our lives better, if trains were faster, more frequent and more reliable in these regions. This is to say nothing of the regions around the country where little or no high-quality rail connects metropolitan areas—regions like Atlanta to Charlotte, Houston to Dallas, Miami to Tampa, Pittsburgh to Cleveland, and Tucson

to Phoenix."

NARP's plan was also endorsed in the testimony delivered to Senators by the Association of Independent Rail Operators (AIPRO). NARP concurrently endorsed AIPRO's call to create tools to help states leverage private investment to improve the experience on state supported services. NARP has already endorsed some independently developed rail projects—most notably All Aboard Florida, which will connect Miami and Orlando; Texas Central Railway, which will connect Dallas and Houston; and XpressWest which will connect Las Vegas to Palmdale and the state of California's high-speed rail system. While these 100 percent privately funded projects will be limited to a few high-value corridors, they are instructive in demonstrating the ability of the private sector to contribute to passenger rail development. ■

## NARP Staff Pitches In With Toys For Tots Train

Early in December, Amtrak and the Canadian Pacific railroad teamed up to run the 16th annual Toys for Tots holiday train through upstate New York, and NARP's Director of Resource Development, Logan McLeod, was among the 20-plus volunteers who took the trip to hand out toys and clothing to families in need along the route.

It's part of the 50-year Toys for Tots tradition carried on by the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, and reservists on the train were joined by Amtrak and CP employees, Army, Air Force and Navy members and even a Metro North commuter railroad Superintendent.

"It was remarkable to see all the lives Amtrak and others were able to impact in just one day," Logan says. "At every stop volunteers were greeted with cheers and smiles as they passed out toys to families in need."

Pulled by a CP locomotive, the Amtrak train included three baggage cars packed with more than 1,000 bundles of collected toys, hats, food items, and assorted clothing. The train started on a Saturday morning in Binghamton, NY, making four stops on the way to Delanson, NY, in Schenectady County as Santa and the volunteers took care of the kids along the way. On Sunday, the train pulled out of Albany and made its way north, making stops along the way to Rouse Point, near the Canadian border. Reps. Chris Gibson (R-NY) and Paul Tonko (D-NY) joined in to support the work as the train passed through their districts.

It was the third straight year Amtrak and CP collaborated on Toys for Tots, donating equipment and on-board staff for the two-day trip along nearly 350 miles of railroad. ■



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### Volunteer Leadership

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# The Year Ahead: What 2015 Holds for Passenger Rail

The close of 2014 brought an end to the 113th Congress—which through a last minute flurry of bills during the lame-duck session avoided becoming the least productive congress in modern history. So it should be no surprise that there aren't many national transportation projects in the pipeline as we look ahead in 2015.

Fortunately, many states have been hard at work expanding and improve passenger rail service. And while there is not as much to look forward to as there would be with a robust national passenger rail trust fund, there are highlights on the horizon. NARP polled its regional leaders to see what's in store for America's passengers in 2015.

## Northeast Division

- The NEC FUTURE will deliver its final set of recommendations to prioritize future investments in the Northeast Corridor (NEC) in 2015. Given the wide variance in the proposed program levels (see the December NARP News for more details), the conclusions of the final EIS could have an impact of tens of billions of dollars. Of course, the report won't include a way to pay for the upgrades. But by defining the need—especially for time-sensitive needs such

as the Hudson River tunnels (see the November NARP News)—the report may well spur action from state and federal officials.

- Passengers in Massachusetts got a great Christmas present when it was revealed that the Federal Transit Administration would grant almost \$1 billion in federal funding to the extension of MBTA's Green Line to Somerville and Medford. The project will add six new stations and 24 new light rail vehicles. Locals will also benefit from 840 design and construction jobs, with another 140 permanent operation and maintenance jobs one the service is launched.

## Mid Atlantic Division

- A key question for Maryland is whether Gov. Larry Hogan (R) will continue two major transit projects: the Purple Line

would connect Washington, D.C.'s Maryland suburbs from Bethesda to New Carrollton; the Red Line would go from Woodlawn in Baltimore County to East Baltimore.

- Western Pennsylvanians for Passenger Rail (WPPR) wants PennDOT to release the Keystone West Corridor Study, which has been completed and approved for release by the Federal Railroad Administration. The purpose of this study is "to identify and evaluate the feasibility of options to reduce passenger rail travel times and increase trip frequency" between Pittsburgh and Harrisburg.

- The Friends of the Cardinal will be returning to the West Virginia Legislature for

passenger operations on along the freight rail corridor.

- While it technically launched on the last day of 2014, this will mark the first year of operations for phase one of the Atlanta streetcar. The 2.7 mile East-West line connects 12 stops between Centennial Olympic Park and the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site.

- The North Carolina DOT will release a public draft of its 20-year rail plan in January 2015. The Comprehensive State Rail Plan will define a vision for North Carolina's rail infrastructure while identifying quantifiable economic and quality-of-life benefits to the state.

## Southern Division

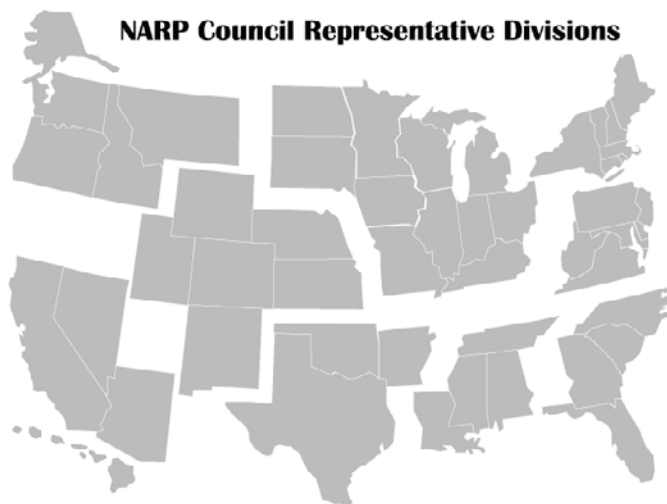
- 2015 marks the 10th Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina—and the elimination of the passenger rail service in the majority of the Gulf Coast. Communities along the Gulf Coast will come together this year to celebrate successful renewal efforts, and rally support for the work yet to be done. NARP is partnering with the Southern Rail Commission and Gulf Coast mayors, elected officials, and business leaders to bring about the restoration of New Orleans to Florida

rail service, along with relevant corridor and connecting services. Key to this effort will be securing a federal grant for planning work.

- The city of Chattanooga will undertake a \$400,000 restoration study in 2015, looking to utilize 21 miles of an urban freight rail corridor to develop a citywide light rail network. The Tennessee city has been without passenger rail for the last four decades, and business and community leaders are looking to spur economic development by connecting downtown Chattanooga to the airport, nearby industrial parks, college campuses, and healthcare facilities.

## South Central Division

- Advocates are looking to secure an increased source of (contd. on next page)



the 2nd year in a row, seeking an appropriation to help Maryland with the expenses for the three MARC trains that run into Martinsburg, WV. The FOC's main emphasis this year will be on the "standing room only" cars that most West Virginians using the MARC Service are experiencing.

## Southeast Division

- Construction has already started on several of the stations that will serve All Aboard Florida, the Orlando – Miami service being developed by Florida East Coast Industries, LLC. The company is developing two 60,000 square foot train stations in West Palm Beach and Fort Lauderdale, with a much larger intermodal station being built in Miami. Crews will also upgrade roughly 200 grade crossings and add a second track to allow for higher speed

funding for the Texas and Oklahoma funded Heartland Flyer, seeking a second frequency to augment the once-a-day service.

- Look for the completion of the Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail study in late 2015. This service development plan covers a long corridor from South Texas to Oklahoma through metro markets San Antonio, Austin, Dallas-Fort Worth to Oklahoma City. Interest has been raised by Mexico to connect through to Monterrey.

- The Environmental Impact Statement is underway to determine routing for High Speed Rail from Dallas to Houston, undertaken by a private corporation Texas Central Railway. Their ambitious plan is to begin service in 2021.

- A private carrier, Iowa Pacific, is developing passenger rail service between Tulsa and Oklahoma City in 2015 on the Sooner Sub.

#### Midwest Division

- The first of CAF USA's much-anticipated rolling stock will enter revenue service in 2015. Most of these cars will go to National Network trains, but since all railroads lead to Chicago, we figured this was as good a region to place them as any.

- The state of Illinois is investing \$223 million to restore daily roundtrip service between Rockford and Chicago. The initial service, scheduled to launch in 2015, will make intermediate stops in Elgin, Huntley, and Belvidere. Illinois Governor Pat Quinn says he hopes to expand frequencies if passenger demand proves sufficient. Illinois also believes it will be able to extend the line to Freeport, Galena, and Dubuque, Iowa in future phases.

- The state of Indiana is facing a January 31, 2015 deadline to decide the next steps for the Hoosier State. The Indianapolis – Chicago train service faced a major setback when Corridor Capitol was deemed unfit to take over operations by the Indiana DOT. Now, INDOT is looking to team up with independent operator Iowa Pacific, LLC to continue the service. INDOT says it may look to sign an extension with Amtrak, the current operator, if it is unable to meet the January 31 deadline.

- The Iowa Department of Transportation will begin preliminary engineering work and an environmental assessment

this year for the planned Amtrak service between Iowa City and Chicago.

#### Mountains & Plains Division

- This summer, BNSF Railway will complete repairs to 50 miles of the Southwest Chief route in Kansas and Colorado, funded by a TIGER grant sponsored by Garden City, Kansas. \$12.5 million came from U.S. DOT, with matching funds from Amtrak, BNSF, Kansas DOT, and Kansas and Colorado counties and communities.

- Legislation to save the Southwest Chief will be introduced in the state legislatures of New Mexico and Colorado this spring.

- The Northern Flyer Alliance is working with Texas Rail Advocates to ensure the continuation of the Heartland Flyer.

#### Northwest Division

- The Northwest Corridor projects continue on the BNSF mainline between Tacoma and Seattle to support the additional two Cascades roundtrips scheduled to start in 2017. As a result, passengers will see a reduction in running time, along with a commitment of improved operational reliability from BNSF.

- Rail advocates continue to work to establish an Empire Builder stop in Culbertson, MT (halfway between Wolf Point and Williston).

- Seattle's First Hill streetcar opening is behind schedule because of car delivery issues, but is expected to begin operations sometime in the middle of 2015.

- The opening for Portland TriMet's Orange Line is set for Sept 12, 2015. The line will connect Portland State University's downtown campus to suburban Milwaukie.

#### Southwest Division

- California High-Speed Rail ceremonially broke ground in Fresno on January 6, a full 19 years after the managing Authority began the initial planning process. NARP Council Members Alex Brideau and Paul Dyson were in attendance, along with Gov. Jerry Brown, outgoing FRA Administrator Joseph Szabo, and EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy. McCarthy touted the dramatic environmental benefits of CHSR, including 10MM fewer annual car trips and 50% less growth in intrastate air demand by 2030 (one year after the system achieves full-route operation). State cap-and-trade revenues ensure ongoing funding even with an unsupportive Congress.

- Caltrain will implement a unique PTC integration in 2015 as it finalizes HSR-compatible electrification plans (construction to begin as early as winter 2015 for 2019 deployment).

- Bay Area Rapid Transit in 2015 will open its first heavy-rail extension since 2003 when the Fremont line extends 5.4 miles south to Warm Springs, setting the stage for the crucial, two-phase Silicon Valley extension to San Jose. Work continues on the 10-mile eBART light DMU connector from Pittsburg/Bay Point to Antioch (estimated 2017).

- Los Angeles MTA continues a raft of new rail transit development, with Expo Line Phase 2 (Culver City-Santa Monica) set to debut by the end of 2015 (6.6 miles), followed shortly by the 11-mile Gold Line Foothill Extension (Pasadena-Azusa). Construction continues on the Crenshaw Line to LAX and the long-awaited Purple Line (subway) extension westward down Wilshire Blvd.

- Metrolink will begin operating the Peris Valley Line in late 2015, extending by 24 miles the reach of the 91 Line commuter service into exurban Riverside County on legacy ATSF right-of-way.

- Sacramento Regional Transit will open a 4.3-mile extension of its Blue Line light rail to Cosumnes River College in September 2015.

- SANDAG (San Diego) in 2015 will begin constructing its 11-mile Mid-Coast Corridor light rail, bringing service northward to the UCSD campus by 2019.

- SMART (Sonoma-Marin commuter rail) prepares for a 2016 opening of its initial 43-mile segment (North Santa Rosa-San Rafael) using modern DMUs.

- San Francisco MTA continues tunneling under some of most densely-populated neighborhoods in the US for a 2017 completion of its 1.7-mile Central Subway T light rail extension from the current SF Caltrain station to Union Square and Chinatown.

- Valley Metro (Phoenix) will have three light rail extensions totaling 8 miles under construction, with the Northwest and Central Mesa extensions opening by early 2016.

- Honolulu continues construction of its 20-mile elevated light rail, with the initial segment set to open in 2017. ■

## NARP Leaders Spur Southwest Chief Support

As newly elected state officials and legislators begin planning their work sessions in coming months, members of your Council and Board are hard at work in Colorado, New Mexico and Kansas to protect and defend the Southwest Chief.

Two threats have emerged: the looming potential cost of vital and long-postponed infrastructure improvements on a 686-mile segment of the route, and wrangling between New Mexico and the BNSF railroad over completion of New Mexico's purchase of BNSF's Raton Pass line. While these are separate issues, how each is resolved could shape the outcome for the other, and both could spell the end of the Chief.

NARP Board Member Jim Souby, who is President of the Colorado Rail Passenger Association, and Lynn Aldrich, your Council representative for New Mexico, have been active in a multi-state coalition formed to work with state elected officials and grassroots organizers to generate support for state funding to keep the line open, and are gaining trac-

tion in efforts to reach New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez to persuade her to back the Chief.

Several Chief funding bills were introduced in New Mexico last year, and one of the two House bills passed 47-11. The companion Senate measure enjoyed similar support, but the part-time legislature ran out of time before it could reach the Senate floor for a vote. Advocates have continued to build public support for the Chief, and recently won overwhelming backing from the New Mexico Association of Counties and the New Mexico Municipal League. ■



James Souby (Photo courtesy FrontRangeOnTrack.org)



The Southwest Chief's route over the affected section of track in Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico.

## Are you on Track with the New Year?

It's that time of the year again when you begin to set goals for yourself to accomplish in 2015. We commonly refer to these as "New Year's Resolutions". An example would be fixing that creaking step on your stair case you swear at every time you went up it, "I'm going to fix that damn thing this weekend!" Maybe it's that gym membership that you promise you're going to use this year to get back into shape.

Whatever your personal goals may be, I hope you accomplish them. While contemplating what they might be, I offer you these easy resolutions that you can perform as a passenger rail advocate:

### PASSENGER RAIL ADVOCATES NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

1. I'm going to be sensitive to the needs for passenger rail service in my community, and communicate them to NARP.

2. I'm going to know who my local and state elected officials are, and will enthusiastically make the case for more and better passenger rail service.

3. I will try and be more involved by investigating the volunteer opportunities at NARP.

4. I'm going to continue to financially support NARP to the best of my means.

Let's have a happy and successful 2015 as we work together. ■

## Next Issue: NARP Developing Summary of National Funding Needs for Rail

NARP is developing a comprehensive "Funding Master List" of national passenger rail projects specifically prioritizing those critical projects which—if left unaddressed—could have a damaging effect on passenger train operations throughout the nation. It will also highlight affordable actions to reinforce the national network and expand the reach of passenger rail services to more Americans.

NARP believes this Master List will be the most ambitious attempt yet to compile a nationwide summary of high-speed, higher speed and regional passenger rail projects.

The goal is to first distribute the list to elected leaders at all levels of government—federal, state and local—and educate them so they develop an appreciation of the nation's pressing rail passenger needs. Second, it will help establish a groundswell of support leading to the formation of an ongoing financing mechanism to fund the rail renaissance. (cont'd on pg. 6)

# NARP Expands Volunteer Opportunities

Have you seen the expanded opportunities to volunteer for NARP? Whether you're looking to build your resume, to add to your creative portfolio, to develop new expertise in preparation for a career change, or just looking for a way to make a difference, NARP now has dozens of immediate volunteer openings available nationwide. These are meaningful, ongoing roles which you can use to jump-start your professional life or to contribute in a hands-on way to our work for more and better trains.

It's also a great way to contribute your professional talents to your association. We need volunteers in administrative, communications, advocacy/programs and technology.

While these positions are unpaid, the results they produce -- for you as well as for NARP -- are real. You'll make a difference while generating work products, references and networking opportunities. It's a win-win!

You can read more about these opportunities by clicking through the Volunteer menu to find each job listing page. If you think you're up to the challenge, apply by sending your resume and a cover letter by email to [volunteer@narprail.org](mailto:volunteer@narprail.org).

## ADMINISTRATIVE

- Office Manager (Washington, DC)
- Data Entry Assistant
- State Support Coordinator

## COMMUNICATIONS

- Blogger (multiple positions available)
- PR And Marketing Associate
- Email Marketing Associate
- Graphic Design Associate

## ADVOCACY/PROGRAM WORK

- Routes Spokesperson
- Certified Citizen Advocate
- Millennials Evangelist

## TECHNOLOGY

- Web Content Assistant

Read a full description for each volunteer position by heading over to <http://www.narprail.org/volunteer/>

## Master Funding List (cont'd)

There are three rail projects of national significance that NARP's Council has identified as top priorities for 2015:

- The two new trans-Hudson River rail tunnels coupled with a new two-track Hackensack River Portal bridge has been dubbed the **Gateway Project** by Amtrak. These 104-year old tunnels are in dire need of replacement, and damage resulting from Superstorm Sandy has only heightened the need. If the existing tunnels were to fail, Amtrak operations would be severely disrupted across the entire East Coast.
- With the recent increases in Midwest passenger rail services, the Chicago-hub has become intolerably congested. The Michigan Department of Transportation has initiated design work on the **"South of the Lake Reroute"** for the enhanced Chicago to Detroit corridor. This plan would provide two passenger only

dedicated tracks with an initial 110 mph capability, and provisions for 125 mph operations. Running times between Chicago and Detroit could be reduced by two hours with an additional seven daily roundtrips.

- Amtrak's fleet is increasingly obsolete, and if something isn't done, will drive away potential and current riders with poor service quality. With **new and rehabilitated rolling stock**, long-distance trains such as the Sunset Limited and Cardinal could be moved to daily operation from their current tri-weekly runs. Existing trains could be lengthened, adding passenger revenues while incurring only minor costs with the resulting revenue improving Amtrak's bottom line.

We believe this list will be an invaluable tool to illustrate the demand for investment in trains. Check back in the February NARP News for full details! ■

# NARP TRAVELER'S ADVISORY

--Amtrak is warning passengers on Lake Shore Limited trains (Trains 49/448 and 49/449) that they may experience delays of up to 3 hours due to Norfolk Southern and CSX freight congestion. Amtrak is working with both host railroads to address these issues.

--Bus service will be provided between Eugene and Portland for Coast Starlight Trains 11, 1101, 14 and 1401, effective until February 23.

--With the completion of BNSF capacity expansion work in North Dakota, Amtrak's Empire Builder was able to return to its normal schedule beginning January 12.

--Crescent Trains 19 and 20 will not operate between Atlanta and New Orleans, due to track work being performed by NS, effective until February 12.