



RAIL PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION

PASSENGERS Voice

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RAIL PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION DEFENDS YOUR RIGHTS IN HOUSE HEARING

The House Rail & Infrastructure Subcommittee on Rail held a hearing on the Amtrak reauthorization on November 13, examining current-day challenges and future opportunities for passenger rail in the U.S. Rail Passengers Association President Jim Mathews testified as part of the panel—which also included representatives from Amtrak, railroad labor, and state transportation officials—arguing that Amtrak is an essential engine for economic growth in town across the country, and that we cannot cut our way to a sustainable national rail network.



Jim Mathews getting ready to testify. (Photo Credit: Sean Jeans-Gail)

Watch the full testimony here:

<https://transportation.house.gov/committee-activity/hearings/amtrak-now-and-into-the-future>

The hearing, titled “Amtrak Now and Into the Future,” focused on the funding challenges facing this Congress if it’s going to change the transportation status quo in this country, and overcome decades of underinvestment in passenger trains. T&I Committee Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-OR) attacked the anemic funding levels at the root, challenging the idea that Amtrak—alone, out of all the transportation modes—should have to make a profit.

“Amtrak should be one of our Nation’s great success stories, but it remains one of our Nation’s most difficult challenges because of a belief by some in this chamber that our country shouldn’t have a national passenger rail system supported by the Federal Government,” said DeFazio in his opening remarks. “We spend hundreds of billions of dollars to subsidize every form of public transportation – highways, aviation, transit– yet Amtrak gets the short end of the stick, with under \$2 billion a year from the Federal Government... To be clear, I don’t subscribe to this notion that Amtrak needs to operate cost-neutral.”

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RAIL PASSENGERS IN SACRAMENTO

In October, over 100 Rail Passengers Association council representatives, members, and fellow advocates descended upon Sacramento, CA - the “farm-to-table capital of America - for the Rail Nation: California fall conference.

The city provided wonderful weather and interesting sights as our members arrived in town and the Sheraton Grand Hotel was a very welcoming host.

A number of members spent Friday afternoon with the staff field team in a workshop that covered a variety of issues ranging from local transportation projects to national rail legislation.

The evening saw many attendees gather to celebrate the year in advocacy as the Association presented the 2019 Ross Capon Awards (*you can read more about that on page 5*).

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“Let’s stop talking about profits and use the reauthorization to address real challenges in Amtrak’s future.”

Jim Mathews, President & CEO



RAIL PASSENGERS

ASSOCIATION

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This issue has news through November 12, 2019.

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We had a variety of speakers throughout the day on Saturday. Hearing from new voices and those who have lead the way. Some of the highlights include:

Rail Passengers VP of Policy + Government Affairs Sean Jeans-Gail & President/CEO Jim Mathews give a presentation on "Amtrak 2.0" and how the Association can help shape the future of passenger rail in the US. Rail Passengers Director Matt Melzer moderated a conversation on regional rail & the Green New Deal with Robert Munson, fellow Director Mike Christensen, and MA Council Representative Karen Christenson

The "Inclusion & Equity" session featured an honest conversation

about development, housing, and transportation with advocate Alfred Twu and Rail Passengers member Jason Lee.

The New York Youth Transportation Advocacy

Committee's George Basile and BART's Alicia Trost & Seung Lee talked about engaging youth stakeholders in transit advocacy. Saturday keynote speaker, California State Transportation Agency Deputy Secretary for Rail & Transit Chad Edison, spoke about connectivity and integrated transit.

The Rail Passengers' Council took center stage on Sunday during the business meeting that was highlighted by reports from both Chairman Peter LeCody and President & CEO Jim Mathews.

Outside of the official meetings, conference attendees were able to attend various trips and tours around the region. From local



A session at RailNation:California. (Photo Credit: Joe Aiello)

and regional transit, vineyards, and the state rail museum - there was something for everyone to enjoy over the weekend. The highlight tour for many was the day trip to Fresno to see firsthand some of the California high-speed rail construction sites.

Rail Passengers Director Mike Christensen commented that "the scale of infrastructure needed to operate trains at 200+ mph is immense. I'm 6'2", yet standing next to the massive viaduct columns made me feel tiny."

It was a great weekend for advocacy and we are looking forward to seeing everyone in Washington, DC for "Day on the Hill."



California high speed rail construction site. (Photo: Credit: Mike Christensen)

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In his written testimony, Mathews tried to shift the conversation from a narrow focus on the money it takes to operate the train and towards the enormous economic benefits that accrue to the communities served by Amtrak trains.

“Amtrak exists, and collects public funds, expressly to provide service to places that need it and where the private sector cannot profitably provide it...,” said Mathews. “Amtrak is one of the ways the U.S. government acts to support the common good, the ‘general welfare.’ Every Amtrak long-distance route creates a return on equity for the communities that have invested in it over the past few decades. And thanks to rigorous economic modeling this Association has developed over the past year, we have been able to quantify that return in a way that hasn’t been done previously.”

Mathews drew the attention of the Committee to the route-specific studies Rail Passengers have done to quantify these benefits. These studies found the Empire Builder is worth \$327 million every year to the economies of the states it serves; that the Southwest Chief brings \$180 million in annual economic benefits to New Mexico, Colorado and Kansas; and that that restoring passenger rail between Mobile and New Orleans would produce \$216 million in annual economic benefits for Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama, despite costing the three states only about \$7 million each year (this last study was done by Transportation for America and the Southern Rail commission using a similar methodology).

Read the full written testimony of

Jim Mathews here: <https://www.railpassengers.org/happening-now/news/blog/testimony-of-jim-mathews/>

2024—which doesn’t even address the needs of the Amfleet II and Superliner fleets. If Americans want to keep a national network, we



Jim Mathews holds passenger kit.

(Photo Credit: House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Webcast)

A FIX FOR AGING EQUIPMENT— ONE TEMPORARY, ONE PERMANENT

One of Mathews’ points of emphasis was the need to immediately ramp up investment in our nation’s aging fleet of rail equipment, saying that while Amtrak has taken concrete, positive steps in beginning the fleet overhaul, Congress must step up and fully fund the next phase of procurement.

“We are pleased with the initial steps Amtrak and its state partners have taken to procure new equipment (and, as an intermediary step, refresh existing equipment),” wrote Mathews. “However, these steps just aren’t enough when compared with the actual fleet needs. It would take 929 new cars to replace all cars over 37 years of age in Amtrak’s fleet... By Amtrak’s estimate, the outstanding fleet acquisitions alone will approach an estimated \$3.5 billion through FY

must be willing to pay the true cost of maintaining it.”

This topic came up again during the question and answer portion of the hearing, when Chairman DeFazio asked Mathews to explain the “passenger kit” he referenced in his testimony—the do-it-yourself kit with shims and duct tape many long-distance passengers bring to jury-rig repairs on old equipment.

“For a lot of our long-distance passengers, particularly in the sleeper cars we have kind of a rolling museum out there as you know,” said a half-joking Mathews. “So, the savvy passenger carries duct tape, shims, plastic and wooden to kind of keep the doors from rattling, Velcro repairs and holds the curtains together, that way you can actually keep your curtains closed.”

In response, recognized that the state of the national network fleet was unacceptable and outlined the steps they’re taking to

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR MEMBERSHIP!

Dear Rail Passengers Members,

Thank you for being a member this year. Our commitment to improving passenger rail in the U.S. is a difficult but necessary mission, and we are grateful to be able to represent your needs and wishes in our conversations with local and national government and industry leaders. Even further, your membership dues allow us to speak up for the those with limited access to rail through legislative efforts in Washington, D.C., circulating time-sensitive rail alerts and calls to action, and offering travel benefits that allow you to further enjoy rail transportation.

We also couldn't do this work without your physical contributions, including helpfully submitting reports on issues near you, participating in our Station Volunteers program, and spending time urging your local leaders to improve your community's access to affordable rail. Your support through membership, donations, and volunteering are investments into our

future – a future aimed towards building a connected America with more and better trains for the next generation. Because you believe in our mission and are proud to be a part of all we have accomplished this year, thank you for being a member of the Rail Passengers Association.

Have a happy new year!

Kim Williams, Membership Manager

Experts in Overhauls and Systems Integration



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address the problem.

"We are making really big investments in the long distance equipment right now," said Amtrak President and CEO Richard Anderson. "We're replacing all the locomotives, we took our grant money from last year, we're going to make an \$800 million investment on all new locomotives for long distance network. We're replacing all the long-distance bedding, all the pillows, all the mattresses in the long distance and the Superliner IIs and Amfleet IIs. We're putting through complete overhauls in our shops. So we're making a lot of investment and to your point, we grew long-distance revenue and long-distance passengers this year faster than Amtrak has grown in probably 10 years... We hear you loud and clear about the importance of the national network, but we can't do it if our passengers have equipment that's not in good shape."

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS FOCUSED ON CUTS

Rail Passengers and Amtrak focused on the need to dramatically expand passenger rail service and add frequencies, which met a receptive audience among the Committee members. However, the Members in attendance also made sure to voice their concern over the steady stream of cuts to employees and customer service, warning Amtrak that it should not try

to reach 100 percent cost-recovery on the backs of its employees and customers.

"One concern is that Amtrak has made and continues to make significant cuts to its workforce, including cutting call center employees, food and beverage workers, station agents, and police officers," said the Rail Subcommittee Chair Dan Lipinski (D-IL). "Last week, Amtrak informed the Transportation Communications Union that it is cutting an additional 89 jobs... Amtrak clearly has decided that the way to prosperity is to have its workers pay for it. This is not the way to run this railroad. Making customer interactions, food and beverage service, and police protection worse decreases Amtrak's attractiveness to potential riders. You do not get more riders or more revenue with a worse product."

Congressman Steve Cohen (D-TN) had even stronger words for Amtrak, clashing with Anderson over the changes to onboard food and beverage service. Rep. Cohen asked for Rail Passengers input on these changes in an exchange that perfectly encapsulated the frustration many of our members have been expressing:

Rep. Cohen: I've been a fan of train transportation since I was a child, and a supporter of Amtrak. It's important

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ENGAGED AND MOBILIZED CITIZEN ADVOCATES ACKNOWLEDGED FOR THEIR WORK

On Friday, October 18th, the Rail Passengers Association was honored to announce the recipients of the 2019 Ross Capon Awards.

Ross Capon Award **Mayor Chris Koos** Normal, Illinois

Throughout his public-service career, Mr. Koos has worked consistently and tirelessly to enhance transit and community development. As mayor since 2003 of Normal, Illinois (population 54,000), Mr. Koos was a key advocate for a multimillion-dollar federal grant that led to the completion of a multimodal transit hub that has transformed his city's Uptown district, which now includes two major hotels, a children's museum, and a condo-office complex.

The hub, which comprises an Amtrak station, local and intercity bus station, and new town hall, has spurred millions of dollars in economic development and made Normal the fourth-busiest stop in Amtrak's Midwest network and the busiest Illinois station outside Chicago's Union Station.

In addition to his work in Normal, Mr. Koos has testified before the U.S. House of Representatives' Transportation Committee on the power of passenger rail as an economic catalyst, and has been a keynote speaker at many Transportation for America events.

Tracks To The Future Award **Rick Klein, City Manager** La Junta, Colorado

Born and raised in La Junta—a railroad town built on the traces of the Santa Fe Trail—Rick Klein has spent much of his tenure as city manager advocating for Amtrak's Southwest Chief.

In 2011, the Southwest Chief was slated to be moved south to the Transcon Line, abandoning La Junta and other stations in Colorado, Kansas, and New Mexico. Backed by a network in all three states, Mr. Klein traveled to Washington, DC, to testify in favor of a rail upgrade, eventually securing bipartisan Congressional support for three Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grants. Mr. Klein and the coalition now seek a grant

from TIGER's successor program, Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD), to finish the job.

On the local level, Mr. Klein has leveraged the Amtrak revival as the keystone of a multimodal center that will replace the current depot and house facilities for BNSF and bus service as well as Amtrak.

Community Action Award **Carey Maynard-Mooney** Volunteer

Ms. Maynard-Mooney, a founding member and leader of the Depot Redux citizens' group in Lawrence, Kansas, was instrumental in restoring that city's historic Santa Fe Station from its long state of neglect. Under her leadership, Depot Redux held volunteer-led cleaning sessions and hosted late-evening musical performances to make the station an inviting destination as well as an essential civic asset.

In addition, Ms. Maynard-Mooney persuaded the city's government to acquire the property, allot upper-level staff time, and secure necessary agreements with other government agencies and corporations. She also secured major grants to fund most of the rehabilitation work.

Finally, she leveraged her connections with Amtrak to inform Congress of increased ridership and encourage reinvestment in the station. Her efforts, and those of the volunteers she led and inspired, paid off at a packed and celebratory station rededication in February 2019.

Ross Capon Award

Named in honor of Ross Capon, who served in leadership roles for the Association for almost 40-years, the Ross Capon Award pays tribute to Ross' focus to engage and mobilize the citizen advocate.

The amplification of disparate voices, as a community in support of an issue, especially one focused on rail transportation infrastructure, is not easy, but can be transformative. Community partners are coming together, and the Rail Passengers Association wants to make sure their rail advocacy efforts/projects taking place at the local levels receive the recognition they deserve.

QUESTION...

DO YOU HAVE A TRANSPORTATION RELATED NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION?



A. Yes - new year, new experiences.

B. No - new year, same me.

Click here to submit your answer to this poll on social media at <https://www.facebook.com/narprail>, or send in your response via email to: survey@narprail.org.

RAIL PASSENGERS MEMBERS SHARE THOUGHTS, POLL RESULTS

Each month we conduct polls on social media and in our newsletters to spark conversation and provide another outlet for you to share your thoughts on rail.

On our Facebook page in October, we asked: **'With the changing of the seasons from summer to fall, we want to know which travel season you prefer?'**

The poll results show that we like the fall best, with **78%** saying 'they love the foliage' and **22%** preferring the warmer summer months for their travel.

The best comment came from **Wendel Johnson** who said **'Amtrak makes each season great!'**

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B. Paid Circulation			
a.	Total Number of Copies	3,325	3,231
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i.	Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions State on PS Form 3541	2,818	2,834
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iii.	Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS	0	0
iv.	Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS	0	0
c.	Total Paid Distribution	2,818	2,834
d.	Free or Nominal Rate Distribution		
i.	Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541	0	0
ii.	Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541	0	0
iii.	Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS	0	0
iv.	Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail	406	297
e.	Free or Nominal Rate Distribution	406	297
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g.	Copies not Distributed	100	100
h.	Total	3,224	3,131
i.	Percent Paid	87%	91%
16. Electronic Copy Circulation			
A.	Paid Electronic Copies	0	0
B.	Total Paid Print Copies + Paid Electronic Copies	2,818	2,834
C.	Total Print Distribution + Paid Electronic Copies	3,224	3,131
D.	Percent Paid	87%	91%

17. Publication of Statement of Ownership

18. I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions and/or civil sanctions.
Jim Mathews, RPA President and CEO

#RAIL PASSENGERS TRAVEL REVIEW

Feedback on your recent Amtrak travel experience is very important to us! Please take a moment and tell us the good & the

bad of your journey. Share your thoughts at railpassengers.org/travelreview or scan the QR code from your mobile device.



Remember, the progression of the data we collect depends upon the feedback

you provide as well as your outreach to other rail passengers. Please help us to keep this going. If you have any constructive feedback or suggestion, please send an email to TravelReview@narprail.org.

#VIEWSONATRAIN

We are sharing many of the great photos we have received on Instagram (www.instagram.com/railpassengers).

We are also still looking for more submissions. Photos can be submitted via Instagram, Facebook or Twitter depicting your experience as "The Rail Passenger" and your views from a train.

Rail Passengers Association staff will select images, which we will use as part of our new visual identity on our website, in our monthly newsletter, on social media, and more!

When submitting your photos on social media, be sure to use the hashtag [#ViewsOnATrain](https://twitter.com/ViewsOnATrain) and tag [@RailPassengers](https://twitter.com/RailPassengers).

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for America. One of the parts of passenger service that's made it so wonderful to Americans over the centuries has been a fine dining service... Now, Amtrak is cutting out dining service. This short sighted and foolish. It's like Delta Airlines taking away amenities to passengers on their airplanes and making air traffic more like traveling on a bus. Mr. Mathews, you've had people contact you to let you know about their thoughts on the elimination of food service. Allegedly, to try and get more Millennials who don't like to sit with others and just look at their phones. What have your people told you about the elimination of food service?"

Mathews: Mr. Cohen, thank you for the question. Reaction has been mixed. I have a stack of letters in my office from folks who recount experiences just like the one you did. They look back fondly on some of the meals they enjoyed and the people that they met. To some extent, one of the things that's missing is not just the food, it's the experience. It's the shared experience of meeting people on the train and having that shared meal which in the modern era, is becoming increasingly a precious thing. Because we don't come together in public spaces very often. The interesting thing is that Yes, we've had some millennials tell us that they would

prefer not to visit with other people, but I've probably had an equal number of millennials tell me that that is they part they enjoy. In fact, my own son before he was an adult, made a point of traveling on a different reservation for dinner than we had because he wanted to meet other people on the train. he would come back and tell us who he met that day at lunch or at dinner. So, its a very individual thing. I've got stacks of letters in my office from folks who really don't want to see that pass. I understand that maybe we can't have the big thick filet anymore, but the idea of sitting at a table with no tablecloth, a plastic bag, a pile of plastic trash. That's just not what they were looking for and certainly not what they paid for.

Listening to the many Congresspeople line up to take shots at the cuts to service, it was hard not to surmise that Amtrak's management had inflicted this upon themselves—through an unwillingness to incorporate stakeholder feedback into its decision making process. Rail Passengers hopes that the message Congress delivered to Amtrak will sink in, and that the railroad will work hand-in-hand with stakeholders going forward to build a better national rail network that Americans need.



ON THE MOVE

Local, state and federal transit agencies have seen several new hires and appointments in November.

• **Steve Predmore** has been appointed to the position of Executive Vice President & Chief Safety Office by Amtrak effective November 4, 2019.

Predmore will succeed Ken Hylander, who will be returning to retirement. In his role,

Predmore will lead the company's consolidated safety resources, a team that includes the System Safety, Compliance and Training, Environmental Compliance, Sustainability and Public Health groups.

Predmore most recently served as Vice President & Chief Safety Officer of the Bristow Group, a provider of aviation services for offshore transportation and search & rescue. Predmore will report to Senior



(Photo Credit: Amtrak)

Steve Predmore

Executive Vice President and Chief Operating and Commercial Officer, Stephen Gardner.



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Save The Date! Upcoming Regional Rail Passengers Association and State, Passengers Association Member Meetings & Events

**RailNation:DC 2020
Advocacy Summit & 'Day on The Hill'**

**Sunday through Wednesday
March 29 - April 1**

**Saturday, December 7 - All Aboard Arizona
Passenger Rail Summit - Tucson, AZ**

**Thursday & Friday, January 23 & 24, 2020 -
Southwestern Rail Conference - Dallas, TX**

Please contact Bruce Becker (bbecker@narprail.org) to have a local, state or regional meeting added to the Rail Passengers calendar (print and on-line) of upcoming events!