



Kenneth Briers

Secretary LaHood and Rep. Peter DeFazio display the NARP Golden Spike Award presented to DeFazio April 23.

## LaHood: "Hang in there!"

*Outgoing Secretary excites NARP Capitol Hill Reception for third straight year*

"You're the ones who are out there all over the country really promoting passenger rail. ... If you look at the President's budget, he has money for passenger rail. And we need to keep encouraging members of Congress that the only way we're going to connect America with passenger rail is when the national government continues its commitment.

"In the last four years, I've traveled to 18 countries looking at passenger rail, and the common thread in every country is the commitment of the national government to national rail.

"And I'm very proud of the people of California who have not been dissuaded

by the naysayers and stuck to their plans. Within the next 10 years, California will be connected between San Francisco and San Diego with 220 mile-an-hour trains. Many of you in this room have been advocates for that. Hang in there!

"You need to keep coming back to Washington. You need to keep working in America. We're going to have passenger rail...because of the strong advocacy of all of you and the strong leadership of the President and the investment of the national government and the investment of governors all over this country."

- Secretary Ray LaHood, addressing NARP's Capitol Hill Reception, April 23

## Rep. DeFazio Honored with Golden Spike

NARP presented its Golden Spike Award to Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR), long-time member of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee

and the top Democrat on its Highways and Transit Subcommittee.

Rep. DeFazio has advocated a robust, energy-efficient, multi-modal transpor-

tation system and passenger train development in the Pacific Northwest and elsewhere throughout his 25-year career in Congress.

His work has benefitted the people of Oregon and Washington, who now have more frequent and more reliable service on the popular *Cascades* route, thanks to strong federal and state investment. He also has supported steady investment in rail transit, leading to a light rail boom in Portland, OR, and elsewhere and to Oregon Iron Works becoming the first American company to manufacture

*Continued on page 4*

## Trinidad Turns Out for the Chief



NARP Council Representative James Soubry

Southwest Chief supporters gathered on the Amtrak platform in Trinidad, CO for National Train Day on May 11 to greet the westbound train and show support for the preservation of the threatened part of the route which serves their town. Story: pg. 3.

## Charlotte Mayor Tapped for US DOT

President Obama nominated Anthony Foxx, Democratic Mayor of Charlotte, NC, since 2010, to be the next Secretary of Transportation.

Although best known for his long-time support of Charlotte's light rail and

planned trolley car system, Foxx does have a positive record on intercity passenger trains.

Foxx, an attorney who has worked for state and federal judges and for the

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## NARP Files Statement with House Appropriations Subcommittee

NARP filed its annual public witness statement with the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development. We backed the Administration and Amtrak's funding requests, which are consistent.

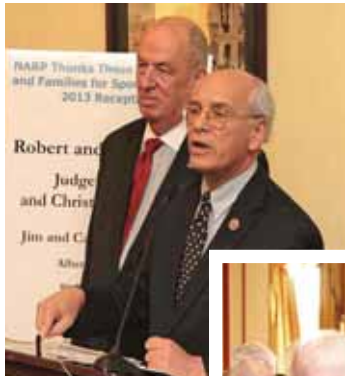
The Administration requested \$2.7 billion for "current" intercity passenger services while Amtrak sought \$2.65 billion. The Administration also proposed \$3.7 billion for a "Rail Service Improvement Program," mostly for the state capital grant program which Congress

has not funded in recent years.

We cited growing demand for train travel—record Amtrak ridership, declining highway use, and polls in three conservative districts (IL-13; MO-8; ND) showing strong support for Amtrak. ■

Our full statement is at [www.bit.ly/13approp](http://www.bit.ly/13approp)

### Members of Congress at NARP Reception



Both photos: Kenneth Briers

Left: Rep. Paul Tonko (D-NY), member of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Cmte., addresses NARP's Apr. 23 Capitol Hill Reception.

Below: Reps. Howard Coble (left) and Walter Jones (right), both R-NC, join NARP Director James Churchill. Coble, who represents Greens-



boro and areas north & west, is a long-time House T&I Cmte. member. Jones represents the easternmost part of the state.

## Burch Award to Amtrak's Tomas for Problem-Car Detection Device

The 19th Annual Dr. Gary Burch Memorial Safety Award went to Michael Tomas, Principal Engineer—Instrumentation & Wayside Design in Amtrak's Engineering Department. He developed a way to identify rail cars at higher risk for derailment so they could be removed from service and fixed.

Some MBTA bilevel cars had derailed near Boston's South Station at low speeds on curved track that met Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Track Safety Standards.

The problem was "stiff" suspension systems in the railcars' trucks caused by issues not easily found by normal, daily inspections.

Thus, FRA asked Amtrak's Testing Group if there was a way to identify cars at risk of derailment.

Tomas took the challenge and created a system of strain gages placed to simultaneously measure forces on all eight wheels of a car.

From the resulting, voluminous

data, he created statistics for each car and identified three "outliers". When inspected, two of these cars "had the broken spring and worn side bearing condition that was identified as the probable causes for derailment. When the cars were repaired and returned to service, the high forces were notably absent from their subsequent readings."

Tomas worked for South African Railways (Spoornet) from 1975 to 2003, when he joined Amtrak.

"I appreciate and am very proud of the work that you've done and the recognition that you've gotten today," Rep. John Carney (D-DE) told Tomas, his constituent, at NARP's April 23 Capitol Hill Re-

ception.

Also nominated this year: Rick Inclima, Director of Safety at the Teamsters' Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division. He has served for 25 years and is highly regarded by safety regulators, management and of course labor. ■



Kenneth Briers

Michael Tomas (2nd from R) with his Burch Memorial Safety Award, flanked by (L to R) NARP Chairman Bob Stewart, US Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, NARP President Ross Capon and Rep. John Carney (D-DE).

## NARP News

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This has news through May 20.

Vol. 47, No. 3 was mailed April 17.

## Trains' Johnston Offers Portraits of Threatened Amtrak Routes

In addressing NARP's Council of Representatives in Alexandria, VA, veteran *Trains* passenger train correspondent Bob Johnston of Chicago presented unpublished photos taken on his recent assignments.

His April 24 talk covered the 2011 North Dakota floods and their aftermath, the Northeast Corridor's (NEC) ongoing capital needs, and the *Southwest Chief's* Newton, KS-Albuquerque segment

Johnston said that the 1996 Amtrak-BNSF agreement, which expires at the end of 2014, provides for a minimum top passenger train speed of 60 mph and mandates BNSF to address slow orders.

Johnston was on the Jan. 10 Newton-La Junta, CO, inspection train (Feb. *News*). He observed sections of 1965-vintage jointed rail with a 60-mph limit and newer welded rail still good for 79 mph. This section still has occasional freight service, but Trinidad, CO-Lamy, NM has not seen a regularly scheduled freight train for six years.

Many cities and towns along the threatened part of the route have made significant repairs and upgrades to their stations, Johnston reported. The Lamy station now has a public library. Dodge City enacted a 1% local sales tax in 1997 that has funded station improvements.

Meanwhile, these other travel choices have disappeared. Garden City's airport, upgraded with \$12 million in local funds, has only two daily American Airlines flights to Dallas-Fort Worth.



NARP Chairman Bob Stewart (left) presents a token of recognition to Bob Johnston of *Trains Magazine*.

Johnston sees the NEC as a "threatened route" because of the gap between investment needs and current investment levels. He recently rode Amtrak's track geometry car, which makes a Washington-New York round-trip every four weeks behind trains 172 and 171. He noted several rough spots that raised warnings on the rail defect detector, but only a few serious enough to warrant immediate further inspection for safety.

One aspect of the NEC's old infrastructure is that bolts must be hand-pulled from Maryland's Bush River Bridge in order for large watercraft to navigate past it.

Finally, Johnston noted some increased freight traffic using the NEC, including a twice daily Norfolk Southern oil train on the Perryville, MD-Wilmington, DE, segment. ■

## Campaign to Preserve Chief Route Revs Up

Boy Scouts heading home from the nearby Philmont Scout Ranch board Amtrak's east-bound *Southwest Chief* at Raton, NM on June 23, 2012. Scout groups are given special permission to use the baggage car at a station that doesn't usually have checked baggage service. Amtrak's sum-

Both photos: W. Mike Weber



mer 2012 Boy Scout passenger count at Raton was 5,431. Scouts would lose this access if no agreement is reached to preserve the *Chief's* current route (see last issue).

Two mayors and two Colorado state legislators were part of a group of 42 *Southwest Chief* supporters who made a Trinidad, CO-Las Vegas, NM round trip on the train on May 11, National Train Day.

Colorado Rail Passengers Assoc. Pres. (and NARP Council Member) James Souby wrote to Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper (D) May 8 urging the state to do "everything possible to save" the *Southwest Chief*.

Souby asked the Governor to pursue "state infrastructure loans, federal transportation grants or other mechanisms" to cover the state's share of the needed funds.

Souby's letter states, "Last year the Legislature and the communities along the line unanimously passed resolutions supporting the *Southwest Chief*

in Colorado. To save the train, the communities formed the *Southwest Chief* Rural Rail Partnership with their colleagues in western Kansas and

Northern New Mexico.

"This year it is time for the Hickenlooper Administration to take the matter for action in support of our rural communities. Time is running out!"

Souby's May 10 Denver Post commentary on National Train Day cited increased train ridership and reduced driving in building the case for keeping the *Southwest Chief* on its current route, saying "prospects for deep pocketed international tourists for southern Colorado haven't even been explored, and the future connectivity to the southwest is ignored." ■

Souby's letter: [www.bit.ly/soubyltr](http://www.bit.ly/soubyltr)

# Amtrak's Yachmetz Talks Fleet, Reorganization, Connectivity

Amtrak is on a path towards accommodating anticipated continued ridership growth with a bigger, newer fleet, Chief of Corporate Research and Strategy Mark Yachmetz told attendees at the NARP Council of Representatives meeting in Alexandria, VA April 22. He said Amtrak's internal reorganization will result in noticeable improvement in the customer experience. The railroad will continue to prioritize safety and improve connectivity with other travel modes.

Yachmetz joined Amtrak last year after a long career in the federal government, primarily overseeing intercity passenger rail for the Federal Railroad Administration.

"Connectivity is essential to what we do," he said, citing the integration of multiple systems on the Northeast Corridor. He said each business line under Amtrak's new corporate structure (Northeast Corridor, State-Supported and Long Distance) will study connectivity issues as they produce their strategic plans, which are due Sept. 30.

Yachmetz said each business line's strategic plan would aim to make some equipment available for expansion once new cars and locomotives start being delivered. The state-supported unit would consider more overnight services, particularly between New York City and Canada.

Yachmetz reiterated CEO Joseph Boardman's strong exception to the Brookings Institution's recommendation that states take responsibility for funding long-distance trains. "We see [long-distance trains] as an important element of the National Railroad Passenger Corporation. ... You will notice that in the President's budget, they are proposing to invest in long-distance trains as well as high-speed."

Each major terminal station in the system will have a Terminal Manager. With responsibility for all aspects of the terminal—from mechanical and engineering functions to customer service—these managers will work to alleviate problems like the crowded and confusing boarding areas at Chicago Union Station.

Yachmetz expressed confidence that Amtrak's joint procurement of high-speed trainsets with the State of California, and the large orders Amtrak has so far been able to place, portend the revival of a passenger rail industry in America capable of producing cars and locomotives on an ongoing basis. He compared the current situation to "go[ing] to the store to buy an electric locomotive [and only being able to get] an HO-gauge electric locomotive."

Asked how train advocates should prepare for a possible, future anti-rail administration, Yachmetz said, "To the

extent that you're effective advocates and have that dynamic out there that people say we need passenger rail of all kinds, and it's important to us, then the debate is changed from the question of *if* or *why* to the question of *how*. So I think the continued drum beating that you all do as advocates is the key." ■



Yachmetz

## Farewell, John Mills

Tireless passenger train advocate John A. Mills died April 30 in Little Rock.

Mills' long Amtrak career began as district supervisor in Fort Worth in



Mills circa 1990.

1973. He walked through every train that stopped there to inspect on-board conditions and address problems.

He pressured Amtrak to use ex-Southern Pacific cars (better able to handle Texas summers) for the *Inter-American* until Amfleet cars arrived.

The next year, he moved to Topeka as supervisor of stations in Kansas, Oklahoma and Colorado.

In 1980-94—"my most rewarding years with Amtrak"—he was Senior Inspector Quality Assurance, first traveling for Passenger Services, later in the Equipment Acquisition Department overseeing:

- Conversion of Amtrak's Heritage cars to electric heat and air conditioning;
- Santa Fe Railway's Topeka shops' rebuild of Heritage bilevel cars;
- Budd Company construction of Amfleet II cars in Philadelphia; and
- Bombardier's plants in Barre, VT, and La Pocatière, QC, as Horizon and Superliner II cars were made.

As advocate, he led the charge to begin Amtrak service to Arkansas, testifying about that on Capitol Hill in 1971.

Mills joined NARP in 1968. He was a generous donor and served many years on our board. His son, John Mills Jr., Amtrak's Garden City, KS, agent, asks that gifts in his dad's memory be made to NARP. ■

## Rep. DeFazio Wins Golden Spike Award

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streetcars in more than 50 years.

"There's a lot that needs to be done all around the country, that we can do to better serve our passengers, our freight, and make the country more internationally competitive," DeFazio remarked at NARP's April 23 Capitol Hill reception. "I'm proud to have advocated for those issues for a number of years, with some success, and I intend to continue to do

it for a bit longer and I'm just thrilled to get this rather unique award."

DeFazio also discussed his work to preserve the rail line connecting the Port of Coos Bay, OR, to the Union Pacific main line in the Willamette Valley and maintain freight service over it. He also called the Pacific Northwest high-speed rail corridor "still very much a work in progress." ■

## North Dakota Station Staffing Challenges

NARP brought to Amtrak's attention staffing issues at North Dakota's five staffed stations. Some recent retirements and general low staffing levels leave little room for backup when any one agent takes leave. Also, the boom-

ing oil economy means higher living costs and means Amtrak salaries are not competitive. Amtrak says Fargo and Grand Forks now are at full strength; Minot and Williston will be soon; future staffing at Rugby is uncertain. ■

## Siemens Unveils New Amtrak Locomotives



Flickr.com user 'yashmorfi'

US House Judiciary Committee, at the age of 38 became the youngest person ever elected Mayor of Charlotte.

When some members of the state legislature pushed for

North Carolina to return its federal grant to improve Raleigh-Charlotte service, Foxx rode the *Carolinian* to Raleigh to testify before the General Assembly's joint Transportation Appropriations Committee. Foxx strongly supported the rail program and opposed the bill that would have forced the state to return the grant. Foxx represented the City of Charlotte, the Urban Mayors' Coalition and the North Carolina Association of General Contractors.

In spite of criticism, Foxx has championed expansion of light rail service in Charlotte and establishment of a downtown streetcar. He has said he appreciates the value of the planned Charlotte Gateway Station which would bring together Amtrak, light rail, intercity and local buses, and a bus link to the city's hub airport.

Majority Leader Harry Reid indicated plans to move expeditiously to confirm Foxx. LaHood has said he will continue to serve until his successor's confirmation. ■

The first of 70 advanced-technology electric locomotives from Siemens USA began rolling off the assembly line in Sacramento on May 13. These first units of a \$466 million Amtrak order will be field-tested this summer for entry into revenue service in the fall.

The Amtrak Cities Sprinter (ACS-64) units have parts built in plants in Ohio, Georgia and Mississippi and components from nearly 70 suppliers in 23 states. The Sacramento plant uses renewable energy.

The new locomotives will power *Northeast Regional*, *Keystone* and long-distance trains operating on the Northeast Corridor.

The units are designed for easier maintenance. Advanced regenerative braking systems will feed energy from braking back into the electric grid. The engines meet the latest federal rail safety regulations.

Those on hand for the ceremony included Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA), Deputy Federal Railroad Administrator Karen Hedlund, Amtrak Pres. Joseph Boardman, Siemens Rail Systems Pres. Michael Cahill, NARP Vice Chairman Albert Papp Jr. and Larry Scott, Special Assistant to NARP's Chairman. ■



The first two ACS-64 locomotives for Amtrak were released May 13 by Siemens USA at its Sacramento plant. Below, Deputy Federal Railroad Administrator Karen Hedlund speaks.



Both photos: Coco Gordon

## Centennial Station's Vicennial



NARP member Charles Hamilton

A crowd gathers to celebrate Lacey, WA Centennial Station's twenty years of service to the area's train passengers on a crystal-clear Saturday afternoon, May 4. An Amtrak Cascades Talgo trainset was on display.

**AMTRAK'S SANDY RELIEF \$**

A Superstorm Sandy relief funding package that President Obama signed Jan. 29 (Public Law 113-2) had \$118 million for Amtrak: \$32m for operations and \$86m for capital. The Federal Railroad Administration formally awarded the operating portion to Amtrak on May 2.

But Amtrak is unlikely to use the capital unless the law is changed. Today, Amtrak's use of the capital would trigger a prohibition against shifting any capital funds to operations. The ability to make such shifts is a key cash management tool for Amtrak. During 3-1/2 fiscal years through March 31, 2013, Amtrak made this shift four times, none lasting more than nine days. Amtrak has received awards for its efficient, cost-effective cash management practices.

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

## New West Virginia Law May See MARC Service Improvements

West Virginia's new Commuter Rail Access Act requires the State Rail Authority to negotiate an Interstate Agreement with neighboring states in support of commuter rail operations that cross state boundaries.

The new law also establishes a fund to help Maryland Area Rail Commuter (MARC) pay for operating service in the state's Eastern Panhandle.

The Brunswick Line connects Martinsburg with Washington Union Station and appears to be the only commuter rail service crossing state lines that does not get funding from all states it serves; Maryland provides the equipment and operating support for the MARC Brunswick Line.

West Virginia has contributed funds for upkeep of its three MARC-served stations. The National Park Service owns and maintains the Harpers Ferry station. The state made some improvements to the Duffields platforms and parking lot.

The City of Martinsburg owns and takes care of its Caperton Station—the oldest continually active train station in the US.

The bill's champion was state Sen. Herb Snyder (D-Jefferson County). The state Senate passed the bill unanimously April 2. The House of Delegates had just one "no" vote and one abstention in passing the bill April 13.

Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin (D) signed it into law on May 9 at a ceremony at

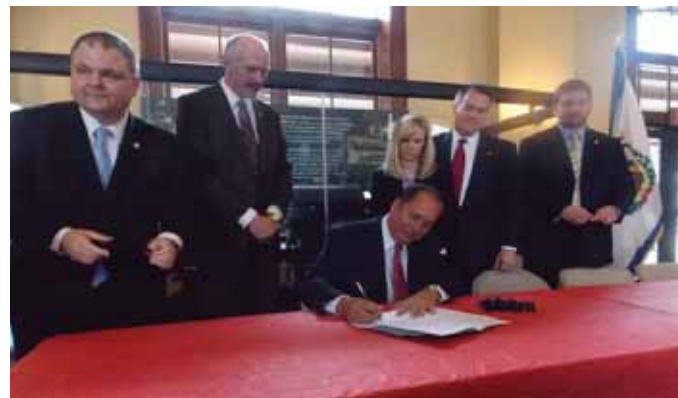
the Martinsburg station. He said "the commuter service is of great importance to the residents of the Eastern Panhandle. I hope we can work to reduce fares for commuters."

Snyder: "The work has just begun. I look forward to working with Gov. Tomblin to reach an agreement with Maryland. The commuter rail is a part of the fabric of who we are."

The law's enactment culminates three years of tireless work by NARP Council Representative J. Charles Riecks of Charleston, WV, who also is President of the local advocacy group Friends of the *Cardinal*.

During debate on the bill, legislators mentioned Fairmont-Morgantown-Pittsburgh and Charleston-Huntington-Ashland, KY as possible future interstate commuter rail corridors.

It is hoped that the additional experience the West Virginia Rail Authority will gain in managing a passenger service also will make it easier to establish state support for expanded intercity service. Friends of the *Cardinal*'s top goal—and a key NARP goal—remains establishing daily operation of the now tri-weekly New York-Chicago *Cardinal*. ■



John McVey / The Journal (Martinsburg, WV)

Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin signs the Commuter Rail Access Act at Martinsburg station May 9. Standing, L to R, are State Senate Majority Leader John Unger, Sen. Herb Snyder (the bill's champion), and Delegates Tiffany Lawrence, Steven Skinner and Jason Barrett.

### TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

#### Buses to replace *California Zephyr*

**Reno-Emeryville June 16-23:** Due to double-tracking of parts of the Donner Pass route by Union Pacific, and freight congestion precluding use of the Feather River Canyon route, motorcoaches will take the place of the *Zephyr* west of Reno, making all intermediate stops and handling checked baggage to/from Sacramento, Davis, Martinez and Emeryville/San Francisco (except package express and firearms). This applies to Train 5 departing Chicago June 14-21 and train 6 departing Emeryville June 16-23. The buses appear in Amtrak's reservations system.