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THE FIGHT TO SAVE THE RAIL SYSTEM

(Reprinted from Passenger Train Journal, 2018-4. Issue 277)

**By Richard Ruddolph, Ph.D.,
Chairman, Rail Users' Network**

This is the fifth in a series of articles that highlights what Rail Users' Network members and other rail advocates are doing to improve and expand passenger rail and transit services in North America.

Given that the Heritage Foundation and other conservative think tanks have become the brain trust behind President Trump on a variety of issues, it shouldn't have come as a surprise that the Trump administration's FY 2018 Amtrak budget proposal called for the elimination of the 15 long-distance routes. This has been their goal for many years.

While members of the Rail Users' Network as well as other rail advocates had braced themselves for the worst, they

were pleasantly surprised to learn that Congress actually increased Amtrak's total appropriations. The passage of the Consolidated Appropriation Act of 2018 was certainly good news to the millions of Americans who depend on public transportation to travel to work, visit relatives, seek medical attention, and procure food and other necessities of life. One might have expected that with a larger total budget, Amtrak would be thinking of adding or improving service. Unfortunately, this doesn't appear to be the case.

Since becoming President and CEO of Amtrak, Richard Anderson has been threatening the very existence of the national train network without justification and apparently without authority to do so. At various forums, he has indicated a preference for a corridor strategy between city pairs and reducing daily service on some of the national routes to three days a

week. At the April California Rail Passenger Summit, for example, President Anderson quoted Title 49 U.S. Code Section 24101 as justification for his actions making it sound like his corridor strategy is mandated by this law. He maintained that the mission of Amtrak is to provide efficient and effective intercity passenger rail mobility consisting of high quality service between city pairs. His claim, however, for what he is doing is not true. Nothing forces a focus on 300-400 mile corridors.

Public Law 210-432 Division B Section 228(b) states: It is the sense of the Congress that (1) long-distance passenger rail is a vital and necessary part of our national transportation system and economy and (2) Amtrak should maintain a national passenger rail system, including long-distance routes, that

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NEWS FROM NEW YORK: MTA CHAIR DEPARTS AND AMAZON ARRIVES

By Andrew Albert

As always, the transit scene in New York is bursting with news!

**MTA Chairman
Joe Lhota resigns!**

This is Lhota's second stint as Chair of the largest transit agency in North America. He resigned shortly after Governor Andrew Cuomo won re-election as New York's Governor. It should be mentioned that Lhota agreed to take the job of Chairman, even though he has an important

job at NYU-Langone Medical Center. He took no salary, while putting a tremendous amount of time and effort into the job of MTA Chair, even while maintaining his other job. It's a miracle he got any sleep, with two very important careers! While his tenure as Chairman was short by any measure—just a little over a year—he is responsible for several important initiatives that will bring lasting improvement to our sprawling transit system.

Firstly, he put in place several agency Presidents who have been

and will continue to be instrumental in bringing our system, consisting of NYC Transit (subways & buses), Long Island Rail Road, and Metro-North Commuter Railroad, into the 21st century. Andy Byford is now President of NYC Transit, and comes to us by way of Toronto, London, & Sydney. He is an extremely knowledgeable leader, and has enlisted the workforce, as well as all New Yorkers, in the task of getting the necessary funding for his Fast Forward Plan—which will

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ELECTION 2018: VIEW FROM CASCADIA

By Lloyd H. Flem

A glance at the map of the 435 U.S. House Districts depicted in Red and Blue following the results of the 2018 Election shows that Republicans still strongly dominate the square miles in our country, even after a significant pickup of seats and now a majority held by the Democrats. Even in the bright blue West Coast States, the densely populated western portions of WA, OR, and CA were the stronghold for Democrats, with the physically larger interiors of the three states remaining predominately Republican.

And even though the popular vote for the U.S. Senate had Democrats with a higher national total, the Republicans picked up seats. Some people, mostly Democrats, favor doing away with that portion of the Constitution that grants representational equality to states in the Upper House. I emphatically support efforts to limit gerrymandering of House districts, which does damage to fair populational representation. But I also support the U.S. Senate remaining with two Senators for each of the 50 states, not becoming simply a second House with but fewer members.

As an advocate for intercity passenger trains which are an interconnected national network, I see a great advantage in the Senate status quo. It is Senators from often lightly-populated Red states who will work hardest for a national network. Senators from such as Montana, North Dakota, Kansas, and the Gulf states will fight to retain or restore a complete interconnected Amtrak system. Former senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) was pro-Amtrak, but famously said "National or Nothing." Of course, six senators, three Rs and three Ds, forced the issue with Amtrak, and managed to at least temporarily save the complete train on the *Southwest Chief*.

Most active advocates for intercity passenger rail and rail transit do reside in now-overwhelmingly Blue metropolitan areas. But if big-city rail advocates want to be able to travel by train beyond a relatively few corridors and in the vicinity of a few hubs like Chicago, they need to join their small-town and rural brethren in pushing for preservation and restoration of such as the Empire Builder and Sunset Limited. Given the concerns raised by

decisions made by top Amtrak leadership, it is essential that urban and rural work together. In many ways the results of the Nov. 6 election in Washington state were a microcosm of what occurred nationally. One congressional seat, Washington -8th, flipped from Republican to Democrat, despite the addition of conservative counties east of the Cascades with the post-2010 redistricting. In the Legislature, the densely-populated and prosperous corridor from Olympia north to the Canadian border became even brighter Blue, with the last Republican legislators being defeated in the Seattle suburbs. Eastern Washington remained almost entirely Republican, the exception being one Spokane District. But both houses of our Legislature plus the Governor Jay Inslee (who loves trains – that go 250 mph!) are now heavily Democratic majority. Our neighbors from Oregon also increased Democratic control of legislature and re-elected their Democrat governor.

Just as I believe urban rail advocates nationally should support and not dismiss those Red State Senators who want to save THEIR passenger trains, in my 35 years of working for intercity passenger trains in Washington state, I have always advocated working both sides of the aisle and both sides of our very geographically diverse state. But some Eastern Washington citizens and legislators have gone so far as to want to form a 51st state, because of the feeling of being dominated by "Seattle." Wiser heads from their dry side of Washington concede it is taxes from "Seattle" which help support services in the less-affluent areas away from the prosperous Olympia to BC border corridor.

While "Seattle" is shorthand for the political and cultural behavior of that which Red district people in my state dislike, I concede some citizens of Seattle and "Seattle" can indeed be both arrogant and provincial. An example: An affluent Seattle-based "alternative transportation" group (meaning other than by private motor vehicle), favors bike, pedestrian, and urban transit-including urban rail, but usually forgets about intercity rail transportation. If reminded, they concede intercity passenger trains are OK. Knowing I worked bi-partisan, they once asked if I knew ANY

Republican that could speak at their annual meeting in Olympia! I did and supplied a good one for them. But our world of intercity passenger rail advocacy must, by necessity, move out of just the cites and encompass citizens and elected officials of wide and varied locations and political persuasions.

A long-term goal for all Aboard Washington is to see the restoration of intercity passenger trains from Auburn, south of Seattle, east across the Cascades mountains, into the Yakima Valley, joining the south leg of the Empire Builder at the town of Pasco. This was the original Northern Pacific route, which had Amtrak service until 1981.

In attempting to see the restoration through, area citizens and legislators must do most of the heavy advocacy work. AAWA can serve as a catalyst, and offer ideas, strategies, and encouragement, but eventual success will have to come from the home folks, who mostly vote for and are represented by Republicans,

Assuming folks directly served by this restored Old NP route will work for such restoration, another job for AAWA is to encourage Westside legislators, mostly Democrats, to work with their Eastern Washington colleagues to get legislation and funding. While we have some partisan polarization in Washington state, it has not reached the level suffered in Washington, DC. As said, AAWA has been traditionally bi-partisan and we will continue working in that direction.

As I will be retiring for the prime responsibility of political advocacy at the end of 2018, I'll continue in 2019 serving to assist my replacement, Mr. Luis Moscoso, formerly a member of the Washington State House from northeast of Seattle. Luis, though a liberal Democrat, worked cordially and had mutual respect with conservative Republicans on many issues. Luis and his GOP friends are modern state-level versions of Humphrey-Goldwater or Reagan-Tip O'Neill, who had strong ideological differences but were friends who worked for the well-being of our country. We need more of this again nationally.

Lloyd H Flem is Executive Director, All Aboard Washington.

RAIL USERS' NETWORK ANNUAL MEETING / PUBLIC FORUM

**By Richard Rudolph, Ph.D.,
Chairman, Rail Users' Network**

The RUN annual meeting / public forum was held at the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission headquarters in Springfield, MA on Oct. 13 with over 60 people in attendance.

Rail Users' Network Chair Richard Rudolph welcomed the attendees and guests and provided a brief history of the inception of the organization. Tim Brennan, the Executive Director of the PVPC, introduced Massachusetts State Sen. Eric Lesser. Sen. Lesser has led a four-year effort to convince the state legislature and the governor to provide funding for an East-West Rail study, which could lead to the expansion of passenger rail from Boston to Pittsfield, MA. Currently, the only option to travel by train from east to west is Amtrak's *Lakeshore Limited*, which is often unreliable.

Sen. Lesser said it's an exciting time for passenger rail in western Massachusetts, given the startup of the new CT Hartford Line, restoration of Springfield's Union Station and a pilot program to provide rail

service to and from Greenfield, Northampton and Holyoke to Springfield, MA and then into New York City. He believes additional East-West train service is critical and addresses two challenges. In Eastern Massachusetts, the challenge is cost; in Western Massachusetts, the challenge is limited access to the booming economy. Connecting the two, he stated, would benefit everybody, because it would provide the same access to quality of life.

Rep. Richard Neal also gave opening remarks. He is the senior Democratic member of Ways and Means, the chief-tax-writing committee of the U.S. House of Representatives. He described the role of a legislator—you really are supposed to legislate. It's not enough to just have a dream; you need to have a plan. He credited Connecticut Gov. Malloy for investing in transit and Massachusetts Governors Deval Patrick and Charlie Baker for their efforts to expand passenger rail and transit in their state.

Next up was John Bernick, the Assistant Rail Administrator for CT DOT. He talked about the CT Hartford Line as a new model for

intercity passenger rail. It involved partnerships and collaboration: 30 legal agreements, seven separate construction contracts, one service with two operators and a first-ever "Not to Exceed" price and schedule agreement with Amtrak. Prior to 2018, Amtrak ran a two-car shuttle service back and forth from New Haven to Springfield six times a day. The new service will offer up to 17 roundtrips per day once double tracking is finished and is projected to increase to 25 roundtrips in the future. The Hartford line one-way fare from New Haven to Springfield is \$12.75 on both CT Hartford line trains and Amtrak. Amtrak's 2017 prior one-way fare ranged from \$17-\$46. Bernick also talked about the Hartford Line as an economic development catalyst: \$400 million had been invested in TOD before the line even opened for business, and 794 new residential units have been built near stations along the CT Hartford line.

Our next speaker, Tim Brennan, an outstanding rail advocate, shared MassDOT's plan to conduct a two-year pilot to extend rail service along the northern end of the Knowledge Corridor. The current proposal involves using two Amtrak shuttle trains in the morning, traveling south from Greenfield,

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The Rail Users' Newsletter is published quarterly by the Rail Users' Network, a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit corporation. Current board members include:

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**Please send comments, letters to editor or articles for possible publications to the Rail Users' Network at:
RUN; P.O. Box 8015, Portland, ME 04104 or email to rrudolph1022@gmail.com**

Editor for this issue: Paul Bubny

THINGS KEEP GETTING WORSE FOR NEW JERSEY'S EMBATTLED RAIL RIDERS

By David Peter Alan

If four months ago you thought that things could not get worse for the beleaguered train riders of the Garden State, you would have been wrong. The past few months have featured cancellations of entire rail lines, continued train annulments, delays, a reduction of transparency at New Jersey Transit (NJT), and one small positive accomplishment by the Lackawanna Coalition.

NJT management blames a shortage of engineers and the race to install Positive Train Control (PTC) on its entire system (except for the Amtrak-owned NEC between New York and Trenton) by the end of the year. Despite recent service cuts, annulments continue and delays have mounted. NJT now blames Amtrak, the aging Portal Bridge and leaves falling on the tracks for the additional delays.

For its part, NJT is beginning to train more engineers (although it will take at least another year before they are on the job), and promises to restore all of the lost service in January. At this writing, NJT has not committed itself to a specific date or said whether service will be restored gradually or all at once.

There is no service on the Atlantic City Rail Line between that city and Philadelphia, or on the "Dinky" shuttle between Princeton Junction and Princeton Station, closer to downtown Princeton and the Princeton University campus. There are no weekend trains between Summit and Gladstone, and

all other lines have lost some of their service. There are substitute buses on lines that have lost all of their service and to Gladstone on weekends, but nothing is filling the gaps left when specific trains were eliminated. The Lackawanna Coalition has started a Twitter campaign, #fullrestorationinjanuary.

The Lackawanna Coalition won a victory for its late-evening inbound riders from Morris County on the Morris & Essex Line. One of the casualties of the new schedule is the last train on weeknights, which left Dover at 11:30 for Hoboken. Now the last train leaves at 10:29. This writer called on NJT to run a bus at that hour, which would make the same stops and drop riders at Summit, where they could catch the last inbound train, which originates at Gladstone.

Transit managers swung into action and contracted with the Lakeland Bus Company to run that service. It takes 30 minutes longer for these riders to get home, but a longer trip is far better than being stranded for the night.

It is getting more difficult to advocate on behalf of NJT's riders, since the agency has stopped giving members of the public any background material concerning items on the agendas of its Board meetings. Without this information, advocates cannot comment as intelligently on issues as they could in the past, and reporters lack the background they need to inform their audiences appropriately. The policy runs counter to Gov. Philip Murphy's campaign promise of increased transparency, but it is

unlikely to change any time soon.

Meanwhile, this writer has scored a media breakthrough by having comments published in *Railway Age* with an approving response by Editor-in-Chief William C. Vantuono. The story can be found on the magazine's website at <https://www.railwayage.com/passenger/commuterregional/if-youre-not-at-the-table-youre-on-the-menu/>.

New Jersey's advocates have also joined RUN in declaring "no confidence" in Amtrak's president Richard Anderson. The Lackawanna Coalition passed such a resolution in August (the concept) and September (final wording). The New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers went further, specifically calling for Anderson to be fired.

These are difficult and perilous times for rail riders, both in New Jersey and elsewhere on Amtrak. Garden State riders are faring worse under Gov. Murphy than under his predecessor, the infamous Chris Christie. Murphy has promised improvements, but riders and their advocates are skeptical. Still, they hope that improvements will come someday, although they probably will not come soon. As far as Amtrak is concerned, that is a different battle, but New Jersey advocates have taken the lead, along with RUN, in calling for change.

David Peter Alan is a member of the RUN Board and Chair of the Lackawanna Coalition, which advocates on behalf of New Jersey Transit's riders.

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It means your dues are past due!

Please remit **immediately** to continue receiving the RUN Newsletter!

REPORT FROM THE SOUTHWEST

By J. W. Madison

News from the Southwest:

The TEMPO Meeting In Texas

On Oct. 13, there was a conference of the Texas Eagle Marketing and Performance Organization (TEMPO) in Marshall, TX, to which I was invited to speak about things in New Mexico. I covered the *SW Chief*, and about how to someday dean up our Rail transportation operating model once and for all (see elsewhere in this issue). I spoke primarily for Rails Inc, but attended for RUN and somewhat for the RWU.

TEMPO is a going outfit, decently diverse in race and gender, and has saved the *Eagle* at least once since the 1990s. I respect them, and I'm hoping to interest at least some of them in membership in RUN, including Richard Anderson (different one—very different).

If I can score some minutes or proceedings from the conference, and contact information for TEMPO, I'll make them available to RUN.

Albuquerque's "ART" Project (We hoped it couldn't get worse):

This is excerpted from the lead story in the *Albuquerque Journal*, Nov. 14: "Mayor pulls the plug on electric bus deal". Here's the first paragraph:

"The City of Albuquerque is pulling the plug on the Chinese manufacturer (BYD—JW) contracted to supply 60-foot electric buses for the much-maligned and delayed Albuquerque Rapid Transit Project".

Reasons include brake failures, battery overheating, unsafe battery mounting systems, insufficient range between charges, "electrical issues", and failure on the part of BYD to construct needed supplementary charging stations. Plus several other reasons, notably, "the electric handicap chair lock becomes insecure when the driver turns on the air conditioner" (!)

The best ART-salvage option at this time is putting in "non-electric" buses (made in America, with an 18-month lead time) till such time as the desired technology becomes feasible. Please know that Rails Inc and I have hoped all along that ART would eventually succeed, as a forerunner to eventual Urban Rail. Hope springs eternal...

To learn more, and O is there more, go to <http://www.abqjournal.com/1246094/>.

Commentary from the Southwest:

How do we put a stop to the endless war against passenger rail?

During the relatively short (18) years that I've been a train activist, I've seen, and played a very small role in a renaissance in some aspects of passenger rail, notably metro and regional (light rail, rapid streetcar, and commuter).

I've also witnessed a continuous, though erratic, erosion of passenger Rail at the national level—we get attacked, we retreat, we fight back, we win an occasional temporary and partial victory, we get attacked again, we lose some more... it never seems to end. So the little minds of Rails Inc have for a long time chewed on the notions of Why? How did this happen? And how can we ever achieve some hope of breaking out of this trench warfare?

It seems to this amateur that the root causes, in some kind of order, are:

1. Our love for the private automobile;
2. A loss in the number of national track-miles and station stops since after WW II;
3. Socialization (federal funding) (subsidy) of our streets, highways, airports, and waterways, especially the Interstate Highway System;
4. Private ownership of most of our national track network;
5. One skimpy and under-funded national passenger rail service, neither properly private nor properly public.

Item 1 is being eroded by history, energy problems (and solutions), technology in general, and changing awareness on the part of the public, especially the younger public. Item 3 has been a good thing, although incomplete. This leaves the onerous presence of items 2, 4, and 5.

It also seems to this amateur that long-term release from the stranglehold of items 2, 4, and 5 can only be effected by a long-proven American solution; namely, to bring our Rail operating model into line with those of all our other transportation modes.

Once again I suggest, in the face of all ordinary tactical thinking:

- Nationalize our major rail infrastructure. Rails Inc calls this the Rail Interstate.
- Either privatize or socialize Amtrak entirely.
- Open the moving parts (trains) up to competition.
- Build, and rebuild, more tracks.
- Enact some common sense laws addressing train length and crew size.
- Start electrifying most of the "RI".
- Install renewable energy facilities alongside the tracks, for system power, and sell any surplus.

In recognition of all concerns, including those of the Class I railroads, some critical

improvements, like electrification, pervasive grade crossing protection, and trackside renewable energy, are too big and cost too much up front, to be achieved by anybody but the government (that is, the entire country).

At RUN's Minneapolis conference, a BNSF retiree asserted after my speech, in response to my nationalization proposal, that the Class I's (like BNSF) do a pretty good job, as private companies, of running trains and keeping up and improving their infrastructure.

Damn good point, worthy of a respectful rebuttal. There is considerable difference in competence and skill from one Class I to another. But however good a job any given Class I is doing on its network, it's doing this good job from its own standpoint, which means going for the greatest profit as quickly as possible. This does not always lead to operating our trains, freight or passenger, in the interests of either the general public or common sense.

All our other transportation infrastructures are operated as "public utilities". So should our tracks be.

I would enlist the best Class I talent as potential consultants to assist in the transition to the RI, and I would compensate them generously for solid (public-friendly) advice.

As to staying in business running their stock along the RI, the Class I's will still operate just fine thank you, although not at quite the insanely bloated and dangerous scale as they do now, and they can sure as hell still make money. As can the companies hired to maintain and improve the RI as time goes on. These companies might even include the Class I's themselves. Ain't America great?

The RI will likely facilitate a resurgence in short and medium-scale freight, express, passenger, and mixed-consist services, making our under-used track segments busier, and more job-and-revenue-generating. The RI will also give both private and public start up Rail services a shot at breaking even or better. I'm informed by a former short-line operator that paying a share of infrastructure taxes is something of a bargain in comparison with the burden of owning and keeping up said infrastructure.

We keep thinking incrementally. We keep retreating incrementally. This has to stop. If there's any other way to haul ourselves free of this swamp, I'm listening. Let's get these ideas out in the open, and stir up some righteous debate.

J. W. Madison is a RUN Board Member and president of Rails Inc, based in Albuquerque, NM.

CANADA REPORT: NOVEMBER 2018

By Ken Westcar

Trains again rolling into Churchill

After a year of uncertainty over who is to pay for track washout repairs between Winnipeg and Churchill, Manitoba, a new operating consortium comprising private sector capital, First Nations and the Canadian federal government reopened the line in early November. Omnitrax, who were unwilling to pay for the remediation work, are no longer involved in operations.

Residents of Churchill celebrated the line's reopening, as it provides relief from the perils of relative isolation on Canada's Arctic tidewater and sky-high prices for life's airfreighted necessities. While a sense of relative normality has settled over the town, the question remains as to whether it is sustainable, given the limited amount of marine traffic flowing through the port and if eco-tourism can help drive the economy.

At the time of writing this article, it was unclear when VIA Rail will reinstate scheduled passenger services. It will need to be satisfied that the track is safe, especially during the spring melt when washouts might reoccur. Check the VIA Rail website for news.

Ontario high-speed rail (HSR) project fading

The proposed 250-kph (156-mph) partly

greenfield line between Toronto and London was put on hold when the provincial government changed from the Liberals (centrist) to the Progressive Conservatives (PC) (right leaning). A cabinet shuffle in October saw the original PC transport minister moved to another portfolio and a replacement appointed.

Although there has been no firm news on the HSR environmental assessment, informed opinion suggests that the C\$25-billion + project will be considered unaffordable given the Province's ballooning debt levels. The new transport minister also has a better appreciation of the HSR business case (or absence thereof) and may decide to scrap it entirely or broaden its scope to include improved services on existing VIA Rail routes in southwestern Ontario.

The County of Oxford recently published an alternative plan for passenger rail and bus services throughout the region and it's available here:

<http://www.oxfordcounty.ca/Your-Government/Speak-up-Oxford/Campaign-Details/ArticleId/14251>

You will note that it emphasizes an alternative service delivery called "SouthwestLink" that moves away from VIA Rail's current operating model and stresses

the need to remove usage barriers. The County has budgeted significant funds to promote the concept, but it remains to be seen whether the Canadian federal and

Ontario provincial governments will show interest. Given that the population within the Greater Toronto Area to London axis is scheduled to increase by at least 30% between 2017 and 2041, the tail-chasing solution of highway expansion seems highly inappropriate. But, with political parties working on a four-year beauty contest horizon, concrete and asphalt may yet prevail.

Toronto Union Station

In the age of long-distance steam and diesel passenger trains, Union Station was iconic. Historic romance has been replaced by the need to accommodate massive growth in GO Train commuter services (possibly a 300% increase by 2041) while maintaining track capacity for VIA Rail intercity operations. While the station is undergoing a controversial renovation to increase its capacity and improve passenger experience, it still has very finite traffic limitations.

When InterCityRail, an advocacy group, studied the now dormant HSR plan that would involve up to 50 additional intercity trains daily by around 2030, it was immediately obvious that Union station lacked the needed capacity—by a long shot. Toronto, in common with many large North American cities, finds itself in a transportation bind when there is no room for highway expansion and public transport is limited by the capacity of a single heritage train station. Solving this requires vision and leadership that's sorely lacking in our society.

Ken Westcar is co-coordinator of InterCityRail.

Your Help Is Needed!

By now you should have received our annual appeal letter. While it is always difficult to ask for financial help, your generosity will help us to continue and deepen our work in the coming year. Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution before the end of this tax year. Rail advocacy is important to a balanced national transportation system. Each organization is stronger working together rather than individually; RUN can make a stronger case for rail service with a geographically diverse, larger membership base. Your contribution will strengthen our impact and broaden our reach as we continue to represent all rail passengers, including long distance, commuter, and transit riders. You can donate online using your credit card or PayPal account on the Rail Users' Network website or make a check out to RUN and mail it to Box 8015, Portland, ME 04104. We thank you in advance for your support and hope you have a great holiday season and new year.

THE FIGHT TO SAVE THE RAIL SYSTEM

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connects the continental United States from coast to coast and from border to border. Title 49 United States Code Section 24701 – National rail passenger transportation system states, “Amtrak shall operate a national rail passenger transportation system which ties together existing and emergent regional rail passenger service and other intermodal passenger service.”

Anderson's strategy, if implemented, would be extremely harmful to the health of the national network. Instead of eliminating or cutting some routes back to tri-weekly, we should be making sure ALL routes are daily! A passenger should not have to consult a calendar to see if the journey he/she intends to make operates on a particular day of the week! It could be wonderful to introduce another daily frequency between shorter distance city pairs such as Chicago to St. Paul / Minneapolis or Chicago to Denver, but not if it means shortchanging passengers living in remote areas of the nation where there are few mobility options available for traveling from their communities to other places in the United States. Anderson's plan would also render unlikely the survival of a number of state-supported trains that presently connect with trains that his plan targets for elimination.

Anderson has also revealed a plan to discontinue the *Southwest Chief* as a through train between Chicago and Los Angeles and replace the center of its route between Dodge City, KS and Albuquerque, NM, with an 11-hour bus ride; a plan that would almost certainly result in the elimination of the entire route after a short time. He has also proposed the elimination of a number of trains because of the lack of Positive Train Control on track over which these trains operate in spite of a waiver that the Federal Railroad Administration has issued. By threatening to do this, he is not only defying the lawful authority of the appropriate regulatory body, the FRA, but also the U.S. Congress, which has appropriated sufficient funds to ensure continued operation of the entire existing Amtrak network, and the United States Senate, which voted 95-4 to call for the continued operation of the entire Amtrak network.

For the time being, it appears that Amtrak has backed off. Amtrak's Chief Operating

Officer, Scott Naparstek, recently told the House Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials that “Amtrak's goal is to continue to operate all its current routes after the first of the year... Exactly how we accomplish this will vary across our network, based on the specifics of each route,” he said. “But, we believe we will have strategies in place that will permit us to continue operations until operational PTC or PTC-equivalency is achieved for all our network.”

Anderson has also alienated constituencies whose support is vital to Amtrak, and has severely reduced the sort of amenities and services that have attracted the public to rail travel. These policies include reducing the senior discounts from 15% to 10% on riders 65 years of age or older and eliminating them completely for riders 62 to 64 years of age and student discounts. These groups have historically been supportive of passenger trains and have historically been a loyal constituency for rail travel. This is also the case with private rail car owners who in the past have been able to move their cars on Amtrak trains. There is now essentially a ban on charter trains. This policy was implemented on the pretext that adding such private cars to train consists delays Amtrak operations, although there is no evidence of any such delays.

Anderson has also eliminated dining car service on the *Lakeshore Limited* and *Capitol Limited*. Sleeping car passengers, who pay a premium fare, instead get box meals that they can consume in their rooms or in a special food service/lounge car. He has also recently issued a request for proposals to provide box breakfast, lunch and dinners on all of the long distance routes. This will undermine one of the wonderful features that makes train travel attractive and makes no financial sense, since Amtrak has spent hundreds of millions of dollars to purchase 25 new Viewliner II Dining Cars, which were originally ordered in 2010 and are now available for use.

There will also be no more meal service for coach passengers for trips that can require more than 24 - 48 hours to complete, end to end. Anderson has also eliminated ticket agents at a number of stations, with the result that customers using those stations are inconvenienced and some may be discouraged from traveling on Amtrak in

the future. Such eliminations have left customers stuck in dangerous places in the middle of the night, resulting in a threat to the safety and security of those customers.

Given the above, what should advocates do? At its most recent Board Meeting, held in New York City on Sept. 8, the Rail Users' Network Board of Directors adopted a resolution of no confidence in Anderson and has requested the appropriate House and Senate Transportation Committees conduct hearings regarding Anderson's actions. It is our hope that other rail advocacy groups as well as individual rail advocates will join the fight to call for his removal. As one well known rail advocate has stated, “The dirty tactics that Anderson and company are deploying to dismantle the national system do not deserve a nice guy response.” “It's time to end the denial and to take action to oppose the current Amtrak management.” “Anderson was never the right leader for Amtrak, a company which depends on competent relations with politicians and its supporters.”

Rail advocates must not only continue the fight to maintain the national network, but we also need to expand our efforts at the state level to restore and expand passenger rail service. This may seem delusional given the present car centric political environment in which we live, but there are a number of success stories that provide hope. The best example is what is happening in New England. With the start-up of the new CT Hartford line, commuters will now be able to travel from New Haven, CT to Springfield, MA. The one-way fare is \$12.75, and Amtrak accepts CT Rail Hartford Line tickets on board all regional and shuttle trains except the *Vermont*. The state of Massachusetts has also agreed to establish a two-year pilot program to offer commuter rail service along the northern end of the Knowledge Corridor from Springfield to Holyoke, Northampton and Greenfield, MA, starting in 2019. There is also a plan to establish seasonal weekend service called the Berkshire Flyer from Pittsfield, MA to New York City in 2020 and MassDOT has commissioned an East-West Passenger Rail Study to determine the feasibility of restoring passenger rail service from Boston to Springfield and beyond to Pittsfield, MA. None of this could have been accomplished without the efforts of rail advocates who have worked tirelessly over the years to make this happen.

NEWS FROM NEW YORK: MTA CHAIR DEPARTS AND AMAZON ARRIVES

Continued from page 1

bring the subway infrastructure into the 21st Century, with new signals, continuous welded rail, accessible stations, drainage, rolling stock, and much more. He has held community meetings, to enlist the public in each borough, as the plan is estimated to cost \$40 billion. That kind of funding doesn't come easily, and political and popular support is essential if we are serious about repairing an aging but essential economic engine for the entire region.

In the meantime, President Byford has initiated the Subway Action Plan, which is attacking problems such as signals, water remediation, and tracks on various sections of the subway, with surprisingly positive results. On-time performance for October was the highest it's been in 15 months! Likewise, Lhota brought in Phil Eng as President of the LIRR, the nation's largest commuter railroad, with similar aging infrastructure, and which is undergoing reconstruction on many of its branches, including Main Line Third Track, which will add an important third track to the line between Floral Park and Hicksville stations, and allow reverse commuting, and service improvements. There will also be electrification of the Central Branch, which runs south from Farmingdale to Babylon, and which will add additional service to Babylon on two routes.

Finally, Lhota selected Cathy Rinaldi as President of Metro-North Commuter Railroad, which has three branches east of the Hudson River, as well as two west of the river. The commuter railroads will benefit from the East Side Access project, which will bring the LIRR into Grand Central Terminal, and through the Penn Access Project will bring Metro-North's New Haven line into Penn Station via Amtrak's Hell Gate Bridge route. This major improvement will require extensive work in the area of Harold Interlocking, the U.S.'s busiest rail junction. Lhota has put in place

many positive things that could be his legacy—provided that our politicians realize the vital importance of this transportation system, and fund it accordingly. And that is anything but a sure thing.

Amazon comes to Queens!

As everyone has heard by now, Amazon is moving half of its second headquarters to Crystal City, VA (outside DC), and half to Long Island City, Queens. While this will bring hundreds of jobs to New York, there are many problems associated with this move.

Obviously, it means billions of new tax dollars, and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio and New York State Gov. Andrew Cuomo, while not agreeing on much,

While it is not clear the hours that the workforce at Amazon will utilize, it is very likely that rush hours at any of the subway stations near the Amazon site will be impacted.

agreed on this deal. And it is a "deal," as it bypassed any community or City Council review, gave Amazon a huge break on taxes, provides Jeff Bezos with a helipad on the East River, but provides (at least at this point) nothing for Long Island City's aging infrastructure and already overcrowded subways.

There will be two locations in Long Island City that will host Amazon: one in the Citicorp Tower next to the Court Square subway complex (E,M,7, G), and one on the East River, several blocks from the nearest subway station. As anyone who uses the Court Square station knows, if there is a delay on any of the four lines serving that complex, the station becomes extremely crowded, and it is tough to move between lines. It is expected that Amazon will run its own shuttle jitneys between their proposed East River location and one of several subway stations: either Court Square,

Vernon-Jackson (#7 line), or Queensboro Plaza (N,W,#7), with Queens Plaza adjacent (E,M,R).

While it is not clear the hours that the workforce at Amazon will utilize, it is very likely that rush hours at any of those subway stations will be impacted. There are also two Long Island Rail Road stations in the vicinity: one at Long Island City, and one at Hunters Point Avenue, which will also be impacted. Every one of these transit facilities needs work: new stairways to accommodate the additional traffic, extended platforms, new entrances, wider passageways for transfers between lines, and more. Not one of these stations is scheduled to receive any of these things. Queensboro Plaza (N,W,7) is scheduled to be made accessible, but that's it.

And to top it all off, when the Canarsie Tube (L line) shuts down next April for repairs dating from Superstorm Sandy, thousands of additional riders will be utilizing the Court Square complex to transfer between the G train and E,M, or #7 trains to get to Manhattan! One would have expected our elected officials to have made a better deal, given Amazon's (or ANY company's) need for a skilled, diverse workforce, but as of this writing, this has not happened.

We are still hopeful that Amazon will show itself to be a good new neighbor, and do the right thing. Some elected officials have blasted the deal to bring Amazon to New York, and many residents and local businesses are fearful of being priced out of the neighborhood. And Long Island City is experiencing an amazing building boom, with giant towers saturating the area, bringing many additional riders to an already bursting transit system. It is possible that, with this important new economic Goliath in the area, improvements will be scheduled on these seven subway lines and the LIRR. For the sake of an already beleaguered travelling public, we can only hope so.

Andrew Albert is Vice-Chairman of RUN, the Chair of the NYC Transit Riders Council, and Riders' Representative on the MTA Board.

RAIL USERS' NETWORK ANNUAL MEETING / PUBLIC FORUM

Continued from page 3

Northampton and Holyoke to Springfield, MA and then onto New York City. He believes additional East-West train service is critical and addresses two challenges. In Eastern Massachusetts, the challenge is cost; in Western Massachusetts, the challenge is limited access to the booming economy. Connecting the two, he stated, would benefit everybody because it would provide the same access to quality of life.

Rep. Richard Neal also gave opening remarks. He is the senior Democratic member of Ways and Means, the chief-tax-writing committee of the U.S. House of Representatives. He described the role of a legislator—you really are supposed to legislate. It's not enough to just have a dream; you need to have a plan. He credited Connecticut Gov. Malloy for investing in transit and Massachusetts Governors Duval Patrick and Charlie Baker for their efforts to expand passenger rail and transit in their state.

Next up was John Bernick, the Assistant Rail Administrator for CT DOT. He talked about the CT Hartford Line as a new model for intercity passenger rail. It involved partnerships and collaboration: 30 legal agreements, seven separate construction contracts, one service with two operators and a first-ever "Not to Exceed" price and schedule agreement with Amtrak. Prior to 2018, Amtrak ran a two-car shuttle service back and forth from New Haven to Springfield six times a day. The new service will offer up to 17 roundtrips per day once double tracking is finished and is projected to increase to 25 roundtrips in the future. The Hartford line one-way fare from New Haven to Springfield is \$12.75 on both CT Hartford line trains and Amtrak. Amtrak's 2017 prior one-way fare ranged from \$17-\$46. Bernick also talked about the Hartford Line as an economic development catalyst: \$400 million had been invested in TOD before the line even opened for business, and 794 new residential units have been built near stations along the CT Hartford line.

Our next speaker, Tim Brennan, an outstanding rail advocate, shared MassDOT's plan to conduct a two-year pilot to extend rail service along the northern end of the Knowledge Corridor. The current proposal involves using two Amtrak shuttle trains in the morning traveling south from Greenfield to Northampton, Holyoke and Springfield, MA and two return trips in the afternoon/early evening. The new service will enable people to commute by rail to work and make it possible to travel to New York City and back in one day.

The proposed service, however, doesn't include reverse commuting and there are concerns about the proposed fares. Brennan hopes MassDOT can be convinced to help underwrite costs. Current Amtrak one-way fares range from \$18 to \$24. He and other advocates attending the meeting believe the fare should be no more than that of the CT Hartford line. Otherwise, it is likely that there will not be enough riders to sustain the service beyond the two-year pilot.

The new executive director of the Berkshire Planning Commission, Thomas Matuszko, talked about Berkshire Flyer, the proposed seasonal service from Pittsfield, MA to Rensselaer, NY and then south to New York City. Matuszko has been recently appointed as co-chair of the Berkshire Flyer 2.0 Steering Committee. This committee is charged with making agreements with Amtrak and CSX, as well as marketing and last-mile issues.

Jennifer Slesinger, Project Manager, MassDOT, provided an update on the proposed East-West Rail Study. A consulting firm has been retained to conduct a \$1-million feasibility study to restore passenger rail service from Boston to Springfield and further west to Pittsfield, MA. The study will look at up to six alternatives for passenger rail service, with at least one alternative for 90-minute or less travel time between Springfield and Boston. The study will also determine whether additional stations are needed such as in Palmer, MA. Mass DOT's outreach efforts for the study will include a Study Advisory Committee of stakeholders, public meetings, briefings for legislative leaders as well as outreach through social media and its website.

The two final speakers of the day focused on rail advocacy in the Berkshires and the Pioneer Valley. Kathleen Christensen, the President of the Train Campaign, talked about the ongoing effort to restore passenger service on the Housatonic Railroad from Pittsfield, MA. to Danbury, CT and Southeast, NY to Grand Central Terminal. This route is more direct than going to Rensselaer and then south to New York City. It would benefit northwestern CT, with stops in Canaan, Great Barrington, Lee and Pittsfield and undoubtedly generate more economic development. Housing options for NY and CT employees would expand and full-time residency and property values would increase.

Ben Heckscher, the co-founder of Trains in The Valley, described the organization's mission to advocate for improved and expanded passenger and freight rail service in the Pioneer Valley region of western Massachusetts. At a high level, the organization provides people with information, advocates for users and works to increase transparency of information. It acts as local "eyes and ears" on the ground and points people in the right direction. Its website is outstanding: TrainsInTheValley.org provides up-to-date information about what is happening with freight and passenger rail in the Pioneer Valley and contains an online newsletter called the Rail News Roundup.

In keeping with our shared vision and past precedents, time was also set aside for attendees to share their ideas about how passenger rail service can be improved and expanded. A brief annual meeting was held to nominate and vote on the slate of Board Members that the Nominating Committee recommended. The vote for the slate was unanimous.

The meeting closed with Andrew Albert, the Vice Chair of RUN, giving closing remarks. "The consensus from a day of testimony and various speakers, including elected officials is: people want rail service in their communities: it enhances their quality of life; it connects them to the rest of the world, while providing an economic & sustainable form of transportation."

2018 WAS NOT A GREAT YEAR FOR NEW STARTS, BUT THERE WAS SOMETHING FOR EVERY REGION OF THE U.S.

By David Peter Alan

At the beginning of 2018, transit officials hoped to open 15 new train or rail transit lines in the United States and Canada. Some of those starts have been delayed, so riders in those places will have to wait until sometime next year. Still, every region of this country has new service somewhere, and the proliferation of new streetcar lines continues.

The most dramatic of the new starts took place in South Florida, where the new Brightline trains began running between West Palm Beach and Fort Lauderdale on Jan. 13. We ran a feature on the line in our summer issue. Since that time, service was extended to Miami on May 19. The equipment is new and the trains are conventional in nature, while the route is historic. It is the Florida East Coast (FEC) Railway, originally built by real estate developer Henry M. Flagler.

Real estate development still plays a large part in the planning for the line, with new stations in downtown Miami, Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach. Brightline is unique in that its operator is a private-sector corporation, Florida East Coast Industries (FECI), the real-estate arm of the company that owns the railroad. Amtrak and local rail transit are in the public sector, and the industry is watching to see how Brightline performs. It is doing well, according to spokesperson Ali Soule, but the company does not disclose ridership numbers. Trains run essentially hourly on weekdays, but with some gaps, and every two hours on weekends. The trip takes 74 minutes. Customers must make reservations through their website, www.gobrightline.com.

Brightline has expansion plans, too. The next extension will be north to Orlando Airport, when a new line is built between there and the FEC at Cocoa. Brightline managers hope to have trains running there in 2021. There are also recently-announced plans to extend service to Tampa in the future. Will there be trains on all of the historic FEC line to Jacksonville someday? Time will tell.

Elsewhere in Florida, SunRail in Orlando extended service south from its former terminal at the Sand Lake Road park-and-ride station to Poinciana, south of Kissimmee. The 17-mile extension opened for service on July 30. The historic station at Kissimmee, where Amtrak's *Silver Meteor* and *Silver Star* also stop, is on the route. So are two other park-and-ride stations between Sand Lake Park and Kissimmee.

There were also some service enhancements: more mid-day trains, a northbound train later in the evening, and a new shuttle bus between the Sanford station and downtown Sanford. There is no new railroad involved, but there are new stations on the line. A trip now takes 88 minutes from end to end. There are plans to extend the line northward to the Deland Amtrak station and establish a connection to Orlando Airport, presumably to connect with the future Brightline station there.

The sole upgrade in the Northeast this year features no new stations, but constitutes a major service enhancement over part of its route. It is the CT Rail Hartford Line between New Haven and Springfield, built and supervised by the Connecticut Department of Transportation. The new trains began running on June 15, and the new service augments the existing shuttle service which Amtrak operates on the same line. Trains run every day, with service between New Haven and Hartford running about every two hours; more at peak commuting times. There are only a few new trains to Springfield, but officials expect to run more when double-tracking along the line is completed.

The only light-rail expansion and the only new line in the South is the LYNX Blue Line extension of the Charlotte Area Transit System. The 9.4-mile extension eastward from Uptown to the University of North Carolina – Charlotte opened on March 15 and almost doubled the length of the line, which was previously 9.6 miles. There are plans to extend the Gold Line streetcar, and eventually to initiate commuter rail service north from Uptown Charlotte (their name for "downtown").

The only expansion on the West Coast this year was on the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system, and it is different from the other BART lines. It is called eBART and it is a diesel light-rail operation, rather than the metropolitan-style electric trains that operate elsewhere on BART. The new 10.1-mile line opened for service on May 28th and links the Pittsburg – Bay Point station at the northeastern end of the electrified system with two more stops at Pittsburg Center and Antioch in eastern Contra Costa County. The units are made by Stadler and are similar to the ones in use in Austin and Denton, TX and on New Jersey Transit's River Line between Trenton and Camden, in South Jersey. BART has plans to extend the eBART line, as well as its conventional electric line in the East Bay to Berryessa toward San José. The latter segment was originally scheduled to open this year.

Streetcars are back in downtown Milwaukee, and have been since Nov. 2. The line uses "modern" streetcars made by the Brookville Equipment Company, similar to those on the new Dallas Streetcar. The line is known as the M-Line and the "Hop"; part of a sponsorship deal with the Potawatomi Hotel and Casino that also allows riders to ride free for the first year. The two-mile line snakes through downtown Milwaukee, northeastward from its origin on Fourth Street, one block from the Intermodal Terminal used by long-distance buses and Amtrak trains. Construction is underway on the "L-line" which will branch off the current line in the Historic Third Ward (the city's district of refurbished warehouses) and head toward the Lakefront. That line is scheduled to open in 2020.

The other dramatic "new start" is the return of streetcar service to El Paso, TX, with cars that ran there in the past. They are Presidents' Conference Committee (PCC) cars that started their lives in San Diego and ran in El Paso from 1949 until 1974. The cars were stored in a dry desert location, and the bodies were sufficiently well-preserved

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RAILNATION 2018 - RAIL PASSENGER ASSOCIATION'S MEETING IN MIAMI

By Phil Strebby

RailNation is the RPA fall meeting held around the country to bring passenger rail information and talk out to its members and other groups making up the passenger rail advocacy movement. This year, it was held in Miami (next year to be held in Sacramento, CA). The event convened Friday, Oct. 19, and ran until midday Sunday, Oct. 21. Tours and other events were scheduled to take advantage of the area in addition to planning sessions and guest speakers.

Friday evening kicked off with a "fireside" chat moderated by Jim Mathews, CEO of the Rail Passengers Association, and including Joe Boardman, immediate past president of Amtrak; David Gunn, also past president of Amtrak; Michael Dukakis, former governor of Massachusetts; and Fred Frailey, *Trains* magazine columnist. The topic was "Envisioning the Future of the US Rail Network." One of the highlights was Mr. Boardman suggesting that the RPA take over the task of organizing and running National Train Day, a task that Amtrak has been conducting until this past year to celebrate the driving of the gold spike connecting the west coast with the rest of the country May 10, 1869 with the completion of the first transcontinental railroad. Visit the website of the National Park Service at: <https://www.nps.gov/gosp/planyourvisit/2019-150th-anniversary-of-the-completion-of-the-transcontinental-railroad.htm> for more information concerning the 150th anniversary of the driving of the golden spike, and follow additional links for even more information on the history of the railroads and towns involved.

RailNation Saturday events included six concurrent sessions, three each in the morning and afternoon.

- "Why the Swiss Can Build Big Projects Cheap and We Can't..." facilitated by RPA's Vice-President-Policy, Sean Jeans-Gail with Gene Skoropowski, a noted and acclaimed passenger rail expert with more than 40 years of railroad industry experience in both the private and public sectors.

Gene was responsible for establishing Brightline, the nation's newest and best passenger railroad now operating between Miami and West Palm Beach in Florida,

developing the service plan (train operations), selecting the rolling stock (trainsets), designing of the rolling stock maintenance facilities, hiring and training of operating crews (engineers & conductors), projecting operating costs and revenues and preparing the company's passenger rail operations program. Brightline is building toward Jacksonville, and intends to provide service to Orlando and Tampa.

- "How to Pay for Infrastructure; Unlocking the Value of Real Estate," moderated by Abe Zumwalt (RPA Director of Policy Research), included on the panel Albert Hernandez, Assistant Director for Planning and Development for Miami-Dade County, and Jose Gonzalez, Senior VP Business Development at Florida East Coast Industries.

Mr. Hernandez led the efforts in completing MDT's Metrorail AirportLink project, which involved extending Metrorail from the Earlington Heights station to the Miami Intermodal Center (MIC). The project budget was over \$500 million and was completed in 2012 under budget and on schedule. He was also responsible for several other transit projects, such as upgrades to several Metrorail and Metrobus maintenance and operation facilities, construction of new park and ride lots and aggressively pursuing public private partnerships through Transit Oriented Developments at several existing rail and bus stations.

Mr. Gonzalez is responsible for pre-development project issues including land use, environmental, traffic and general governmental regulation, as well as property acquisition and seller issues. Mr. Gonzalez' involvement spans across projects for FEC and its subsidiary companies including Flagler, Brightline, and Flagler Global Logistics.

- "RPA's Envisioning of the Future of the US Rail Network," led by Jim Mathews described how the National Association of Railroad Passengers (RPA's former name, and also known as NARP) researched and developed the national network plan known as "Grid and Gateway." Jim described the comprehensive interconnectivity of core routes developed from the work, by NARP volunteers, unifying state passenger rail plans into a true national plan, and described the benefits, both economic and social, of that intensified connectivity.

During lunch, Stephen Gardner, Executive VP & Chief Commercial Officer -Amtrak, addressed us. His message, boiled down, was that Amtrak is interested in operating trains throughout the country, provided there is sufficient funding and equipment to do so. He spoke of Amtrak's focus on safety and how Positive Train Control (PTC) is operational on all Amtrak controlled routes as well as many of the host railroads' routes. He continued with Amtrak implementing a safety management system to identify risk across the network. The company wishes to overcome any public perception of danger riding Amtrak, and reduce accidents, which cost Amtrak \$50 million in the last year.

Amtrak is re-investing in track structure and bridges in the Northeast Corridor, which Gardner stated has suffered from decades of under-investment. It is working on a station improvement program to provide travelers with better conditions including seating, ADA accessibility, signage, restrooms, etc.

Amtrak is also refurbishing its fleet of single level cars, with the Amfleet I equipment nearly finished. Locomotives need to be replaced since the P42s are nearly worn out, and don't meet even the minimum emissions requirements. Equipment replacement is at the top of the list because what Amtrak has is old and, in some cases, beyond repair or refurbishment. The company is looking at state partners to take advantage of large-order cost reduction for off-corridor service, and they are preparing to replace the also-aging Acela equipment.

Shifting focus, he promoted the idea that Amtrak is preparing for growth in the coming decade as the federal government dictates to Amtrak what it wants from the company. Amtrak is essentially working from the 1970-era skeletal system. While the U.S. demographic is shifting southward and westward, and re-urbanizing the cities therein, such re-urbanization continues to occur throughout the entire country as people chose to work and recreate nearer to where they live.

Rail's natural fit is to connect those 400-500 mile corridors with multiple frequencies serving the core business district and new population centers to meet the travel demand these centers generate. Amtrak wants to be

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RAILNATION 2018

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positioned to provide the levels of service required, providing improved trip time and reliable service with new equipment. Expansion into new markets is a goal, and will require Congress to greatly improve funding for the third leg of a national transportation network.

Following lunch, we enjoyed three more concurrent program sessions.

- Joe Aeillo, RPA Northeast Field Coordinator, moderated the panel "Miami SMART Plan's First Mile/Last Mile Opportunities," which concentrated on plans and opportunities for "getting there" from the train station to one's final destination. Aileen Boucle, executive director of the Miami-Dade Transportation Planning Organization, joined him.

Ms. Boudé is responsible for conducting the planning for Miami-Dade's complex transportation network, which includes implementing policies established by the MPO governing board, as well as directing, managing, and planning for projects and programs that enhance the county's transportation. Also joining the discussion was Alfred Lurigados, a board member with Friends of the Underline, which is an ambitious plan to utilize the space under the People Mover system in Miami as a 10-mile long by 100-foot linear park with walking/bicycling paths. (www.theunderline.org)

2018 NEW STARTS

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that they could be sent to the Brookville Equipment Company to be modernized and rebuilt. They retain much of their original appearance. The original line went to Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, but the new line stays on the El Paso side of the border. It comprises two loops in the downtown area, and it is part of the local Sun Transit system, but with no regular Sunday service. We hope to have a feature story on this service restoration sometime next year.

In a surprise move and after two years of delays, the Delmar Loop Trolley began service in St. Louis on Thursday, Nov. 15. The 2.2-mile line runs between University City and the Missouri History Museum in Forest Park, mostly on Delmar Boulevard and DeBaliviere Avenue. Service is limited: Thursday and Sunday between noon and 8:00, and Friday and Saturday

- Session 2 with moderator Carolyn Cokley, RPA Customer Advisory Programs; Patrick Kidd, Gov't Affairs—Amtrak; Bryan Sawyer, District Station Manager—Amtrak; and Carey Maynard-Mooney, Station Redux in Lawrence, KS spoke about Amtrak's volunteer Station Host Program, which RPA endorses as an interim solution to the widespread lack of Amtrak station agents at most locations around the country. While roles may vary, station hosts are trained uniformed volunteers whose role is to meet and greet passengers, provide local community information, distribute appropriate Amtrak literature, and be familiar with emergency procedures all while volunteering a mandatory number of hours and times each month.

- Session 3 concerned Amtrak's annual reauthorization and how we might better push this agenda toward consistent and improved funding. Richard Harnish, Midwest High Speed Rail, presented a detailed study utilizing the Chicago to Indianapolis route as an example of what true high-speed rail could offer to a region. Using PowerPoint slides, he demonstrated the potential, which could be unlocked with a core high-speed service between the two major cities, supplemented with standard speed service from close in but outlying cities near both. In the case of Indianapolis, those cities would mainly include Cincinnati and Louisville, but also smaller nearby cities such as Anderson and Muncie. Other trains as well as buses would feed the core as a true corridor route.

Art Guzzetti, VP Policy at APTA, the

between noon and 11:00. Officials plan to increase service when the third car they ordered is delivered. The service began with two vintage cars made by the Gomaco Trolley Company for a "vintage streetcar" line in downtown Portland, Oregon. The fare is \$2 for a two-hour ride and \$5 for a day pass, with seniors, children and persons with disabilities riding for half fare. The last time streetcars ran in St. Louis was in 1966.

The last new start of the year has not yet occurred at this writing, but a "modern" streetcar line is scheduled to begin service in Oklahoma City on Dec. 14. The new 4.6-mile line, also known as MAPS 3, will have 22 stops, linking the city's central business district with downtown and Bricktown, a collection of historic warehouses and similar buildings that has been re-purposed as an entertainment district. The line is owned by the City and will be operated by Herzog Transit Services. As in Milwaukee, it will run with modern-style Brookville cars. There will be no Sunday service, but a separate

American Public Transportation Association, lent a very credible presence to the conversation. He is a 39-year veteran of public transportation at the local, state, and national levels. Among other things, Guzzetti is responsible for APTA's extensive policy research agenda, policy analysis and development, transportation information, and statistics. He and the APTA team work with the legislative and executive branches of all levels of government and with other national associations, think tanks, and interest groups to cultivate the ideas, relationships, and advocacy initiatives that will propel public transportation forward.

Sunday morning was devoted to RPA internal business, with reports from the Chairman of the Board, Peter LeCody; the President, Jim Mathews; Treasurer Ken Clifford; Sean Jeans-Gail on Policy; Mark Colucci on resource development; and Bruce Becker for next year's event in Sacramento. Resolutions were discussed and voted on and committee business was attended to separately. After lunch, some of us traveled to the Gold Coast Railroad Museum, while others took a ride on the new Brightline route.

See you next year. Remember, all passenger rail advocates are encouraged to attend.

Phil Strebby is a RUN Board member and a board member of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance.

short-turn loop will operate in Bricktown on Fridays and Saturdays, in addition to the regular service on the full line.

There were more "new starts" planned for 2018, but they were delayed. They include the G-Line in Denver (conventional suburban railroad) and TexRail in Fort Worth (diesel light-rail, like Denton and Austin). There are also two new starts planned for the Province of Ontario in Canada: the Confederation Light Rail line in Ottawa and ION Light Rail in Kitchener and Waterloo, northwest of Toronto. There are other service expansions planned for opening next year, too. We will watch for them and report to you about them.

David Peter Alan is a RUN Board member who lives and practices law in South Orange, NJ. He has already ridden Brightline, several trips on the Hartford Line, the Milwaukee "Hop" streetcar, and the track over which SunRail operates. He plans to ride the rest of the new lines next year.

A SURVEY OF LONG DISTANCE AND STATE-SUPPORTED PASSENGER TRAIN SERVICE IN THE WESTERN U.S.– PART FOUR: EXISTING (Continued)

By Dana Gabbard

To keep this survey at a manageable length, it is being divided into multiple parts. This part deals with existing long distance passenger train services in Southern California. Part five in the Spring issue will explore the under construction California high speed rail project, while part six will be on proposed new routes, plus efforts to revive discontinued Amtrak routes.

Please see the introduction to part one in the Spring issue regarding the purpose and certain other underlying aspects.

Southwest Chief

Santa Fe began its *Super Chief* between Chicago and Los Angeles in 1936. Amtrak continued the *Chief* after it began operations May 1, 1971. In 1974 the name was changed to *Southwest Limited* after Santa Fe withdrew permission for Amtrak to use the name, citing what they perceived as a decline in the quality of service. In response to service improvements, Santa Fe allowed the name to be changed to *Southwest Chief* in 1984.

It serves 32 stations, operates daily and is 2,265 miles long. The major stops besides Chicago and Los Angeles include Kansas City, MO; Topeka, KS; Albuquerque, NM; Flagstaff, AZ; and San Bernardino, CA. It is the seventh highest ridership long-distance train with 363,000 riders (all ridership figures are for FY 2017, taken from the Monthly Performance Report for Sept. 2017 (Preliminary and Unaudited) dated Dec. 27, 2017 and posted on the Amtrak website).

On Jan. 1, the change described in the article "A Tourist Train Runs Between Amtrak and Majestic Scenery, At Least for the Moment" by David Peter Alan in the Fall 2017 issue took effect. Those wishing to take the *Southwest Chief* to the Grand Canyon Railway [whose website is thetrain.com] now get off in Flagstaff, AZ and take a dedicated connecting Thruway motorcoach to the Holiday Inn Express in Williams, AZ, 1150 W. Cataract Lake Rd. From there one must arrange what Amtrak describes as a "self-transfer" to get to the Grand Canyon Railway Depot (280 N Grand Canyon Blvd). The distance is about ¾ of a mile which Google

Maps claims is mostly flat. In the alternative, taxi service is available in Williams, and options to get quotes and make reservations online exist. It might be prudent to call the Holiday Inn at (928) 635-2221 for their advice on the best option to get to the depot. The shuttle costs \$24 each way. I agree with the Amtrak website, "We recommend that you research and arrange your self-transfer transportation options prior to your trip."

As I described in the last issue ("Can the *SW Chief* Stay on Track?") advocates are engaged in a battle for the *Chief* involving its mid-section, responding to Amtrak's demand for additional conditions to be met before providing a previously promised \$3 million toward the match of a \$16 million federal grant for upgrading the tracks and its proposal to replace the mid-section with a bus bridge (between Dodge City, KS or La Junta, CO and Albuquerque, NM). Since the last issue, there have been a number of developments.

In late August, Colfax County hosted a meeting on the *Chief* attended by more than 40 state and local officials from the route's corridor. In the meeting, Amtrak Senior Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer Stephen Gardner made comments that *Trains* magazine initially summarized as "Amtrak will not operate passenger trains on lines without positive train control after Dec. 31, 2018," even for lines granted PTC waivers by the Federal Railroad Administration which would impact the aforementioned mid-section ("Amtrak says it will not run trains on routes without PTC" by Bob Johnson, posted August 27).

Amtrak hurriedly issued a statement ("Amtrak Statement Counters *Trains*'s PTC Article") refuting the *Trains* piece: "For those carriers and routes operating under an extension or under an FRA-approved exemption, Amtrak is performing risk analyses and developing strategies for enhancing safety on a route-by-route basis to ensure that there is a single level of safety across the Amtrak network. For those very limited routes where a host may not achieve an alternative schedule by year's end, Amtrak will suspend service and may seek alternative modes of service until such routes come into compliance."

Gardner made an impression with his appearance, unfortunately not a positive one. Johnson quotes one of the attendees, Steve Cottrell Assistant City Manager of Garden City, KS, which was the sponsor of the first Transportation Infrastructure Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant for upgrading tracks. He complained Amtrak should be working with stakeholders about the future of the *Chief* and questioned Gardner's comments that Amtrak had no pre-conceived end-game in mind. Cottrell averred, "... To get blindsided by this bus-bridge thing and then come in and say they have no preconceived idea just kind of set a negative tone to the meeting." *Trains* obtained a copy of Gardner's PowerPoint presentation (as have I) and notes it is very detailed, which understandably belies the no preconceived end-game claim.

In September, testimony before the House Transportation & Infrastructure Rail Subcommittee hearing on PTC implementation, Amtrak's Executive Vice President and COO, Scott Naparstek stated, "we believe we will have strategies in place that will permit us to continue operations until operational PTC or PTC-equivalency is achieved for all of our network." The Rail Passengers Association (RPA) in its Hotline e-newsletter #1084 noted, "... Mr. Naparstek's testimony does appear to undermine one of the central rationales Amtrak has put forward for breaking up the *Southwest Chief* route with a bus-bridge. In its presentation to local officials, Amtrak stated it would "require PTC for this segment for long-term operation," with an estimated \$23 million in installation costs and \$3.5 million in annual operating costs. By identifying "PTC-equivalencies" for main track exemptions, Amtrak is admitting what RPA has been arguing all year: there are lower-cost alternatives to ensuring the safety of the *Chief*'s passengers.

At an Oct. 3 Senate Commerce Committee hearing under questioning by Sen. Tom Udall (D-NM), Naparstek testified, "We plan on running the *Southwest Chief* as-is through fiscal year 2019." Udall echoing Cottrell stated, "I reiterate the need for Amtrak to work with the communities impacted to create a real plan for the future of the *Southwest Chief*." In a video posted on Facebook, Udall is shown at the hearing to have also pressed Naparstek for a commitment from Amtrak to make

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LONG DISTANCE AND STATE-SUPPORTED PASSENGER TRAIN SERVICE

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available the \$3 million for the TIGER grant but the Amtrak official only would state despite repeated prodding, "We are committed to continue to work with the stakeholders and to try to find [a] successful resolution."

On Oct. 7, a community Q&A was held at the Lamy, NM Amtrak Station, sponsored by the New Mexico Rail Passengers Coalition (formerly the NM Section of the *Southwest Chief* Coalition) in partnership with the Lamy Station & SFS Railway Lamy. Adrian Gurule, President/Founder of NMPRC and organizer of the event, says it had around 50 attendees plus a number of local officials, a staffer from the office of Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Amtrak spokesman Marc Magliari and RPA President Jim Mathews.

Passenger Rail Kansas (PRK) [www.passengerrails.org/] held a Kansas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Summit in Topeka, KS on Oct. 12 with over 70 attendees. Many local officials spoke, along with representatives of state and federal elected officials, plus a number of advocates. Several videos of speakers at the Summit are posted on YouTube. Kudos to PRK President Evan Stair for organizing this important event in just a few months for coalition building in the affected corridor.

At this point, the next battleground will be the FY2019 federal appropriations act. As I mentioned last issue, the Senate version contains provisions to aid the *Chief*. This is to be heard in a House-Senate conference committee during the post mid-term lame duck session. Rails Inc and its President/Founder (and RUN Board member) J.W. Madison are continuing their efforts to advocate for the *Chief* as do the numerous stakeholders I mentioned in the last issue. The New Mexico Rail Passengers Coalition has announced on its Facebook page two rallies it plans to hold next year. Be assured RUN will continue to be at the forefront of the effort to save the *Chief*.

Sunset Limited

During the era of private passenger rail service, Southern Pacific operated its *Sunset Limited* between New Orleans and Los Angeles (and in some periods continuing on to San Francisco). By 1970, service was reduced from daily to tri-weekly. Amtrak continued the route when it began operation in 1971, unchanged from how Southern Pacific operated it (including the frequency). In 1993 it was extended to Miami, FL; from

Nov. 1996-Oct. 1997 its endpoint was Sanford, FL; then it was extended to Orlando.

In 1996, a rerouting eliminated direct service to Phoenix, AZ. Due to track damage by Hurricane Katrina, the route returned in 2005 to only running east as far as New Orleans, which it does to this day. Service east of New Orleans is described as "suspended."

It serves 22 stations, operates tri-weekly, and is 1,995 miles long. Major stops besides New Orleans and Los Angeles include Houston, San Antonio and El Paso, TX; Tucson, AZ; and Palm Springs, CA. Of the 15 long-distance trains, it has the lowest ridership with 99,000 riders.

There has been some interest among local stakeholders in Benson, AZ to have a replica of the historic depot become the station, replacing the current barebones stop whose amenities consist solely of a bus-stop-style shelter, but this is a very nascent effort at the moment.

Bruce Flohr worked at Southern Pacific, became Deputy Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration in the 1970s and finally founded RailTex, which specialized in owning and managing short line railroads before being sold to RailAmerica in 2000. He has gotten some media attention ("Amtrak Considers Marfa Stop," *Big Bend Sentinel* Feb. 8, 2018) and a favorable response from Amtrak to his proposal that the *Sunset Limited* stop in Sanderson, TX be shifted to Marfa, TX which has growing recognition as an art mecca (it was the subject of a photo essay published earlier this year in the travel section of the *New York Times*).

Flohr is quoted in the aforementioned *Sentinel* article after watching trains stop at Sanderson, "Nobody got on or off in Sanderson..." Which doesn't surprise me since that station in fiscal year 2017 had only 193 boardings/alightings (per the Texas Fact Sheet FY 2017 posted on the Amtrak website). Not merely the worst in Texas, but the worst by a substantial margin (the second-to-bottom station is Del Rio with 1,764).

A Marfa stop is not a new idea. In 2015, the University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture posted online a concept for the design of a Marfa station. Last year, then-Mayor Dan Dunlap mentioned it during a meeting of the West Texas Economic Development Board.

Ann Marie Nafziger, Mayor of Marfa, informs me Bruce Ashton, RPA South Central Division Leader, is slated to make a presentation on the station proposal at the Dec. 11 City Council meeting. It appears this proposal may bear fruit.

Regarding these two station-related aspirations, Amtrak spokesman Magliari noted, "Station location ideas often originate with the communities." He further stated that while Amtrak is not in current conversations with Benson or Marfa, he would be happy to connect the communities with the right people at Amtrak Government

Affairs to talk about their ideas.

The *Sunset Limited* is the object of three separate but inter-related aspirations:

- daily service
- service east of New Orleans along the Gulf Coast
- resuming direct service to Phoenix

Stakeholders working on these include RailPAC, RPA, Southwest Rail Passenger Association, All Aboard Arizona (AAA), Rails Inc., Louisiana Association of Railroad Passengers, Florida Coalition of Rail Passengers and the Southern Rail Commission (SRC).

Some of the salient points in favor of these changes:

- Studies predict daily service would double ridership (the two lowest ridership Amtrak lines, the *Sunset Limited* and the *Cardinal*, are the only ones that are tri-weekly)
- The New Orleans-Orlando segment accounted for 40% of revenue in fiscal year 2004, the last full year it was operated
- Maricopa, 35 miles from Phoenix, has much lower boardings/alightings than was experienced when Phoenix had direct service

At the 2018 California Passenger Rail Summit, Amtrak CEO Richard Anderson stated categorically extending the *Sunset* to Orlando will not happen, declaring it doesn't make economic sense since the train for that distance is too slow.

In February 2016, SRC co-sponsored with Amtrak an inspection train trip from New Orleans to Jacksonville, FL that received substantial press coverage and participation by elected officials in the corridor. SRC is holding regular meetings, the most recent of which was held Sept. 7, 2018 in New Orleans. Besides an extension of the *Sunset Limited*, it is promoting service from Baton Rouge to Mobile, AL via New Orleans, with possible eventual extension to Jacksonville, FL.

Anderson at the Summit spoke favorably about this proposal, which is hung up at the moment by a lack of funding commitments by the states of Alabama and Mississippi. SRC Chair John Spain informs me in October it applied for a federal Consolidated Rail Infrastructure Safety and Improvements grant for Gulf Coast passenger rail restoration. It is doing so on a 1:1 basis (\$32.99 million federal funds matched by an identical amount raised from various public and private sources). The statute establishing the program gives preference to 1:1 applications which makes SRC feel its application is extremely competitive. SRC's website is at www.southernrailcommission.org

A Daily *Sunset Limited* Coalition organizing meeting, spearheaded by AAA and attended by a cross section of stakeholders, was held Oct. 24, 2017 in San Diego.

Dana Gabbard is a RUN Board member and executive secretary of Southern California Transit Advocates.

TAKING THE TRAIN TO/FROM RAILNATION MIAMI

By Phil Streby

Members of the Rail Passengers Association (RPA), formerly known as the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP), converged in Miami, FL October 18-21, 2018 for several days of events, speakers, tours, and fun. Traveling from South Bend, IN to Washington, DC on Amtrak train No. 30, the *Capital*, I met up with more RPA members traveling south on train No. 97, the *Silver Meteor*.

Most of us traveled with sleeper accommodations allowing us to enjoy the dining car fare on the *Meteor*. The meals were cooked to order and quite delicious, and much conversation ensued since we, for the most part, dined together.

Too bad the same thing could not be said for the *Capital*, which did not have a functioning dining car. Cold, boxed lunches are the normal fare on this train, and from my observation, while it included yogurt with granola topping, fruit, and juice, did not appear to be satisfying. I spoke with one couple who thought the packages would be quite troublesome for those with arthritis or any other restrictive use of hands. The resulting mound of trash appeared to be discarded rather than recycled.

About 7 a.m. the next morning, a group of us were sitting in the Sightseer Lounge (often mistakenly referred to as an observation car) when the car got very cold. I found the conductor in the lower lounge with several other employees and complained that several of us upstairs were cold. Further questioning and commenting only garnered an "Okay" as a response. No apologies for the situation or any effort to correct the situation were offered. Instead, he suggested that I contact the train manager, Linda Anderson, if I wanted more information. She did not appear to be any more conversive.

At Cumberland, a passenger became irate because he was unable to get off to smoke, and started swearing. I forgot my place as a passenger, and ordered him to cease his outburst with a curt "That will be enough of that language!" He immediately settled down...

Train No. 97 departed DC on time. Our group enjoyed a nice dinner in the diner, and retired to our accommodations for additional conversations.

I awoke several times during the night. At one point we had stopped because of a Positive Train Control (PTC) fault. At least we know the fail-safe is to shut off the locomotive, and it works. Too bad a multi-billion-dollar system took the place of the fireman (second engineer) on our trains both passenger and freight. I'm guessing the railroads aren't too happy about having to spend the money they just saved by reducing crew forces. Another issue involved a passenger pulling out the emergency window.

We arrived in Miami that evening after a long train ride, and took rental and Uber cars to the hotel, about seven miles distance. Yes, there is another train

America's love affair with the automobile is over, but we still don't have an adequate alternative. More and better train service would cause the auto to become the alternative.

station, brand new even, that Amtrak doesn't utilize because when it was under construction, Amtrak failed to reply to many requests for input.

Because of this failure, the station tracks and platforms would allow Amtrak train to block street crossings. Now additional time and money needs to be spent to correct this situation before Amtrak will be allowed to park its trains in the new station!

Returning to Indiana the following Monday, many of us retraced our journey on the northbound *Meteor*, No 98. This time I traveled via coach. I should have gotten a sleeper. Some of us are just too tall to stretch out comfortably in the coach seat; I felt as though I was sliding out of my chair all night. Except for an air hose problem,

which was quickly repaired, the trip to DC was uneventful.

Arriving the next morning in DC, Duane Chatten and I went out to see the city, touring several sights. Heading westbound on No. 29, the *Capital*, we were "entertained" for about 1 ½ hours by an unruly, intoxicated passenger who was taken off the train in Meyersdale, PA.

While easy to "Monday morning quarterback," I believe that when the crew was notified the police would be half an hour arriving, the train should have continued on to Connellsville, PA, the next station stop, about 40 miles distant. I realize they had their hands full with this miscreant, but they should have isolated and restrained him away from the rest of the coach passengers who were subjected to his vulgar and crude rantings. We lost even more time from that point on, and left Pittsburgh over 3 ½ hours late! We were further delayed by both freight and passenger trains from the time we arrived in Cleveland until I disembarked at South Bend.

Infrastructure needs vast improvement to replace what the railroads ripped out from the 1950s through the '80s to avoid both taxes and maintenance costs. It makes no economic sense from the passenger standpoint to have delays caused by this lack, but I understand that the railroads had to do it, since the nearly bottomless bucket of public money built the infrastructure allowing us to be "in love with the automobile." That love affair is over, but we still don't have an adequate alternative. More and better train service would cause the auto to become the alternative, save for the trip to the train station.

Phil Streby is a RUN Board member and a board member of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance.

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