

Amtrak Service to Norfolk Starts Dec. 12

Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell (R) announced that a Virginia-supported Richmond-Norfolk extension of a daily Amtrak *Northeast Regional* round trip will begin Dec. 12. It will have one intermediate stop, at Petersburg. Staples Mill Road will be the only Richmond stop; the line to Petersburg-Norfolk does not pass Main Street Station.

The train will leave Norfolk at 4:50 AM weekdays/6:05 AM weekends. The return trip departs Washington at 3:55 PM weekdays/7:00 PM weekends and arrive Norfolk at 8:50 PM/11:48 PM.

The lowest one-way fares—reserve at least 14 days before departure; “may not be available at all times”: \$38 Norfolk to Washington, \$51 to Philadelphia, \$63

to New York, \$73 to Boston.

In his August 30 announcement, Gov. McDonnell said, “The partnership between the Commonwealth and Amtrak to bring an Amtrak Virginia station to the city of Norfolk reflects my administration’s commitment to continue to make progress in improving our transportation networks for the state. [The train] takes cars off the highways, helping ease congestion on already highly-traveled roads.”

Virginia Transportation Secretary Sean Connaughton expressed “thanks to the hard work of our partners, CSX, Norfolk Southern and the City of Norfolk, for completing the necessary up-

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Amtrak Updates NE Corridor Vision Plan

A lower pricetag, funding more evenly spaced at \$4 billion a year and a longer time to complete are key features of *The Amtrak Vision for the Northeast Corridor: 2012 Update Report*.

The July 9 report has visible changes from Amtrak’s original, 2010 plan for a new, double-track Boston-Washington high speed line (NextGen HSR):

- Serves Providence instead of Woonsocket
- No White Plains Airport station
- Changes to other proposed stations
- Moynihan Station (Penn Station) to be the prime HSR station in Manhattan, “with options for an East Side station later. We also found no appetite for a second station in Manhattan when we met stakeholders. We gain ridership by eliminating the dwell time at a second station.” The quote is from a July 12 talk by Andrew Wood, Amtrak’s Chief, Next Generation Integration, HSR, NEC Infrastructure & Investment Development Business. He spoke at the World Congress on High Speed Rail in Philadelphia.
- Higher ridership and revenue forecasts—43.5 million annual Northeast Corridor (NEC) intercity riders and \$4.86 billion in revenues by 2040—which is 25% higher than in the report released in September, 2010.

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Gulf Coast Event Promotes Rail Revival

Rail Summit Gathers Elected Leaders, Business, Federal Officials, Advocates

The City of Mobile and Mayor Sam Jones (D) hosted and NARP sponsored the Gulf Coast Passenger Rail Summit.

Local, state and federal elected officials from Florida, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana heard from Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Amtrak, business, academic and advocacy leaders about prospects for returning passenger trains to the region. Amtrak suspended the *Sunset Limited* east of New Orleans in September, 2005, due to Hurricane Katrina but did not restart the service after CSX reopened a “better-than-new” railroad in early 2006.



-Courtesy: Stephen Sayles

At Gulf Coast Passenger Rail Summit in Mobile (L to R): Tallahassee NARP member Bart Bibler, House Railroads Subcommittee Ranking Member Corrine Brown (D-FL), Tallahassee City Commissioners Max Stout & Nancy Miller, NARP Florida Council Member/FL Coalition of Rail Passengers Pres. Stephen Sayles.

At the Aug. 16 summit, FRA Deputy Administrator Karen Hedlund announced a \$100,000 grant to Alabama for a feasibility study on restoring Mobile-Montgomery-Birmingham passen-

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The Ins and Outs of eTicketing

eTicketing offers substantial benefits both for traveler convenience and to help Amtrak reduce costs (see January 2012 *News*). But it does introduce new issues and questions:

What if I make a multi-train trip on one reservation and I skip one of the segments? Suppose I'm ticketed from Eugene to Chicago and a friend offers me a ride to Portland with the result that I don't ride the Cascades?

Amtrak always recommends that you contact them right away if your plans change. In general, if you fail to show on one reserved segment of your trip, that and all subsequent segments on that reservation will be canceled unless you contact Amtrak in advance. In this case, Amtrak can easily adjust the reservation to make sure your space is protected if you choose not to (or are unable to) make a train in your itinerary.

There are more ways to contact Amtrak. You still can speak with an Amtrak agent. But now you can make changes on Amtrak.com, the Amtrak Mobile Application or at a Quik-Trak kiosk—even after your trip has started.

Will my reservation be canceled if I'm on the train but the crew fails to collect my ticket?

If your ticket is not scanned, it is best to search out the conductor to have that done. However, Amtrak will not let a conductor push the “sweep” button (indicating ticket collection from a particular point is completed) if:

(a) an unusually small number of tickets are collected, and/or

(b) only one conductor is logged in, indicating that only one is working the train, increasing the chance that some tickets are not being collected.

In these situations, incidentally, the system may infer that you traveled when you did not. If you learn that to be the case, tell Amtrak so they will adjust your record appropriately. But, again, it is best to tell Amtrak your change-of-plans in advance.

What if I find that my reservation has been canceled against my wishes, for whatever reason?

Talk with an Amtrak agent, who will

restore the reservation.

Can I avoid the cancellation problem by booking consecutive segments as separate reservations?

Yes, but Amtrak discourages this practice. It may result in a higher fare than if the itinerary had been booked as one reservation.

Also, this places responsibility for managing connecting itineraries in the customer's hands rather than Amtrak's. Customers may not leave enough time to make their connection. Also, if there is a schedule change or a late arriving train, Amtrak will not know about the connecting segment and the customer will have to make sure their connection can still be met, or move the connection themselves.

What if I change a subsequent segment after printing my eTicket, and I do not have a smartphone, access to a Quik-Trak machine, or time to see an Amtrak ticket agent?

There is no need to print out a new eTicket if you are boarding at a station without gate control. When the reservation is changed in the Amtrak reservation system, the modified itinerary is sent to the conductor's iPhone, so the conductor will be aware of the change.

At stations with gate control (Washington Union Station, New York Penn, Chicago, Philadelphia, etc.), you will need to print out a new eTicket or display the revised eTicket on your Smart Phone.

This lets the gate usher confirm that you are boarding the correct train. The gate areas at these stations can be congested and it is easy for a customer to board the wrong train. Amtrak gate ushers provide some protection against this.

What if I board a train before the station shown in my reservation?

It is always best to tell Amtrak in advance about any itinerary changes. In this case, there may not be seats and the fare may change. See in the answer to the first question the many ways that you now can change your itinerary, including after you begin your trip. ■

NARP News

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This has news through August 31.

Vol. 46, No. 8 was mailed August 14.

ILLINOIS LAW PUTS TOLL HIGHWAY AUTHORITY IN RAIL BUSINESS

Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn (D) signed into law Aug. 17 a measure granting the Illinois Toll Highway Authority (“Illinois Tollway”) the power to construct and maintain railroad tracks. As it can for highways, the Authority now can assemble right-of-way, design civil works, issue bonds and manage the construction of railroads. It can charge passenger or freight train operators for use of tracks, just like it can charge drivers and truckers for the use of toll highways.

The law was one of the Midwest High-Speed Rail Association's major initiatives in the past year. Association Pres. (and NARP Director) Rick Harnish said in a blog post that he was proud to have made it happen.

During an impromptu policy discussion at the signing ceremony, Gov. Quinn highlighted the need to connect Rockford, O'Hare Airport and downtown Chicago via high-speed rail. He said the Toll Authority's next step is to study the feasibility of the O'Hare-Rockford segment.

grades for this service and making it possible to launch 10 months earlier than originally projected. The economies of [Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia] are intertwined and starting this service will strengthen them both.”

Norfolk Mayor Paul D. Fraim (D): “The return of passenger rail service to Southside Hampton Roads adds an important transportation alternative for business and military travelers as well as the general public. It is the result of dedicated, visionary leadership at the state and local level that will benefit the region far into the future.”

Norfolk’s station is at the parking lot next to Harbor Park Stadium and Harbor Park light rail station. Amtrak’s station will have a waiting room and a Quik-Trak ticket machine. ■

2012 Republican Platform Calls for End to Passenger Train Funding

Amtrak continues to be, for the taxpayers, an extremely expensive railroad. The public has to subsidize every ticket nearly \$50. It is long past time for the federal government to get out of way and allow private ventures to provide passenger service to the north-east corridor. The same holds true with regard to high-speed and intercity rail across the country.

—2012 Republican Party Platform

This implies that the trains—or many of them—could keep running if federal funding stopped. This is not credible. We’ve been through the suggestion of a private takeover before.

On Feb. 21, 1985, Secretary of Transportation Elizabeth Dole told a Senate subcommittee, “I do believe that creative methods will be devised. I’m optimistic that the Northeast Corridor especially will survive” without federal funding.

But two months later, on April 23, she told a House subcommittee that the possibility of a private takeover “was one of the things we wanted to look at early on and I think, in the time that has intervened, we have had a chance, re-

- Completion date 2040, not 2035.
- Total pricetag for the *Master Plan* to upgrade the existing NEC and for Next-Gen HSR is \$151 billion, a reduction of \$18 billion from the 2010 plans.
- Schedule and large capital projects modified to strengthen “opportunities [for] additional revenue from expanded services and new fare policies...and leverage...opportunities for public and private sector funding.”

Update is based on a recently completed internal document, *NEC Business and Financial (B&F) Plan*.

The *B&F Plan* calls for strategically [advancing] specific elements with the biggest impacts on improved reliability, increased capacity and reduced trip time as quickly as funding allows.” Foremost is the Gateway project to rebuild Portal Bridge near Secaucus, NJ and build two new tunnels under the Hud-

son River into Manhattan.

ally, to focus on that. I don’t think realistically that is likely to happen.”
The \$50 per passenger claim is misleading. Dividing Amtrak’s \$1.461 billion federal grant for 2011 by its 30.17 million riders yields \$48.43 per Amtrak passenger. But this ignores Amtrak’s big role as host to commuter railroads where it owns infrastructure, including the Northeast Corridor and the Chicago terminal. It’s also “rear-view mirror analysis”—what would highways and airways look like if we accommodated future traffic growth only on those already-crowded forms of transport?

Readers may take some comfort in the fact that platforms, like conventions, increasingly are viewed as anachronisms. You also should know that NARP communicated its recommendations to the leaders of the platform committee (www.bit.ly/goplet).

The Republican platform also opposes using Highway Trust Fund money for “other purposes.” This likely refers to the ability of states in certain cases to use Fund monies for transit, bicycle, pedestrian and historic facilities. ■

More on the 1985 Amtrak debate is in NARP Pres. John Martin’s May 1986

son River into Manhattan.
Critics who say major NEC improvements could be accomplished at a much lower cost ignore that key pieces of elderly infrastructure like the Susquehanna River bridge and the Baltimore tunnels must be replaced at high cost but with the main benefit simply preventing collapse of the railroad. Even with all Master Plan improvements, the existing NEC will be at capacity by 2030.

The Federal Railroad Administration’s (FRA) Passenger Rail Corridor Investment Plan includes creating a Service Development Plan, and the environmental process whose outcomes will determine what is built. ■

Update is at www.bit.ly/nec2012. Give comments to FRA and sign up for e-mail updates at <http://necfuture.com/> Sept. 14 is deadline for comments to be considered in EIS Tier I scoping.

article in Trains. For the Republican platform, www.bit.ly/rpltfm under “Infrastructure: Building the Future.”

YOUNG AND OLD NEED MORE TRAINS, TRANSIT

An Aug. 14 front-page *New York Times* story reported a trend among states towards restricting “when, how and with whom teenagers can get behind the wheel.”

Young people increasingly find using electronic devices more important than driving a car. A University of Michigan study found that the share of people in their late teens and early 20s with drivers licenses dropped markedly from 1983 to 2008 (AP, Apr. 5).

The annual number of vehicle-miles traveled by 16-to-34-year-olds fell 23% from 10,300 miles per capita in 2001, to 7,900 in 2009 (*Transportation and the New Generation: Why Young People Are Driving Less and What It Means for Transportation Policy* at www.bit.ly/yngdrv)

There is also the sharp growth in the number of seniors who need alternatives to the car to maintain both their mobility and their mental health.

ger service, which has not existed since the 1995 discontinuance of Amtrak's state-supported *Gulf Breeze*.

Hedlund answered the charge that trains are too costly. "What is affordable about adding four more lanes to Interstate 10? What is affordable about doubling size of airports? Rail is affordable. Yes, upfront costs can be higher but it lasts for hundreds of years," she told the audience.

Mayor Jones later told the *Mobile Press-Register*, "I think we've probably got another four to six months' worth of preparation before we step out with our plan and proposal. We need to sell it as a region, and that's what we're committed to do."

He was referring to the coalition of Gulf Coast mayors that he heads.

Dr Paul Nelson, NARP Mississippi Council Representative, was praised for his presentation focusing on the economic and community development benefits of passenger trains. He told local leaders that NARP is ready to help them generate grassroots public support for whatever plan they agree to for bringing new or restored service to the region.

Amtrak Southeast Region Government Affairs Director Todd Stennis told attendees that his company stands ready to work as a partner with government, which will have Amtrak's Todd Stennis to lead the initiative and come up with the funding. The coalition of mayors has yet to come up with an operating plan or a funding source, but seem to prefer a stand-alone, daily New Orleans-Florida service.

Stennis emphasized Amtrak's position that the 2006 decision to suspend the *Sunset* indefinitely was a "strategic business decision" that was not intend-

ed to single out the Gulf Coast region as unworthy of train service.

Local government leaders expressed significant interest in initiating corridor train services in the region, rather than simply restoring the *Sunset* as it was before Hurricane Katrina. Many have negative feelings towards the *Sunset* as a train that was chronically late, served most Gulf points in the middle of the night, and was sometimes canceled.

National Science Foundation transportation policy advisor Eric Peterson and Mississippi Gulf Coast Convention and Visitors Bureau President Beth Butterfield Carriere also spoke. The summit was by invitation only. ■



-Stephen Sayles

Paul Nelson, NARP Council Member

Chairman's Corner

One of the exciting things I get to do is travel around the country attending and speaking at transportation events and NARP regional meetings.

In early August I went to the 15th Annual Transportation & Infrastructure Summit in Irving, TX. This was my second year to speak at the conference and I found the many speakers to be very informative. What follows are some things I learned that might help you in presenting the reasons for rail passenger service.

Joe Szabo, FRA Administrator, gave an excellent presentation which included these points:

- Congestion costs nearly \$130 billion a year—and growing—and wastes 2.5 billion gallons of fuel.
- In 2010 there were more than 120 million hours of delays on the airlines.
- From 1995 to 2008, ridership on all forms of rail transit shot up 72%.
- In 2009, seniors made 328 million more trips by rail and transit than they did a decade ago. (With 100 million more people by 2050 and a higher percentage of seniors we need good rail passenger service all over the country.)
- By 2050, we will move four billion more tons of freight a year. (We will need more track capacity for handling that freight and our passenger needs).
- Two railroad tracks can handle the same number of passengers as 16 lanes



-Stephen Sayles

Amtrak's Todd Stennis

Scenic Maine Eastern Railroad Reawakens Former Maine Central Rockland Branch

Maine Eastern Railroad 1950s vintage passenger trains link Brunswick, Bath, Wiscasset and Rockland on tracks owned and rehabilitated by the State of Maine. There are two round-trips Wednesday through Saturday through Oct. 20. A single round-trip runs Sundays Sept. 16 to Oct. 21. There are special holiday trains in December. The anticipated 2013 service begins Saturdays only in early spring, with Wednesday-Saturday service from late June.

(continued next page)

by Robert J. Stewart

of freeway.

- Rail right-of-way only consumes 1/3 of the land roadways require.
- California in 20 years will have seven million more people. High speed rail can avoid the need for 2,000 more miles of highways and 115 more airline gates, while costing only half what the added road and air capacity would cost.

Pat Natale, Executive Director of the American Society of Civil Engineers, said our infrastructure is falling apart. Here are the grades they give for some of our systems: Drinking water: D; Bridges: C-; Navigable waterways: D; Rails: C; Roads: D; Energy: B+; Dams: D; Transit: C; Hazardous waste: C, Solid Waste: C-.

Rail advocates are not alone in this country with a need for improve infrastructure. Pat said we need to spend \$2.2 trillion over the next 5 years but we have only allocated half that amount.

Many speakers emphasized that we live in a world economy and must invest in infrastructure to be competitive.

I will leave you with one last sobering thought. Matt Rose, President and CEO of BNSF said that we spend 2% of our GDP on surface transportation while Europe spends 5%

So, when you go out spreading the message, you can back up your requests with solid facts that the need is there and the alternative not acceptable. ■



-Both photos: Ross Capon

Excursion train eastbound for Rockland and its walkable harbor area passes Wiscasset Yacht Club on 57-mile run from Brunswick.

Dragon Cement freight cars and barge facility south of Rockland's picturesque harbor.

Maine Eastern now uses the same, federally-funded Brunswick station that Amtrak will begin using in November.

A key reason why Maine Eastern can provide this service is its freight business, which includes transport of

cement from Dragon Cement in Thomaston (above photos) four miles to the Rockland waterfront where the product is loaded onto barge for shipment to Boston and distribution in southern New England. The short rail haul reflects

both Dragon's creativity and Maine Eastern's reliability. ■

More on Dragon Cement transport is in the Bangor Daily News of March 22, 2011: www.bit.ly/dragcmt

New Amtrak Baggage, Refund Policies

Baggage -- Effective Sept. 10:

- **Each passenger is limited to four pieces of checked baggage. The first two are free and the other two are \$20 each. Each checked bag will be limited to 75 linear inches (length+width+height).** Larger bags (up to 100 linear inches) will incur a \$20 per bag fee.

Before, you could check up to three bags free, up to 50 pounds each. A \$10 fee applies for each bag between 50 and 100 pounds and for each additional bag (if checking more than three).

- The new policy assures that **checked baggage will be accepted until 45 minutes before train departure**, up from 30 minutes previously.

- **The fee for parcel-checking luggage with an Amtrak agent (leaving a bag for pick-up later the same day) increases to \$4 per item from \$3** (now \$5.50 at New York Penn Station).

- **Special item fee increases to \$10 from \$5 per item.** This includes bicycles (in boxes), skis, golf clubs, etc. Tandem bicycles, kayaks and canoes are no longer accepted.

- **Rubber containers are no longer allowed as checked baggage (plastic containers already were prohibited).**

Carry-on baggage policy is unchanged. Per-passenger limit: two pieces, **excluding** purses, small electronic devices with protective cases, small

personal items, two infant items (if you are with infants under two years).

Refunds -- Effective Aug. 12:

- **A "ticket" is created upon payment.** It may be an eTicket (which you receive the instant you make an on-line purchase) or a paper value ticket. **The refund policy applies to both types**, that is, immediately upon payment, even if no document is printed.

- **There is no refund fee for a canceled ticket if converted to an electronic eVoucher or paper exchange voucher.** Both types can be redeemed for future travel within one year of the date of issue, but only with an Amtrak ticket agent at a staffed station. (Redemptions at Amtrak.com, on mobile devices, or over the phone are planned for the future.)

- **A 10% service fee is charged on refunds** for unreserved coach tickets, regardless of form of payment, but not for:

(a) *Acela Express* First Class and non-*Acela* Business Class if cancelled before scheduled departure;

(b) reserved coach and *Acela* Business Class if cancelled at least 24 hours before scheduled departure.

- **There is a new, tougher policy on no-show-related refunds.** A single refund policy now applies to an entire trip. A trip is a grouping of continuous travel that may include one or more same-day

transfers. If your trip has coach and sleeper travel and you "no-show" the first segment, the tough sleeper refund policy applies to the whole trip—the full amount paid is forfeited.

If your trip has only coach and/or *Acela* Business Class travel and you "no-show," the entire fare paid automatically is converted into an eVoucher, or can be refunded less the 10% fee.

For a reservation involving more than one type of fare, the "hierarchy" of refund policies is: sleeper (as in the example above); *Acela Express* First Class/non-*Acela* Business Class; reserved coach and *Acela Express* business class; special promotional fare (including certain Northeast Regional fares); unreserved coach.

- **Cancelling a sleeping car reservation.** If done 15 days or less before departure (up from seven days), the fare can *only* be converted to a non-refundable eVoucher good for one year toward future travel. If done earlier, you can choose a cash refund less the 10% fee. If not cancelled before scheduled departure ("no-show"), the full amount paid is forfeited.

- **Advance purchase special fares**, like *Northeast Regional* fares available 14 days or more in advance, **are non-refundable but their value may be applied to future travel.** ■

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

Join Us in Milwaukee, Oct. 20-21

NARP's annual Fall Council of Representatives meeting takes place at the **Hilton Milwaukee City Center Hotel**, four blocks from the Milwaukee Intermodal Station (Amtrak & bus hub). Meeting activities will be all day Saturday, Oct. 20 and until 2:00 PM Sunday, Oct. 21. **On Friday, Oct. 19, an optional, extra-cost tour** of Wisconsin's three new stations and the *Trains* magazine offices in Waukesha is planned.

Partial speakers list: *Trains* Senior

Editor Matt Van Hatten, Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission Director Laura Kliewer, Midwest High-Speed Rail Association President Rick Harnish, Californians for High-Speed Rail Executive Director Daniel Krause, and NARP officers and staff.

An early bird registration rate of \$180 for the full meeting (not including the Friday tour) **is available until Oct. 1. There also are discounted rates** of \$160 for first-time attendees

and \$150 for young adults (ages 18-30). Attendees can book rooms at a special NARP rate at the Hilton Milwaukee City Center through September 18.

For more information and to register and reserve a discounted hotel room, **visit www.narprail.org/meeting or call (202) 408-8362.** ■

Kansas Lawmakers to Study Passenger Rail Maintenance, Expansion

Just before ending the year's session on Aug. 14, the Kansas Legislature voted to create an interim study committee to make recommendations for laws needed to fulfill the state's share of the work required to keep Amtrak's *Southwest Chief* on its current route, as well as to extend the Fort Worth-Oklahoma City *Heartland Flyer* into Kansas.

The vote was a victory for the Northern Flyer Alliance (NFA), a hard-working group of passenger advocates and business leaders. The committee will consist of a select group of legislators and is one of several issue-specific committees that will meet during the legislature's recess. It will hold one day of public hearings sometime between Sept. & Nov.

"We anticipate that the committee will hear from several business leaders

around the state as to why passenger rail is important for their businesses and employees," said NFA President and NARP Kansas Council Representative Deborah Fischer Stout. ■

2013 Funding Update

The House and Senate on July 31 agreed to a Continuing Resolution to keep the federal government running at current levels through March 31, 2013.

Thus, the new Congress sworn in in January, 2013, likely will decide federal funding levels for the remainder of fiscal 2013, which runs from Oct. 1, 2012 to Sept. 30, 2013.

Barring Congressional intervention, which might occur in the lame-duck session, automatic spending cuts—set for Jan. 2, 2013, under current law—could interfere (*NARP News*, July, page 3). ■

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

New North Carolina Thruways:

Starting Oct. 3, two new Thruway bus routes will connect these eastern North Carolina points with Amtrak's *Palmetto* at Wilson. The routes are Greenville-New Bern-Havelock-Morehead City and Goldsboro-Kinston-Jacksonville-Wilmington.

The next Amtrak System Timetable will be in mid-December and take effect Jan. 1, 2013 rather than in Oct. It will include the *Downeaster* Brunswick extension (starts early November) and the *Northeast Regional* extension to Norfolk (lead story). Portland-Brunswick will get three daily round-trips, two of which run through to/from Boston.

Northlander: Ontario Northland Railway's Toronto-Cochrane train makes its last run Sept. 28, giving way to bus service. The Cochrane-Moosonee *Polar Bear Express* will remain.