



NARPnews

“We’re not talking about building back what was, but to build for the future. The population of the Gulf Coast will grow by 10 million people. Those additional people need to move safely and efficiently. It cannot happen without passenger rail.”

SARAH FEINBERG, ADMINISTRATOR OF THE FEDERAL RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION

NARP Members Push Congress to Implement FAST Act Funding

Disagreement among Republican lawmakers over the best strategy to pass a budget is raising doubt over their ability to pass a spending blueprint for Fiscal Year 2017. NARP is taking action in the face of this confusion, asking advocates to push Congress to fully implement train-friendly policies from the comprehensive surface transportation bill passed in late 2015.

The majority of Republicans and Democrats in the House are looking to craft a budget based upon a bipartisan budget deal agreed to last year by Congress and the White House. However, members of the House’s Freedom Caucus have issued an ultimatum, saying they won’t vote for a deal that includes \$30 billion in sequestration relief agreed upon in last year’s compromise.

In the face of this uncertainty over next year’s budget, NARP staff—and NARP members—are urging Congress to abide by the bill they voted into law. NARP is requesting \$2.32 billion for passenger rail, based upon the programs overwhelmingly approved by Congress as part of the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. This funding figure represents a meaningful increase from the \$1.39 billion enacted for Amtrak for FY 2016—though it falls short of the overwhelming demand

from states looking to expand rail service to forge economic links and better connect their populations.

“Growing congestion in other modes and rapidly dwindling transportation options in small- and mid-sized communities are driving the surge in public demand for trains, making train travel more vital than ever to local economies across the nation,” wrote NARP President Jim Mathews in his written statement to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development. “As surely as mobility powers economic growth, congestion constrains it.”

As of publishing, 335 members of Congress have received messages from NARP members requesting their support. Simultaneously, spurred on by NARP members, a bipartisan coalition of Senators and Representatives are circulating a Dear Colleague letter in support of FAST Act rail programs. As negotiations continue—on the topline number, as well as transportation-specific talks—it’s important that your elected officials hear from you! You can take action online, or call the Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121. Ask them to follow through on the bipartisan FAST Act by supporting NARP’s passenger rail funding request! ■

April 2016

Vol. 50, No. 4

INSIDE

MEMBERSHIP NOTE	PAGE 2
.....	
Volunteer Spotlight: Matt Fels, NARP’s ‘Data Maven’	PAGE 2
.....	
Update: NARP 2016 Spring Meeting	PAGE 2
.....	
DMU Technology Gains Momentum In U.S. Passenger Rail	PAGE 3
.....	
States News	PAGE 4
.....	
NARP Members Submit Comments To STB On Policy Statement	PAGE 5
.....	
Web Exclusive: A Dispatch From Aboard The Gulf Coast Inspection Train	PAGE 6
.....	

NARP Pushes For A Connected America During “Day on The Hill” and Congressional Reception

On April 12, NARP staff, Council Representatives and members will meet with elected officials on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. to discuss support for critical transportation policies and funding for a strong national rail network. “Day on the Hill” will see NARP representatives from

across the country visit congressional offices throughout the day to share NARP’s request for \$2.24 billion for passenger rail in Fiscal Year 2017, while also highlighting the need for local passenger rail in their own communities. The day’s meetings will be followed by NARP’s Annual Congressional

Reception, which will include industry representatives and elected officials.

“When NARP meets on Capitol Hill, we want to raise awareness of critical transportation infrastructure needs and address investment in passenger rail throughout the

HILL, p. 3

MEMBERSHIP NOTE

Is Your Info Up-to-Date? Please help us by keeping your information current! You can change your address, your phone number or any other important detail in your membership by yourself using the NARP website, at <http://narprail.org/for-members/manage-your-membership>. Just enter your membership number, or create an account to get started.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Volunteer Spotlight: Matt Fels, NARP's 'Data Maven'

When we talk about volunteering, often we're asked by our members "what difference can just one member make?" Well the answer is "a lot," especially when you match your personal passions to your Association's needs. Need proof? Look no further than Matt Fels, a 30-year advertising and marketing professional who hails from Fort Worth, Texas.

Even if you've never met Matt, you've probably benefited from his work compiling the enhanced ridership fact sheets we use in our advocacy and which many of you download and use in your own efforts with local officials. Whether you want to look at ridership and financial performance by congressional district, by city, by state or even by Amtrak business line, NARP can offer you a clean, attractive, data-rich PDF to print and use as needed, courtesy of Matt's labor of love.

"I've been kind of a data geek playing with timetable data since about 1996," says Fels, who was recognized with NARP's Jack Martin Award honoring the volunteer work that he has been contributing for more than a decade. "The analogy that I use is it's like building an Erector Set. You take a week, immerse yourself [and create] almost a three-dimensional model you can turn over in your mind."

Matt starts with raw Amtrak ridership data in a spreadsheet. He then parses all of that and uses software scripts to sort,

combine and write-out the data into our fact-sheet format, updating facts and figures, double-checking address information for all 530 served destinations and remapping to congressional districts as needed, all the while being careful to observe the caveats and restrictions Amtrak has put around using the data.

"[Board Member and former NARP Chair] George Chilson calls these the 'Value Line' format," says Fels, a reference to the 86-year-old New York investment research house's one-sheet summaries of mutual funds: "A big bar chart and then the narrative around it. You could digest the information pictorially, boom, right there and if you wanted to dig into the details underlying that chart you could do that."

The objective is to try to make the data useful enough so that each sheet can answer a whole range of specific questions, and better yet to "anticipate question, answering a question before it's even asked," he says.

Matt also wants his fellow NARP members to know that if they ever find themselves being asked the same kinds of questions over and over in their own local advocacy efforts, they should let us know so that he can try to get the answer: "We'll work it!"

You can see Matt's work here: <http://www.narprail.org/our-issues/ridership-statistics>. And the next time you see Matt, thank him for his tireless work that benefits all of us! ■


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This issue has news through Month 16, 2016.
Vol. 50, No. 4 was mailed Month 23, 2016.

Update: NARP 2016 Spring Meeting

Last Reminder for NARP's 2016 Spring Meeting...Being held Sunday, April 10 through Wednesday, April 13 at the Sheraton Hotel in Silver Spring, MD. Last minute meeting registration is available through April 6. Visit the event webpage <http://bit.ly/1SxCKPe> for a registartion link and for the most up-to-date agenda information.

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DMU Technology Gains Momentum In U.S. Passenger Rail

A proven technology that could lower the barriers to entry to starting passenger service and solve the thorny problem of how passenger and freight service can share the rails is making its U.S. debut with the Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) system.

SMART will begin operating new diesel multiple units on its San Rafael-Santa Rosa route later this year. The public had its first chance to board the new units in San Rafael March 11.

Diesel multiple units, or DMUs, are gaining popularity for use in passenger rail. A DMU is a multiple-unit train powered by on-board diesel engines. Unlike other trains, a DMU requires no separate locomotive, because the engines are incorporated into one or more of the carriages. Better yet, these DMUs exceed FRA crashworthiness standards, which lets them run in traffic with freight trains while operating more efficiently than standard passenger-car sets.

Passenger services across the world have begun to incorporate DMUs into their fleets. A prominent North American example is the Union Pearson Express in Toronto, which connects the city's Union Station with Pearson International Airport. DMUs were introduced last year to prepare for the 2015 Pan Am Games, which Toronto hosted.

Apart from the game-changing crashworthiness of SMART's Nippon Sharyo units, DMUs are cleaner and quieter than traditional

rail cars and, because each unit can move itself, passenger capacity and motive power can be added simultaneously. DMUs can accelerate more quickly due to more power-driven axles, increasing efficiency on routes with many closely spaced stops. DMUs are also less vulnerable to single-point-of-failure outages because of the way propulsion is distributed among the cars; in other words, they can operate with one or more faulty units.

Both SMART and the UP Express use Nippon Sharyo DMUs. Nippon Sharyo, a unit of Sumitomo Corp. of America, began building these DMUs in 2013, and have already built 14 for

SMART and 18 for the UP Express. Each DMU begins construction in Nagoya, Japan, before travelling to Rochelle, IL, for final assembly. The Nippon Sharyo DMUs can use alternative fuels such as waste-derived biodiesel, and can even be converted to electric multiple unit operation. That means the same train could be run using electricity as opposed to diesel.

Other DMUs are fully U.S.-made. US Railcar makes two types of DMU railcars, self-propelled and non-powered commuter coaches. The commuter coaches are available in single level, carrying up to 94 passengers, or bi-level, carrying 188. The US Railcar DMU is approved to operate in all mixed-mode freight corridors across the U.S., which is not the case for all foreign platforms. US Railcar makes its DMUs in Arkansas. ■



Nippon Sharyo DMU in SMART livery
Photo by Sonoma-rich at English Wikipedia, CC BY-SA 3.0

HILL, from p. 1 country,” said NARP CEO and President, Jim Mathews. “This year, that means discussing with Congressmen the promises made for the EAST Act’s multi-year rail authorization, which will allow local and state governments, railroads and Amtrak to make critical investments to modernize train fleets, expand rail passenger services, and upgrade rail infrastructure in order to meet a fast-growing U.S. population.”

NARP’s request of \$2.24 billion for FY2017 is a modest, yet significant increase in funding for passenger rail service, including Amtrak. Up from \$1.39 billion in FY2016, NARP representatives can highlight how this increase in funding should be spent, and on what projects, such as the reintroduction of Gulf Coast passenger rail service from Louisiana to Florida; state-of-good-repair work on the Southwest Chief’s route through Kansas, Colorado, and New Mexico; and the Gateway Project to alleviate bottlenecks in the Northeast Corridor between Manhattan and New Jersey.

“America’s transportation infrastructure is not where it needs

to be if our country hopes to meet the transportation demands of 70 million more U.S. residents by 2050. If we don’t look for new investments in passenger rail, millions of Americans will continue to face mobility challenges,” Mathews stated.

Last year, more than 100 NARP representatives paid their own way to take part in “Hill Day” meetings, including TJ Girsch, who traveled from Quincy, MA and will take part in the events for 2016.

“When we come together as citizen advocates, NARP is able to highlight with our own Congressmen, why support for a national rail network is so important to millions of Americans. Engaging with elected officials, sharing messages between NARP members, and raising attention on passenger rail is a great way to influence change and the advancement of rail on Capitol Hill,” said Girsch, who has been a NARP member since 2005 and a NARP Council Member since 2014.

Following the last meetings of “Day on The Hill,” NARP will

HILL, p. 5

• • • S T A T E S N E W S • • •

NJ Transit avoided a major strike with its employees by agreeing to provide retroactive pay with the new wage increase the organization will give. Unions representing more than 4,200 employees that transport commuters between New Jersey and New York had threatened to strike if their demands were not met. The new deal gives NJ Transit workers a 21 percent wage increase over 8½ years before compounding. Union leaders also conceded to a new structure for employee health-care benefits that NJ Transit officials had sought.

In an unprecedented move, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority in D.C., shutdown for 29 hours after officials were concerned that a fire on Monday, March 14 was similar to a fire from January, 2015. During the shutdown, which impacted approximately 700,000 Metro commuters, the agency conducted safety inspections on the aging network. The shutdown also prompted calls for more stabled funding and oversight of D.C.'s Metro.

The Seattle Times released a two-part story on the new light rail system that links major parts of Seattle together, including Capitol Hill Station and the University of Washington. The new network, known as Link Light Rail, is projected to accommodate 45,000 weekday passengers by 2021, for a total of 80,000 in a 21-mile system. The \$1.8 billion, 3-mile tunnel from Westlake to the UW is funded mostly by local sales and car-tab taxes, plus an \$813 million federal grant.

Sacramento County Superior Court Judge Michael Kenny ruled in favor of California's high-speed rail network, ruling that development of the train did not violate promises that officials made to voters who approved it. The lawsuit claimed that the state's estimates for ridership, construction and operations were not reliable. Judge Kenny noted that the \$64 billion rail system continues to evolve so it is premature for the court to intervene.

On March 7, an Altamont Corridor Express train derailed northeast of Fremont, CA. The accident was caused by a fallen tree on the tracks, with the first car slamming into the tree before falling into a creek. The derailment resulted in 14 passengers being injured, but there were no life-threatening injuries.

On March 14, Amtrak's Southwest Chief train derailed west of Dodge City, KS. The train was carrying 131 passengers and a crew of 14, and 32 people were sent to the hospital. The National Transportation Safety Board is currently examining problems with the track, which could have been misaligned.



Amtrak's Southwest Chief outside Los Angeles”
Photo by Pazzee at de.wikipedia, CC BY-SA 3.0

Nearly 15 years after September 11, the World Trade Center Transportation Hub opened this week. The station, which opened months ahead of schedule, connects to 11 subway lines in New York as well as the underground PATH trains that link New York to New Jersey. Despite the early opening, the hub's cost soared to \$4 billion, twice the estimate when it was unveiled in 2004, and the space has been described by some residents as an architectural wonder and by others as an expensive eyesore.

The state of Maryland has chosen the team of Purple Line Transit Partners to develop and maintain the Purple Line, a light-rail system outside Washington, D.C. The project is expected to take six years to complete, and service will begin in the spring of 2022. The line will run 16 miles between Bethesda in Montgomery County and New Carrollton in Prince George's County, inside the Capital Beltway.

The House Public Works and Highways Committee is reviewing New Hampshire's decade-long Transportation Improvement Plan, and the possibility of a \$4 million addition for development of the Capitol Corridor to construct a new rail line from Massachusetts north through Nashua and Manchester. The \$4 million for engineering and environmental permitting was originally pitched last year in Gov. Maggie Hassan's budget but later removed by the Legislature. Federal funds with the newly enacted FAST Act would cover 80 percent of the development phase. The remaining 20 percent contribution from the state level could utilize accrued toll credits - generated through construction and maintenance of the turnpike system. ■

NARP Members Submit Comments To STB On Policy Statement

This February, the Surface Transportation Board sought comments on a “policy statement” they had issued regarding the definition of preference for passenger trains. NARP condemned the statement as an overreach of STB’s administrative powers and encouraged its members to weigh in on this critically important issue.

As we have come to expect, our members came through with flying colors. More than 100 members responded, and commenters on the statement supported NARP’s position over STB’s by nearly 10 to 1. Below is a sample of our members’ comments, used with permission.

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“Passenger train timekeeping is already lamentable: I cannot schedule a meeting in, say, Atlanta within an hour of my train’s arrival, since I will be late for that meeting one time in two! And yet, if I read your proposition correctly, it would now be up to Amtrak to prove that the delay was abusive — a practical impossibility... I am more time-sensitive than coal or scrap metal.” — Nicolas Clifford, Philadelphia, PA

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“I am a volunteer at the Kelso-Longview Train Depot in Kelso, WA. We have

many people that go to Seattle in particular for medical reasons. An on time train is very important to these people.” — Hope Ramsdale, Longview, WA

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“Late trains affect me in the pocketbook and in my lost time. ... I ask the STB to do its job as Congress intended to do it. Keep Amtrak’s priority over freight intact.” — Ron Schmidt, Portland, OR

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“I’m very disappointed that the STB would alter the subject rule without public input. When I plan to travel to northern Illinois I would prefer to travel via Amtrak’s Empire Builder, yet I’m fearful of landing in downtown Milwaukee in the middle of night trying to find an auto rental office open at 2:00 AM due to freight congestion.” — Ray Krueger, Seattle, WA

.....
“We do not have a public airport, nor is our bus service adequate. Amtrak is very important for our rural community. ... Please do not change your policies, because we have a lot of oil trains and longer freights that go through our community and we need to make sure that Amtrak can be on time and a priority on the rails as promised to us. ... Make them stick to that promise.” — Leone Mauszycski, Winona, MN.

HILL, from p. 3

hosts its Annual Congressional Reception. The event will feature the presentation of NARP’s Golden Spike Awards, the Burch Family Safety Award and remarks by invited guests and dignitaries, including Senator John Thune (R-S.D.) and Senator Roger Wicker (R-Miss.). Industry representatives, administration officials and elected representatives will also be in attendance for the reception. This year, the event is being held in Reception Room 485 of the Russell Senate Office Building and will run from 5:30pm to 7:30pm.

“The annual reception is a terrific way for our members to not only meet each other, but rub elbows in a casual setting with leaders in passenger rail,” said Mathews. “We will also be honoring senators Thune and Wicker for their continued bi-partisan support for the development of a truly national rail network in the U.S.”

Congressional office visits are held throughout the day on April 12. “Day on The Hill” appointments can be made by individual or groups of members on their own, or NARP staff can help arrange meetings in advance by contacting NARP at: abezumwalt@narprail.org ■

Important Tips For Meetings on Capitol Hill From NARP Member TJ Girsch

- Educate yourself about a couple of key issues that are most important to your region.
- Learn who your elected officials are.
- Tie messages into NARP’s “A Connected America” strategy for a national rail network.
- Don’t be disappointed if you meet with staffers rather than the actual official. You may well be better off meeting with the staffer to get things done.
- Dress professionally.
- Be flexible with your schedule as unscheduled meetings may occur.
- Most importantly, be yourself, a concerned citizen (and constituent where applicable).

NARP Partners with Amtrak Vacations For New Member Benefit

NARP is pleased to announce a significant new member benefit - a 10% discount on the rail travel portion of all Amtrak Vacation tour packages. Amtrak Vacations, the operator of Amtrak’s tour & tour package program, offers over 300 destination and attraction-based, all-inclusive, tour packages across North America, which feature Amtrak trains as the method of transportation.

NARP and Yankee Leisure Group (the operator of Amtrak Vacations) have entered into a new, mutually-beneficial partnership, making this discount possible. In addition, Yankee Leisure Group, will offer NARP members a 5% discount on their Unique Rail Journey packages available for destinations across Europe.

In announcing the new partnership, NARP President/CEO Jim Mathews said, “This is the perfect win-win for all NARP members. Yankee Leisure Group has over 40-years’ experience offering first-rate travel packages and they specialize in combining great destinations and train travel. NARP also benefits, as our Association gains access to Amtrak Vacations extensive customer base, many of whom are potential new NARP members.”

Watch for more information coming soon on our website www.narprail.org/get-involved/become-a-member on these exciting new discounts. ■

WEB EXCLUSIVE: Jim Mathews—A Dispatch From Aboard The Gulf Coast Inspection Train

Shortly before 9 a.m. on Thursday, February 18, I had the privilege to be aboard a train carrying passengers eastbound out of New Orleans headed ultimately for Jacksonville -- the first in a decade, since Katrina wiped out the tracks and forced Amtrak to suspend service.

The tracks have long since been restored, but the service has not. Thursday was a day spent rolling past enthusiastic crowds lining the route and stopping to say a few words to enormous rallies, whistle-stop style. In Gulfport, Miss., more than 1,000 people turned out midday, from all walks of life, to greet the train and wave signs and deliver a message to all the VIPs aboard that their communities wanted and needed that service restored.

Taking it in, Amtrak's top VP for government affairs, Joe McHugh, told an audience in Atmore, Ala., Thursday night that the outpouring of public support showed that these towns -- Bay St. Louis, Biloxi, Gulfport, Pascagoula, Mobile, Atmore -- "never left us. But we left you."

The message wasn't lost on Mississippi Gov. Phil Bryant, who saw his constituents clamoring for the service we know they need, want and deserve. Smiling, laughing, shaking hands and stopping at each station along the way, the Governor showed leadership and commitment to that need.

It matches what I've seen with my own eyes and heard with my own ears in the past year and a half. I've made seven trips to the Gulf Coast in just the past 14 months, and every official I met with at every level of government agreed that restoring this service was vital to the South's economic competitiveness. The consensus was more than bipartisan, it was non-partisan. There are wonderful towns and cities in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida, but those communities won't remain competitive if nobody can get to them on a national network. The officials I have visited with over the past few months, Republican and Democrat, are united in their unwillingness to be turned into second-class citizens and getting left behind when it comes

to getting around their states and the Gulf Coast region.

Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.), whose leadership in the Senate was critical this past legislative season to getting the strongest rail authorization in recent memory, was also one of the most important players in getting the Gulf Coast Working Group authorized, funded and operating. And this week the Working Group wasted no time in making a key decision, to focus its efforts on the Alternative A and A1 plans offered in the most recent Amtrak study. The group made that announcement Thursday night.

This would mean using a two-pronged approach to restore Gulf Coast service: extending the daily City of New Orleans all the way to Orlando, and launching a separate, state-supported daily service linking New Orleans and Mobile on a schedule roughly opposite to that of the daily City. Based on an assessment of existing performance, projected additional boardings, and a change from three-times-weekly to daily service, NARP believes a daily Gulf Coast service between New Orleans and Jacksonville alone could generate as much as \$40 million to \$50 million per year. Linking the tourist destinations of New Orleans and Orlando, and offering a one-seat ride from Chicago will be incredibly powerful.

It's so important for all of you as NARP members and advocates to realize and understand the role YOU have played in making this a reality, and the role YOU can continue to play as we keep the pressure on. If you live along the Gulf Coast, it's vital that you write to or visit with your Mayors, congressmen and Senators, often, and tell them that you want this service restored. Republican or Democrat, when elected officials hear a strong and consistent message from their voters they are compelled to act.

If you could have been standing five feet behind Gov. Bryant, Sen. Wicker and Federal Railroad Administration Administrator Sarah Feinberg, united and enthusiastic in their determination to bring this service back to the diverse groups of men and women, young and old who came out this week to cheer on the train you would have no doubt about the power of advocacy. Advocacy works. Keep on doing what you're doing! ■

NARP Traveler's Advisory

- ❖ To accommodate a long-term track work project, several Springfield Shuttle trains will be canceled and bus service. Monday through Friday service changes, effective through July 29, 2016: Springfield Shuttle Trains 470, 490, 493 and 495 will be cancelled on Monday through Friday until July 29, 2016. Passengers will be provided bus service between New Haven, Wallingford, Meriden, Berlin, Hartford, Windsor, Windsor Locks and Springfield. All southbound weekday buses will depart all stations 30 minutes earlier than the respective trains.
- ❖ Business Class passengers can buy a daily access pass for ClubAcela at Philadelphia-30th Street Station for \$20.00 a day, which includes priority boarding for all trains. The pass is valid for use at Philadelphia - 30th Street Station only. Cash and credit cards are accepted at the ticket office, while credit cards are accepted inside ClubAcela. Sleeping car passengers, Acela Express First class passengers and Amtrak Guest Rewards Plus and Select Executive members will continue to have priority boarding and complimentary access to ClubAcela.
- ❖ Effective April 1, Amtrak will offer Business Class service aboard Crescent Trains 19 and 20, which runs between Pennsylvania Station in New York City and New Orleans Union Passenger Terminal in New Orleans, Louisiana. Passengers can begin making reservations for this new service on March 14.