



AMTRAK SHUTDOWN ADVANCES IN HOUSE

Federal Grants For Key Texas Rail Projects

Thanks to a \$34 million investment from the federal Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER II) grant program, work will begin soon to alleviate the notorious bottleneck at Fort Worth's Tower 55.

"[Tower 55 improvement] could not have happened without the unprecedented collaboration of a number of entities that supported this essential project," said Texas Transportation Commissioner William Meadows

A separate \$15 million High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) grant to Texas, announced simultaneously, will allow engineering and environmental work

(continued on p. 4)

STAND UP FOR TRAINS!

Visit <http://act.narprail.org> to easily email your Representative, or call 202-224-3121 and ask for your Representative's office.

Subcommittee Approves 60% Reduction in Operating Grant

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development passed a fiscal 2012 spending bill Sept. 8 that would force an Amtrak shutdown.

There is \$227 million for operations, down from \$563 million this year and last. Capital is \$899 million, down \$25 million from 2011. The High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) capital grant program for states gets nothing.

In sharp contrast, **President Obama on Sept. 8 unveiled his American Jobs Act. It has \$4 billion for HSIPR and \$2 billion to bring Amtrak to a state of good repair**, part of \$50 billion for transportation. On top of that, a proposed National Infrastructure Bank would get \$10 billion for loans to supplement private-sector transportation investment.

Much has been made of the House bill's prohibition against using Amtrak operating grants to support short-distance corridors. But our Sept. 9 lease made clear that \$227 million means a total shutdown—because of the overhead costs that would shift onto the Northeast Corridor and overnight trains if the short distance lines disappeared. NARP's Aug. 2 letter to House Appropriations Chairman Tom Latham (R-IA) supported the highest possible Amtrak and HSIPR numbers.

A continuing resolution likely will govern funding for the first four months of FY 2012: Oct. 1, 2011 to Jan. 31, 2012. Nonetheless, the worst subcommittee attack on Amtrak in its history shows that passenger train supporters must work hard to preserve Americans' choice to take the train and avoid increasingly congested and costly road and air travel. ■

Our release: www.bit.ly/badthud. Full summary of the American Jobs Act at 1.usa.gov/ajact. Our Aug. 2 letter to appropriations leaders: www.bit.ly/narpy12

Historic St. Paul Depot Returns to Prominence

Will Serve Amtrak, Light Rail and Commuter Rail



Photo: Ramsey County, Minnesota

Rendering of the soon-to-be restored Saint Paul Union Depot, which will give Amtrak passengers their first-ever direct link to local rail and bus service in the Twin Cities.

St. Paul's art-deco Union Depot, built in 1926 and featuring a large main hall with vaulted glass ceiling, is nine months into a two-year, \$243 million renovation that will make it a major transportation hub. Completion is expected by the end of 2012.

Tracks are in place in front of the building for Metro Transit's Central Corridor light-rail line, set to begin Minneapolis-St. Paul service in late 2014. This recreates the streetcar service that existed along Fourth Street until the early 1950s.

Upon completion, Union Depot will also serve nine Metro Transit bus routes, Amtrak, and Greyhound and Jefferson Lines

intercity buses. An electric-car charging station, bicycle shop, stores and restaurants also are planned.

Crews are removing decades of grit from the exterior stone surfaces to restore their original color. Inside, the plan is to match the paint used in the 1920s. The main hall, which will see sunlight for the first time since the 1940s, should be open for events this November.

The depot some day also could see not just Amtrak's *Empire Builder* but also trains to Duluth, currently under study by the Minnesota DOT and Amtrak, and Chicago-Twin Cities high-speed trains. ■

“Supercommittee” to Impact Spending From FY 2013

A 12-member Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction was created as part of the law, enacted August 2, that lifted the debt ceiling. The law cuts \$917 billion from the deficit during the 10 years FY 2013-2022. However, the Joint Committee must identify at least \$1.2 trillion in additional deficit reduction.

If the committee fails to make these recommendations by Nov. 23 and they

Ethan Allen Express Goes Faster

Trackwork performed by Vermont Rail System, with \$750,000 of its own funds, between Whitehall, NY and Rutland, VT has shaved 20 minutes off the travel time of the New York-Rutland *Ethan Allen Express*.

The April-July work replaced 12,200 crossties, resurfaced eight miles of track, and rebuilt three grade crossings. Also accomplished: state-funded reconstruction of a major grade crossing in Rutland.

Vermont Rail System is asking the state to fund the replacement of the five remaining miles of jointed rail on the *Ethan Allen* route.

New York State is investing \$2.5 million over the next two years to make similar upgrades to its portion of the route. Work is to begin next summer. ■

MOVING NARP'S MESSAGE

NARP Chairman Bob Stewart spoke on a panel about Positive Train Control (PTC) at the 14th Annual Transportation & Infrastructure Summit. This was in Irving, TX, August 10. www.transportation-summit.com/summit-program.pdf

Stewart underlined NARP's concern about the inability of PTC as currently envisioned to prevent rear-end collisions. (Aug. *NARP News*; see also Steve Ditmeyer's major Oct. *Trains* article).

NARP Pres. Ross Capon's letter was in *The Boston Globe* Sept. 12. He answered John Sununu's op ed column attacking overnight trains. Capon said, in part, “statement about buying...passengers airline tickets reflects ignorance of the fact that most passengers use intermediate stations, many with astronomical air fares or no air service. Also, many Americans cannot fly or drive.” ■

are not enacted by Dec. 23, there would be mandatory across-the-board cuts.

In theory, both spending cuts and revenue increases are on the table.

Co-chairs are Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) and Rep. Jeb Hensarling (R-TX).

Murray chairs the appropriations subcommittee on transportation/housing, and the Health/Education/Labor subcommittee on employment and workplace safety. Hensarling is vice-chair of the Financial Services Committee.

Other members:

Senate Democrats:

- Max Baucus (MT; chair, Finance),
- John Kerry (MA; chair, Foreign Relations)

House Republicans:

- Dave Camp (MI; chair, Ways & Means),
- Fred Upton (MI; chair, Energy & Commerce)

Senate Republicans:

- Jon Kyl (AZ; Minority Whip),
- Pat Toomey (PA; freshman serves on Banking [transit], Commerce, Budget),
- Rob Portman (OH; freshman; on Budget, Armed Services, Homeland Security; Energy)

House Democrats:

- James Clyburn (SC; Assistant Democratic Leader),
- Xavier Becerra (CA; vice-chair, House Democratic Caucus),
- Chris Van Hollen (MD; ranking member, Budget)

Designs Unveiled for New Amtrak Diners



- Amtrak/CAF USA

A prototype interior for one of the new dining cars that will start being seen on Eastern overnight trains in late 2012.

Amtrak has released preliminary design models for Viewliner-style dining cars to be delivered starting late next year as part of the 130-car order Amtrak placed with CAF USA (August 2010 *News*).

The diners will resemble the prototype Viewliner diner that Amtrak's Beech Grove Shops built in 1988 based on Budd Company designs. The prototype, no. 8400, was recently rebuilt and now operates on

the *Lake Shore Limited*.

The cars, being built at CAF USA's plant in Elmira, NY, will replace the last remaining Heritage diners and baggage cars on the Eastern overnight trains, and will add much-needed sleeper capacity, with additional cars and by including by moving the on-board services crew out of revenue sleeper space and into baggage-dorm cars. ■

Register Now for Los Angeles Council Meeting

All NARP members are invited to attend the fall meeting of the national Council of Representatives, October 14-15 in downtown Los Angeles (see last issue, page 3). There will be a tour of area rail facilities on Oct. 13.

The meeting will feature prominent guest speakers and an awards ceremony. Check www.narprail.org or call us for more information. **To register, please go to www.narprail.org/register or call 202-408-8362.**

New and Improved Stations in the Carolinas and Michigan

Pontiac, Michigan: “Your trip starts here,” said Michigan Transportation Director Kirk Steudle in a statement marking the station’s debut. “This station is an excellent example of why it’s important for the State of Michigan to invest in safe, modern, accessible transit buildings. This is an investment in the city of Pontiac and an investment in public transportation.” Full release: 1.usa.gov/pntsta.

Amtrak’s *Wolverines*, which terminate at Pontiac/ from Chicago three times daily, have been beset by chronic delays this summer owing to lack of maintenance on Norfolk Southern’s line between Detroit and Kalamazoo.

But Steudle announced Aug. 8 that the state had reached a \$4.2 million maintenance agreement with NS, which will complete track improvements by mid-September, restoring top Amtrak speeds to 60 mph. ■



- Steve Sobel

Amtrak locomotive 66, in “retro” paint for the railroad’s 40th anniversary, after arriving Pontiac with *Wolverine* train 350 into Pontiac, Michigan’s brand-new Transportation Center on Aug. 9. The facility, which also serves intercity and local buses, opened Aug. 8.



- RFandPFan on Trainorders.com, taken Aug. 9

Yemassee, South Carolina (left) opened this new station Aug. 9, serving the New York-Miami Silver Meteor and New York-Savannah Palmetto. The city bought the land from CSX last year and gave it to

the nonprofit Yemassee Revitalization Corp., which demolished the 1955 Atlantic Coast Line station and built this one for about \$500,000. It is about 50 miles from Hilton Head Island.

Big Crowds Greet Norfolk Light Rail

The nation’s newest light rail line began public service Aug. 19 in Norfolk, VA. Construction on The Tide, a 7.4-mile line with 11 stations, began in 2007.

Operator Hampton Roads Transit (HRT), a regional body made up of participating city and county governments, celebrated opening weekend by offering free rides over the entire line.

Hundreds of riders began forming a line before 6 AM on Friday, with 30,000 riding that day. So

HRT extended free rides until Aug. 26, the end of the week.

The opening got great coverage in two Norfolk-area daily newspapers. Video: www.bit.ly/tidevid.

Virginia Association of Railway Patrons (VARP) Directors Jim Bayley of Virginia Beach and Alan Carpenter of Norfolk attended.

Largely because HRT saved money doing work in-house, the line cost \$20 million less than a \$338.3 million February estimate that generated controversy.

Cary, North Carolina: Thanks to renovations and additions to the station using federal (Recovery Act), state and local funds, Cary now has an Amtrak ticket agent on duty for all departures, and a QuikTrak machine. Checked baggage is offered at Cary for the *Piedmonts* and *Carolinian*, but not for the *Silver Star* until the platform on the CSX line is lengthened.

The upgrades are expected to relieve crowding and parking scarcity at Raleigh, eight miles east.

There is now an excellent connection from the evening eastbound *Piedmont* (train 76) to the southbound *Silver Star* at Cary.



- North Carolina DOT

An art installation graces the roof of the renovated Cary, NC depot.



- Virginia Dept. of Transportation

Opening-day crowds jam onto a Norfolk light rail train at Easton Forest station on Aug. 19.



National Association of
Railroad Passengers

NARP NEWS

Vol. 45, No. 9

September 2011

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National Association of Railroad Passengers *NARP News* (ISSN 0739-3490), published monthly (except Nov.) by NARP; 505 Capitol Ct. NE, Suite 300; Washington, DC 20002-7706; 202/408-8362, fax 202/408-8287, narp@narprail.org, www.narprail.org. ©2011 National Assoc. of Railroad Passengers. All rights reserved. Membership dues \$35/year (\$20/student, \$25/senior), of which \$5 is a subscription to *NARP News*. Periodicals Postage Paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to National Association of Railroad Passengers
NARP News; 505 Capitol Ct. NE, Suite 300; Washington, DC 20002-7706.

(This has news through Sept. 13. Vol. 45, No. 8 was mailed August 25.)



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

Second Vancouver, BC Train To Continue

Thanks to the Canada Border Services Agency's (CBSA) agreement to continue funding the required additional customs and immigration agent hours, the second Amtrak Seattle-Vancouver, BC, will continue for the foreseeable future.

This train—south in the morning and north in the evening—runs through to/from Portland.

At a joint news conference Aug. 16

with U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, Canadian Public Safety Minister Vic Toews said CBSA would continue to provide border clearance to its passengers at the Vancouver station "despite significant financial constraints."

The train's late arrival time initially led CBSA to demand \$1,500 per day from Amtrak or the State of Washington. ■

Railroads Sue to Block On-Time Requirements

The Association of American Railroads (AAR) filed suit in federal court Aug. 19.

AAR claims the 2008 Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) is unconstitutional because Section 207 gives a private company—Amtrak—legislative and regulatory authority to regulate others in the same industry.

AAR thus objects to Amtrak's role (jointly with US Department of Transporta-

tion) in creating on-time performance standards for passenger trains using the railroads' tracks.

The suit names Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood and Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph Szabo as defendants.

AAR is the trade association for the nation's largest railroads. Amtrak is a member but not a party to the suit. ■

Texas Grants

to begin for a Fort Worth-Dallas-Houston high-speed rail corridor.

Negotiating Tower 55, the at-grade junction of Union Pacific's east-west route and BNSF's north-south route south of the Fort Worth Intermodal Transportation Center, has long been a source of delays for Amtrak's *Texas Eagle* and nearly 100 daily freight trains.

"The Tower 55 Multimodal Improvement Project exemplifies the strong commitment of the Texas Department of Transportation to comprehensive transportation planning, and an acknowledgment that a transportation system

includes many different and diverse components," Meadows also said.

Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) called it "a crossroads of the North American continent," and said the project "will allow the Tower to go from a legacy chokepoint to the model of a freight and passenger checkpoint, a facility featuring efficiency, safety, and convenience." Her Sen. John Cornyn and Reps. Kay Grainger and Michael Burgess (all R-TX) all expressed similar sentiments.

The project involves new signaling and interlocker systems, bridge upgrades, a third north-south main line, and improved

TRAVELER'S ADVISORY

Better disruption notices: In response to NARP's request, Amtrak quickly made it easier for prospective passengers to learn about service interruptions, both long- and short-term.

Now, on Amtrak's home page, the first link under "Rider's Guide" is "Service Disruptions."

Zephyr resumes Denver-Chicago service: In aftermath of Nebraska floods, the *Cal. Zephyr* ran Denver-Bay Area only. First full trips of restored service depart Bay Area Sept. 15, Chicago Sept. 16.

Three new California Thruway stops: Amtrak California buses between Bakersfield and Palm Springs, extensions of *San Joaquins* trains, now stop at Cabazon (Morongo Casino), Palm Desert (Westfield Mall) and La Quinta (Town Center)

Cardinal checked baggage service at New York, Newark and Indianapolis began Sept. 1.

CLARIFICATION: July 24, 2011 to Aug. 31, 2012, is when *Capitol Ltd.* riders will be bussed from Pittsburgh to Washington if train leaves Cleveland after 3:30 AM. See last issue.

street and pedestrian crossings. The TIGER II funding is being matched by \$1 million each from the Texas DOT and the City of Fort Worth, and by \$65 million in UP and BNSF's own private funds. ■

See www.tradecorridors.org/tower55 and www.bit.ly/texhsr for more info.