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# NARPnews

*"I believe deeply in rail's possibilities as an economic engine in the communities it serves, as a potentially transformative mode in an ever-changing transportation landscape and as the most environmentally responsible way to meet the transportation challenges of the 21st century."*

NARP PRESIDENT & CEO JIM MATHEWS

## America's Passengers Endorse Texas High Speed Rail Project

The NARP Board of Directors issued an [official resolution of support](#) for Texas Central Railway's high speed rail project, a project that will connect Dallas to Houston with fast and frequent high speed trains.

NARP has identified supporting the development of a 200 mph-plus high speed rail system as a national objective, and it believes that the Texas-based company is poised to deliver this groundbreaking train service. Texas Central Railway is a private-sector company that is employing a market-led, privately funded approach to develop a 90-minute trip between Dallas and Houston, using trains capable of reaching 205 mph.

This month, Congressional leaders are meeting in Washington to draft the next passenger rail reauthorization bill. NARP is working to ensure that Texas Central Railway has the regulatory flexibility to begin building this line, and the public awareness and support needed to keep the project moving.

"It's clear that Washington is struggling to address our nation's infrastructure challenges. While Congress must get its act together, this political gridlock means it is all the more important for private companies and states to take the lead and show innovation in improving their transportation systems," said NARP Chairman Bob Stewart.

*(Continued on Page 2)*

## NARP Welcomes New President and CEO

The National Association of Railroad Passengers recently announced that Jim Mathews will join the organization as President and Chief Executive Officer. Previously the Executive Editor of the Aviation Week Intelligence Network, Mathews joins NARP with 30 years of publishing experience in the transportation sector.

"We couldn't be more pleased with Mathews' extensive background and vision for our organization," said NARP Chairman Robert Stewart. "We welcome his leadership and experience to NARP and are confident that he will move the organization forward."

During his 26-year tenure at Aviation Week, Mathews cultivated the company's digital strategy and led teams that twice won national awards for best news website.

Mathews served on the Amtrak Customer Advisory Council for six years, including two years leading the ACAC as chairman. He is a lifelong train traveler with a deep-

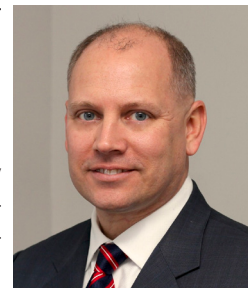
rooted vision for a robust national passenger train network within the U.S.

"I believe deeply in rail's possibilities as an economic engine in the communities

it serves, as a potentially transformative mode in an ever-changing transportation landscape and as the most environmentally responsible way to meet the transportation challenges of the 21st century," Mathews said.

"As President and CEO, I will commit myself to fostering more member engagement, broadening NARP's relationships and reach and setting a foundation for growth to make this important and impressive organization even more effective and relevant."

Mathews took over the role from Acting President Larry Scott on September 8.



## Rail Delays Under Federal Investigation

With On Time Performance continuing to hinder rail operations across the U.S., momentum is building for a political solution to this threat to the Amtrak system.

NARP has led on this issue, educating elected officials and the media on how seriously this issue is affecting passengers across the country. NARP is also teaming up with the Environmental Law & Policy

Center to file a "[friend of the court](#)" brief in a Supreme Court case that is looking at how Amtrak and host railroads mediate disputes over the dispatching of trains.

With On Time Performance dipping below 50 percent on Amtrak's long distance lines, the ability of communities to rely on trains—whether for business, leisure, or medical reasons—is severely compromised. *(Continued on Page 3)*

# America's Passengers Endorse Texas High Speed Rail Project (from Page 1)

"While their blueprint may not work for every travel market, Texas Central Railway has demonstrated it has exactly the right kind of innovative ideas to finally bring world class high speed rail to the U.S."

With over 1,000 people from different parts of the country moving to Texas every day, the state's population is expected to more than double by 2050, surpassing 50 million residents. With roads and airports seeing diminishing marginal returns, the Texas Department of Transportation has increasingly turned to passenger rail in its planning for future capacity enhancements. By creating a dedicated, sealed and separate right of way, Texas Central Railway will provide a high-capacity transportation corridor with convenient cross-platform connectivity to existing and planned intercity and transit rail.

"Survey after survey has found the majority of Texans want more passenger train service in Texas," said Peter LeCody, NARP Board Member and President of Texas Rail Advocates. "It's not surprising—fast and frequent rail service will be an essential component in meeting the needs of Texas' rapidly growing economy and population. Additionally, building and operating the line will make a positive contribution in itself, employing Texans in good jobs that can't be outsourced abroad."

"NARP's endorsement of TCR's efforts symbolizes the collegial spirit of the railroad industry, not to mention the most important component of that industry—the passengers," Richard Lawless, Chairman and CEO of Texas Central Railway. "By embracing and supporting TCR's innovative approach to deploying high-speed rail in Texas, NARP sends a strong

message to the public, to lawmakers and to others highlighting the importance of executing a success-driven strategy that accommodates innovation, encourages private investment, and defers to local and state-planning priorities. NARP's respected voice in Washington and across the country will prove to be pivotal as projects such as TCR's challenge the status quo and seek to change the way in which we travel and do business."

"TCR's efforts will create thousands of new jobs, generate billions in economic activity, and revolutionize the way Texans travel," said Robert Eckels, President of Texas Central Railway. "NARP's endorsement of TCR adds an important and influential voice to the conversation. There is strong demand in the state for TCR's success, and as others across the country lend their support, high-speed rail in Texas will move closer and closer to reality."

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Congress has returned to D.C. from August's in-district work period with one enormous task and only one month to accomplish it: figure out a way to fund the government before the end of Fiscal Year 2014. With funding implications for Amtrak, passenger advocates are engaged in a last minute push to ensure that passenger trains receive a sufficient share of federal funding.

While normal procedure requires the House and Senate to pass 12 individual appropriations bills, partisan gridlock has left legislators well short of that goal. And with the midterm elections already looming, members of Congress are sure to face even more political distractions. That means Congress is likely to fall back on a Continuing Resolution (CR), which will extend current funding levels for a set period of time.

That could end up being good for Amtrak. The House version of the transportation appropriations bill included two anti-train amendments that were

tacked on at the last minute—a provision by Rep. Pete Sessions (R-TX) that would eliminate funding to the Sunset Limited, and an amendment by Rep. Phil Gingrey (R-GA) that would eliminate funding for food and beverage service on Amtrak trains. If Congress is forced to turn to a CR, these amendments die with the appropriations bill. That assumes that persistent anti-Amtrak House members don't try to introduce similar provisions into the CR. But given the short period of time legislators have to avert a government shutdown before the election process ramps up, party leaders will likely opt for a "clean extension" to avoid controversy.

While a CR would be good news for the hundreds of communities that rely on the connection the Sunset Limited provides, it gets train passengers no closer to the ultimate goal: a secure, dedicated source of funding for passenger rail. That's why we need you to [join us in asking Congress for five billion dollars for trains!](#) You can find out more at [NARPrail.org](#).



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 505 Capitol Court, NE, Suite 300  
 Washington, DC 20002-7706  
 202-408-8362 / 202-408-8287 (fax)  
[www.narprail.org](http://www.narprail.org)  
[narp@narprail.org](mailto:narp@narprail.org)

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# High Speed Rail Advances on a Number of Fronts

Bringing world class high speed trains to the U.S. has been a longtime goal for transportation advocates—a goal that has proved frustratingly elusive. Other countries have had this form of transportation figured out for decades—Japan’s bullet train system turns 50 this October. However, recent developments suggest that 200+ mph train service is finally coming to America.

## California

The most ambitious project is also the leader in the race (for now). The California High Speed Rail Authority (CAHSRA) has just started the work of physically constructing the central valley segment. CAHSRA is also performing public outreach segments on two other segments: Burbank to Palmdale, which could include a tunnel under the San Gabriel Mountains (quicker, but more expensive); and Burbank to Los Angeles, which will tie the line into Los Angeles Union Station.

## Texas

NARP has recently endorsed the Houston – Dallas line (See Page 1), with 200 mph trains providing a 90 minute end-to-end trip.

Texas Central Railway is working with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), in cooperation with Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement, which will look at the impacts of various alternative route alignments, including shared corridors with existing rail services and along electric utility

lines.

## Northeast Corridor

The Northeast Corridor is the closest thing the U.S. has to high speed rail, and Amtrak has done an admirable job of working around funding constraints to upgrade this busy corridor. Using a \$450 million high performance rail grant, Amtrak is replacing aged signaling systems and outdated catenary. This project will improve reliability, decrease trip time, and raise top speeds.

Work began in October 2011, and is scheduled to wrap up in June 2017. FRA Administrator Joseph Szabo and Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) met with Amtrak officials and local stakeholders to tour the worksite firsthand August 6.

“The Northeast Corridor, if it was a nation on its own, would be the fifth-largest economy on the globe,” Senator Booker said. “The more we invest in this rail line, the more we invest in the region, the more we grow as a nation... This project is long overdue.”

## Southeast Corridor

FRA Administrator Szabo traveled to Virginia in July to call on transportation agencies in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia to work together on developing a Washington, D.C. to Atlanta high speed train. Officials responded that they have already started coordinating on the development of a 160 mph service.

“We have already conducted public outreach sessions for the study in terms of identifying potential corridors, four

of which traverse the Upstate and another two come through the Midlands region,” said Doug Frate, director of South Carolina DOT’s Intermodal and Freight Programs.

“Construction depends on a number of different variables, not the least of which is funding,” added Frate. “What this phase does is establish a preferred alternative with some more tangible costs projections for that alignment. Then you’re able to get a good handle on what the funding needs are.”

## Midwest

The mayors of nine cities in Ohio and Indiana announced on August 6 that they have signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) to cooperate in developing a Chicago-Fort Wayne-Columbus passenger rail corridor.

“This is a big step forward in the effort to bring passenger rail back to our community,” said Fort Henry Mayor Tom Henry. “The Chicago-Fort Wayne-Columbus corridor will be good for citizens throughout northern Indiana and central Ohio. It will increase transportation alternatives and help boost economic development and tourism.”

A 2013 feasibility study projected that roughly 2.1 million riders per year would ride the train on its first year of operation, with ridership tripling by 2040 to more than three million. The study also estimated that for every \$1 of investment, \$1.70 would be generated in economic return through job growth and development.

## Rail Delays, from Page 1

This is hurting Amtrak’s ridership and financial performance, which, in addition to hurting the railroad, will ultimately cost more taxpayer dollars. And it’s not just passengers that are being affected—companies that rely on trains to ship freight are being impacted by national delays across the rail network. This is especially problematic for farmers, who rely on trains to get crops to market and

have a limited window within which to operate.

Senator Dick Durbin of Illinois has taken note, and convened a meeting between the Surface Transportation Board, Amtrak, and local stakeholders to examine the issue. “Ridership and revenue are at all-time highs for Amtrak, and unfortunately so are delays. Late trains and unnecessary delays turn passengers away from Amtrak and can slow the incredible growth we have seen so far,”

Durbin said. “We’re investing almost \$2 billion in federal funds into our passenger rail infrastructure in the state. These funds are building new locomotives and train cars that will be used here in Champaign and the across the Midwest. We cannot let these investments go to waste due to unnecessary freight train interference.”

NARP is committed to addressing this serious issue, and will keep you updated on our progress.

# The Pioneer: Still Missed 17 Years Later



*The train crew paints a frown and "Last Pioneer" on the front of the last train to depart Seattle on May 10, 1997.*

By Jim Hamre, NARP Council Member and Vice President of All Aboard Washington  
The *Pioneer* was not part of the original 1971 Amtrak system, leaving cities like Boise and Pocatello, Idaho, and Ontario, Baker City, La Grande, Pendleton and The Dalles, Oregon with no passenger train service. A concerted effort by local, state and national leaders resulted in the start of Amtrak's *Pioneer* on June 7, 1977, running from Salt Lake City to Seattle.

The train connected to the *San Francisco Zephyr* in Ogden, Utah. Eventually a through coach and sleeping car oper-

ated all the way from Seattle to Chicago.

In 1983 the Chicago-Oakland train was rechristened the *California Zephyr* and routed via the scenic Denver and Rio Grande Western from Salt Lake City to Denver. The longer running times and Union Pacific's unreliability forced Amtrak to continually move up

the Seattle departure time, eventually reaching 5:20 am! In June 1991, Amtrak rerouted the *Pioneer* on the faster Ogden-Denver route through Wyoming, restoring service to places like Laramie and Cheyenne. We in the Northwest lost the Colorado Rockies scenery but gained more acceptable departure times.

Then in 1994 disaster struck. Amtrak hired Mercer Management to study how to reduce costs. Mercer Management's report: "Amtrak, cut your way to prosperity!" The *Pioneer* was sliced to tri-weekly. The effect on ridership and revenue was devastating; the *Pioneer* lost 58% of its riders as Amtrak continued to operate the same two coaches and one sleeper three times a week as

it had operated daily, but costs didn't drop nearly that much, increasing the operating subsidy.

The worsening finances gave Amtrak an excuse to kill off the *Pioneer*. However, the November 1996 end date was pushed out six months by Congress to give the states time to offer financial help. Unfortunately, nothing materialized and the last departures came on May 10, 1997.

Efforts continue to restore the *Pioneer*, including from Senators Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Mike Crapo (R-ID). In 2008, they pushed through a provision requiring Amtrak to study restoration of the *Pioneer*. Since Amtrak didn't want to do the study, it of course did a poor job of evaluating options, was pessimistic in ridership forecasts, and had sky high infrastructure, equipment and operating costs.

As we can see, even when a train has strong support from passengers and politicians alike, there's always the danger of negative events, including complete loss of your train. And once the service is gone, it's nearly impossible to restore. Visit [pioneertrain.org](http://pioneertrain.org) for more information.

## Passenger Rail Improvements in Oregon

By Arthur Poole, NARP Member and Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates Board Member

NARP leaders in Oregon, working in concert with the Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates (AORTA), have helped Oregon to plan for future Cascades Corridor and other intercity passenger rail development.

During the public hearing phase of Oregon's Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement development for the Oregon portion of the Cascades Corridor, Dan McFarling drafted a factual document, Oregon's Amtrak Cascades Future Alignment, which demonstrated the economic and efficiency problems of alternative alignments from the current Union Pacific route. This paper is avail-

able on the [AORTA website](http://AORTA.org).

Passenger rail advocates supported a successful ConnectOregon grant to Union Pacific Railroad for the replacement of an old railroad bridge north of Eugene, which had a long-standing 30 mph speed restriction. Union Pacific completed this project in July 2014, and the new structure will eventually allow passenger train speeds of 79 mph.

NARP council representative at-large, David Arnold, served on the Oregon State Rail Plan Steering Committee that developed a rail plan, which will allow Oregon to compete successfully for future federal rail grants when they become available. The rail plan not only addresses the Cascades Corridor but also intercity long-distance services and the

re-establishment of service across eastern Oregon for needed connectivity to the rest of the nation.

With federal ARRA funds, Oregon purchased two new Talgo trainsets that are now in regular Amtrak *Cascades* service. The 2015 Oregon Legislative Assembly will begin February 2, and NARP members are now working for dedicated, sustainable funding to improve passenger rail service.

NARP's leaders in Oregon belong to several key statewide committees and organizations that impact both freight and passenger rail development. NARP is successful in Oregon because of its active involvement with local grassroots rail and transit associations like AORTA.



## Salt Lake City: A Local Perspective on Transit

By Mike Christensen, NARP Council Member

I have been a Salt Lake City resident for the past eleven years. My daily commute to the University of Utah, where I am a graduate student, consists of a 15-minute walk followed by a 45-minute ride on light rail -- although I frequently integrate a ride on our new "GREENbike" bikeshare system as part of my commute. The trip takes me through downtown, which has experienced a renaissance that was partially spurred by hosting the 2002 Winter Olympics.

Our rail system is a relatively new development. With fifteen ski resorts, five national parks, and plenty of open space to explore, Utah has become a popular place. Utah's population has tripled in the last half century and is expected to double in the next half century. In the 1990s, planners began to realize that the transportation paradigm for the Salt Lake City metro needed to change. The first 15-mile light rail line opened in 1999 with 16 stations. Less than fifteen years later, that system had grown to 135 miles of commuter rail, light rail, and streetcar with a total of 73 stations. For those interested in the details of

that expansion, I've been working on an atlas chronicling the expansion. A draft is available [here](#).

Unfortunately, the Utah Transit Authority, which runs the rail, bus, and paratransit system in the Salt Lake City metro, has faced budget problems that have been common in the US. At the same time that rail lines were being constructed and opened, the recession and the diminished revenues that came with it made funding for operations scarce. The Utah Transit Authority was forced to slash bus service in order to operate the growing rail system. Naturally this created equity issues, as the bus service relied upon by those of lower income was being reduced in order to increase commuting options for the middle-class. The bottom line is that revenue sources for mass transit need to be drastically increased, so that we can enjoy a multi-modal system that serves the needs of everyone.

## Fall Council Meeting Preview

NARP invites you to attend our upcoming Fall Council Meeting, held on October 17-19, 2014 at the Doubletree Suites Hotel in Salt Lake City. Speakers include Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker and Amtrak Chief of Customer Service Tom Hall. On Friday (10/17) meeting participants are invited out for a tour day, which includes a visit to the Ogden Depot Rail Museum, a tour of the UTA maintenance shops, and more. **To register for the meeting, please visit [narprail.org](http://narprail.org) or <http://tinyurl.com/Council-Meeting-Registration>.**



The American Public Transportation Association reported that commuter rail ridership in Utah doubled in 2013, which was the largest increase in the country. Above, a passenger awaits the "Fronrunner" commuter rail service.

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: HARVARD MOREHEAD



Harvard Morehead assisting train passengers at the NARP kiosk in Washington Union Station

If you ever get off the train in Washington, DC and enter Union Station through Gate G, you might just see someone in a train tie telling people about NARP. That's Harvard Morehead, a NARP council member and longtime passenger rail advocate who has been volunteering his

time at NARP's Union Station kiosk for a year and a half.

Morehead began his advocacy work in the mid 1970's after falling in love with the rails and learning that Amtrak was going through one of its periodic budget battles. He remembers setting up a card table outside a CoOp grocery store and asking for a few yards of butcher paper on which to make a sign that read "Help Save Amtrak. Please Sign." He collected a few hundred signatures, presented them to his local congressman, and became the office's go-to contact for rail issues. That's when he got involved in NARP and Citizens for Rail California, where he served as the Northern

Chapter Secretary.

Morehead says: "Amtrak and passenger rail are under constant threat from many powerful forces, and it is up to us as lovers of trains to make sure our voices are heard. The only way to do that is by advocacy. I also like to remind the rail history buffs that that the best way to ensure that the history of passenger rail continues is to make sure that it continues in the present. Without current operations, the history ends."

*We need more volunteers like Harvard! If you're interested in representing NARP at a local event or distributing NARP materials, please email [jjablonski@narprail.org](mailto:jjablonski@narprail.org). NARP thanks our many dedicated volunteers!*

# The Hoosier State Will Go On... For Now

Indiana's passenger rail advocates scored a victory on August 20 when the Indiana Department of Transportation announced it will continue to fund the Indianapolis – Chicago train through January 2015. Officials will use the four-month extension to hammer out an agreement between the state, the cities along the route, Amtrak, and a newly selected contractor that Indiana hopes can enhance the service, Corridor Capital LLC.

Corridor Capital Director of Communications Fritz Plous unveiled more details on the contractor's plans during a presentation to the Indianapolis Passenger Rail Forum on August 29. Plous announced that the company will be using refurbished single-level cars, and will contract out maintenance and food service. Amtrak will still be involved as a sub-contractor for train operations and host railroad relations.

Though the train will run on its current four-times-weekly schedule for now, Corridor Capital plans to increase frequency to at least twice daily and will run at different times than the current schedule. The company also plans to implement in-state bus shuttles to existing stops with the possibility of new rail stops.

NARP is continuing to ask passengers in Indiana to tell their elected officials to help build a better train network in the Hoosier State!

## Volunteers Shine in National Campaign

NARP is excited to announce that we have been accepted into the National Combined Federal Campaign (CFC), which is the world's largest and most successful annual workplace charity campaign.

During this campaign, Federal civilian, postal and military workers make pledges between September 1st to December 15th to support a number of non-profit organizations that provide health and human service benefits throughout the world. Almost 200 CFC campaigns take place throughout the country and around the world, raising millions of dollars each year.

At the end of August, the NARP office sent out a request to all members ask-

ing volunteers to assist in representing NARP at CFC events around the country. In the first week, we had over 80 members respond with a willingness to donate their time and talent towards educating federal workers and armed force personnel on the benefits of having an interconnected national passenger rail network. Thank you to all of those that have volunteered. NARP would not be able to participate in this campaign without your help.

NARP would like to give special recognition to Board Member Carol Haslett and Silver Rail Member Mike Weber for playing a critical role in organizing and supporting our volunteers.

We are still looking for more volunteers.

If this is something you are interested in learning more about, please contact the NARP DC office or email Carol Haslett at [chaslett@roadrunner.com](mailto:chaslett@roadrunner.com).

Thank you all for all your support in the month of August. Let's make September even better!

--Logan McLeod



## NARP TRAVELER'S ADVISORY

*Wolverine* and *Blue Water* routes will continue to operate on the summer modified schedule through September 30.

Due to major construction near Aberdeen, MD, Northbound *Acela Express* trains will depart up to five minutes earlier at Washington, BWI Thurgood Marshall Airport and Baltimore between September 2 and November 14, 2014. Southbound trains will arrive up to eight minutes later than times shown in timetables.

*Cascades* service is expecting delays of over an hour through late September as track work is performed between Seattle and Vancouver, BC.

The most up-to-date arrival and departure times for all trains are available on [Amtrak.com](http://Amtrak.com), Amtrak's free mobile apps or by phone at 1-800-USA-RAIL.