



Photo credit: Chip



FRIDAY HOTLINE

#1428

FEBRUARY 13<sup>TH</sup>, 2026



Tell Us Your Story

## NOTICE: Looking for your 2025 membership/donation tax documents?

[Click here](#) for instructions.

## Association News

### Court Orders Trump Administration to Resume Gateway Funding

*By Sean Jeans-Gail | VP of Gov't Affairs + Policy*

A federal appeals court on Thursday allowed a lower court's order to take effect requiring the Trump Administration to resume funding for the Hudson Tunnel Project (HTP), one of the most important infrastructure projects in the nation. The ruling, issued by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit, represents a significant—though temporary—victory for state officials and passenger advocates who have said that the administration unlawfully froze billions of dollars committed to the project through full funding agreements signed by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) under previous administrations.

**[Thank you to everyone who took part in [our campaign](#) to restore funding!]**

The decision follows from a legal battle between the Trump Administration and states of New York and New Jersey, which sued the federal government after the USDOT halted support for the \$16 billion project in October 2025. The freeze was nominally about the implementation of the implementation of the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program; however, [as we reported at the time](#), the decision came in the first days of last year's government shutdown and is most likely political in nature. Our reporting was vindicated by last week's revelation that President Donald Trump told Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY) that he would release the funds [if Penn Station and Dulles Airport were renamed after him](#).

By declining to intervene, the appeals court effectively reinstated a previous judge's order requiring the federal government to release the funds while litigation continues. The court emphasized that this ruling is not final; oral arguments are scheduled for later this month, after which the panel is expected to issue a more definitive decision. For now, however, the administration must comply with the directive to resume funding.

New York Governor Kathy Hochul welcomed the development, stating that the administration's "legal stay to avoid funding the Gateway Tunnel has expired" and urging immediate compliance to get the project "back on track." New York Attorney General Letitia James [echoed that sentiment](#), asserting that the administration "never had the authority to freeze this funding" and must now deliver the money needed to keep workers on the job.

[\[TO CONTINUE READING, PLEASE HERE TO GO TO OUR WEBSITE\]](#)

# Airo Unveiled at DC Union Station

[by Jim Mathews / President & CEO](#)

This week [Amtrak unveiled to the public its first new Siemens Airo trainset](#), bringing the train -- done up in Cascades livery because that's where it will first enter service -- to Washington Union Station for press tours and VIP walkthroughs for members of Congress, the Administration, and their staffs.

Former Rail Passengers Board member and genuine travel expert Carl Fowler has already shared his disappointment on social media with many of the Airo features highlighted in the [news coverage](#). I won't argue with him, in part because some of that criticism is well-founded (the risk of software-plagued doors and the potential for practical maintenance challenges, as just two examples).

But I'm here to offer a slightly different view. These trainsets are long, long, long overdue, and they are replacing equipment that is reaching, or in some cases, has already reached, true "end-of-life." They were also conceived, developed, built -- and, crucially, **funded** -- within an American political, institutional, and industrial environment that imposed a lot of design and manufacturing realities that were unavoidable: we got what we were able to get with the car-builders we have, the political support that was available, and the one-shot funding we received.

I've felt that way for a few years now, and my walkthrough on Tuesday at Union Station cemented that idea for me.

[\[CLICK HERE TO READ JIM'S THOUGHTS ON THE NEW FLEET PREVIEW\]](#)

## Go Watch 'The Last Train to Resist Amtrak'

[by Jim Mathews / President & CEO](#)

Let's face it: a lot of online "documentaries" today are truly slop, and a fair number are now churned out by AI bots instead of real humans. So it's like a sweet, gentle breeze when something new hits the intertube that's thoughtful, well-crafted, and grounded in real honest-to-goodness research.

["The Last Train to Resist Amtrak"](#) is, nominally, about the saga of the California Zephyr -- that is, the California-City of San Francisco-Rio Grande-Denver Zephyr. But along the way, [YouTube documentarian Peter Dibble](#) manages to tell the story of the Rio Grande Railway, the Southern Railway, the birth of Amtrak, Brock Adams, Graham Claytor, the Southern Crescent, the Auto Train, and so very much more. (Hat tip to my friend and long-time Association member John James in Arizona for passing it my way.)

Woven throughout the roughly hour-long program is a nuanced discussion about whether and how passenger rail, including Amtrak, will ever become profitable. It's an important discussion because the conversation around Amtrak and profitability continues to be deeply misunderstood, even by some inside Amtrak.



[As I've written here before](#), Amtrak critics base their profit-motive analysis on a combination of ideological blindness, a quirk in Amtrak's early legislative history, and admittedly confusing prose in the Amtrak statute itself. But, for the past 46 years **the laws on the books have not required Amtrak to make a profit**, and trying to make Amtrak profitable not only won't work but will make it even harder for Amtrak to do what we already pay it to do.

None of the critics' misperceptions can overcome these factual realities: one, that Congress changed its mind in 1978 on this topic and since then has never required Amtrak to make a profit; two, that the Congressional

Research Service confirmed that change in 2002; three, that the Supreme Court has ruled – twice – that Amtrak is not a “private company,” and; four, that when Congress re-visited Amtrak’s mission and purpose in 2021 in the Investment in Infrastructure and Jobs Act (IIJA), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Congress explicitly stripped profit-making out of Amtrak’s to-do list, line by line by line.

[\[FOR MORE ON JIM'S REVIEW OF PETER DIBBLE'S DOC, CLICK HERE\]](#)

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## Field Notes

**Amtrak Pro-Tip:** If you have companion coupons, or Amtrak Guest Rewards 10 percent discount coupons, or something similar to use the next time you book a trip, for the time being you might be better off calling Amtrak Guest Rewards directly to apply the coupon and finish booking your trip. That’s because the program rules say that you must apply coupons at the time of booking -- but lately both the Amtrak app and the Amtrak website are struggling with getting coupons applied to transactions. Sometimes it’s not even offering the passenger an opportunity during the booking process to enter the coupon code. It’s a known issue, and they’re working on it, but the Call Center advised me this week that you’ll always be able to use the coupons if you call them directly at 1-800-307-5000.

Please email [Joe Aiello](mailto:joe.aiello@amtrak.com) if you have any local, state or regional stories/projects (even something you know or experienced happening overseas) that you would like to write about and see highlighted in the Hotline.

### Calling All Readers!

Do you have a favorite transit/train photo (or photos) you have taken from your travels around the country, or even around the world? Would you like to see them featured in our Hotline social media post each week (with credit, of course)?

Send them to us @ [hotline@narprrail.org](mailto:hotline@narprrail.org) with the subject “HOTLINE PHOTO”

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## Hotline Links

*A curated selection of passenger rail and transportation stories from this week. Check out our social media feeds to read breaking news and join the conversation!*

[NJ Transit to cut service by 50% for four weeks, 6sqft](#)

Starting Sunday, passengers who normally take the Midtown Direct service between NJ and NYC will be seeing a lot of Frank Sinatra’s hometown of Hoboken for the next month - but will have a number of options from there to continue their trips.

[Beautiful, wonderful, or Toronto transit's black eye? Whatever it is, the Eglinton Crosstown is finally open, CBC News](#)

Better late than never, right? Six years later than planned and 15 years after construction started, Metrolinx’s (Toronto) 25-station, 19-kilometer (11.8-mile) Eglinton Crosstown finally opened up this weekend.

[Video] [Amtrak unveils new Airo Trains, CBS New York](#)

Coverage of Amtrak’s media event to unveil the new Airo fleet.

[Sound Transit says Super Bowl parade a ‘stress test’ for World Cup 2026, Fox 13 Seattle](#)

While overall successful, Wednesday’s victory parade did point out a number of issues that will need to be addressed before Seattle hosts six matches during this summer’s World Cup.

[‘We are in a good place’: Tri-Rail optimistic about long-term funding plan despite state cuts, WPTV](#)

With enough funding on hand to keep them going through next summer, officials at Florida’s Tri-Rail are hopeful that conversations in Tallahassee will lead to long term DOT funding.

[MBTA enters New Haven heritage locomotive into passenger service, Progressive Railroading](#)

Honoring their roots of when the MBTA purchased the equipment & infrastructure of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad in the early 70s - the now modern locomotive will operate out of South Station in Boston.

**[Mountain Rail charges toward November launch of Phase 1 passenger rail service](#)**, **Craig Daily Press**

Phase 1 of the Colorado Mountain Rail service is set to launch this November. This first step secures daily service between Denver and Granby, with expansion to Steamboat Springs and Craig to follow.

**[A few passionate fans ride Amtrak from Sacramento to Santa Clara for Super Bowl LX](#)**, **Sacramento Bee**

Making new friends and rooting on your team - all thanks to the train.

**[PATH logged commuter-rail ridership gain in 2025](#)**, **Progressive Railroading**

While still down from the pre-pandemic days, NY/NJ Post Authority's PATH commuter service saw over 60M riders in 2025 (a first since 2019)

**[As Amtrak invests in Downtown Cleveland, Greyhound leaves it](#)**, **NEOtrans**

While Amtrak is investing and expanding passenger comforts in the Buckeye State, Greyhound is leaving their historic downtown Cleveland station that they have operated since 1948.



**WE ARE WORKING ON A DISCORD SERVER.  
STAY TUNED FOR MORE INFORMATION**

If you aren't following Rail Passengers on social media, you should be!  
We are covering all the breaking news America's passengers need to stay informed on local, regional, and national issues.

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## Upcoming Events

### Advocacy Workshops + Council Business Meeting

**2026 DC WORKSHOPS**  
**+ Days on the Hill**  
**April 20th - April 24th, 2026**  
Rail Passengers Office  
1200 G St NW, Suite 520

**[DC ADVOCACY WORKSHOPS REGISTRATION](#)**

**Registration is \$125.00**

Due to the space limitations of our office, each of the sessions is **limited to 20 tickets** and there will be no on-site or virtual registration. Please attend the session for the state you reside in. **Registration ends at Midnight eastern on Friday, April 10th.**

The in-office workshops will run from 8:00a to 4:00p. Lunch will be provided (*attendees are responsible for their own breakfast*). Attendees will be responsible for securing their own lodging needs.

Stay tuned to [www.railpassengers.org/dc2026](http://www.railpassengers.org/dc2026) for more information.

**2026 SPRING**



### [2026 SPRING COUNCIL BUSINESS MEETING REGISTRATION](#)

**In-person registration is \$99**  
**Virtual registration is free**

The 2026 Spring Council Business Meeting will take place on Wednesday, April 22nd from 8:00a to 4:00p. Lunch will be provided (*attendees are responsible for their own breakfast*). Registration ends on Friday, April 10th at Midnight eastern. There will be no on-site registration.

Stay tuned to [www.railpassengers.org/2026SpringCouncilMeeting](http://www.railpassengers.org/2026SpringCouncilMeeting) for more information.

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## Local Meetings + Events

[RIARP Meeting](#), Monday, February 16 4:30p

Please contact Joe Aiello ([jaiello@narprail.org](mailto:jaiello@narprail.org)) to have a local, state or regional meeting added to the Rail Passengers calendar (print and on-line) of upcoming events!

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## Staff Updates

Your staff is at the table, in the field, having the conversations that make a difference for passengers across the country. Learn what they're up to each week and how you can support your Association's key missions!

- **Jim Mathews, President & CEO**, attended Amtrak's Airo unveiling at DC's Union Station, closely monitored the Gateway funding dispute, and continued work on developing materials for the Association's filings to the Surface Transportation Board as STB considers whether to approve the Union Pacific acquisition of Norfolk Southern.
- **Sean Jeans-Gail, Vice President of Policy**, helped staff President Jim Mathews at the unveiling of the new Amtrak Airos, and attended the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials Council on Rail Transportation meeting in Northern Virginia later in the week.
- **Jonsie Stone, Chief of Staff**, returned to a more active role in Association work while still recovering from surgery on my right arm and hand (dominant arm). My responses will probably still be slow as I continue to heal and rehab my arm. I appreciate the kind words that you've sent and your understanding.

This week I processed membership dues and donations sent by check to the DC office and tended to some Administrative/Operational needs..

- **Joe Aiello, Director of Community Engagement & Organizing**, made final travel preparations and set up a number of meetings with local leaders for next week's trip to Toledo. Looking forward to my first trip to the city and to learn the advocacy needs.
  - **John Christoph, Chief Data Scientist & Research/Analysis Lead**, doesn't always post updates in the Hotline, but this week there's exciting news: we officially have the first working version of a ridership model which takes train frequency into account. There will still be more work to test and refine this model, but at the very least we can now predict with some confidence how many more passengers will travel to/from a given station for each additional Amtrak train which stops there, in addition to the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the local area. Watch this space!
  - **Kimberly Notarianni, Membership Management Consultant**, returned from vacation last week and continues to work closely with our members to assist with account access, username retrieval, password resets, and the addition of sub-memberships for qualifying membership levels. She sincerely appreciates your patience as she works through the many email requests received while she was away, and thanks you for your continued understanding and support.
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# Apply for Volunteer Staff at Rail Passengers Association

**VOLUNTEERS  
NEEDED**



RAIL PASSENGERS  
ASSOCIATION

[railpassengers.org/volunteer](http://railpassengers.org/volunteer)

Rail Passengers Association

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## Membership How-To

Are you a current member and need help with your account number, username, etc.?

[Click Here For Our Membership "How-To" Page](#)

## We Have Merch!

New items available!



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Discuss This  
Week's Hotline



Service Updates  
& Timetables



Visit the General  
Membership Group



View Webinars



Rail Passengers'  
Social Media



Take Action

# Rail Passengers Timetables



Thanks to a collaborative effort between Rail Passengers NYS Council Member Nathanael Nerode & [juckins.net](http://juckins.net)'s Chris Juckins, we have been able to completely update our timetables resource page.

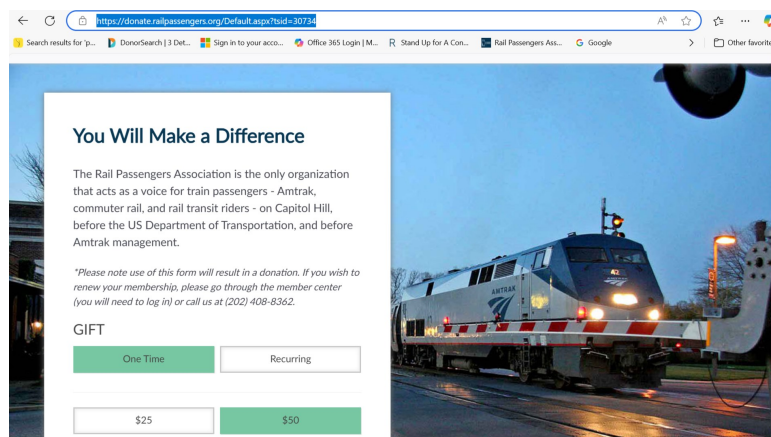
[CLICK HERE](http://railpassengers.org/timetables)

NOTE: Because we do update the links on our website - please bookmark **the main page** and not the individual schedules

## Donate Online with Confidence

You can donate to the Rail Passengers Association online with confidence, knowing your credit card information is secure. Charity Engine uses industry-standard SSL technology to keep your information secure. Don't wait for a paper appeal to donate, support the Association today by donating here. When the web browser shows a lock next to the URL, it means that it's an HTTPS, and it's secure:

<https://donate.railpassengers.org/Default.aspx?tsid=30734>



LOOKING FOR SMARTER  
WAYS TO DONATE?



MAKING A CONTRIBUTION  
HAS NEVER BEEN EASIER!

Do more with your donations. If you have questions about employer match, gifting a membership, or other questions about how to make a bigger impact, let us know! Your staff is here to help with:

- Online Donations
- Donor Advised Funds
- Employer Match
- RPA Signature Visa Card
- Gift of Membership
- and More!

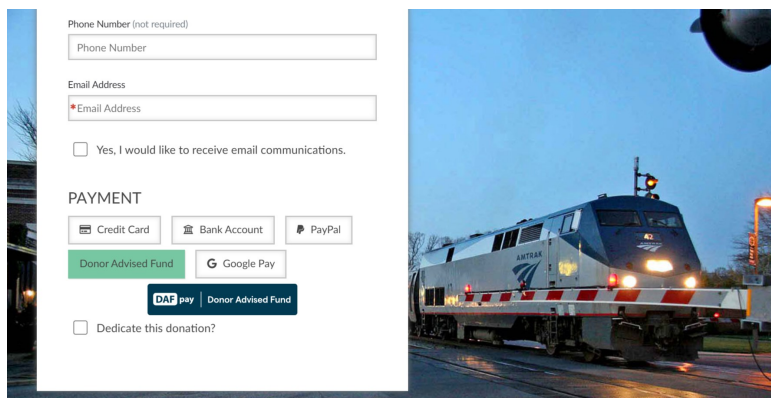
With multiple secure, protected methods of payment, you have more flexibility in the way dues are paid. Skip the hassle and [contact us](#) today for help setting up automatic or online payments.

- Setup ACH or E-Check with your bank of choice
- Use a Debit or Credit Card to pay online, or
- Send a check to 1200 G Street NW Suite 520 Washington, DC 20005

### Use Your Donor Advised Fund (DAF) to Donate, Renew or Join Online

You can now donate or join/renew your membership, online, through your donor advised fund using DAFpay. All Rail Passengers forms now include a “Donor Advised Fund” button under Payment.

#### Donation Form:



Phone Number (not required)

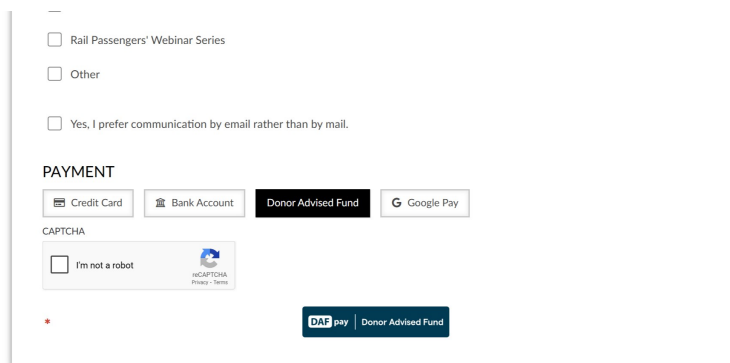
Email Address

☐ Yes, I would like to receive email communications.

**PAYMENT**

☐ Dedicate this donation?

#### Membership Form:



☐ Rail Passengers' Webinar Series

☐ Other

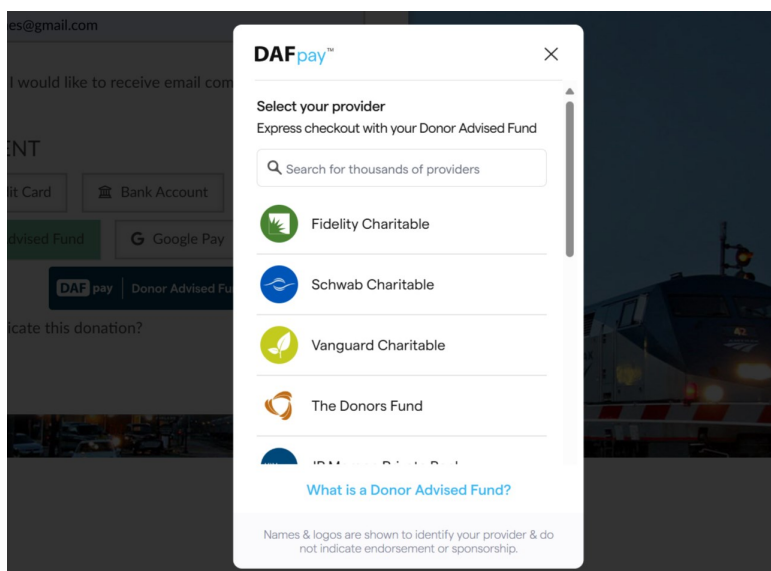
☐ Yes, I prefer communication by email rather than by mail.

**PAYMENT**

**CAPTCHA**

☐ I'm not a robot

After selecting Donor Advised Fund as your payment preference, you will be taken to a DAFpay screen to select your donor advised fund provider, ie., Fidelity Charitable, Vanguard Charitable, Daffy, etc.



**DAFpay™**

Select your provider  
Express checkout with your Donor Advised Fund

- ☐ Fidelity Charitable
- ☐ Schwab Charitable
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- ☐ The Donors Fund
- ☐ What is a Donor Advised Fund?

Names & logos are shown to identify your provider & do not indicate endorsement or sponsorship.

Select your provider, then follow their prompts. If you need to provide information on Rail Passengers Association, please use the below:



## Member & Donor Notices

- **The Rail Passengers Association is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. Our federal tax identification number is 36-2615221**
- **To help facilitate dissemination of electronic thank you receipts,** please make sure your contact information, **specifically your email address**, is up-to-date in your Neon profile.
- **If you need assistance with your membership**, please call the Office at 202-408-8362.
- **While our staff continues to work remotely, we are unable to provide permanent membership cards.** You can print a temporary membership card by creating an account at [www.railpassengers.org](http://www.railpassengers.org) (select "My Account" on the homepage).
- **Complete all information!** -- Before sealing your envelope, PLEASE double-check the credit card information on the buck slip!
  - Print credit card information clearly.
  - **Include an expiration date, month and year, as well as the CVV number.**
  - Without **COMPLETE** information, your membership renewal or donation can't be processed.
- **If you have your financial institution send a check on your behalf,** without a bucksliip, PLEASE instruct them to add:
  - a notation in the memo field if the payment is for membership dues or a donation, AND,
  - your Rail Passengers Association member ID. If we have multiple members with the same name, i.e., John Smith, it can be hard to identify the correct member to attribute the payment, without the member ID.



Rail Passengers Association members have access to a full service, nationwide federal credit union with extensive product and service offerings. Signature FCU is the exclusive provider of the [Rail Passengers Association-branded Visa credit card](#) with our logo, which supports our work by giving back to our organization, and gives you 1 point for every \$1 you spend to redeem for travel and merchandise. The card has no annual fee, no balance transfer fees, no foreign transaction fees, and has a very low interest rate.



Rail Passengers Association Earns Coveted 4-Star Rating from Charity Navigator

Rail Passengers Association's strong financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency have earned it a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator, America's largest independent charity evaluator. Our Charity Navigator profile can be found by clicking [here](#).

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**If you have questions, feedback, or submissions for next week's hotline, send us your thoughts! Help us spread the word about your local, regional, and national passenger rail wins.**



## THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS:



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