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FRIDAY HOTLINE

#1443

JUNE 12TH, 2026



NOTE: There will be no Hotline next Friday (June 19th) because the office will be closed in observance of the Juneteenth holiday.

Association News

USDOT Unveils New Concept Art for Penn Station Redesign

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) [unveiled new renderings of its vision for the New York Penn Station redevelopment project](#). Positioned as a “once-in-a-generation” overhaul of the busiest transit hub in the Western Hemisphere, the plan promises to reshape the daily experience of more than 600,000 commuters.

“We named this project Penn Station Transformation for the exact reason depicted in these renderings; a world-class, beautiful, and modern train station is coming to New York City,” [said Special Advisor to the Amtrak Board Andy Byford](#). “With the continued support of the President and USDOT, and the expertise of Halmar, Skanska, and the rest of our partners, we are continuing to drive momentum and meet more milestones to get shovels in the ground next year and turn these renderings into reality.”

A Federal Vision for a Stagnant Rail Hub

The USDOT’s announcement strikes an ambitious tone. And while it foregoes a more radical reconstruction that some have argued for, it would replace the current confusing layout with an expansive, single-level concourse featuring a spacious train hall, natural light, and improved accessibility.

Highlights of the proposal include:

- Construction of a larger entrance on 8th Avenue to a new, expanded train hall [Nb. most passengers currently access the station through the 7th Avenue entrance];
- Replace cramped walkways with open concourses;
- Expand track capacity, including the introduction of at least limited through-running on the regional rail network;
- New retail, better wayfinding, and other passenger experience improvements; and
- Improvements to the station’s existing subterranean structure.

Notably, Madison Square Garden will remain in place—a politically and logistically significant decision that avoids the thorny question of how, where, and when to relocate the arena.

[Click Here To Read More](#)

Expansion: Another Reason You Should Care About The UPNS Merger

By Jim Mathews / President & CEO

Now that regulators are in a two-month pause evaluating Union Pacific’s proposed acquisition of Norfolk Southern, no doubt their respective boardrooms are happy to see the companies’ names attached more to positive news than worries about the future -- Union Pacific’s majestic Big Boy locomotive [chugging impressively across Norfolk Southern territory](#) before tens of thousands in excited crowds.

But that doesn't change the future, nor does it diminish the urgency of the questions we need to ask about this proposed mega-merger. **"Will this deal make it harder to build the passenger rail network Congress is already paying to plan?"** We already kind of knew the answer, but thanks to your Association's team of data scientists and researchers, today we can emphatically declare, "Yes, without a doubt."




Last winter, [Rail Passengers warned](#) that a merged Union Pacific-Norfolk Southern railroad would control much of America's future passenger rail map. I told you then that our teams would keep working through filings and documents filed to the Surface Transportation Board docket, and that we'd keep you informed as we learned and understood better.

This week, our team just put the finishing touches on its analysis of the overlap with the Federal Corridor Identification program, comparing UPNS' projected freight growth with corridors currently being examined under Corridor ID, sharing it with our coalition partners working on litigation over the transaction. Our analysts compared the applicants' own projected freight growth with the corridors that the Federal Railroad Administration is planning -- and which Congress is paying for. Unsurprisingly, we found many places where future passenger expansion and future freight growth would compete for the same capacity. Nearly everywhere in the country, you probably live in a place where the new train service you want to see could get crimped or even vetoed by a combined Union Pacific-Norfolk Southern railroad.


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Giving you new opportunities to interact with us. Read, comment, and chat! We are working on adding new contributors to write exclusive blogs for the site and throwing around ideas for more content (podcast, anyone?)

[Check It Out Here!](#)

Field Notes

Please email [Joe Aiello](mailto:Joe.Aiello@narp.org) 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@narp.org with the subject "HOTLINE PHOTO"

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!

[Amtrak Mardi Gras line exceeds expectations nearly year after launch, Fox 8](#)

It's not just the number of passengers flocking to the service that should be celebrated, but also the incredible satisfaction scores for the service and the crew.

[Penn Transformation](#)

After renderings were leaked online last week, the USDOT has made it official by releasing images of the future NY Penn Station on the new Penn Transformation website.

[Amtrak wants people to work from trains. There's just one problem, Fast Company](#)

Sorry... lost you... going through a tunnel...

[\[Video\] High-speed passenger rail service is now a goal in Alberta, CBC](#)

Meanwhile, our neighbors to the north are looking to adopt a high-speed & regional model seen in many places around the world.

[Genesee Valley Transportation addresses spectator safety for Big Boy visit, Trains](#)

Officials from Genesee Valley Transportation are enforcing a "zero tolerance" safety policy for visitors of the Union Pacific Big Boy No. 4014 locomotive while it's on display until the end of the month.

[Entering the US from Vancouver, BC via Amtrak just got faster, Fox 13 Seattle](#)

Vancouver's Pacific Central Station now has the preclearance designation that allows for quicker entry for those traveling south into the United States - the first of its kind in North America.

[Extensive rebuild of Grand Junction Union Station, a historic marvel in Colorado, shows signs of progress, CBS News](#)

Purchased in 2016 for just \$350k (a steal when you factor in the history of the building) by Dustin Anzures and Veronica Sanchez, the 120-year-old Grand Junction (CO) Union Station is moving closer to a second life.

[Barge Hits Maryland Rail Bridge Along Northeast Corridor, The New York Times \(Gift Article\)](#)

While "very minimal damage" was done to the 120-year-old Susquehanna River Bridge in Maryland over the weekend, trains were running a couple of hours behind schedule.

[Recent tunnel fires stoke fears about a World Cup transit meltdown, Gothamist](#)

With two tunnel fires happening in the last few weeks, both passengers and officials have the right to be a tiny bit on edge when the World Cup matches start in the NY/NJ area this coming Saturday.

[California voters reauthorize sales tax for Sonoma-Marín rail district, Progressive Railroading](#)

More than 70% of voters in Marin and Sonoma counties (CA) have approved an extension of the sales tax that currently funds the Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit system, which will now run for an additional 33 years.



**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.

Upcoming Events

Association Events



[Click Here For The RailNation Website](#)

Local Meetings + Events

[Greater Northwest Rail Summit](#), August 25-27

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

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**, enjoyed quality time with our three terrific new interns in DC this week, while reviewing legal and legislative documents and planning our work for this Fall's legislative sprint before the midterm elections.
- **Sean Jeans-Gail, Vice President of Policy**, worked with stakeholder offices on developing several policy proposals for the ongoing surface transportation reauthorization, while also tracking and responding to requests surrounding the current Congressional budgeting process.
- **Jonsie Stone, Chief of Staff**, processed membership dues and donations sent directly to the DC office, tended to the administrative/operational needs of the Association and worked on closing May financials.
- **Joe Aiello, Director of Community Engagement & Organizing**, spent the week tending to a number of internal Association issues and

continued work on the upcoming fall meeting.

- **John Christoph, Chief Data Scientist & Research/Analysis Lead**, completed the initial round of *Rail Passengers'* analysis of the UP-NS merger's potential impacts on Amtrak and other passenger rail services, which as Jim noted above may be significantly greater than what's described in the applicants' filing documents. None of this would have been possible without our excellent volunteer team, who have been working diligently on this problem from the day STB released the application to the public. Stay tuned for more details as proceedings advance and we continue to refine our analysis alongside our coalition partners.
- **Kimberly Notarianni, Membership Management Consultant**, continues to support our members with renewals, new memberships, User Center access issues, and password resets. When requesting a password reset, please be sure to check your junk or spam folder, as these emails can occasionally be filtered; marking us as a safe sender can help prevent this. When logging into your User Portal, we encourage you to review and update your communication preferences and mailing address as needed. To avoid duplicate accounts, each member should have a unique email address associated with their membership.

Apply for Volunteer Staff at Rail Passengers Association

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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](#)

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 Tell Us Your Story

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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



Our Timetables Manager, Chris Jukins, has created a spring update for us. He is still working on a few stragglers, but we should have those up soon.

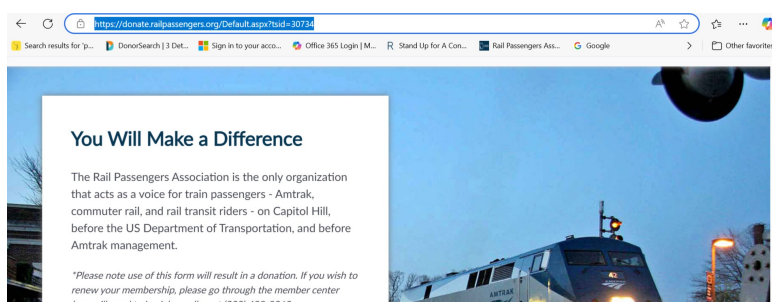
[CLICK HERE](#)

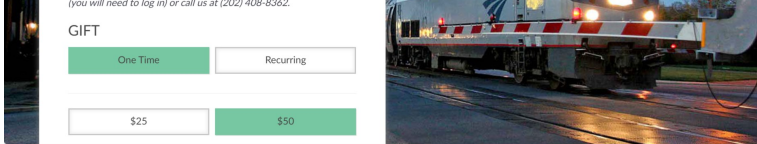
NOTE: Because we do update the links on our website - please bookmark **the main page** and not the individual schedules

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>





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WAYS TO DONATE?





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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
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- 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

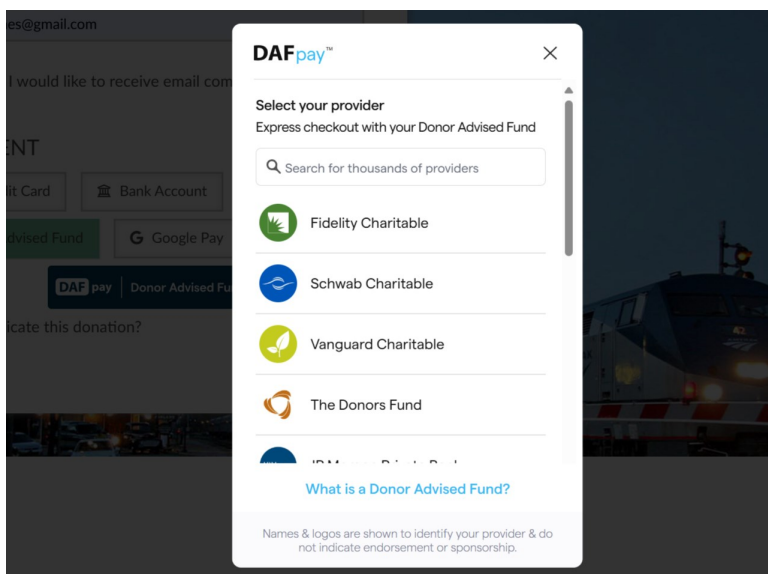
Use Your Donor Advised Fund (DAF) to Donate, Renew or Join Online

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:

Membership Form:

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



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

National Association of Railroad Passengers, Inc.
dba Rail Passengers Association
1200 G Street, NW
Suite 520
Washington, DC 20005
Contact: Jonsie Stone, jstone@narprail.org
Tax ID: 36-2615221

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 (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 buckslip, 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

Charity 
Navigator



◆ **THREE-STAR** ◆

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.

2026

Rail Passengers Association Earns 3-Star Rating from Charity Navigator

Rail Passengers Association's strong financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency have earned it a 3-star rating from Charity Navigator, America's largest independent charity evaluator. Our Charity Navigator profile can be found by clicking [here](#).

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS:



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.



RAIL PASSENGERS

EST. 1967

Rail Passengers Association
1200 G St. NW
Suite 520
Washington, DC 20005

P 202.408.8362
F 202.408.8287

www.railpassengers.org