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"In my speech, I talked about the huge success story of the Downeaster, which is all about the power of grass-roots organizing."

NARP CEO JIM MATHEWS, SPEAKING AT THE NEW ENGLAND NARP DIVISION MEETING IN DURHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE

DOT's Foxx Urges Congress to Work With Administration to Pass Transportation Bill

Congress and the Obama administration should work together to pass the president's proposed \$478 billion, six-year reauthorization for transportation funding instead of arguing over the bill, said Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx during a Playbook event hosted by Politico.

"We feel very strongly that the country needs to pivot forward to a substantial injection of financing into transportation funding and also give enough certainty over a longer term, six years, so that we can actually get something done out in the street," he

said in a BNA report. The GROW America Act 2.0 would be funded under a 14 percent "transition" tax on an estimated \$2 trillion of untaxed offshore revenue.

Meanwhile, Rep. John Delaney (D-Md.) says his proposed infrastructure-tax repatriation plan has more bipartisan support than the administration's GROW America Act. His Infrastructure 2.0 Act (H.R. 625) is a six-year plan that would impose a 8.75 percent tax rate and create a \$50 billion infrastructure fund, reports Bloomberg BNA. ■



DOT Secretary Anthony Foxx

NARP CEO Interviewed on NPR's "Marketplace"

NARP President and CEO Jim Mathews appeared on the public radio program "Marketplace" to discuss the March 9 Supreme Court decision that will have an effect on train delays.

Mathews noted that despite a federal law that says passenger trains get priority on the rails and Amtrak saying freight trains should pull over for passenger trains, it doesn't always happen.

"We watched on-time performance plummet," he told "Marketplace." On some trains, there were "five, six, seven hour delays," he added, noting that one point Amtrak's Capitol Limited train, from Washington to Chicago, was late more than 90 percent of the time.

But in the story Ed Hamberger, president and CEO of the Association of American Railroads, said the delays were caused by weather or accidents.

He argued that freight rail companies actually subsidize Amtrak because passenger trains use their tracks, which they pay to maintain. That claim glosses over the fact that Amtrak trains pay host railroads access fees that nominally cover infrastructure costs. It could be argued that Amtrak pays below-market rates for this access over a number of routes. However, Amtrak was created to relieve freight railroads from the obligation of running passenger service.

Freight trains could run on more set schedules to make it easier to coordinate with scheduled passenger trains, said Steven Ditmeyer, adjunct professor with the Railway Management Program at Michigan State University. The story ends with a mention of Positive Train Control, designed to eliminate bottlenecks and improve safety, noting that it's behind schedule. ■



NARP CEO Mathews with reporter Nancy Marshall-Genzer

Oregon DOT Fights to Fund Cascades Service Amid Proposed Budget Cuts



The debate over how to fund the continuation of the Cascades service continues as Oregon's state budget panel has cut by more than 50 percent a request for \$10.4 million to continue the twice-daily roundtrip service between Portland and Eugene for the biennium, starting July 1. Unless the money is restored, the Oregon Department of Transportation will notify Amtrak to begin the discontinuance process as early as July.

Former Gov. John Kitzhaber (D) included \$10.4 million in the budget to keep the Cascades route running. But state legislators slashed that by more than half, leaving only \$5 million for passenger rail. Although Kitzhaber resigned in February, his successor, Gov. Kate Brown (D) is believed to support rail.

ODOT Assistant Director Travis Brouwer said it would very likely not be enough to keep the Cascades route operating, and it was a "distinct possibility" it would have to close, reports the Statesman-Journal. The Cascades train covers routes including two daily round trips between Eugene and Portland and between Seattle and Vancouver, B.C., and four daily round trips between Portland and Seattle.

Under the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008, states are being required to fund routes under 750 miles, like the Cascades. Oregon faces a \$28.1 million deficit to cover the operating costs, according to the state's budget report.

The Cascades service is Amtrak's eighth-busiest route, and it carries the most passengers of any of the railroad's services outside of the Northeastern U.S. or California. Total ridership for 2014 the latest date numbers were available, was 767,994 riders. It was also the same year that the Washington state and Oregon departments of transportation paid all operations costs not covered by ticket revenues and federal assistance was eliminated.

"The important thing for NARP members, especially those in Oregon, to know is that the hearing described above is not the end of the process," said Mike Morrison, director at large for the Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates. "Pro-rail contact with legislators is still timely and worthwhile, and that there is still a reasonable chance of preserving the service intact if lawmakers keep hearing affirmative voices." ■

NARP Prepares for Spring Council Meeting, Day on the Hill

NARP's council, representatives and members are preparing to come to Washington D.C., for the Spring Council Meeting April 19-22, 2015.

Highlights on Monday, April 19 include a presentation by Amtrak, training for the Day on the Hill and NARP committee meetings. On Tuesday, April 20, members will get the chance to meet their Congressional delegation, pressing them to give Americans the passenger rail system they deserve. The day will end with a NARP reception at the Rayburn House Office Building on Capitol Hill that will be attended by members of Congress, along with our industry partners. We will also present the Golden Spike Award, NARP's highest honor, to Joe Szabo, former administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration.

Visits to the House of Representatives include: Reps. Frank LoBiondo (R-N.J.); Thomas Massie (R-Ky.); Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-N.J.); Leonard Lance (R-N.J.); and Tom MacArthur (R-N.J.). Senate visits include: Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.); Rand Paul (R-Ky.); Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.); Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.); Dean Heller (R-Nev.); Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii); and Cory Booker (D-N.J.).

The final day of the Spring Council Meeting will feature a keynote address by David Hagy, executive director of community outreach for Texas Central Railway. Other confirmed speakers include: Karen Torrent, federal legislative director for the Environmental Law & Policy Center; Barry Fromm, chairman of US Railcar LLC; and Seth Seaburg, CEO of Rail Scout. Members will also receive a report on the Day on the Hill, hear a panel discussion with council representatives and listen to closing remarks by President and CEO Jim Mathews. ■



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Southwest Chief Gets a Reprieve?

Amtrak has announced that it will not terminate the Southwest Chief on January 1, 2016, when its contract with the BNSF Railway for track maintenance expires. The train serves rural communities in western Kansas, south-eastern Colorado, and northern New Mexico on its route from Chicago to Los Angeles.

The service remains in jeopardy of ending on January 1, 2016, but Amtrak announced that it will continue operations as long as it appears political progress is being made to come up with a comprehensive funding solution for necessary track infrastructure upgrades.

Originally, Amtrak officials wanted New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas and BNSF Railway to contribute \$4 million each a year for 10 years to fund repair and maintenance of 632 miles of track between Newton, Kansas, and Lamy, New Mexico. Due to aging and deteriorating track conditions, the Chief is often forced to run at speeds well below the maximum 79 mph.

Amtrak was facing significant increases in its costs for repair and maintenance because BNSF no longer runs much freight on the Kansas and Colorado lines and has no freight service on the New Mexico portion of the line.

The initial estimates changed dramatically in 2014, however, when a Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant was awarded to Garden City, Kansas. The \$12.5 million grant was matched by \$9 million from Amtrak, BNSF, and the Kansas Department of Transportation, as well as \$360,000 from Colorado and Kansas counties, communities and advocacy groups.

In connection with the grant, BNSF announced that it would cover maintenance costs for the newly repaired segment. This has relieved Amtrak of some of the major maintenance costs it was going to face starting in 2016 and has changed the entire outlook for the train. Repairs on about 45 to 50 miles of track in the worst condition in Kansas and Colorado will be repaired this year.



BNSF has already begun tie replacement at its own expense in anticipation of laying new rail. If the tracks were repaired, the train could operate at maximum speed, cutting travel times, bringing in more riders and making the line economically viable. Following additional repairs, Colorado is hoping enough time can be saved on the schedule to add a stop in Pueblo, which would bring the train within 40 miles of Colorado Springs and open an array of new tourism opportunities to Amtrak passengers.

While Colorado and Kansas moved aggressively in 2014 to obtain a federal grant and allocate money for repairs on their sections of the Southwest Chief's tracks, New Mexico didn't follow suit. In 2014, Gov. Susana Martinez (R) funded a \$150,000 study of the Chief's costs and benefits. Recently, the New Mexico Department of Transportation announced that it will attempt to seek a TIGER grant for repairs, improving the prospects for a three-state collaboration on a solution. BNSF, which owns the tracks that the Southwest Chief has not yet commented on the recent news.

NARP Mountains and Plains Division Leader Jim Souby is still concerned about the fate of the train. "Recent exaggerated news reports that the train has been 'saved' hurt our efforts. We have an uphill struggle ahead of us and these news reports came right as we were seeking support from the Colorado General Assembly," he said. "This is already a long, hard campaign and we need to continue our efforts until we actually save the train. More time is fine, but the time is now!" ■

INDOT Works on Deal to Fund Hoosier State Line

Amtrak's Hoosier State Line passenger rail service, scheduled to end on April 1, 2015, got a 30-day reprieve after an announcement by the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT). It is part of a long-running saga to keep daily rail service between Indianapolis and Chicago running.

After spending all of 2014 and the first three months of 2015 working to create a public-private partnership to operate the line, INDOT threw in the towel in a March 6 letter to U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx.

In the letter, INDOT Commissioner Karl Browning disagreed with a ruling by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) calling his agency the party "contracting for railroad service" instead of Amtrak.

"We respectfully disagree with this determination, asserting that INDOT does not come within the definition of a 'railroad' or a 'railroad carrier' in 49 U.S.C. 20102," Browning wrote. "INDOT cannot agree to become a railroad or a railroad carrier as that would require a significantly higher commitment of resources, the assumption of additional liability, and uncertainty over employment practices."

Indiana Sens. Dan Coats (R-Ind.) and Joe Donnelly (D-Ind.) have joined the effort to keep the Hoosier State train from closing on April 30. The senators sent letters to the Federal Rail Administration, asking them to reconsider its INDOT determination. Coats says since Indiana partners with Amtrak to operate the service and does not own the tracks or railroad equipment, it should be exempt.

In a statement, Rep. Todd Rokita (R-Ind.) said the state should be exercising every legal option to protect its position. "These rules do not apply in North Carolina after that state aggressively challenged the FRA, and I do not see why they should inconsistently apply in other states like Indiana," he said. "I am asking Secretary Foxx to overturn the FRA determination to ensure passenger rail service between Indianapolis and Chicago continues."

There is still hope that a public-private partnership negotiated with INDOT, Amtrak and Iowa Pacific Holdings Inc. can still happen. Under the deal, Iowa Pacific Holdings would provide and maintain the railroad cars and market the service, Amtrak would operate the trains and sell the tickets and INDOT would fund the service at \$3 million a year. ■

Subsidies for Heartland Flyer Questioned

Some Oklahoma state senators have questioning the budget for the popular train Heartland Flyer train service, which connects Oklahoma City and Fort Worth, Texas with daily service, reports Tulsa World. The state pays Amtrak \$2.9 million annually to operate the service, and that cost is expected to rise to \$3.2 million per year, according to the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's (OKDOT) recent budget presentation to the Senate Appropriations Committee. Senate Appropriations Chairman Clark Jolley (R-Edmond) responded to OKDOT's presentation by asking if that money should instead go to subsidize road maintenance.

The Heartland Flyer is jointly funded by the states of Texas and Oklahoma. The service started operating in 1999, when it carried only 26,832 riders. Ridership steadily rose, reaching a high-water mark in 2012 with 87,873 passengers buying tickets, according to OKDOT. Last year, ridership was over 81,000 per year.

What State Senator Jolley glosses over is that all transportation requires public funding. A 2014 study done by the Tax Foundation found that highway user fees made up just 50.4 percent of state and local spending on roads, with the rest coming from general state and local revenues, as well as federal aid—which is itself a mix of gas tax and general fund revenue. That isn't a reason to stop investing in transportation infrastructure. An efficient and resilient transportation network requires strong intermodal connections that allow travelers a choice in how to get from one point to another.

Currently, the Heartland Flyer is the only service connecting Oklahomans with the rest of the national network. By connecting to the Texas Eagle at Fort Worth, the Heartland Flyer allows Oklahomans to travel by train to any number of destinations between Chicago, San Antonio, Los Angeles and other points beyond. Discontinuing the train now, especially at a time when other states are contemplating expansion of their own state-supported services, would be incredibly short-sighted.

The Heartland Flyer is also key to the success of other passenger rail initiatives in the state. Texas and Oklahoma are looking to improve the rail corridor between Oklahoma City, Dallas/Fort Worth, San Antonio and Austin, and extend it south to Mexico. Additionally, Iowa Pacific Holdings plans to privately launch the Eastern Flyer this year between Sapulpa and Midwest City, with eventual plans to run trains directly between Tulsa and Oklahoma City. And Texas Central Railway is performing preliminary design work on a high-speed rail corridor between Houston and Dallas. Without the connections provided by the Heartland Flyer, the appeal of all of these services would be greatly diminished. ■

Riding the Rails with NARP CEO Jim Mathews

NARP CEO Jim Mathews spent much of March riding the trains in his ongoing effort to meet with members and local officials and advocate for rail service. During the first weekend in March, he was in Schenectady, New York, for a meeting with the Empire State Passenger Association (ESPA), headed by Bruce Becker, a vice chair of the NARP board. He took the Acela to New York City, then took Empire Service to Schenectady.

"I went up there to reintroduce myself to those who didn't make fall council meeting," said Mathews. "I talked about my vision for NARP and the need for the organization to be more locally focused and more about grassroots efforts."

NARP should be working with local officials to focus more on rail as part of an intermodal system, said Mathews. "People need to see how trains connect to other modes of transportation and helps the economy," he said.

While in Schenectady, the mid-Atlantic division of NARP had its meeting in Arlington, Virginia, so Mathews Skyped into that meeting and spoke to its members.

On March 14, Mathews went to Durham, New Hampshire, to speak at the New England NARP division membership meeting at the University of New Hampshire, taking the Acela to Boston and the Downeaster to Durham. "In my speech, I talked about the huge success story of the Downeaster, which is all about the power of grassroots organizing," he said. "I would love to clone what happened with the Downeaster to communities across the country."

On March 24, Mathews took the Crescent to Biloxi, Mississippi, to meet with officials on efforts to restore rail service past New Orleans. "I spoke with representatives from the offices of Rep. Steve Palazzo (R-Miss.) and Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.)." "I also spoke with Harrison County officials," he said. "The temperature at the beginning of my trip was -17 degrees. At the end, it was 81 degrees."

In April, Mathews will go to Denver. "This trip is more about getting to know people and their local issues, along with meeting with local activists and officials," he said. ■



NARP CEO Jim Mathews uses an Amtrak Roomette as his office while on the road.

Something We Can All Relate To

NARP Council Representative Stephen Sayles guesses that his passion for trains came at birth. “Whether or not that means my mother rode trains while carrying me, well, that’s a good bet,” he said.

A lot of Sayles’ childhood memories were spent at Minnesota’s St. Paul Union Station, where his wonderment at passenger trains took root. “Feeling the trains rumble beneath the floor of the concourse as they pulled alongside the platforms was very exciting,” he recalled. “I would then gaze in amazement as the people gathered at the gate, while listening to the station master’s announcements of which train had arrived and its destinations.”

It took some doing but someone finally allowed Sayles to take the stairs to the waiting train. “All was hectic, with patrons and baggage carts scrambling to get folks on board. It was wonderful,” he said.

Fast forward to December 1967 when Sayles bought a copy of Trains magazine. “As I perused the back, I saw the ad for the National Association of Railroad Passengers. Its funny how that stuck in my mind and how I eventually would become part of this great organization, whose main goal is to support passenger rail,” he said.

Sayles joined NARP and attended his first Region 5 meeting, where he was introduced to the Florida Coalition of Rail Passengers, eventually becoming president of the organization. “From there my good friend Jackson and I would form the Friends of Tampa Union Station, where I am currently on the board. It was Jackson [McQueen] who felt being on the NARP council would be a good fit, so I applied and was accepted.”

Presently, Sayles said his life is now very busy with not only volunteering, but spending time with his best friend and soul-mate Michelle. “Attending the meetings twice a year is great, especially the D.C. segment and visiting Capitol Hill,” he said. “Michele became a member not long after we met and she enjoys riding the rail as much as I do. On our second date, we both found out we knew our Congressman Ted Yoho, who was her old veterinarian. I met the congressman while he was campaigning and told me to come see him if he was elected.”

Going to the Hill each year gives members that special feeling that they’re making a difference, said Sayles. “It may take a long time but eventually a light bulb goes on and you reach a politician,” he said.



Stephen Sayles and Michelle Boyer with Rep. Ted Yoho (R-Fla.).

It is important to keep up the fight so current and future generations can continue riding on the steel rails, said Sayles. “If you share my feelings about passenger rail or identify with my love for the rails, I ask you to seriously consider joining me in supporting NARP by becoming a Silver Rail or Heritage Circle member,” he said. To join Sayles in supporting NARP, contact Director of Resource Development Logan McLeod at (202) 408-8362, extension 3202. ■

Rising Appalachia Promotes Rail Travel Via “Wider Circles Train Tour”

The band Rising Appalachia kicked off its six-month Wider Circles Train Tour that it hopes will rally young Americans in support of a 21st century passenger rail system.

The band, led by sisters Leah and Chloe Smith, will be working with NARP and Amtrak in this experimental rail tour to help its fans and concertgoers learn more about the U.S. rail system and how to help make train travel a more viable transportation. The tour launched in New Orleans on March 28, and will end in Pataskala, Oklahoma, on September 26.

NARP’s partnership with Rising Appalachia is part of an effort to make young Americans more aware of the benefits of rail travel. They will be the ones who benefit most from a modern passenger train network—or bear the costs of our shortsighted infrastructure policy.

That’s why the band is using its rail tour to support NARP’s mission for an expanded national network of passenger trains, putting 80 percent of Americans within 25 miles of a train station served by frequent, fast, and reliable trains.

Through Rising Appalachia’s rail tour, concertgoers and the band’s supporters will learn that whether they live in a major metropolitan area served by high-speed rail, or a small rural town served by a long-distance train, they have a voice in building a more connected America.



The tour will also encourage people to join NARP through student rate-memberships being offered at the band’s shows. Follow them on Twitter and Instagram at @RisingApp and on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/RisingAppalachiaMusic> ■

NARP Expands Volunteer Opportunities

Have you seen the expanded opportunities to volunteer for NARP? Whether you're looking to build your resume, to add to your creative portfolio, to develop new expertise in preparation for a career change, or just looking for a way to make a difference, NARP now has dozens of immediate volunteer openings available nationwide. These are meaningful, ongoing roles which you can use to jump-start your professional life or to contribute in a hands-on way to our work for more and better trains.

It's also a great way to contribute your professional talents to your association. We need volunteers in administrative, communications, advocacy/programs and technology.

While these positions are unpaid, the results they produce -- for you as well as for NARP -- are real. You'll make a difference while generating work products, references and networking opportunities. It's a win-win!

You can read more about these opportunities by clicking through the Volunteer menu to find each job listing page. If you think you're up to the challenge, apply by sending your resume and a cover letter by email to volunteer@narprail.org.

ADMINISTRATIVE

- Office Manager (Washington, DC)
- Data Entry Assistant
- State Support Coordinator

COMMUNICATIONS

- Blogger (multiple positions available)
- PR And Marketing Associate
- Email Marketing Associate
- Graphic Design Associate

ADVOCACY/PROGRAM WORK

- Routes Spokesperson
- Certified Citizen Advocate
- Millennials Evangelist

TECHNOLOGY

- Web Content Assistant

Read a full description for each volunteer position by heading over to <http://www.narprail.org/volunteer/>

Amtrak Unveils Train Days



In a new effort to support more communities, Amtrak is expanding National Train Day into what it calls a traveling, community-centric experience under the name of Amtrak Train Days.

In the past seven years, more than 300 communities in all 50 states celebrated their love of trains on National Train Day, usually held in May.

Amtrak Train Days is kicking off at Chicago Union Station on May 9, and then it will hit the rails, traveling to more than 20 locations across the country through October. The touring event will feature the Amtrak Exhibit Train at select stops.

While the touring event won't stop in every community, Amtrak is inviting local stations, state partners, rail industry colleagues and communities to join in the celebration of train travel by hosting their own Amtrak Train Days events, whether on May 9, as part of the kick-off, or during a local event on the date of your choosing.

NARP will coordinate with local members to provide educational materials and encourage increased ridership.

Local communities can still register to host an event on [AmtrakTrainDays.com](https://amtraktraindays.com). For more information, go to <https://amtraktraindays.com>

NARP Institutes Social Media Policy

With the hiring of Benét Wilson as NARP's new director of communications, the organization is firming up its social media policy while understanding the value of a good discussion with our members. To that end, NARP will now enforce a policy designed to keep discussions civil, no matter what position is taken on rail policy.

NARP will never censor remarks, even if we may not agree with them. However, posts will be deleted if they include the following: racism, sexism, verbal abuse, inappropriate language or blatant antagonistic behavior toward other members. If there are more than three infractions, members will be deleted from the group. Otherwise, we look forward to continuing the conversation. And please follow us on Twitter and Instagram at @NARPRail or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/narprail>