

“Bringing together this group of experts and leaders in transportation, travel, and tourism will help us build a system that ensures that every family vacation or work trip is as seamless and successful as possible”

US DOT SECRETARY ANTHONY FOXX ON THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON TRAVEL AND TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE

Congress Passes Short-Term Budget & Amtrak Border Bill Before Adjourning for 2016

Most Members of Congress left Washington, D.C. in early December for the holiday break, and—save for select pro forma sessions—Congress was adjourned for the year.

With the budget extended through late April, NARP has a much clearer idea about what legislative goals are for the first half of 2017. Stay tuned in the new year to hear more about opportunities to advocate for more and better train service.

Congress Extends Budget

The United States Senate passed a Continuing Resolution (CR) appropriations bill funding through April 28, 2017, by a vote of 63-36. This followed on a bill cleared by the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 326-96. President Obama signed the bill into law, averting a government shutdown.

As we predicted, Congress extended program funding levels at FY2016 levels. However, due to the budget anomaly secured by NARP advocates in September, Amtrak will be funded at the slightly higher FY2017 levels.

Unfortunately, given the short duration of the bill, the U.S. DOT will likely make partial-year apportionments to grantees, which will hurt rail-friendly programs like New Starts and TIGER. Additionally, the increases authorized by the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act for FY2017 remain unfunded, including rail service restoration grants and expansion and upgrade grants.

The timing sets NARP up for an eventful spring meeting, where we will be well-positioned to push for a full-year

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January 2017

Vol. 51, No. 1

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NARP’s Search For Summer By Rail 2017 Intern Begins

This summer, a college student will go on one of the greatest road trips of his or her life...by train across the United States. Perhaps a trip to visit Major League Baseball stadiums by train. Or visit any number of National Parks that are accessible by rail. Or maybe identify the best restaurants in America, or design a unique trip that will take place over the course of a month.

Last year, Elena Studier, did just that as an intern for NARP. A transportation engineering student from George Washington University in Washington, D.C., Elena went across the country and back,

taking only the train and her bike, Stevie.

Along the way, Elena met public and elected officials, as well as transportation representatives and transit advocacy leaders. She stopped in small towns and big cities. She rode her bike along trails and paths that were all accessible from the United States rail network. She put up a website to track the progress, and posted Instagram and Twitter updates for the world to follow along. Check out her trip at www.summerbyrail.com.

The point of the trip, too, was far more than a great adventure. NARP

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Elena Studier on an Amtrak train during Summer by Rail in 2016. Photo Credit: NARP

Amtrak Hits Record Year Through Increased Service

Demand for passenger rail service continues to grow, and this was made evident through Amtrak's record earnings for fiscal year 2016. The transit agency's fiscal year ended on September 30, with an unaudited ticket revenue of \$2.14 billion - \$12 million more than in 2015.

"The results demonstrate the value we deliver to our customers and the vital role Amtrak plays in our nation's transportation system," said Amtrak Chairman of the Board Anthony Coscia. "We are off to another strong start for the new fiscal year and will provide a great travel experience for customers who choose Amtrak in the upcoming holiday season."

The new record in revenue coincides with growth in demand for people wanting to take Amtrak trains for travel. Amtrak carried 31.3 million passengers over the past year, which was 400,000 more than 2015. "Demand for Amtrak trains, as well as other passenger rail services, is booming," said Jim Mathews, President and CEO of the National Association of Railroad Passengers. "We have seen more people requesting new, expanded, or the reintroduction of rail service to their communities. For example, people throughout



Passengers walk past an Amtrak train. Photo Credit: Amtrak

the Gulf Coast region have been without Amtrak since Hurricane Katrina, but they are excited and eager to have Amtrak service start again."

Service along the Gulf Coast route from New Orleans and Orlando was stopped in 2005 after Hurricane Katrina caused severe damage to the railroad infrastructure. According to the Gulf Coast Working Group, which has studied the cost and viability of starting service again, the loss of Amtrak has limited transportation for 20 million annual travelers and four million residents, while demand for other Amtrak intercity passenger rail services in the area has increased more than 20 percent.

Throughout 2016, Amtrak also expanded rail service, as well as passenger

accommodations, which helped contribute to Amtrak's growth in 2016. Highlights include:

- Amtrak expanded service to a seventh day on San Joaquins for round trip travel between Bakersfield and Oakland's Jack London Square Station;

- Amtrak's Acela added stops in Iselin

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NARP President and CEO Appointed to New Committee Created by FAST Act

U.S. Secretary of Transportation

Anthony Foxx appointed Jim Mathews, President and CEO of NARP, to serve on the National Advisory Committee on Travel and Tourism Infrastructure (NACTTI). The new committee was created under the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act by the Department of Transportation and will closely examine how the U.S. can enhance its infrastructure in regards to travel and tourism. NACTTI held its first meeting from December 8-9, 2016, at the Federal Aviation Administration headquarters.

NACTTI brings together some of the nation's top transportation and tourism experts

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Jim Mathews, NARP President and CEO
Photo Credit: NARP


NARPnews

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This issue has news through December 15, 2016.
Vol. 51, No. 1 was mailed January 18, 2017.

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Dan Aykroyd Shares The Importance Of Passenger Rail In NARP Video

Over the past several months, NARP produced a new video called, “A Connected America,” featuring actor, comedian and rail enthusiast, Dan Aykroyd, who talked about the importance of passenger rail.

The increasing demand for rail service in this country is trending upward, and it is evident through rail projects in California, Florida, Texas, and elsewhere. These projects will change how Americans travel, and we wanted to capture the benefits in a new and educational video.

In the video, Aykroyd helped NARP share the travel, economic, and environmental benefits of passenger rail services, such as the national Amtrak network, light rail service in Charlotte, NC, or upgraded rail lines in Salt Lake City, UT.

With the completion of the video, NARP members are welcomed to not only watch and enjoy it, but to help NARP share it with others so they, too, know the positive outcomes passenger rail generates.

The video is on the [NARP YouTube](#) page. From [YouTube.com](#), search “NARPrail” and look for, “A Connected America.” It will probably be the first link. ■



Actor Dan Aykroyd
Photo Credit: ABC News

BUDGET BILL, from p. 1

budget at authorized FAST Act funding levels.

‘Preclearance’ Bill To Ease U.S.-Canada Rail Travel Clears Congress

The Promoting Travel, Commerce and National Security Act of 2016, a bill that will facilitate travel across the Canadian border, was passed by Congress and signed into law in mid-December. This legislation will improve the future performance of Amtrak’s Adirondack, and is an important step in extending the Vermonter to Montreal. The bill could also have positive ramifications for additional frequencies on the Cascades service, which terminates in Vancouver, B.C. However, passengers on the Maple Leaf between New York City and Toronto will still have to detrain at Niagara Falls for inspections.

The bill was supported by a bipartisan, bicameral coalition, including Senators Pat Leahy (I-VT) and Chuck Schumer (D-NY), and Representatives Elise Stefanik (R-NY-21) and Ann Kuster (D-NH-2).

“This agreement has long been a priority for Vermonters,” said Senator Leahy. “It would make it possible to restore Amtrak service between Vermont and Quebec in the future. It’s a win for Vermont’s economy, and for Canadians who visit Vermont to sightsee, ski, shop and dine. This process has been a true bipartisan effort at every level of government in both the United States and Canada and both governments have been fully supportive and engaged. Now, at last, we can

confidently move to the next stages of getting passenger service to Montreal up and running. Many of us can’t wait to hear those first whistles blow.”

The Canadian government will now need to pass matching legislation before a bi-national treaty agreement can go into effect. Canada’s Liberal party has introduced a companion bill, C-23, and it enjoys broad support in the House of Commons. This will allow both governments to ratify the underlying treaty.

Infrastructure Bill Thrown in Doubt

Senator Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) signaled again in December that establishment Republicans may oppose President-Elect Donald Trump’s proposal for a massive infrastructure bill.

“It will be interesting to see how this is put together,” McConnell told reporters. “I hope we avoid a trillion-dollar stimulus.”

Additionally, the Senate GOP leader joined his counterpart in the U.S. House, Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI), in voicing opposition to using tax reform to pay for additional spending on transportation infrastructure.

“I think this level of national debt is dangerous and unacceptable,” McConnell added. “My preference on tax reform is that it be revenue neutral.”

President-Elect Trump has explicitly called for a trillion dollar infrastructure push, so transportation advocates will have to wait and see whose vision for the first 100 days of the 115th Congress comes out on top. ■

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took the opportunity to highlight to current rail-riders, as well as general public, that the U.S. has an extensive inter-modal transportation system that connects economies and people to each other. Through this network, Elena visited such cities as Chicago, Seattle, Los Angeles, San Francisco, New Orleans and many more.

NARP is now underway in launching year two of our

Summer by Rail program, and we’re looking for a smart, dedicated young person to spend a month riding, biking, and hiking across a connected America! The application process is open to all enrolled college students, aged 18 and over, who have an interest in transportation and urban planning.

Applications are due January 31, 2017. More details on the trip, as well as information on how to apply, are available at [www.summerbyrail.com](#). ■

• • • S T A T E S N E W S • • •

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey took a major step in their 10-year capital draft plan by noting it may include funding for Amtrak’s Gateway tunnel. The plan calls for an estimated \$29.1 billion in transportation and infrastructure projects, with \$2.7 billion going towards the rail tunnel project between New York and New Jersey. Amtrak’s Gateway Project, which is focused on repairing and expanding rail infrastructure in the NEC, is set to cost \$24 billion, and the tunnel itself could cost a total of up to \$7 billion.

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After nearly two decades of planning and construction, the International Train Station and Intermodal Transportation Center in Niagara Falls, NY, entered service on December 7, 2016. The first train to use the new facility was Amtrak’s #64, the eastbound Maple Leaf, on route from Toronto, Ontario, Canada to New York City. The new station complex was specifically designed to accommodate the processing of U.S.-bound, cross-border travelers.

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The California High Speed Rail Authority confirmed it will buy U.S.-manufactured parts for the state’s HSR system. The authority previously discussed buying foreign parts and requested a waiver from the Buy American Act. The request was made since the lack of a vibrant HSR train manufacturing sector within the U.S. will likely lead to higher per unit equipment costs. However, the rail authority is planning to



Entrance to the new Amtrak train station in Niagara Falls, NY. Photo Credit: NARP

issue a request for proposals to domestic passenger train manufacturers.

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Significant progress is being made at Florida Brightline’s West Palm Beach train station, which will connect higher-speed rail riders to Miami. The station is 70 percent complete and only the interior of the building and installation of track through the station remains. As of now, it is expected that track installation for the West Palm Beach to Miami route will be completed next month, and locomotives and train cars will arrive by the end of the year for testing. ■

NARP Offers First Student Fellowship

This spring, NARP will offer its first student Fellowship opportunity at the association’s annual Spring Council Meeting and Day on the Hill (April 25, 2017). The Fellowship will include a number of hands-on learning experiences in public policy and administration focused on transportation issues, including opportunities to meet with members of Congress and their staffs, as well representatives from the US Department of Transportation, Amtrak, and various rail trade associations and interest groups.

The Fellowship will be geared towards students whose academic or career interests are in transportation, railroads, political science, public policy, public administration, urban and regional planning, and business or nonprofit/association management. This is an

all-expense paid opportunity that will afford students great networking opportunities and a chance to understand the workings of a non-profit. This fellowship is open to both undergraduate and graduate students who are U.S. citizens or legal residents and enrolled as a full-time student as a U.S. accredited college or university.

We are also looking for college and university faculty/staff who can help promote and advertise NARP’s Spring Fellowship Program. If you or someone you know can help, please contact Betsy at the email address below.

Applications for the fellowship are available at www.narprail.org/fellowship. Additional information can be requested by contacting Betsy Nelson, Director, Resource Development bnelson@narprail.org ■

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(Metropark) and Trenton, New Jersey;

■ The addition of cars for lines that saw increased demand or were regularly sold-out;

■ Improved on-time performance for Amtrak trains;

■ Now allowing customers to bring pets and bikes on

Amtrak routes.

“More and more customers recognize Amtrak as a smarter way to travel,” said Amtrak President and CEO Wick Moorman in an Amtrak press release. “We will continue to enhance the customer experience and strengthen our market position

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NARP Member Benefits

■ If you haven't done so already: claim your Travelers United Advocate Membership, and further broaden the support for consumer focus at <https://travelersunited.org/welcome-narp/>

■ Review the full and growing list of NARP benefits by logging into <https://www.narprail.org/MyBenefits>. ■

• Spring 2017 Advocacy Summit & Meeting - Wash., D.C.

- Sunday, April 23 to Wednesday, April 26, 2017
- NARP's 'Action Day On The Hill' & Congressional Reception – Tuesday, April 25, 2017
- Updated details and agenda information is available on the NARP Events page. Meeting registration will open in mid-February.
- Host Hotel & Meeting Location: Sheraton Hotel Silver Spring (MD) - Group rate room reservations are now available via a link on the NARP Events page.

• NARP's 50th Anniversary Celebration – Chicago, IL

- Thursday, November 2 to Sunday, November 5, 2017
- Four days packed with an exciting array of presentations, speakers, exhibits, tours, and events
- Celebrating NARP's accomplishments over the past 50 years and looking ahead to the future of passenger rail in the United States
- Host Hotel: Millennium Knickerbocker - E. Walton Place at N. Michigan Ave.

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from both private and public sectors, as well as government officials, to discuss new opportunities for growth. Mathews, who will serve a two-year term, will provide the committee insight on how passenger rail service can help drive tourism and the economy. In addition, Mathews will share expertise on how rail development can produce more efficient multimodal transportation systems.

“It is a great honor to be given the chance to serve on this Committee as a voice for railroad passengers,” said Mathews, who is the only rail industry executive on the 25-member committee. “NACTTI will help tackle the challenges we face in rebuilding our aging transportation infrastructure to connect America with multiple travel modes, to create jobs, and to foster economic growth everywhere in America, including ‘flyover country.’”

The committee's first meeting was two days, December 8th and 9th, and members had an opportunity to discuss the current condition of the transportation and tourism industries, infrastructure needs, opportunities for growth, and current challenges the industries face. Others to join Mathews on the Committee include:

- Chair: Rossi Ralenkotter, President & CEO of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority
- Vice Chair: The Honorable Mark Begich, President & CEO of the Northern Compass Group, LLC.

Important Membership Reminder

■ Please do NOT use any old envelopes, membership renewal forms, or donation requests you may have saved from previous NARP mailings prior to March 2016. These forms and the PO Box address on the old envelopes are no longer in use and your checks or credit card payment submissions will NOT reach NARP. Please only use the new envelopes and renewal/donation forms you receive with our current mailings, which are addressed to: NARP, PO Box 17082, Baltimore, MD 21298-9485. If in any doubt, you may always send checks and other payments directly to our office at: NARP, 505 Capitol Ct, NE, Suite 300, Washington, DC, 20002-7706.

■ There are still openings for state representatives on the NARP Council of Representatives in several states, including one each in Alabama; Arizona; Delaware; Hawaii; Idaho; Missouri; Nevada; North Carolina; North Dakota; Ohio; South Carolina and Wyoming. If you are interested in becoming more involved with NARP and advancing our goal of ‘A Connected America’, please visit our website, www.narprail.org under ‘About to Leadership to Council of Representatives to Open Seats’ for more information on applying and for a complete up-to-date list of the positions available.

• The Honorable Mitchell Landrieu, Mayor, City of New Orleans
 “Our first meeting was very productive, as well as enlightening to hear many of the challenges that we face within our industries and local communities, and how rail can be part of the solution” said Mathews. “Yet we came out of the meeting with new ideas and a direction on how to approach and respond to the challenges that lay ahead.”

Overall, the Committee has a wide range of responsibilities, which include:

- Promote the sharing of information between the private and public sectors on transportation issues impacting travel and tourism;
- Provide for development of measures of condition, safety, and performance for transportation related to travel and tourism;
- Gather information, develop technical advice, and make recommendations to the Secretary on policies that improve the condition and performance of an integrated national transportation system.

Signed into law in December 2015 by President Obama after passing with overwhelming majorities in Congress, the FAST Act provides long-term funding for transportation infrastructure and transit projects. NACTTI was created to provide advice and recommendations to the Secretary of Transportation on infrastructure pertaining to travel and tourism within the U.S. ■

WEB EXCLUSIVE! FRA Proposes Regulations For High-Speed Rail

Following 10 years of discussions and research with the passenger rail industry, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) released a set of proposed draft regulations for high-speed rail in the U.S. This is the first time the federal government has proposed standards and safety regulations for high-speed trains. Previously, the government only focused on regulations for trains traveling below 150 mph, but trains approaching 220 mph require separate regulations.

“As several regions of the United States build faster passenger rail service, the trains on those tracks must keep passengers safe,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx in an FRA press release.

“To do that, we want to allow manufacturers to innovate

and achieve all-new levels of safety. These proposed changes put us on track to do just that.”

The FRA states that the proposed rules would establish a new category of passenger equipment, Tier III, and it would offer an alternative method for evaluating how well passengers and crews are protected in an accident. Although Tier III trains will be required to have exclusive tracks to operate at speeds above 125 mph, the new standards will allow Tier III trains to safely share track with current Tier I and Tier II commuter, intercity, and Acela trains.

The FRA released the draft regulations on November 21, 2016, and is accepting feedback and comments from the railroad industry and related stakeholders for 60 days. ■

Service, from p. 4

through investments such as next-generation high-speed rail for the Northeast Corridor, while at the same time remaining focused on running an efficient and effective company.”

Other notable figures from Amtrak’s financial reports include:

- Ticket sales and other revenue streams allowed Amtrak to

cover 94 percent of its operating costs;

- Amtrak saw an unaudited operating loss of \$227 million, \$78 million less than 2015;

- This is the sixth consecutive year that Amtrak carried more than 30 million customers. ■

NARP Traveler’s Advisory

❖ In Springfield, MA, to accommodate a long-term track work project, several Springfield Shuttle trains will be canceled and bus service will be provided. On weekdays, Trains 470, 490, 493, and 495 will be canceled until May 31, 2017. Trains 476 and 479 will have normal schedules until March 1, 2017. Both trains will be canceled from March 2 through May 31, 2017. In addition, Southbound weekday buses will depart all stations 30 minutes earlier than the respective trains.

❖ Amtrak is offering a lower cost travel option on the popular Sleeping Cars between New York and Miami, following a 10-month test on the Silver Star (Trains 91 and 92), operating daily between New York City and Orlando/Miami, via Washington, DC, Columbia, SC, and Tampa, FL. A Dining Car will not be operated on the Silver Star, although passengers can purchase meals in the Café Car which offers hot and cold sandwiches, snacks, and other items. Traditionally on all Amtrak trains, the cost of Dining Car meals was bundled into the charge for the Sleeping Car. On the Silver Star, Amtrak Sleeping Car customers now save up to 25% on the cost of a ticket.

❖ Due to extreme heat and safety risks, Amtrak has banned Samsung Galaxy Note7 mobile phones on all Amtrak trains, Thruway buses, facilities, stations, platforms, and as an item carried within a vehicle on Auto Train. This ban was made effective in October, 2016. ■