



PASSENGERS Voice

MAY 2018 | VOL. 52, NO. 5

RAIL PASSENGERS TAKE ACTION WITH NEW AMTRAK MAYOR'S PETITION

Rail Passengers Association has recently learned that Amtrak management has started actively discussing the long-term future of long-distance routes, with some executives within the company looking at the possibility of allocating more resources to short-distance state corridors. While we don't yet know how far these discussions have advanced, recent Amtrak decisions to cut back food & beverage service on two long-distance services and eliminate station agents in 15 National Network communities have lent new urgency to RPA's actions.



Passengers gather in the Amtrak dining car on the Empire Builder. Photo Lee Rentz

Your Rail Passengers staff is busy advocating for improved service—both in DC and in our regional offices. We're reaching out to Members of Congress and Amtrak management to let them know exactly what America's passengers think. We're also launching an Amtrak Mayors' Petition, and we want to get every community currently served by an Amtrak train onboard.

If you're looking to help RPA push back against this effort to degrade National Network service, call your Senators and Representative with this simple one-sentence message: **I'm a member of the Rail Passengers Association, and while we support Amtrak's efforts**

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SUMMER BY RAIL CONNECTS TRANSIT TO AMERICA'S PASTIME

The Rail Passenger Association's third annual Summer by Rail will kick off on May 26, but this year's journey comes with a slight twist, or rather a curveball. With a route that runs from Miami, FL to Seattle, WA, Summer by Rail correspondent Jacob Wallace will visit 19 different stadiums between Major League Baseball (MLB), Minor League Baseball (MiLB), and independent leagues. "Baseball is one of the great gems of an American summer, and we wanted to highlight how easy it is for baseball fans to travel throughout the U.S.

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“At a time when Congress has just appropriated a record sum for Amtrak, we can't understand why Amtrak is cutting service in ways that degrade the customer experience. Our members just had over 350 meetings with members of Congress this week, and we will mobilize those elected officials in defense of America's passenger rail network.”

RPA President Jim Mathews.



RAIL PASSENGERS

ASSOCIATION

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using only public transit to get to the ballpark," said Wallace, who is a rising journalism senior at American University in Washington, D.C. "I've always been a fan of baseball, and I'm excited for the opportunity to connect the sport with travel and transportation."

Starting on May 26 in Miami to attend a Marlins game, Wallace will use only intercity rail and other forms of public transit like bike-share and ride-share services to go from game to game and town to town.

The trip will conclude July 1 at a Seattle Mariners game, but along the way Wallace will also travel to Washington, D.C., Detroit, Chicago and Milwaukee to see the Nationals, Tigers, White Sox, Cubs and Brewers, among other MLB teams. Wallace will also visit minor

league teams like the Savannah Bananas, Durham Bulls, and Vancouver Canadians.

In between games, Wallace will meet with elected city officials, transit advocates, and small business owners to listen to the public transit needs and plans for these cities, as well as what tools these communities need to bolster their local infrastructure.

Wallace will share regular updates on his trip, highlights of using public transit, and stories that share other riders' views on using services like Amtrak or other public transit services to commute to and from ball games.

Updates can be found online the Summer by Rail blog, www.summerbyrail.com, or on Instagram and Twitter using the handle [@RailPassengers](https://twitter.com/RailPassengers).

AMTRAK AFFIRMS NATIONAL NETWORK COMMITMENT

After consistent, applied pressure by rail advocates, Amtrak is taking steps to commit publicly to a robust nationwide rail service with a national footprint. Whether speaking individually to our association, offering assurances to congressional staff or testifying before Senators, Amtrak's leaders would seem to be getting the message loud and clear from the rail-riding public: we expect a truly national network, and one that's run prudently enough to minimize the need for government investment but not exclusively for profit.

Rail Passengers has been working hard to inform congressional offices about disturbing reports

from the states that Amtrak was contemplating diminishing service on mainline National Network trains such as the Empire Builder to focus on short-haul corridors. Following conversations with RPA staff, Republican Sen. Steve Daines of Montana asked Amtrak Chief Commercial Officer Stephen Gardner point-blank whether there were plans to reduce the Builder and whether Amtrak is committed to the Network.

"We do not plan to institute tri-weekly service on the Empire Builder," Gardner replied in a transportation-related hearing May 16. "Obviously we're operating under the FAST Act authorization in which Congress

authorized our network, any conversations about the broad future of our network is best placed in our authorization context as we approach our next authorization. Amtrak is operating all of our long distance routes, we intend to do that and we will consider any future changes collectively between the Congress, the Administration, and Amtrak as we look at the network ahead."

This was the strongest public statement yet reaffirming support for a national footprint, a welcome development as rumors began to sweep through the advocacy community in

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125 MEMBERS ATTEND SUMMIT AND MEET WITH 375 CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES

On April 15th, over 125 Rail Passengers Association members and fellow advocates descended upon Alexandria, VA for the 2018 RPA Advocacy Summit and Day on the Hill. The summit is the most important national advocacy meeting of the year for the Association and it allows members from around the country to get together to talk about the issues they are most passionate about.

The annual gathering was kicked off on Monday by a full day of speakers and capped off by an open house at the brand new RPA offices in Washington, D.C.

Some of the topics covered by our invited speakers were:

- Amtrak's Assistant VP of Operations Chris Jagodinski gave a PTC update and discussed where Amtrak stands after the omnibus bill funding.
- RPA VP of Government Affairs Sean Jeans-Gail, Regional Coordinators Joe Aiello & Betsy Nelson, and Council Member Doug Kerr held a panel covering regional outreach and the mayor's campaign.
- Federal Railroad Administration Division Chief Will Dyer addressed FRA grant programs and funding streams, such as the FAST Act and



Rail Passengers President Jim Mathews, Joe Aiello and the rest of the Massachusetts RPA team meet with Rep. Seth Moulton.

DOT programs.

- Kristopher Takacs from Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill covered a new "Golden Age of Rail" through transit-oriented development and rail investment.
- Jay Fox, Amtrak's Sr. Director for Host Railroads, summarized the host railroad scores based on their letter grade rating system.

On Tuesday, our members met with 375 congressional offices to advocate for local and national passenger rail issues; a number of them met personally with their Representatives and Senators. The legislative asks were centered around funding and safety: pushing for Congress to ensure that the FRA uses current funds to implement PTC on railroads; guaranteeing that no

passenger train loses service after the December 31st, 2018 deadline; asking for Congress to match or increase federal passenger rail funding for Fiscal Year 2019.

After the office visits were complete, RPA hosted a Congressional Reception at the Capitol Visitors Center. At the reception, Jim Hamre's life and memory was celebrated by posthumously awarding him the Association's Golden Spike Award. RPA President Jim Mathews and Congressman Denny Heck (D-WA) both spoke at the event honoring Jim and fellow RPA member Zack Willhoite who tragically lost their lives in the derailing of Amtrak 501 last fall. The importance of safety and PTC funding was echoed throughout the summit.

COMMITMENT, from p. 2 recent weeks. Those rumors, and the absence of definitive efforts to knock them down, provoked former Amtrak chief Joe Boardman to pen an unprecedented open letter in industry publications calling for

more transparency as drastic changes are contemplated.

The rumors also prompted Rail Passengers President Jim Mathews to visit with Amtrak Chairman Anthony Coscia earlier this month, and Coscia offered

similar assurances.

Pointing to the recognition that Amtrak is a government-supported enterprise, Coscia said that it has a "mission" beyond the balance sheet, and pledged

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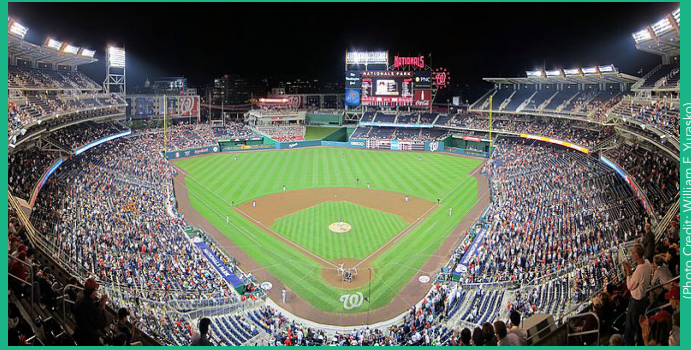
DESTINATION OF THE MONTH: WASHINGTON, DC

The Nation's Capital is Home to Transit, Baseball and More

This year's Summer by Rail correspondent, Jacob Wallace will be traveling by rail all over the country, including our nation's capital, Washington, D.C. The District is well-known for its politics, but it has so much more to offer for foodies, baseball fans, history and art buffs, and more. Here are five key facts about D.C. if you visit this summer.

1 - Home to the Washington Nationals baseball team, the seventh-inning stretch originated in D.C. in 1910 when President William Howard Taft stood to stretch his legs at a game. Other fans believed he was leaving, so they stood to show their respect to the president.

2 - The Library of Congress is the largest library in the world, with more than 162 million objects with 535 miles of bookshelves within its walls. One item is a top secret FBI interrogation manual.



The Washington Nationals stadium of Washington, D.C.

(Photo Credit: William F. Yurasko)

3 - The cherry blossom trees that bloom around the Tidal Basin every year are a gift of friendship from Japan.

4 - Prior to 1901 when President Teddy Roosevelt officially named it the White House, it was referred to as the President's Palace, the President's House, and the Executive Mansion.

5 - D.C. has had a reputation for boring food, but in recent years up-and-coming and world-renowned chefs have opened restaurants and eateries in the city, giving the city's food-scene new life. Chefs include José Andrés, Daniel Boulud, Mike Isabella and Wolfgang Puck.

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that top management is "committed to the mission." Amtrak has a responsibility as a recipient of federal funds to make sure that its long-range plans serve the maximum number of Americans possible, especially those who need mobility and have fewer options such as the elderly, the disabled and rural residents, he added.

Years from now, as demographic shifts continue and more migration takes place from rural communities into dense mega-regions, there may come a time when the "legacy National Network routes no longer meet the mission," Coscia said, "but looking at the map today I can't identify any that don't."

Coscia describes the way the concept is beginning to take shape as "corridors hanging off the legacy National Network routes like a necklace," with development focused on corridor services with strong growth potential such as the entire Southeast

U.S., or corridors like Chicago-St. Louis, or Chicago-Minneapolis.

CEO Richard Anderson said as much on April 19 addressing the California Rail Summit: "The future of Amtrak is in these 300- to 400- or 500-mile corridors." Asked from the audience what that means for the long-distance trains operating today, Anderson acknowledged that "there is a place for the long-distance, 'experiential' train....there are some really sort of epic trips that are in the long-distance system (like) the California Zephyr, the Coast Starlight."

He declared that Amtrak's "responsibility is to figure out how to keep that experiential piece of the pie in place" while simultaneously "figuring out how we discharge our mission under PRIIA"—the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008—"to serve the short-haul markets."

STATE NEWS

ALL ABOARD FLORIDA'S BRIGHTLINE BEGAN TESTING TRAINS IN MIAMI. with plans to begin service in May. The city's downtown is home to the new transit hub, MiamiCentral, which will include access to the higher-speed train, as well as other transit services, living, restaurants, businesses and more.

THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL IN NORTH TEXAS will continue studying the possibility of high-speed rail. The council is interested in connecting Dallas, Arlington and Fort Worth, as well as other cities such as Waco, Austin, San Antonio, Laredo and even Monterrey, Mexico.

CONGRATULATIONS TO NEW AND RETURNING RPA LEADERSHIP

During the recent 2018 Council of Representatives Business Meeting, **Chair of the Board Peter LeCody (TX)** was re-elected to another two-year term, as were **Treasurer Ken Clifford (OH)** and **Secretary William 'Cliff' Dunn (VA)**. The Association's four Vice-Chairs elected for a two-year term are **Ken Briers (DC)**; **Carl Fowler (VT)**; **Thomas Girsch (MA)** and **David Randall (IL)**.

Newly-elected Board Directors are **Susan Hadrous (FL)**; **Andrew Lodriguss (LA)** and **Matt Melzer (MN)**, all of whom will serve three-year terms through 2021.

The remainder of the previously elected Directors

include **George Chilson (CA)**, **Jim Souby (CO)**, **Brian Nelson (MN)**, **Richard Vavra-Musser (MI)** and **Phil Streby (IN)**. Immediate Past Chair **Robert Stewart (TN)** will continue to advise the Board in a non-voting role.

In addition, the Council of Representatives elected 10 'At-Large' members to serve for the next two years: **Stephen Adams (NM)**, **Kendall Allen (VA)**, **William O. Greene (TN)**, **Penny Jacobs (FL)**, **Michael Jankowski (CA)**, **Jan Lindberg (CT)**, **Mark Meyer (OR)**, **Kent Patterson (NY)**, **Ron Schneider (KY)** and **Steve Strauss (DC)**. *Congratulations to all!*

RAIL STATION OF THE MONTH: UNION STATION, WASHINGTON

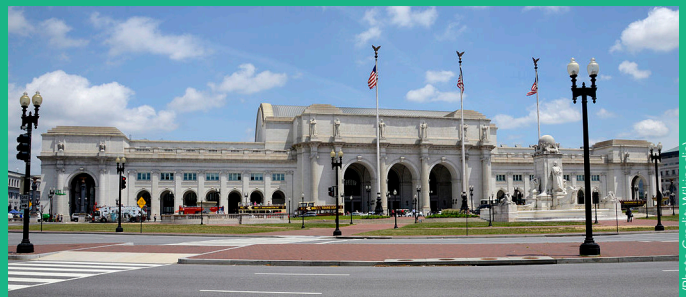
D.C.'s Union Station Connects You To The District

Washington, D.C.'s Union Station is a city-landmark that is nearly as recognizable as the Lincoln Memorial or the Washington Monument with 40 million people traveling through it every year. It is a major transportation hub for the city and the Northeast Corridor as it connects people to the Metro system, Amtrak, Virginia Railway Express (VRE), Maryland Rail Commuter Service (MARC), and long-distance bus services. It is also centrally located in the Northeast of D.C., connecting people to the heart of Capitol Hill. If you get a chance this summer to travel through D.C.'s Union Station, remember this five tidbits:

1 - Designed by Daniel H. Burnham, Union Station began its first passengers service on October 27, 1907, although the station was not fully completed until 1908. The first train to run that day was the Baltimore and Ohio Pittsburgh Express.

2 - D.C.'s Union Station is home to Amtrak Headquarters, along with dozens of other retailers and numerous restaurants that serve warm meals to travelers.

3 - The station is also home to 36 Roman legionnaire



Washington Union Station

statues, as well as six statues that represent a Greek god or demigod (Prometheus, Apollo, Ceres, Themis, and Thales), and the mathematician, Archimedes.

4 - Like other D.C. monuments, Union Station is a popular film location for movies and TV shows. It has appeared in the movies Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, Strangers on a Train, Collateral Damage and Wedding Crashers, and the show "The West Wing."

5 - Though it's not quite like this anymore, Union Station was once seen as a city within a city offerings and features that are no longer available, such as a bowling alley, a mortuary, a butcher, a YMCA, Turkish baths, and a nursery.

I AM A TICKET AGENT

By James Woods

I am the first face of Amtrak, a friendly smile and greeting when you come in the door.

I am the person that makes sure you have a proper E ticket, and checks your bag.

I am the person who makes sure you have an ID tag on your bag.

I AM A TICKET AGENT.

I am the person who reassures the first time traveler, almost an everyday occurrence

I am the person who hands out children activity books and engineer hats

I am the person who warns parents about the loud engine & horn that sometimes scares babies

I AM A TICKET AGENT.

I am the person who cleans the toilets, empties the trash/recycling, mops the floors, & changes lightbulbs.

I am the person who stocks the paper towels, toilet paper, soap, & tissues.

I am the person who washes the windows and shovels & salts the sidewalk & platform.

I AM A TICKET AGENT.

I am the person who sells a walk up passenger a ticket for cash, and sometimes a combination of cash & credit.

I am the person who checks for a best buy price reduction, and refunding tickets.

I am the person who suggests upgrading to a sleeping accommodation.

I AM A TICKET AGENT.

I am the person who does an E ticket for the retired railroad pass rider, who never bought a computer and only has a dumb phone.

I am the person who switches people to lower level seating, because Amtrak fails to tell them about the 12 LY seats they usually put in seat inventory on the train's day of departure.

I am the person who checks the computer, for both coach & sleeper space availability, on future dates.

I AM A TICKET AGENT.

I am the friend for the autistic rail-fan who comes down every Sunday night.

I am the friendly phone voice for the lonely person who just wants to talk in the middle of the night.

I am the part time social worker for the depressed, the homeless, & stranded passengers.

I AM A TICKET AGENT.

I am the person who helps get lost bags and carry on items back.

I am the person who rebooks tickets for people that get their travel dates wrong.

I am the person who personally calls people a day ahead, alerting them the train is running late.

I AM A TICKET AGENT.

I am the person that stocks travel brochures for popular destinations.

I am the person who has the knowledge and gives advice for transit, rental cars, & cabs.

I am the person who gets the occasional carry by passenger back to their destination.

I AM A TICKET AGENT.

I am the person who calls EMS & the police when there is an issue on board the train.

I am the person who calls the rescue mission when somebody gets off the train and has nowhere to go.

I am the person who houses the traveler overnight, because often that's the only time they can get to the depot.

I AM A TICKET AGENT.

I am the person who stays late for people that are waiting on rides.

I am the person who sells the boxes for people that come in with garbage bags or totes.

I am the person who assists the elderly, the blind, & the physically challenged.

I AM A TICKET AGENT.

I am a goodwill ambassador for our city.

I am a problem solver, the one that alerts conductors of potential issues e.g., passengers who are intoxicated, with offensive body odor, & with too much carryon luggage, etc.

I am the person who watches your vehicle, and keeps the riff raff out of the waiting room.

I AM A TICKET AGENT.

I am the person that helps the station caretakers.

I am the person that calls customer service.

I am the person who does the station accounting, and is trusted with company funds.

I AM A TICKET AGENT.

PETITION, from p. 1

to grow passenger rail service, we insist it must happen in addition to National Network service, not at the expense of existing Amtrak communities.

You can reach the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121. If you encounter any questions you're unsure how to answer, feel free have RPA policy staff follow up (we can be reached at 202-408-8362).

ROLLING BACK SERVICE

On April 17 Amtrak announced suddenly that it will be replacing traditional hot meal-diner car service for sleeping car customers on the Capitol Limited and Lake Shore Limited starting June 1. Rail Passengers Association protested this move, which will degrade the passenger experience and, we believe, has the potential to harm ridership.

Amtrak said in a press release that it will change its menu June 1 and offer the following cold foods: **Lunch & Dinner:** Chilled beef tenderloin, Vegan wrap, Chicken Caesar salad, or Turkey club sandwich. **Breakfast:** Assorted breakfast breads with butter, cream cheese and strawberry jam; Greek yogurt and sliced seasonal fresh fruit plate.

Additionally on April 26, Amtrak resumed its efforts to de-staff stations that it considers lightly used. The standard is 40 or fewer daily passengers. The list includes Charleston, WV; Cincinnati, OH; Fort Madison, IA; Garden City, KS; Hammond, LA; Havre, MT; La Junta, CO; Lamy, NM; Marshall, TX; Meridian, MS; Ottumwa, IA; Shelby, MT; Texarkana, AR; Topeka, KS; and Tuscaloosa, AL. Cincinnati is getting a "Caretaker Plus," in which there will be a caretaker at the station 24/7, but not an Amtrak employee.

If you can't participate in our Amtrak Mayors' Petition, please consider supporting Rail Passengers advocacy work with a special contribution at www.railpassengers.org/donate. Your advocacy and generosity is vital to building a modern, efficient rail system for future generations of passengers.

RPA will continue to advocate and provide updates on these vitally important issues. As always, go to railpassengers.org for all the latest.

Upcoming Regional Rail Passengers Association and State Passengers Association Member Meetings & Events

Saturday, June 2

- Empire State Passengers Association Working Group Meeting - Schenectady, NY

Saturday, June 9

- Delaware, New Jersey & Pennsylvania Regional Meeting - Philadelphia, PA

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

ON THE MOVE

Local, state and federal transit agencies have seen several new hires and appointments in October. A few of them include:

- **Phillip Eng** - Appointed at the new president of the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR), Eng succeeds Patrick Nowakowski after he resigned in April. Eng first began working with the Metropolitan Transportation
- **Lois Pittman** - The South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA) appointed Pittman as its new director of operations and maintenance. In this role, Pittman will oversee the Tri-Rail commuter-rail system, which will include operations and maintenance providers and contracts, as well as station and fleet maintenance.



OPENINGS AVAILABLE FOR STATE COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

The following vacancies now exist for state representatives on the RPA Council of Representatives:

Alabama (1 opening); **California** (7 openings); **Delaware** (1 opening); **Florida** (1 opening); **Idaho** (1 opening); **Illinois** (1 opening); **Louisiana** (1 opening); **Massachusetts** (1 opening); **Minnesota** (1 opening); **North Dakota** (1 opening); **Ohio** (2 openings); **Pennsylvania** (1 opening); **Vermont** (1 opening); **Washington State** (1 opening); **Wyoming** (1 opening)

If you are interested in becoming more involved in passenger rail advocacy and serving in a RPA leadership role, this is your opportunity to be considered for an

appointment by the Board of Directors to an open state representative seat. There is no deadline to apply and submissions will be considered on a rolling basis as they are received.

Please review the position responsibilities & required qualifications at: www.railpassengers.org/about/leadership/council-of-representatives/state-representatives/

Complete a Candidate Information Statement at: <https://www.cognitoforms.com/RailPassengerAssociation/CandidateInformationStatementForOpenStateRepresentativePositions>

TICKET AGENT, from p. 6

I am the person that comes in on my days off to make a reservation.

I am the person who communicates with management on service problems & solutions.

I am the person who spends his own funds on the small stuff, pens, toilet cleaner, & coffee.

I AM A TICKET AGENT.

I am the person who engages in small conversation, shows how to read a timetable, and tells people about on board services and rules of riding the train.

I am the person who makes a living wage, pays a mortgage, and supports a family.

I am the person who uses his pass privileges and enjoys riding the train.

YES, I AM A TICKET AGENT...

...Or as Amtrak calls them, **Customer Service**

Representatives, I have always given Amtrak 100%, and have made many friends and cultivated a dedicated clientele. Amtrak apparently doesn't see the value in that anymore. This will undoubtedly lead to a faceless, problem prone & less personable experience for travelers. Ridership "will" go down, conductors will be stressed, and trains delayed. This is a bad management decision and may possibly hasten the demise of the long distance train.



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