

Photo credit: Gary Moline

RAIL PASSENGERS
Passenger Voice

FRIDAY HOTLINE

#1411

SEPTEMBER 19TH, 2025



Take Action

NOTE: Our office has been getting a number of questions as of late about our printed "Passengers Voice" newsletter. We, unfortunately, stopped production in the Spring of 2020 and, as of this notice, do not have plans to start up again.

Association News

Ugly August Timekeeping, but Crescent Shines Bright

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

With heat, flooding, and construction, August is often a poor month for timekeeping across our Nation's passenger-rail services, and this August hit passengers pretty hard – collectively, the state-supported routes and the long-distance routes were both five percent worse on Customer On-Time Performance (Customer OTP) than the 12-month moving average, [Amtrak reports show](#).

But among the Long Distance routes, the *Crescent* – fresh off a [Justice Dept. settlement on poor timekeeping](#) – broke out of the pack and was the only long-haul train to beat the Federal Railroad Administration's 80-percent Customer OTP standard in August.

The Northeast Corridor eked out meeting the 80-percent Customer OTP threshold in August, but only by 1.4 percent. *Acela* and *Northeast Regional* services both just failed to reach 80 percent, while Pennsylvania's *Keystone* pulled the NEC average up, contributing its 92.9 percent Customer OTP record for the month to the overall results on the Corridor.

Of 30 state-supported or non-NEC services, only six met the threshold set in FRA regulations – *Capitol Corridor* services were better than 90 percent on-time, the *Downeaster* was 82.8 percent for August, the *Hiawatha* was 82.3 percent, while the Missouri service notched 83.5 percent and the *Pacific Surfliner* got just over 84 percent.

Our brand-new *Mardi Gras* between New Orleans and Mobile is running at 83.5 percent, and host railroad CSX is genuinely trying to do its level best to get that train over the road on time.

The worst non-NEC corridor route for Customer OTP was the beleaguered *Maple Leaf*, finishing August with an astonishingly meager 27.4 percent on-time performance.

But even so, the worst performance system-wide belongs to the *Southwest Chief*, which managed to meet the Customer OTP standard only 13.4 percent of the time in August, three times worse than its already-depressing 12-month moving average.

Although the *Keystone* enjoys the best on-time performance, the big winner for August has to be the *Crescent* between New York City and New Orleans. The *Crescent* was the only one of the 15 operating long-distance services to beat the FRA's Customer OTP standard, coming in at 83.9 percent for August.

And yes, I hear you thinking it; I thought it, too. The *Crescent* is the train that provoked the Dept. of Justice during the final year of the Biden Administration to drag Norfolk Southern in front of a Federal district court judge for allegedly violating the so-called "preference clause" in Federal law that requires Amtrak trains to go first whenever practical and possible.

[\[READ THE REST OF JIM'S BLOG HERE\]](#)

California HSR Secures Dedicated State Funding

California has brokered an agreement to secure critical funding for the state's high-speed rail program, with Governor Gavin Newsom and Democratic legislative leaders reaching a landmark deal to extend the state's "cap-and-invest" program and allocate \$1 billion annually from its revenues towards the project. The deal, finalized just before the legislature's scheduled adjournment on September 13, 2025, represents a pivotal moment in securing predictable, dedicated funding for the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CAHSRA).

Under the new agreement, the program will be reauthorized through 2045, providing the Authority much-needed stability as it continues construction work in the Central Valley. The project had been thrown into uncertainty by the Trump Administration's decision earlier this year to cancel a \$4 billion federal grant awarded under the Biden Administration—a move that is currently being [challenged in court](#).

"I am grateful to Governor Newsom, our legislative leaders, and allies across the state and the nation – including those in the labor community – whose partnership and resolve helped make this possible," said CAHSRA CEO Ian Choudri. "Today's agreement has made a big, bold statement about California's future—one that will create jobs, cut pollution, and connect and transform communities across the state."

This deal will close the funding gaps for the Early Operating Segment in the Central Valley. There are 171 miles currently under design and construction from Merced to Bakersfield, with nearly 70 miles of guideway complete.

Choudri emphasized that statutory and regulatory enhancements to accelerate construction are still needed, an acknowledgement that California's permitting structure has been a key obstacle, raising the project's overall costs by extending development timelines.

The Authority recently unveiled a proposal that [outlined new alternatives for the configuration of the system's Initial Operating Segment \(IOS\)](#), looking for ways to connect San Francisco and Southern California populations centers at system launch.

Field Notes

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 Joe Aiello @ jaiello@narprail.org with the subject "HOTLINE PHOTO"

Please email [Joe Aiello](#) if you have any local, state or regional stories/projects that you would like to see get highlighted in the Hotline.

Hotline Links

A curated selection of passenger rail and transportation stories from this week. Check out our social media feeds on [Twitter](#) & [Facebook](#) to read breaking news and join the conversation!

[L.I.R.R. Strike Avoided for Now as Unions Ask U.S. to Intervene](#), New York Times

By asking the Trump Administration to intervene in the stalled contract talks, the potential LIRR work strike (which would have happened starting this

coming Thursday) is off the table... for now.

[**A program for anonymous railway safety reports has been underutilized, NPR**](#)

Rail Passengers President & CEO Jim Mathews was recently on NPR to discuss the FRA's Confidential Close Call Reporting System (C3RS) and how it was stalled by the Class 1s.

[**Columbus eyes train comeback after 46-year rail hiatus, but hurdles remain, WTOL**](#)

Ohio's long planned 3C+D corridor alone could serve nearly 57% of Ohio's population, offering transformative potential for both urban and rural communities.

[**Operation Lifesaver, Inc. and Amtrak Police Department Mobilize Operation Clear Track, Raising Public Awareness about Safety Near Railroad Tracks and Trains, Amtrak Media**](#)

The effort, part of See Tracks? Think Train! Week, aims to raise further awareness about the dangers of trespassing on railroad tracks and ignoring crossing signals. Last year alone, over 2,300 people were injured or killed in rail-related incidents.

[**Renewed push for passenger rail expansion in Nebraska, Nebraska TV**](#)

Nebraska State Sen. Margo Juarez is leading an initiative to revitalize passenger rail service across Nebraska, beginning with Legislative Resolution 203, which proposes an interim study on rail infrastructure - the state's first in nearly 20 years.

[**Ridership numbers released for Amtrak's Mardi Gras service, WXXV**](#)

Last week we shared the story of Amtrak adding another coach to the Mardi Gras for select weekends to get people to and from Saints home games in NOLA - now we have some numbers to back that up.

[**Budget shortfall halts Amtrak bus link between Green Bay and Milwaukee after four years, Fox 11**](#)

Despite Gov. Evers' request for over \$15M to support passenger rail and related services, the legislature allocated zero new funding in the 2025-27 budget and the contract between the state and bus provider could not be renewed.

[**DART to open commuter rail Silver Line on Oct. 25, Trains Pro**](#)

Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) will officially open its 26-mile Silver Line commuter rail on October 25, connecting Plano to DFW Airport through seven cities including Richardson, Addison, Carrollton, Dallas, Coppell, and Grapevine.

[**\[VIDEO\] Riding the 7 Train to Citi Field with Mets Pitcher Sean Manaea, How I Get Around**](#)

Athletes, just like millions of us around the country, take public transit to work.

[**Congresswoman Sykes seeks Akron-Canton passenger rail stop in Ohio plans, Canton Rep**](#)

Akron-Canton is Ohio's 4th largest metro - but left off the state's 2025 Rail Plan. Rep. Emilia Sykes (OH-13) is fighting to change that. "We deserve a seat on the train."

[**Ditching cars for rail, Wisconsin Amtrak passengers find accessibility, Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service**](#)

Like so many routes around the country, Amtrak's Hiawatha between Milwaukee and Chicago isn't just a train - it's a lifeline for students, workers, families, and everyday travelers.

[**Zero emissions train rolls into the Inland Empire, CBS Los Angeles**](#)

Swiss built ZEMU, North America's first zero-emissions hydrogen train, is now rolling on a 9-mile route between San Bernardino & Redlands.

[**Unexpected brands strut their stuff at NYFW. Who did it best?, PR Week**](#)

Passengers rail wear at the New York Fashion Week? You better werk,

[**LRT project moves into testing phase, Eden Prairie Local News**](#)

This phase involves over 4,000 individual tests to ensure the safety, reliability, and efficiency of the 14.5-mile light rail line connecting Minneapolis to Eden Prairie.



**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

[RailNation: San Antonio](#) - October 3-5

[Build Northwest Economic Forum & Pacific Northwest Rail Summit](#) -
October 14-17

[WisARP Fall 2025 General Membership Meeting](#) - Saturday, October 25

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!

RailNation: San Antonio





[Click Here for the RN:SAS Event Page](#)

THANK YOU TO OUR EVENT SPONSORS

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INDIVIDUALS

BRUCE ASHTON
TOM & CHRISTY COMPSON
ROBERT FRAMPTON
GARY MOLINE
J.R. PRICE
MICHAEL ROBINSON
MILES SCHULZE

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**, split time this week between working with Hill allies, informal meetings with Amtrak, hosting our monthly Board meeting, and taking part in this week's meeting of the Surface Transportation Board's full Passenger Rail Advisory Committee.
- **Sean Jeans-Gail, Vice President of Policy**, continued to work with allied organizations, industry stakeholders, and House and Senate on key Rail Passengers [surface transportation reauthorization policy proposals](#).
- **Jonsie Stone, Chief of Staff**, spent the week working on logistics for RailNation:San Antonio, processing membership dues and donations sent to the DC office, drafted fundraising messages and tended to the administrative/operational needs of the Association.
- **Joe Aiello, Director of Community Engagement & Organizing**, staffed this month's Association Board meeting and worked with fellow staff and our volunteer committee on the final touches for our meeting in San Antonio. Also started the process for the upcoming Council elections.
- **Kimberly Notarianni, Membership Management Consultant**, continues to support our members by answering questions, troubleshooting account concerns, and ensuring they have the resources they need to make the most of their membership experience.

Keep Your Contact Info & Preferences Up to Date

We want to be sure you never miss important updates, membership news, or your transaction receipts! You can easily update your email address, phone number, mailing address, and communication preferences anytime through the CharityEngine Constituent Portal:

<https://membership.railpassengers.org/usercenter> (we recommend bookmarking this link for easy access)

Getting Started

1. Visit the Login page and enter the User Name and Password associated with your CharityEngine account.

Log in

	<input type="text" value="User Name"/>
	<input type="password" value="Password"/>



Remember me

[Forgot password?](#)

LOG IN

2. Once you're logged in, you'll see your account dashboard. Click "Update Your Info."

Making Updates

On the Edit Contact Info screen, you can:

Update your personal details like email, phone, and address.

Adjust your communication preferences—switch the green "Yes" button to red "No" (or vice versa)

Click **UPDATE** to save your changes.

A Quick Tip

Since transaction receipts are sent by email, having your current email address on file will ensure you receive everything without delay.

We Have Merch!



Visit our Store



Discuss This
Week's Hotline



Service Updates



Volunteer Sign-up



Rail Passengers Timetables

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

**WE HAVE A FULL SUMMER UPDATE,
INCLUDING THE NEW *MARDI GRAS* SERVICE**

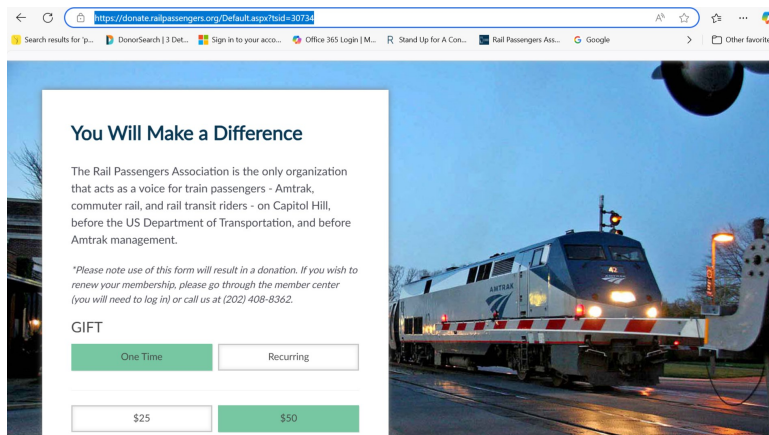
[CLICK HERE](#)

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>



LOOKING FOR SMARTER
WAYS TO DONATE?



MAKING A CONTRIBUTION
HAS NEVER BEEN EASIER!

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

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

With multiple secure, protected methods of payment, you have more

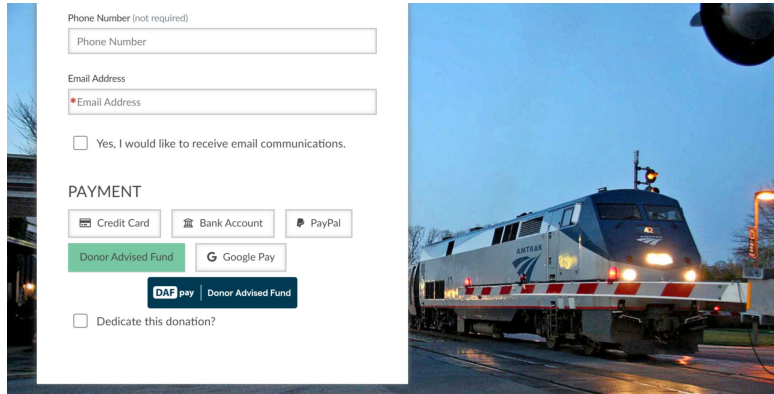
flexibility in the way dues are paid. Skip the hassle and [contact us](#) today for help setting up automatic or online payments.

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

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

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

Donation Form:



Phone Number (not required)
Phone Number

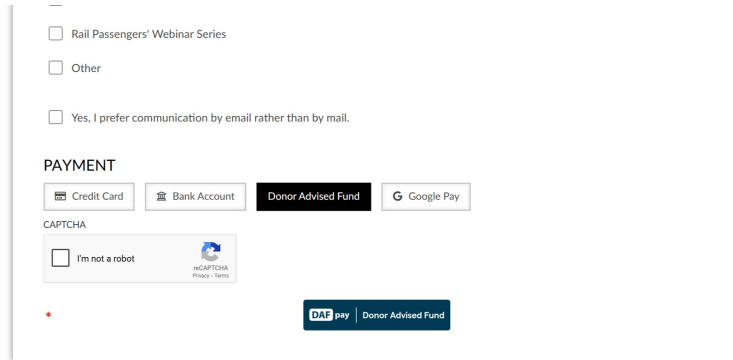
Email Address
*Email Address

☐ Yes, I would like to receive email communications.

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☐ Dedicate this donation?

Membership Form:



☐ Rail Passengers' Webinar Series

☐ Other

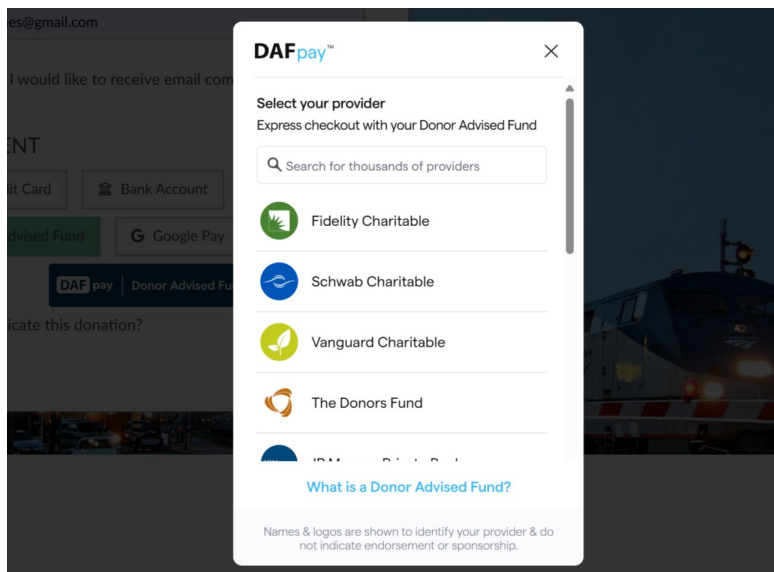
☐ Yes, I prefer communication by email rather than by mail.

PAYMENT

CAPTCHA

☐ I'm not a robot

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Select your provider
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[What is a Donor Advised Fund?](#)

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

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

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 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.

Charity
Navigator



★ FOUR-STAR ★

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

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

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.



Contact Us

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS:





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