

December 2012

Trains: A Travel Choice Americans Want

Sandy Devastates NYC-area Rails

Limited Amtrak Service Across Manhattan Resumed in Days
Full Service Suspended
NJT Fleet Devastated

Superstorm Sandy led Amtrak to cancel Northeast Corridor service on Oct. 29-30 along with most commuter rail and transit from Virginia to Maine.

The Washington DC, Baltimore, Philadelphia and Boston metro areas were able to resume nearly all rail and bus service by Oct. 31. The challenges in the New York City region were much greater. The Long Island Rail Road main lines had full service Nov. 4; hourly, diesel-powered service on the Long Beach line began Nov. 14.

Salty floodwaters surged into many New York City subway stations and into the Hudson and East River tunnels that bring trains into New York Penn Station. Amtrak moved quickly to pump the water out and restored

(continued on p. 5)

Making Tracks in Midwest, Elsewhere

State, Federal Executives Bring Good News to NARP Council in Milwaukee

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has allocated 100% of the High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail grant funds appropriated in 2009 and 2010, and 99% of all grant funding for passenger trains, to 157 projects nationwide, reported Deputy Federal Railroad Administrator Karen Hedlund in her Oct. 20 keynote address.

"More than 6,000 miles of rail corridors are now being constructed or improved. More than 40 train stations are being upgraded. Thirty State Rail Plans and service development plans are now being developed."

Hedlund reviewed the impact this investment has had on many emerging passenger train corridors:

All Aboard the Downeaster to Freeport and Brunswick, Maine

Years of Advocates' Work Culminates in Nov. 1 Start of Extended Service



- Federal Railroad Administration, via Facebook

A large crowd greets the first revenue train from Boston to Brunswick at the new Freeport station on Nov. 1.

Hundreds of New Englanders came to stations on the Amtrak *Downeaster* route on Nov. 1 to help celebrate the start of service to Freeport and Brunswick, Maine, a 29-mile extension of the route eastward from Portland.

The first train to Brunswick carried

special guests, including Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-ME) who received a NARP Golden Spike Award last year, Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-ME), former Gov. Angus King (I) who was elected to the U.S. Senate six days later, Maine Transportation Commissioner David Bernhardt (representing Gov. Paul LePage, R), New Hampshire DOT Commissioner Christopher Clement, Amtrak Vice President Stephen Gardner, Pan Am Railways President David Fink, and TrainRiders/Northeast President and NARP Council Representative Wayne Davis.

(continued on page 4)



- Ken Briers
NARP Chairman Bob Stewart with FRA Deputy Admin. Karen Hedlund, Oct. 20.

California: "America's first 220 mph high-speed rail system – a project that will create hundreds of thousands

(continued on p. 3)

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

- Chairman's Corner: More air travel woes as regs on pilots tighten 2
- Election results round-up 2
- *Hiawathas* keep setting the pace 3
- Amtrak's new long-distance GM 3
- We answer Rep. Brown's questions 4
- *Southwest Chief* correction; update 4
- Inspiring Amtrak statistics 5
- NARP in Action 5
- Moving forward in Michigan 6
- 110 mph in Illinois 6

Chairman's Corner

by Bob Stewart

Compete with the Airlines?

Most of the time when we talk of more and faster trains it is to take passengers away from their cars. Yet something else is happening that will also have an impact on Amtrak's business: Airlines are getting out of 400-mile or less travel markets.

Many folks don't want to go through the hassles of the short flight and the airlines don't like the costs of flying a plane short distances. But something else has entered that picture.

The front page of the Nov. 12 *Wall Street Journal* tells of the upcoming shortage of airline pilots. Here are some of the reasons for it:

1. New airline pilots will need 1,500 hours of prior flight experience, versus the old 750 hours, and this becomes effective this summer.

2. By 2014, airline pilots will have to have more rest time between flights, which will increase the number of pilots needed by 5%. 5% seems small, but when you have 96,000 pilots that will mean 4,800 more pilots.

3. New Federal Aviation Administration tests may weed out some more pilots.

4. With mandatory retirement age of 65, many will retire the next few years.

5. Young people are discouraged from

getting a license due to the cost and the hours needed to fly for major airlines.

I have talked to many pilots who say with the technology today the airplane basically flies itself and they have to fight complacency and boredom.

So here is the bottom line for us:

"For passengers, the biggest impact is expected to be at smaller, regional carriers. They have traditionally been a training ground feeding pilots to the biggest airlines, which are expected to step up their poaching."

"Absent a game-changing spurt in the supply of pilots, small to midsize communities are in jeopardy of losing some, if not all, their scheduled flights," said Roger Cohen, president of the Regional Airline Association.

So for many more communities, Amtrak could be the only public intercity transportation, and many other cities will have no public intercity transportation. The United States is ranked 23rd in the world for its transportation infrastructure; we will probably slip further.

Now is the time to make mayors and Chambers of Commerce aware of the problem and realize that passenger train service could be a lifeline for their communities. ■

NARP News

©2012 National Association of Railroad Passengers. All rights reserved.

505 Capitol Court, NE, Suite 300

Washington, DC 20002-7706

(202) 408-8362; fax: (202) 408-8287

narp@narprail.org

www.narprail.org

Robert J. Stewart	Chairman
John Delora	Vice Chair
Albert L. Papp, Jr.	Vice Chair
Arthur Poole	Vice Chair
David Randall	Vice Chair
Stephen J. Salatti	Secretary
Kenneth T. Clifford	Treasurer
Ross B. Capon	President & CEO
Sean Jeans-Gail	Vice President
Malcolm M. Kenton	Director of Outreach & Engagement
Luis Olmo-Rivera	Coordinator of Resource Development
Lawrence E. Scott	Special Assistant to the Chairman

This has news through November 16.
Vol. 46, No. 10 was mailed October 17.

ture Cmte., was defeated by former Rep. Rick Nolan (D), who describes himself as a rail enthusiast and will come back to Washington with seniority thanks to his previous service (1975-1981), in the district former T&I Chairman Jim Oberstar (D) once represented.

• Current T&I Chairman John Mica (R-FL) was re-elected, as was Railroads Subcmte. Chairman Bill Shuster (R-PA). T&I Ranking Member Nick Rahall (D-WV) and Railroads Subcmte. Ranking Member Corrine Brown (D-FL) were also re-elected.

• In New York State, Rep. Louise Slaughter (D) of Rochester, a Golden Spike winner who helped found the Congressional Bicameral High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail Caucus, was re-elected in a redrawn district. Freshman Rep. and Amtrak opponent Ann Marie Buerkle (R) was defeated by Dan Maffei (D) in the neighboring district encompassing Syracuse.

• Another re-elected Golden Spike winner, besides Brown and Mica, was Rep. Patrick Meehan (R-PA). Golden Spike winners Rep. Steve LaTourette (R-OH) and John Olver (D-MA) retired, and

(continued next page)



- Malcolm Kenton

national security and quality of life:

"[FRA's state partners] know a 21st century economy won't run on last century transportation. They know that, by 2050, America will be home to an additional 100 million people, and that congestion today costs our economy close to \$130 billion a year. They also know that, given the pressure we're already placing on our highways and airports ... we clearly can't afford not to invest in the most energy-efficient choice for intercity travel: Passenger rail." ■

of jobs and provide a one-ticket ride between Los Angeles and San Francisco in less than 3 hours – is moving forward." Hedlund remained optimistic that construction will begin in the Central Valley this winter.

Illinois and Michigan: The Oct. 19 test of 111-mph operation between Dwight and Pontiac, IL, "is just the start. By 2015, 110 mph service will be expanded throughout nearly 75 percent of the corridor. During this same time period, 110 mph will be expanded throughout 80 percent of the Chicago-Detroit corridor.

"These improvements ... will cut trip times on both of these corridors by close to an hour. Future improvements ... will significantly increase the number of daily roundtrips and bring the trip time for both routes under four hours." Hedlund also mentioned the Indiana Gateway Project and Midwest station development as priorities.

Vermont: "In just two years, workers upgraded 190 miles of track. They strengthened more than 50 bridges in addition to installing 140 miles of continuously welded rail, 130,000 new ties, and safety upgrades at 52 crossings.

"The work done will deliver a 30-minute reduction in trip time off Amtrak's *Vermonter* service."

Northeast Corridor: "We've invested more than \$3 billion in a variety of projects that are tapping into the roots of the network – eliminating bottlenecks, upgrading track, replacing catenary, and modernizing signals." Hedlund also explained the NEC Future planning process (www.necfuture.com). *Acelas* will soon be able to reach 160 mph over four NEC segments.

Hedlund summed up why this progress remains critical for our economy,

DOUG VARN TAPPED TO OVERSEE LD TRAINS

Amtrak announced Nov. 8 that Doug Varn, currently the Marketing Dept.'s Chief of Product Planning & Financial Analysis, will fill the new position of General Manager, Long Distance Services.

Based in Chicago, Varn will direct performance improvements for the 15 routes that encompass the Long Distance business unit, which includes Transportation, Mechanical and Engineering functions.

Varn is highly regarded for his previous work as *Auto Train* general manager. He balances innovation with experience. The *Auto Train* lounge cars were his creation. He knows the long-distance trains well.

Election Results

from page 2

winner Denny Rehberg (R-MT) lost his bid for Sen. Jon Tester's (D-MT) seat.

- Massachusetts' new Senator, Elizabeth Warren (D), is a strong train supporter, and specifically backs a rail link of Boston's North & South Stations.

Mixed success for rail transit-related ballot initiatives:

68% of all 31 transportation funding measures were approved nationwide. Voters in Virginia Beach and Arlington, VA and Orange County, NC (encompassing Chapel Hill) approved tax increases to fund light-rail projects, but similar measures were defeated in Memphis, TN (would have increased the local gas tax by a penny) and Clark County, WA (across the Columbia River from Portland, OR). Houston voted to keep allowing local transit taxes to be diverted to roads, and California's Los Angeles and Alameda Counties failed to extend their half-cent sales taxes for transit (65% in both counties voted yes, falling just short of the 2/3 majority required to enact or extend a tax increase); but Marin County backed a similar measure.

The American Public Transportation Association is counting 14 victories out of 20 ballot measures it tracked. ■

NARP Delegation Visits Milwaukee Sites



- Top: Ross Capon Bottom: Ken Briers

At Talgo's Milwaukee plant, NARP Members Judy Siegfried of Madison, WI and Eileen Carpenter of Milwaukee and NARP Council Member Stephanie Weber of Kirkland, WA, stand next to one of the two Talgo trains that Wisconsin contracted to buy but no longer wants. It remains to be seen where or whether these trains will operate.

Talgo and the State of Wisconsin are in mediation after Talgo filed suit against the state Nov. 2, claiming it had defaulted on their contract after the state refused to finish paying for the two trainsets. If Talgo wins, it could sell the equipment to another state. Below: Interior of the cafe seating car of one of the two newly-built trainsets bound for Oregon.



Architects' rendering of plans for reconstructing Milwaukee's trainshed, shown on platform under the current trainshed.

NARP ANSWERS BROWN'S ?S

Following up NARP Pres. Ross Capon's Sept. 20 testimony before the House Committee on Transportation & Construction (Oct.-Nov. News), Railroads Subcommittee Ranking Member Corrine Brown (D-FL) asked Capon to answer nine questions for the record (www.bit.ly/brownans).

The hearing was about Amtrak subsidies. In answering one question, Capon noted that Amtrak's federal operating grant, in constant dollars, fell by 69% from 1980 to 2012, even as "passenger-miles rose from 4.6 billion to 6.8 billion."

Correction & Update: Tighter *Southwest Chief* Timeline

Amtrak says that \$20 million a year for 10 years is needed to address deferred and ongoing maintenance work (mainly replacing jointed rail) so the *Southwest Chief* can continue to serve nine communities from Hutchinson, KS, to Lamy, NM. At an April 10 "summit" in Garden City, KS, and on Oct. 29 before the Kansas legislature, Amtrak suggested five-way cost shar-

ing among Amtrak, BNSF Railway, Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico, hence \$4 million a year per party.

Funding commitments are needed in 2013, since Amtrak's "level of utility" agreement with BNSF for this segment ends in January 2016 and two work seasons are needed to ready an alternate route. May News (page two) had the wrong cost and timeline. ■

Downeaster

At a ceremony in Freeport, Sen. Snowe praised Davis and TrainRiders/Northeast for their work towards launching and expanding *Downeaster* service. "I said, 'Wayne, I'll get the money. You get me the passengers,'" laughed Snowe.

Rep. Pingree touted the train's arrival as an example of the fruits of bipartisan cooperation, and noted that the train has carried more than 3 million passengers, and recorded more than 528,000 in just the last 12 months.

There are two daily Boston-Brunswick round-trips, departing both ends in the morning and evening, plus an

extra Portland-Brunswick round-trip, going east early in the morning and west late in the evening. A full schedule is at AmtrakDowneaster.com. A third Boston-Brunswick round-trip will begin operating when funding for a Brunswick overnight layover facility comes through.

The *Downeaster* began Boston-Portland service in December 2001, after over a decade of citizen pressure to secure the necessary state funding and a host railroad agreement. A \$38.3 million federal Recovery Act grant for track and signaling upgrades, and \$500,000 from the state for building the Freeport and Brunswick platforms, made the extension possible. ■

from page 1



**- Federal Railroad Admin.
Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-ME) celebrating in Freeport.**

Amtrak's Magliari Shares Inspiring Statistics



Excerpt from Marc Magliari's Oct. 20 presentation to NARP's Council showing Amtrak's share of the air-rail market in selected corridors.

This slide from Amtrak Central Region Government Affairs Director Marc Magliari shows trains' surprisingly high share of air-rail markets outside the Northeast Corridor. Magliari used these and other previously unreleased data to show the overwhelming demand for trains, much of which can't be accommodated with the existing limited

equipment pool and scope of service. Magliari also drew on his own knowledge and experience to echo the defenses of the national network trains NARP made in its White Paper released in early October (see last issue, front page).

Amtrak has cut its debt in half since 2002, Magliari revealed.

He reviewed the patchwork develop-

ment of Amtrak's state partnerships and the work all parties have undertaken, as required by law (section 209 of the 2008 authorization, PRIIA), to agree on and implement a uniform cost-sharing methodology. Amtrak next will develop details of states' shares of Amtrak fixed assets and update each state agreement to be consistent with the new methodology, work that will begin soon. ■

NARP IN ACTION

NARP submitted written comments Oct. 24 on the scoping process for a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for a long-term infrastructure plan for the Northeast Corridor, dubbed NEC Future (www.bit.ly/narpnec). We emphasized the need to grow track and station capacity and maximize benefits for all users, and reiterated strong support of Amtrak's Gateway Project.

We also commented favorably on the Federal Railroad Administration's draft Guidance for State Rail Plans.

Our comments on the draft Tier 1 EIS for the Chicago-Detroit corridor (www.bit.ly/narpc-d) joined the Midwest High-Speed Rail Assoc. in emphasizing that the corridor be made compatible with 220-mph top speeds.

We wrote Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood on Nov. 5 urging him to undo the administratively-imposed 3-year limit on the use of Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) grant funds to operate intercity passenger trains (www.bit.ly/narpcmaq).

We reiterated our support of US DOT's handling of the High-Speed & Intercity Passenger Rail grant process in a Nov. 6 press release (www.bit.ly/hsiprdef), in light of criticism from the DOT's Inspector General.

The *Chicago Tribune* published NARP President Ross Capon's letter to the editor Oct. 8 (www.bit.ly/tribresp), responding to the paper's Sept. 28 editorial attacking investment in Midwest passenger train upgrades. Capon appeared on CNN in an Oct. 8 segment about Amtrak and the election. The *Boston Globe* on Aug. 16 published NARP Vice President Sean Jeans-Gail's response to an anti-Amtrak column by former Sen. John Sununu (R-NH). ■

Railroads Recover from Sandy



- New Jersey Transit

A boat that Sandy's waters washed onto NJ Transit's North Jersey Coast line, taken Oct. 31.

some service between New York and Washington late on Nov. 2, and limited through service to Boston Nov. 4.

As of Nov. 13, all tunnels had reopened, but capacity between Penn Station and North Elizabeth, NJ remained limited to four trains per track per hour due to a damaged electrical substation that was set to be restored Nov. 16.

Amtrak will even be able to operate its published special Thanksgiving holiday schedule, with many extra trains, almost as if Sandy never happened. It will need to borrow other equipment to replace NJT cars for Nov. 25 extras.

New Jersey Transit (NJT) restored New York-Trenton and Trenton-Camden services by Nov. 2. By Nov. 14,

all lines had at least "modified" service except the North Jersey Coast Line ("suspended until further notice").

Of greater long-term concern is the large number of NJT cars and locomotives—estimates run as high as a quarter of the fleet—that suffered flood damage. Bloomberg reported that 23% of NJT cars and 34% of locomotives were rendered unusable; it was not clear how much of that equipment could be restored.

Metro-North's New York-Poughkeepsie Hudson Line, also used by Amtrak trains to Albany and points north and west, suffered severe flooding and was reopened Nov. 4. Metro-North also restored service to all its other lines except the New Canaan branch of the New Haven Line (being replaced by buses).

LIRR was crippled for over a week, mainly due to the lack of trans-East River capacity.

Sandy has refocused national attention on the reality of climate change. NARP used the opportunity to point out that more passenger train investment can help move the country towards a low-carbon future with a Nov. 2 blog post (www.bit.ly/sndyclmt). ■

Vol. 46, No. 11

December 2012

OUR MISSION: A MODERN, CUSTOMER-FOCUSED NATIONAL PASSENGER TRAIN NETWORK THAT PROVIDES A TRAVEL CHOICE AMERICANS WANT.

Moving Forward in the Great Lakes State

Michigan Dept. of Transportation Rail Division Chief Tim Hoeffner praised Amtrak as a great partner with the state, including by providing assistance to him and his staff, and by being willing to do things like add *Wolverine* frequencies at Thanksgiving. "We'll do what we can from a State of Michigan standpoint to make [Amtrak] be successful in that endeavor."

Watch for exciting announcements regarding the *Blue Water* in November, Hoeffner said, as a result of a new partnership between Amtrak and online communities.

Hoeffner touted the newly remodeled Battle Creek station, as well as new stations under construction in Dearborn and Troy and planned for Detroit and Ann Arbor.

Hoeffner said Amtrak's ownership of the line between Porter, IN and Kalamazoo helped the state and Amtrak do a lot of work behind the scenes to enable today's 110-mph operation over 80 of the 120 miles.

"We're buying 137 miles ... from Norfolk Southern from Dearborn to immediately adjacent to the ownership from Amtrak [at Kalamazoo], so that will give us [a] 240-mile 'platform' that's what we call 'in passenger-friendly hands,'" he said.

A state consultant is working on the final design for restoring double-track-

ing of the Ypsilanti-Dearborn segment, part of what the state is buying from Norfolk Southern.

As far as new routes in Michigan, Hoeffner said, "I get more questions on why there isn't a train to Traverse City or Petoskey than I get on why no train from Grand Rapids to Detroit." He said there is consideration of routing the *Pere Marquette* over the Amtrak line from Porter to a new connection with CSX near New Buffalo, or running it to Kalamazoo then north to Grand Rapids.

"It's not about how fast the trains are going," Hoeffner concluded. "It's all about trip time; it's all about reliability; it's all about safety; it's all about security. Publish the schedule, have something that's competitive against the auto."

There are discussions about offering hotel and shuttle packages at Port Huron for Ontarian *Blue Water* passengers. About two-thirds of the cars in the parking lot there have Ontario license plates.

Also under consideration: a bus link between the Detroit Amtrak station and VIA Rail's Windsor station.

If there is to be a through Chicago-Toronto train in the future, Hoeffner thinks it will go via Detroit/Windsor, which would permit true downtown station in Detroit possible. ■



- Malcolm Kenton

Blue Water train 364 arrives at its Port Huron terminus at 1:20 AM on Oct. 22. Many riders were Canadian.

111 MPH IN ILLINOIS!

NARP Director and Midwest High-Speed Rail Assoc. Exec. Director Rick Harnish joined Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn (D), Federal Railroad Administrator Joe Szabo, and other dignitaries Oct. 19 for a ceremonial test run of an Amtrak train that topped out at 111 mph on the newly rebuilt section of Union Pacific track between Dwight and Pontiac, IL.

Federal funds helped bring this portion of the Chicago-St. Louis line up to FRA Class 6 standards, and other portions will soon follow. Two *Lincoln Service* round-trips now run faster Dwight-Pontiac; by 2015, nearly 75% of the route will allow 110-mph top speeds for all trains except the *Texas Eagle*.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Temporary Cascades & Coast Starlight schedules Seattle-Eugene through Nov. 30 due to BNSF trackwork. See www.bit.ly/nov12cscl.

Saratoga & North Creek Railway's expanded winter schedule: two daily round-trips, with connecting shuttle van service to Gore Mountain.