

National Association of Railroad Passengers: www.narprail.org

Train Passengers Express Concern at Key Rail Provisions in House Bill

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (#12-03)

February 1, 2012

Contact: Ross Capon – 202-408-8362 [mobile: 301-385-6438]

Train Passengers Express Concern at Key Rail Provisions in House Bill

The National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) issues this statement on the House Republican draft transportation bill as it stood late yesterday.

While we are encouraged at the prospect of some long-awaited movement on addressing our nation's transportation needs, the "[American Energy and Infrastructure Jobs Act](#)" (H.R. 7) has measures that would take transportation policy in the wrong direction when more and more people are turning to train travel.

We strongly oppose further reductions in Amtrak's already bare-bones federal operating grant. Following hard on budget cuts that already have forced unhealthy reductions in Amtrak's capital and operating grants, these new cuts are at odds with the goal of encouraging train travel .

We can support extending beyond 2015 the deadline for installing Positive Train Control to prevent train-to-train collisions on passenger and certain hazmat routes. However, we do not support a five-year extension. Also, any extension should be accompanied by language clarifying the need to prevent rear-end collisions, which current federal regulations do not do. [Our detailed comments on Positive Train Control are available here.](#)

We believe the privatization of Amtrak food service personnel is impractical, and constitutes micro-management of one area when Congress's appropriate focus should be on Amtrak's overall bottom line. Having trains partly staffed with Amtrak personnel and partly with private sector personnel (presumably, unionized and non-unionized, respectively) likely would increase the complexity of the operation and end such efficient sharing of tasks among different Amtrak personnel as currently exists. Also, it is not clear that the legislation takes into account the fact that Amtrak's on-the-ground commissaries already are privatized, and meals for sleeping-car passengers are included in the ticket price. The flaws in this proposal are exacerbated by the prohibition against Amtrak's ability to sue certain parties. Congress has tried to micro-manage food service on previous occasions, never successfully.

Finally, NARP supports the railroad industry in its opposition to any increase in maximum allowable truck weights. The competitive impact of such a change in policy would be at odds with concerns about safety, the growing gap between highway maintenance costs and available revenues, and energy conservation.

About the National Association of Railroad Passengers

NARP is the only national organization speaking for the users of passenger trains and rail transit. We have worked since 1967 to expand the quality and quantity of passenger rail in the U.S. Our mission is to work towards a modern, customer-focused national passenger train network that provides a travel choice Americans want. Our work is supported by over 22,000 individual members.