

House Transportation Bill Threatens Transit, PTC, Cal. HSR

The “American Energy and Infrastructure Jobs Act” (H.R. 7), passed by the House Transportation & Infrastructure (T&I) Committee early Feb. 3, is a five-year mostly-highway reauthorization. The House Ways and Means Committee approved the revenue provisions, also Feb. 3.

NARP and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce are among 600 organizations that signed a Transportation for America letter opposing the troubling transit provisions.

Transit—including commuter rail—gets about 80% of its federal funds from the Highway Trust Fund’s transit account, roughly \$10 billion a year.

But the bill would replace the transit account with a one-time “alternate funding” \$40 billion appropriation. It is unclear at whose expense (Amtrak’s?) this \$40 billion would come. Equally troubling is what transit’s fate would

be once the \$40 billion runs out.

The T&I committee, on a party-line 15-22 vote, rejected Rep. Earl Blumenthal’s (D-OR) amendment in opposition to this unfortunate proposal.

Also on a party-line vote, 22-17, the Committee adopted an amendment (www.bit.ly/denhamhsr) by Rep. Jeff Denham (R-CA), making any California high-speed rail project ineligible for the bill’s funds.

The bill extends by five years, to Dec. 31, 2020, the deadline by which most lines carrying passengers must have Positive Train Control *and eliminates the requirement for hazmat lines* (see separate PTC story, p. 2).

The bill mandates that Amtrak’s dining and cafe operations be competitively bid, which is problematic. Most troubling is a prohibition against Amtrak taking legal action against any

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NARP, Partners Back Gov. Brown’s HSR Commitment

In a joint letter, NARP, Californians for High-Speed Rail and the Midwest High-Speed Rail Association praised Gov. Jerry Brown’s (D) continuing commitment to high speed rail. The groups urged Brown to move forward with construction of the first segment between Merced and Bakersfield.

The letter comes after a Jan. 18 State of the State Address in which Brown gave greater prominence to a passenger train project than perhaps any governor in recent memory.

“If you believe that California will continue to grow, as I do, and that millions more people will be living in our state, this is a wise investment,” he said, comparing the project to the Central Valley Water Project and Interstate Highway System.

“The need to break ground this year for the Initial Construction Segment in the San Joaquin Valley is paramount for the future of HSR in this state and nation,” the joint rail groups’ letter said. “HSR will serve as a catalyst for a robust expansion of California’s econo-

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New Norfolk Train to Operate by Year’s End

Funding Secure for Norfolk, Lynchburg Trains through Late 2014

Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell (R) announced Jan. 18 that a daily Amtrak Northeast Regional round-trip currently operating between Boston and Richmond will be extended to Norfolk via Petersburg and Suffolk by the end of 2012, ten months earlier than originally projected.

Thelma Drake, Director of the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), said, “This service is a win-win for Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia. The economies of these two regions are intertwined

and getting this service operating will strengthen them both.”

The northbound train will depart Norfolk’s new downtown station in

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-Ryan Stavely on Flickr.com

Construction under way on the platform for the Norfolk Amtrak station, which will share a parking lot with Harbor Park, the minor-league baseball stadium.

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER *Positive Train Control: Approach, Costs, 2015 Compliance Deadline*

“The Amtrak-ARES demonstration project, designed to show the benefits of an advanced train-control system, can carry Amtrak service to new levels of safety, reliability and efficiency.”

--Amtrak President and Chairman W. Graham Claytor Jr., in 1992 flier promoting Burlington Northern/Amtrak demo Congress refused to fund

“...‘positive train control system’ means a system designed to prevent train-to-train collisions...”

--Section 104 of the Railroad Safety Improvement Act of 2008

“Some potential for a low speed rear-end collision will remain...and the rule is clear that this limitation has been accepted...The PTC system... cannot guarantee that the trains sharing the authority will not collide.”

--PTC implementation rule, Federal Register, January 15, 2010, page 2613

As suggested by the headline in a recent FairWarning.org report, things are not going well with Positive Train Control (PTC) implementation: “Railroad companies fight safety rules, with help from GOP and Obama” (on.msnbc.com/ptcrr).

Some History

In 1992 at Washington Union Station, Burlington Northern (BN) proudly showed off its Advanced Railroad Electronics System (ARES, pre-cursor to PTC). Along with Capitol Hill and industry people, I saw an ARES-equipped SD-40 locomotive and office car.

ARES operated 1987-93 on the Minnesota Iron Range on 250 miles of track with different types of signal systems and some



- Amtrak (1980s ARES brochure)

In 1992, Amtrak Pres. Graham Claytor Jr. (right) and Burlington Northern Railway CEO Gerald Grinstein partnered on a proposal to expand BN’s advanced technology but Congress provided no funding.

dark territory. ARES “worked as advertised for five years. It always worked consistently,” said Steve Ditmeyer, who BN CEO Richard Bressler hired to establish an R&D department.

Veteran reporter Don Phillips saw a demonstration at the Iron Range, with an engineer trying to run the train against a red signal. “The engineer was dubious as hell. I don’t think he trusted the technology. The train never reached the signal. He tried to start up again and the train started to creep and let him go 10 feet and shut him down again. It was impressive” (*DesignNews*, 10/21/2008).

ARES also impressed the National Transportation Safety Board, which put PTC on its most-wanted list when that list was created in 1990.

If the railroad industry had been on its toes, ARES would have continued and spread nationwide:

- preventing train-to-train collisions,
- supporting efficient, fuel-saving train dis-

Troy Council Does About-Face on New Station

Reversing its Dec. 19 vote to terminate the project (January *News*), the Troy, MI City Council voted 4-3 on Jan. 17 to approve construction of a 100% federally funded intermodal transportation center to replace the current Birmingham shelter and platform on the *Wolverine* line.

The Troy Chamber of Commerce negotiated with one Council member,

Wade Fleming, who said he was open to changing his vote if the project’s cost could be reduced significantly. By omitting several “green” features and special lighting, and shortening the platform, the cost was cut from \$8.5 million to \$6.2 million, which will come from federal TIGER III funds. ■

For full commentary by NARP’s John DeLora, see www.bit.ly/troysta

NARP News

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This has news through Feb. 8.
 Vol. 46, No. 1 was mailed Jan. 9.

patching—telling engineers the optimum speeds for their trains; and
 • supporting efficient maintenance, with division points knowing of any problems with a train before its arrival.

Industry Disinterest

Unfortunately, a new CEO at BN was willing to continue and expand ARES only if another railroad would partner. Only Amtrak’s Claytor, who had been Secretary of the Navy, was interested.

He proposed installing it on Amtrak’s part of the Chicago-Detroit line. Congress refused his request for funding to partner on ARES with BN, which envisioned implementing ARES Minneapolis-Seattle/Portland. For much of the next 15 years, the industry insisted that PTC technology was not ready.

The April 16, 1993, board meeting of the Association of American Railroads [AAR]

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H.R. 7

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competing passenger carrier.

The conservative Club for Growth, for its own reasons, opposes H.R. 7 and says it will count this as a key vote on which it will rate legislators. ■

H.R. 7 is at 1.usa.gov/hr7ti. Our Feb. 1 release is at www.bit.ly/narphr7.

showed CEO lack of appreciation for—or interest in—technology.

Chuck Dettmann, AAR Senior VP—Operations and a former Union Pacific operating officer, “sought to deliver an hour-long briefing on advanced train control” [later known as PTC]. He “was accosted by CSX President Pete Carpenter [AAR board chairman], who demanded the presentation last no more than five minutes” [Frank Wilner in *Railway Age*, May 2001]. By one account, there would have been no presentation at all but for the insistence of arguably the smartest man present—Santa Fe CEO Rob Krebs.

Even in 2001, Wilner wrote, “With hindsight, some might argue that money spent on [railroads acquiring each other] should have been spent on intelligent trains...Too few crews in too few places with too few locomotives and too few freight cars is the too-often-heard complaint that induced demarketing of traffic [after some key mergers].”

Dramatic train-to-train collisions continued, but the 2008 Chatsworth, CA, tragedy finally led to enactment of the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008 (and Amtrak reauthorization). PTC was to be installed on most passenger lines and lines with certain hazmat traffic by December 31, 2015.

PTC Now “Stand-alone”

As for the non-safety-related, business benefits that could have been bundled with PTC, the railroads have worked to get them separately.

So PTC is being implemented on a stand-alone basis and labeled an “unfunded federal mandate.” Unsurprisingly, stand-alone PTC shows a rate of return of zero or less on invested capital (2010 AAR study), instead of 28% to 160% returns shown in earlier studies.

However, there is some question as to whether the railroads are achieving the claimed non-PTC benefits.

Norfolk Southern told the STB last year that NS has a digital train dispatching system independent of PTC. An AAR study by Oliver Wyman says NS dispatching centers only get locomotive location reports every 15 minutes. This seems incompatible with the efficient operation of high-density lines like Cleveland-Chicago and Harrisburg-Pittsburgh.

Wayside Signals to Stay

Railroads are implementing PTC inefficiently by attaching it to their wayside sig-

nals. They are spending significant sums on replacing old legacy wayside signals with new. Instead, wayside signals ought to be eliminated once PTC is installed and proven. Today, railroads plan to keep and upgrade legacy signals, driving up costs and lowering benefits.

Retaining wayside signals means retaining fixed blocks, and not obtaining the higher capacity that would be possible with moving blocks and continuous, real-time information on train location and speed.

A larger share of signal costs in wayside equipment leads to pressure to reduce the mileage where PTC is required, even though—before the 2008 law was enacted—one CEO said full system coverage is needed to get the network effects (most business benefits).

A major NARP concern is that “picking and choosing” where PTC is installed inflates the cost of maintaining or starting passenger services.

Rear-end Collisions to Continue

Finally, planned implementation will not prevent some rear-end collisions because FRA is not requiring the system to be “designed to determine the position of the end of the train.”

PTC as planned would not have prevented two 2011 rear-end collisions that killed four engine crew members.

Metrolink Criticizes Delay

Metrolink in Southern California is determined to meet the 2015 deadline, but it is unclear how they will meet the “interoperability” associated with their use of UP and BNSF tracks. In a Jan. 19 letter to the AAR, Metrolink CEO John E. Fenton wrote, “I do not agree with any arbitrary extension of PTC implementation deadlines without addressing first a fact-based assessment of risks and needs.”

—**Ross B. Capon**

More is at www.narprail.org/ptc.



—Amtrak/FEC Corridor Coalition (www.bit.ly/amtkfec)

Conceptual for the future Fort Pierce, FL Amtrak station. See story on next page.

my and provide a significant boost to employment in the state.”

They also called on the governor to allocate funds towards improving existing rail services in the Los Angeles and San Francisco metropolitan areas.

After last month’s departure of High Speed Rail Authority (CAHSRA) CEO Roelof van Ark and Board Chairman Thomas Umberg, Brown appointee Dan Richard was elected Chairman at the Board’s Feb. 2 meeting.

The new leadership is now working on a revised business plan, due out in March, that is likely to include more support for short-term train service improvements in both major metro areas.

The Southern California Association of Governments’ Regional Council approved a memorandum of understanding with CAHSRA on Feb. 2. It calls for \$1 billion in voter-approved bonds for upgrades to local Amtrak and Metrolink lines and stations that can offer feeder service to the future high-speed line.

The issue sadly has become partisan, with House Republicans pushing a ban on new federal funding for California high-speed rail (lead story). ■

The letter is at www.bit.ly/calet.

PLAN TO ATTEND NARP’S SPRING COUNCIL MEETING

**Mon.-Weds., April 24-26, 2012
Hilton Alexandria Old Town
Alexandria, VA**

We are working on an exciting lineup of prominent guest speakers for this semi-annual conference of leaders in passenger train advocacy. Our annual Day on the Hill and Capitol Hill Reception will be Tuesday, April 25.

Discount hotel room rates now available! Visit www.narprail.org/membersonly for booking instructions (member login required).

The online meeting registration form will be available soon at www.narprail.org/register. As always, there is no charge just to attend Day on the Hill. Call 202-408-8362 for more information.

Amtrak's Fiscal 2013 Grant Request

Here are some highlights from Amtrak's annual request to Congress:

- Asks for \$758 million more in capital funding than the company received in the current year, but \$16 million less for operations, as growing ridership allows more costs to be covered by passenger revenues. Among the capital projects envisioned in the new plan are:
 - 904 new conventional rail cars for use across the system - a significant increase from previous plans
 - 280 new diesel locomotives
 - 40 additional *Acela* coaches
 - 11 new Next Gen High-Speed Rail trainsets
 - 70 new electric locomotives (continuing existing order)
 - Rebuild 60 Amfleet cars, 12 long-distance cars, and 15 diesel locomotives
- Many Northeast Corridor upgrades, including 40% more *Acela* capacity, a doubling of peak-hour New York-Washington *Acela* frequencies, completion of

the Gateway project, top speed increase to 160 mph on key segments south of New York, and double-tracking the New Haven-Springfield line

- Steps to make wintertime Chicago operations more reliable
- Bridge replacements and station rehabilitation between New York and Schenectady
- Seeks "transformative" surface transportation reauthorization legislation that, among other big steps, makes intercity passenger trains eligible to receive Highway Trust Fund dollars. ■

Read the complete FY 2013 Grant & Legislative Request at www.bit.ly/at-k13rq. Full details about Amtrak's "aggressive agenda for 2012" are at www.bit.ly/atk2012 (PDFs).

<i>Figures are Appropriations in millions of dollars</i>	2011 Enacted	2012 Enacted	2013 Amtrak Request
Operations	562	466	450
General Capital incl. Fleet	658	667	1,470
Debt Service	264	271	212
NEC Gateway Project		15	35
AMTRAK TOTAL	1,484	1,418	2,167

Texas, Oklahoma See 40th Anniversary Train



- Northern Flyer Alliance



- Gary Lanman

At top, NARP Council member Gary Lanman and wife Pam pose beneath Amtrak's exhibit train in downtown Oklahoma City Jan. 14. Above, Pam Lanman & Linda Sparks at NARP's table. NARP volunteers have been present at each of the train's stops, sharing and building support for our vision.

Florida East Coast Awaits Federal \$'s, State Liability Agreement

Serious planning is under way to support the return of passenger trains to the Florida East Coast Railway's (FEC) Jacksonville-Miami route.

Amtrak's Performance Improvement Plan for the *Silver* trains calls the FEC "the most promising initiative for expansion of Amtrak's route network that has been identified during ... [the] performance improvement process."

The FEC line is 77.5 miles shorter than the CSX line Amtrak uses. Completed in 1912, the FEC was a project of Standard Oil magnate and resort de-

veloper Henry Flagler.

The FEC was the primary route for Miami passenger trains until the 1963 start of a violent labor conflict.

In 2010, the state programmed \$118 million in its five-year transportation program, available after July 1, 2013, to match public or private funds to begin passenger train service on the FEC.

Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), with Amtrak's support, applied for funding in 2009 and 2010 for a federal High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) grant for capital funds.

Both applications were denied. The second application (www.bit.ly/fecenv) was faulted because the state's proposed "in-kind match" was deemed insufficient to provide the required 20% of funding.

The Amtrak/FDOT Service Development Plan had one

stand-alone train plus one or two trains with New York-Miami through-cars on one or both of the existing *Silver* trains north of Jacksonville, with a 90-mph top speed on the FEC.

Liability: Amtrak does not have an indemnification agreement with track-owner FDOT, which supports amending state law to let it enter such an agreement. Legislation to do this is now being considered. Meanwhile, no new Amtrak service in Florida.

Attendees at a Jan. 5 public meeting in Cocoa, FL, agreed that planning should begin now to be ready if and when a federal grant is secured. Public-private partnerships for development in and near future stations will start moving forward. FDOT was asked to identify what matching money will be available to local governments for station work.

FDOT's plans for each station are at www.bit.ly/fecstops. ■



- Amtrak/FEC Corridor Coalition (www.bit.ly/amtkfec)

Conceptual rendering of the rebuilt 1950s-era FEC Cocoa-Rockledge station in future Amtrak service.

Amtrak Files Surface Board Complaint against Canadian National

Petition: CN Routinely Delayed Amtrak Trains throughout Fiscal 2011, Violating Federal Law

Between Oct. 1, 2010 and Sept. 30, 2011, eight Amtrak routes that operate over tracks owned by Canadian National Railway (CN) failed to meet the new legal standard for on-time performance of arriving at the end-point station within 15 minutes of schedule at least 80% of the time. After efforts to deal directly with CN failed, Amtrak on Jan. 19 filed a Petition for Relief with the Surface Transportation Board (STB) seeking an investigation, recommendations for improvement, and damages levied against CN.

The CN-owned segments the Petition discusses are Chicago-Carbondale-New Orleans (*City of New Orleans, Illini, Saluki*), Chicago-Joliet, IL (*Lincoln Service, Texas Eagle*), Detroit-Pontiac, MI (*Wolverines*), Battle Creek-Port Huron, MI (*Blue Water*), and 5.8 miles in suburban Chicago used by the *Cardinal* and *Hoosier State* as a link between Union Pacific and CSX tracks. Amtrak also uses CN within Canada, but the STB lacks jurisdiction there.

The legal maximum (set in the 2008 passenger train law) for Amtrak delays due to interference for which the host railroad is responsible is 900 minutes of delay per 10,000 train-miles (dm/10ktm). The average host railroad-caused delay rate for Amtrak trains on other host railroads is well below 900, but—on CN—Amtrak trains during FY 2011 averaged 1,490 dm/10ktm caused by the host, with 46% of that owing to “freight train interference.”

“[CN’s] commitment to providing its freight customers with precision-level on-time performance stands in stark contrast to CN’s abject failure to deliver Amtrak passenger trains on schedule,” Amtrak’s petition says, adding that the delays are “the direct result of policy choices and an unlawful preference for freight trains over Amtrak trains.”

“CN’s responses to Amtrak [conductors’] delay inquiries (on the occasions when CN chooses to respond), routinely reflect blatant disregard for Amtrak’s statutory [right to preferential dispatch-

ing],” according to the petition.

A particular trouble spot is in Champaign, IL, where Amtrak trains are routinely made to take a 40-mph siding to make way for high-priority freights. The complaint notes that CN’s routine delays partly foil the purpose of Illinois and Michigan’s recent investments in better passenger service.

Severe delays also occur on CN’s Chicago-Joliet segment, particularly at Argo Junction, controlled by the Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad. Amtrak initiated dialogue with CN and IHB in November 2010 to improve protocol

regarding this junction, but from December on, CN refused to participate in the talks.

In defending the importance of the affected trains’ reliability to passengers’ “basic travel needs,” Amtrak mentions that nine of the 11 cities the *City of New Orleans* serves south of Carbondale are more than 75 miles from the nearest hub airport. It also discusses the importance of the Illinois and Michigan trains to university communities on their routes. ■

The full Petition for Relief is at www.bit.ly/stbcn

Norfolk Train Expedited; Lynchburg Train Safe

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the morning, with the southbound arriving in the evening. (While the station will also have a stop on The Tide light rail, the morning train will leave before The Tide opens for the day.) The service’s new trackage heads east from Petersburg on a new track connection to a Norfolk Southern (NS) line. Amtrak last used this line in 1977 (the Norfolk-Cincinnati-Chicago *Mountaineer*).

The DRPT, CSX, NS and the City of Norfolk have worked rapidly to get tracks and stations ready for the new service as traffic congestion on parallel Interstates 95 and 64 worsens. The Commonwealth Transportation Board unveiled the new goals and start date in a resolution passed at its Jan. 18 meeting.

The Norfolk service is expected to cover most of its operating costs, aided by high patronage by military personnel.

Other Virginia/Amtrak trains: Gov. McDonnell’s budget proposal for fiscal years 2013 and 2014 (through Sept. 30, 2014) allows for continued operating support for the two trains the Commonwealth added in recent years—the Lynchburg train and one Richmond schedule, the latter to be ex-



- John Mueller on Flickr.com

New York-bound Northeast Regional train 156 crosses the James River north of Lynchburg on Apr. 21, 2011.

tended to Norfolk.

The budget doesn’t propose a new appropriation for the Lynchburg and Norfolk trains, but lets the Commonwealth Transportation Board delay small capital improvement projects and transfer the funds to keep all the Richmond, Newport News and Lynchburg trains running for two years, beginning in FY 2013.

Piedmont Rail Coalition Chairwoman Meredith Richards of Charlottesville called this a “kick the can down the road solution.” The full implementation of Section 209 of the 2008 passenger train law, required by the summer of 2013, means the state will have to pay the operating support (difference between operating cost and revenue) for all short-distance trains within its borders, including Newport News/Richmond-Washington trips now fully Amtrak funded. ■

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our mission: a modern, customer-focused national passenger train network that provides a travel choice americans want.

Daily Sunset Talks with UP Over for Now

In answering a reporter's question, President Joseph Boardman said Jan. 11 that Amtrak will not continue negotiating with Union Pacific over the \$700 million it wants Amtrak to pay to cover the expanded track capacity UP said is necessary to make the tri-weekly New Orleans-Los Angeles *Sunset Limited* a daily train.

Boardman later told NARP that it "is not financially or politically feasible" to expect Congress at this time to fund a large sum for UP infrastructure to add four round-trips a week. Boardman also said, "I believe that we are in for a rough time in keeping our Long Distance network together and my focus is on that and not on expansion. I support long distance trains, a coast to coast border to border service to maintain the mobility and connectivity our nation needs." ■

8th WORLD CONGRESS ON HIGH-SPEED RAIL: FIRST GLOBAL GATHERING IN NORTH AMERICA

Wednesday-Friday, July 11-13, 2012

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The World Congress on High-Speed Rail, a global gathering of rail industry professionals, is being held in the U.S. for the first time. The International Union of Railways and American Public Trans-

portation Assoc. are co-sponsors.

Visit www.bit.ly/hsrreg or call (international to the Netherlands) +31 030-698-1800 to register.

To learn about the Congress, visit www.uic-highspeed2012.com.

Crowds Flock to Lynchburg Train

Right: Riders board the Smartway Connector bus in Roanoke on Nov. 19, bound for Lynchburg. While not an official Amtrak Thruway service, the bus connects with Amtrak's Lynchburg *Regionals*.



Left: Over 300 board New York-bound *Regional* at Lynchburg's Kemper Street Station Nov. 19. This train was sold out between Charlottesville and Washington. (Both photos: NARP member Edward Stone)

NARP IN RAIL MAGAZINE, PASSENGER TRAIN JOURNAL

Beginning with the Winter 2012 issue of each, NARP staff are contributing regular columns to two major passenger train-oriented quarterly publications: *RAIL Magazine* (Community Transportation Assoc. of America) and *Passenger Train Journal* (White River Productions).

Read the current issue of *RAIL* at www.bit.ly/rail29, and visit www.bit.ly/railmag to subscribe via email. To subscribe to *PTJ* (not available digitally), visit www.bit.ly/ptjsub or call (877) 787-2467.