

2013 Appropriations: Capitol Hill Update

A House subcommittee has approved \$1.8 billion for Amtrak in Fiscal 2013 which compares with \$1.45 billion reported from the Senate Appropriations Committee April 19.

The intercity passenger rail totals, including what is now the “High Performance Passenger Rail Service” (HPPRS) program, are:

- White House: \$2.5 billion (March *NARP News*, p. 2);
- House: \$1.8 billion;
- Senate: \$1.55 billion (includes \$100 million for HPPRS, restricted to upgrading existing services).
- Fiscal 2012 actual: \$1.42 billion

The House Subcommittee on Transportation and Housing & Urban Development (THUD) action on June 7 included no funds for HPPRS or Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grants, for the second straight year.

The THUD Amtrak level has just \$350 million for operations—\$100 million below Amtrak’s request and \$116 million below this year’s level. However, the bill lets the DOT secretary approve a transfer of up to \$80 million in capital funds to operations.

Also, \$500 million of the House’s Amtrak capital money is earmarked for

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“Train to Maine”: 10 Years and Growing Brunswick, Freeport Development Blossoms Ahead of Route Extension

Amtrak’s *Downeaster* in a decade of operation has become a poster child for rail passenger success. Annual ridership jumped 108% from 250,000 in 2004 to 519,668 last year.

The train has been named “one of America’s friendliest trains.”

As well, TrainRiders/Northeast (TRN) and its chairman and founder, NARP Council Member Wayne Davis, have set a gold standard for effective citizen action.

Founded in 1989, TRN engaged in 12 years of hard grassroots campaigning and work with elected officials and the host railroad. The result is a much-loved Maine institution—and on-time performance among Amtrak’s best.

NARP honored Davis with our John R. Martin Passenger Train Advocacy Award (June 2009 *News*, p. 4). In May, 2011, NARP presented Golden Spike Awards to Senators Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins (R-ME) for their work in support of the *Downeaster* and passenger rail in general.

December 14, 2011 marked the 10th anniversary of the service’s return after a 36-year hiatus. *Downeaster* now offers five daily round-trips between Boston (North Station) and Portland.

The service is operated by Amtrak and managed by the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA), a State of Maine agency.

A Popular Train

Strong grassroots support for the service led to the 1995 passage of a ballot initiative to create NNEPRA and fund the trains.

TRN’s work continued after the start-up of service. The extension to Brunswick was one of TRN’s original goals.

To build support for that extension, TRN did two public events—a luncheon for Brunswick and Freeport business leaders, and a breakfast for business leaders and the leadership of the state legislature.

The latter event gave business leaders the opportunity to tell legislators how important the Brunswick extension was.

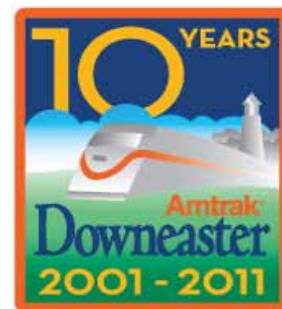
Extension Spurs Development

As the service enters its 11th year of operation, it prepares for the 28.5-mile extension to Freeport and Brunswick. The Recovery Act has funded track, signal and grade crossing improvements, as well as new high-level platforms for both new stations.

Starting this November, two daily round-trips will continue as far as Brunswick, where connection can be made to the Maine Eastern Railroad’s excursion service east to Rockland.

New shops, restaurants, and other amenities already are blossoming around the stations in anticipation of the extended service. Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph Szabo appeared in Freeport and Brunswick May 14 to celebrate the new platforms and acknowledge the economic development the train’s prospect is already stimulating. He was joined by Maine DOT Commissioner David Bernhardt and local business leaders.

“The *Downeaster* expansion is cre-
(continued on p. 5)



-Image: Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority

HSR Poll Misleads California Public

A poorly-worded poll released June 1 has helped fuel new attacks on California's high-speed rail project.

The USC Dornsife/*Los Angeles Times* supposedly shows that 55% of respondents would vote against the project if it reappeared on the statewide ballot.

Poll wording obscures the fact that the initial Merced-Bakersfield segment is being funded by bond money voters approved specifically for that purpose, with the rest coming from federal funds that Congress appropriated for High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail. Money was not taken from other programs or accounts.

Also, pollsters discussed high-speed rail's costs but not its benefits. The media has not done a good job of conveying that it would cost the state much more than HSR's \$68 billion pricetag over the coming decades to meet the mobility needs of the state's growing population in the absence of HSR. And the longer the state waits to build high-speed rail, the more its pricetag will escalate.

- One question inflated the amount by which the total project cost increased from the original estimate. The amount was derived from a comparison that is not apples-to-apples.
- Another question presented a disagreement between "some people" and "other people" without identifying the people or their qualifications or whether the statements are factual.

Building HSR should cost the state less in the long run purely to move people from A to B, and improve travel for those who don't ride it by reducing highway and air congestion.

Also, it will create good paying jobs that can't be outsourced, and spur station-area economic development in ways that roads and airports do not.

The tax revenue generated by this development and the additional travel Californians will undertake without having to worry about congested highways and airports should eventually more than pay the cost of high-speed

MAJOR ADVOCACY GROUP BOOSTS HIGH-SPEED RAIL

A major boost to the high-speed rail project came on June 13 from TransForm, California's largest transportation nonprofit. The group's analysis (www.bit.ly/tns-fmhsr) emphasized the 100,000 new jobs the project would create, and that it would be necessary to the longer-term maintenance of functioning, livable metropolitan areas in the face of population growth. NARP praised the report (www.bit.ly/calrprt) in a June 14 release.

rail's construction.

If you live in California, please contact your state Senator and Assembly Member at their Sacramento offices. Remind them that building high-speed rail saves the state money over the next few decades and continues California's forward-thinking leadership of the na-

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This has news through June 18.
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tion. Call the Capitol Switchboard at (916) 322-9900 and ask for your Senator's office, then call back and ask for your Representative's office. You can also use our easy online email-writing tool: www.bit.ly/hsremail ■

CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL UPDATES

- US Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, visiting Sacramento, called on state lawmakers May 11 not to wait until fall to approve the project's budget.
- Federal Railroad Administrator Joe Szabo announced June 5 that the Obama Administration remains committed to the project. "Americans want—and they deserve—more transportation choices," Szabo told the American Public Transportation Assoc. 2012 Rail Conference in Dallas. "They're tired of being stuck in traffic, delayed in airports, and facing pain at the pump."
- Gov. Brown called on the legislature June 1 to pass, as part of the HSR funding package in the 2013 budget, a provision increasing the burden of

proof opponents would have to meet to successfully challenge HSR in court under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). They would have to convince a judge that the project would cause "major environmental problems" and not simply reveal minor flaws in the environmental review process. Absent this change, which some environmental organizations support, necessary work could not be completed by 2017 and the federal funding would be lost.

- Jeff Morales was named CEO of the California High-Speed Rail Authority on May 30. He had been working on the project as a Parsons Brinckerhoff project manager. He succeeds Roelof van Ark, who left in January.

New Florida, California Maintenance Bases Offer Vastly Better Work Environment

Amtrak Mechanical crews who perform safety inspections, servicing and maintenance in Hialeah, FL (near Miami) and Los Angeles now have vastly improved workspaces that should result in higher-quality work done more efficiently.

The new Hialeah Progressive Maintenance Facility, which opened April 20, is 50 feet by 920 feet. It features a 600-foot in-ground pit with an in-floor jacking system to remove and replace wheel trucks. There are administrative offices, training rooms and employee locker and lunch rooms.

Previously, much of this critical work was done outdoors without cover. Workers endured muggy heat, frequent rain and tropical storms common to south Florida. With the new facility, almost all work is done indoors or under a cover, with air circulation provided by giant ceiling fans. The new facility is designed to withstand hurricanes.

The facility has a number of features that meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards for environmentally sustainable construction. The 2009 Recovery Act's grant to Amtrak covered \$29.4 million of its \$32.7 million cost; the rest came from Amtrak's regular capital budget.

Hialeah crews perform nightly in-

spections and routine maintenance on *Silver Meteor* and *Silver Star* equipment. All single-level, long-distance cars (Viewliner sleepers, Amfleet II coaches and cafes, and Heritage dining cars) are cycled onto these trains for heavy maintenance.

A similar new facility in Los Angeles opened Aug. 18, 2011, and was funded with \$24.5 million in Recovery Act funds. It houses crews that inspect and service all the Amtrak trains serving Los Angeles.

The L.A. facility, which NARP leaders toured on Oct. 20, relies more on canopies with giant ceiling fans than on indoor spaces because of southern California's climate. It is earthquake-resistant and incorporates many LEED-certified features. Much of its work was previously performed outdoors without shelter.

Seattle

A similar \$43 million project in Seattle, scheduled to officially open in late summer 2012, will allow Amtrak to move its maintenance work for *Cascades* equipment, and servicing of *Empire Builder* & *Coast Starlight* consists, into an enclosed facility, and its headquarters, warehousing, and other support functions from deteriorating trailer facilities into a modern building. ■



-Bob Stewart

Amtrak Mechanical employees celebrate the new Hialeah, FL maintenance facility, built with Recovery Act funding, on Apr. 20. NARP Chairman Bob Stewart attended.

WELCOME, NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS!

NARP welcomes these newly-elected members of the Council of Representatives, the Association's national, all-volunteer advisory body:

Nimi R.B. Andersen-De Rivas (Washington, DC): Experience in grant writing & review & hospitality industry. Pursuing MBA at Univ. of Maryland. Has been active in many civic and charitable causes, including Boy Scouts and Help the Homeless Walk-a-thon. Personal friend of D.C. Mayor Vincent Gray.

Aaron Berkovich (New York, NY): Native of Belarus; earned M.S. in Transportation Planning from Polytechnic University (now Polytechnic Inst. of N.Y. University), and M.A. in Computer Science. Works as Staff Analyst in MTA New York City Transit's Division of Operations Planning. Active in his synagogue.

Larry Blake (Newbury, MA): Retired reporter and copy editor; worked 25 years for the Salem (MA) *Evening News*. Believes a network of feeder buses and taxis is vital for the success of passenger rail.

Hon. John Businger (Brookline, MA): Former MA State Representative (1971-1999); Past President of National Corridors Initiative (2003-2011) & Member, Regional Transportation Advisory Council. Has been a long-time champion of Boston's North-South Rail Link.

Rev. Michael Cooper (Portage, IN): Native of North Carolina; M.Div. from Chicago Theological Seminary. Lived in Boston many years and served as co-President, Assoc. for Public Transportation (2007-2011). Many years active in grassroots train advocacy.

Dr. Burton Eisenberg (Wyncote, PA): Dr. of Optometry; retired high-school science teacher. 10-year AARP Mature Driving Instructor. Board member, Delaware Valley Assoc. of Rail Passengers. Active in National Railway Historical Society.

Tom Heard (Little River, TX): Railroading career includes 10 yrs as Manager of the TXU Electric RR. Fmr. Member, Western Coal Transport Assoc. Board member, Temple Railroad Heritage Museum. Current Caretaker of the McGregor, TX Amtrak station.

Carol Haslett (Chagrin Falls, OH): Political strategist, consultant to Cleveland-area elected officials. Active in education & serves on many panels & commissions. Long-time member, Amtrak Customer Advisory Cmte & All Aboard Ohio. Experienced public speaker, writer & event organizer.

Continued next page...

Battle Creek, Michigan Passengers Enjoy New Digs

A completely rebuilt intermodal station in Battle Creek—serving Amtrak’s three daily Chicago-Detroit-Pontiac *Wolverines*, daily Chicago-East Lansing-Port Huron *Blue Water*, and Battle Creek Transit, Greyhound and Indian Trails buses—opened to the public on May 23. A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held June 12.

The facility at 119 McCamly Street South features a new entrance and passenger pick-up and drop-off area, a fenced long-term parking lot, improved exterior lighting and landscaping, new passenger lobby with a vending area featuring cafe seating. The new long-term parking lot can be accessed off of the former Capital Avenue entrance.

The bus ticket counter has been moved down a hallway to the west, and is now more conveniently located to the intercity bus boarding dock. Battle Creek Transit buses now use a loop west of the station with a shelter for each route.



- John DeLora



- John DeLora

Shots of the Amtrak passenger waiting area in Battle Creek before (left) and after (right) the renovation.

NARP Welcomes Volunteer Interns

Four students, interning in the NARP office from June 13 through Aug. 10, will learn about transportation policy, legislative advocacy and nonprofit management while assisting NARP staff.

Yufan Cui of Yantai, Shandong, China, a rising junior pursuing a Master of Business at the Univ. of Maryland, College Park.

Chris Romero of Tucson, AZ, a rising

sophomore in Politics, Philosophy, Economics and Law at the Univ. of Arizona.

Davis Strench of Riva, MD, a rising senior at South River High School in Edgewater, MD.

Riley Whitelock of Vancouver, BC, Canada, a rising junior in Political Science and American Studies at the University of British Columbia.

CORRECTION

The new bridge over the Osage River near Jefferson City, MO, makes the route double-track between there and St. Louis. The April newsletter incorrectly stated that double-track will now extend to Kansas City. The western portion remains single-track.

NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS cont'd

John Hostage (Watertown, MA): Harvard Law School librarian. M.A. in Library Science from Univ. of Wisconsin at Madison. Treasurer of Assn. for Public Transportation/Mass. Assn. of RR Passengers.

Emmy Koponen (Dixon, NM): Acclaimed artist, environmental advocate, coordinator of horse clinics, tutor of children and young adults with disadvantages. Built 2 off-grid solar houses. Passionate about education & nuclear disarmament. Long-time dedication to public transportation.

Stan Kozaczka (Cazenovia, NY): M.A. from Florida State Univ.; 37-year higher education professional. Library Director at Cazenovia College. Regional director for Empire State Passengers Assoc.

Daniel Krause (Pasadena, CA): Exec. Dir. of Californians for High-Speed Rail; Board Member of Rescue Muni (San Francisco). Masters in Urban Planning from San Jose State Univ. Believes high-speed rail advocacy is key to catalyzing all rail investment.

Bob Lenz (Waunakee, WI): Life mem-

ber of NARP and Wisconsin ARP. Veteran Amtrak rider.

Brett McCall (Black Mtn., NC): Professional storyteller, game theorist, game evangelist, filmmaker and social media strategist. Degree in Computer Engineering, Univ. of Texas at Dallas. Asst. Girls Varsity Soccer Coach, Carolina Day School. Founder, The People for Rail to Asheville (citizens' org.).

Timothy Moore (Plaistow, NH): Retired from Lucent Technologies after 35 yrs. Chairman, N.H. Rail Transit Authority & Chairman, Plaistow Conservation Commission. Active in Plaistow Area Transit Advisory Cmte. & TrainRiders/Northeast.

Brian Nelson (Minneapolis, MN): Fmr. NARP Region 7 Board member. Veteran rider of Amtrak & pre-Amtrak trains.

Alan Schmitt (Chicago, IL): Education director at various Chicago-area churches since 1987. M.A. in Theology from Loyola University in Chicago. Eagle Scout. NARP member since high school.

Jim Souby (Denver, CO): President, Colorado Rail Passengers Assoc. Member, Colo. Dept. of Transp. Transit & Rail Ad-

visory Cmte. & Steering Cmte. Member, Denver Univ. Intermodal Transp. Institute. Pres. & CEO, Park City Ctr. for Public Policy. Grew up in Alaska, retired Naval Reserve Officer. Operated a fishing lodge & worked in mineral exploration.

Geza John Vamos (At-Large; Cleveland, OH): Focused on making trains and transit more accessible to people with disabilities. Member, Nat'l Federation of the Blind, Knights of Columbus & All Aboard Ohio. First in family to graduate college. Frequent Amtrak & transit rider.

Roy Walthall (Waco, TX): Appointed by the Governor to Texas High Speed Rail Advisory Board & Trans-Texas Corridor Advisory Commission. MPA from Texas A&M Univ. Was involved in reorganization of Texas Constitution. 15-year NARP and Texas ARP member. Has ridden many trains in U.S. & abroad.

Charles Welsh (St. Louis, MO): Retired Master Sergeant, Marine Corps, Counter-Intelligence. Major shareholder of a coal and coke company. Experience with railroad operations.

Downeaster "Track Star"

ating jobs and spurring local economic development even before the trains arrive," said Szabo. "The Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority delivered this project on time and on budget, and when the line opens in the fall it will increase tourism and mobility choices for residents from Boston to Brunswick."

Szabo stayed at the Inn at Brunswick, a new hotel that is part of a development that has medical offices, restaurants, retail stores and the train station. Project manager Michael Lyne said the development would never have moved forward without the new train service.

In Freeport, headquarters of clothing manufacturer L.L. Bean, retailers anticipate that shoppers visiting by train will boost sales, according to Deb King, Executive Director of the Greater Freeport Chamber of Commerce. Freeport's latest attraction is a new \$2.5 million movie theater next to the train station. Development is also occurring near the station in Portland, where nearly \$1 million in additional tax revenue per year is projected.

"An independent study shows that by 2030, *Downeaster* train service will spur nearly \$7.2 billion in new construction along the corridor," reports Szabo. "Nearly 18,000 new jobs will be created. State and local budgets will benefit each year from nearly \$75 million in new tax revenue generated from increased economic activity."

Besides \$38.3 million for Portland-Brunswick capital work, FRA has granted NNEPRA \$21 million to improve the Boston-Haverhill (MBTA) segment. Work should begin this summer to rebuild the mainline track and install a section of double track to eliminate a bottleneck.

NNEPRA plans to build a layover facility in Brunswick to support the expanded service."

A Unique Service

Downeaster was the first Amtrak route to get on-board wireless Internet service, another NNEPRA initiative.

Maine and Oregon are the only states to use federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program funds to support Amtrak operations. The Senate's S. 1813 (*May News* p. 1) would end the need for Congress to periodically make exceptions to the three-year limit on this use of funds.

TRN coordinates a volunteer Station and Train Host Program. Hosts are aboard most runs to welcome passengers, answer questions and offer advice about attractions along the route. Station hosts assist passengers at Maine's three stations without Amtrak ticket agents. This, the nation's first volunteer host program, inspired similar ones in California and North Carolina.

Downeaster also is the only route not sharing any stations with another Amtrak route. MBTA's Orange Line links North Station and Back Bay; taxis or two subway lines are required for the mile between North and South Stations. NARP still supports the North Station-South Stations Rail Link, but no early action is likely, especially as the MBTA currently has major funding problems and will be cutting back service on commuter rail.

Finally, on-board food service is provided by a private contractor. ■

Patricia Quinn, Executive Director of the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority since 2006, has gained wide recognition for her work in managing and promoting the *Downeaster*. Secretary LaHood selected her as a voting member of the National Cooperative Rail Research Program (p. 6). She began consulting for NNEPRA in 2000, becoming executive director in 2005.

She had no previous rail experience, but knew the hospitality business, having been general manager of Portland's Doubletree Hotel. She proved to be a quick study who knew the right questions to ask. In a male-dominated field, it was serendipitous that she presented to the NARP Board in 2006 at the same time we were honoring Crawfordsville, IN high school students for their work improving their train station. Thus, the girls from that class saw first-hand that a woman could do a top-notch job of managing a passenger railroad service.

Maine Business Journal on Aug. 8, 2011, gave her a nice write-up under the headline "Track Star": www.bit.ly/mequinn ■

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"high-priority state-of-good-repair... projects on infrastructure owned by [Amtrak] or States for the benefit of existing intercity passenger rail services."

While the relatively favorable treatment of Amtrak at this first stage of the House's funding process may surprise some, the House-Senate conference is likely to have a different result.

The Senate committee has \$500 million for TIGER, which has been widely praised as the federal government's first competitive grant program for all forms of transportation. Rail (mostly freight rail) won about one-third of the \$3.1 billion in TIGER grants to date (Fiscal Years 2009-2012).

Continue to remind your legislators that passenger train investments are vital for creating jobs and improving mobility, especially as our senior population grows and our young people are less auto-oriented: 202-224-3121. ■



-Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority

Administrator Szabo (left) steps off a special train onto the new Freeport, ME platform on his June 14 visit.

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

President's Corner: NARP Addresses Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission

The Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission's (MIPRC) annual meeting this year was in Kalamazoo, MI, on June 11. There were presentations by Amtrak, the Federal Railroad Administration, Southern Illinois University, Illinois State University, the University of Illinois and me.

MIPRC was created by an interstate compact—11 states passing identical legislation. The commission “promotes, coordinates and supports regional improvements to passenger rail service.”

MIPRC consists of state elected officials and their designees—four resident members per state. Each governor appoints two (one as his/her designee; the other from the private sector) and legislative leaders appoint two members (one legislator from each chamber; leaders may also appoint alternates).

MIPRC has focused on promoting the benefits of regional passenger rail development and supporting the development of plans for fast, frequent Midwest service. The meetings bring together people with profoundly different views. What I found most encouraging was the respectful tone of conversation among all participants and guests.

Gov. Scott Walker's (R-WI) private sector representative attended and participated, as did Illinois DOT Secretary Ann Schneider.

But Nebraska, North Dakota and Ohio were absent. A few states are not

paying their \$15,000 a year dues.

One skeptical state legislator saw passenger rail as “a new system that the market has already turned down. When you board a train, we have to go to where the government says when they say.” But he added this, which many could agree with: “When property values rise, those who benefit should pay.”

NARP Serves on Research Committee

The National Cooperative Rail Research Program (NCRRP) Oversight Committee, on which NARP serves as an *ex officio* member, recently met for the first time. The day-and-a-half-long meeting produced a list of seven projects to be funded with the \$5 million available to the committee from NCRRP's initial, FY 2010 appropriation.

The new program is administered by Transportation Research Board (TRB), an arm of the National Academy of Sciences. Congress did not fund NCRRP for either 2011 or 2012, so the program's future is uncertain.

Highway, airport and transit cooperative research programs are well established. Highways get about \$40 million a year—a percentage of each state's federal highway funds.

Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood named NARP President Ross Capon to the Committee. The six other organizations with *ex officio* representatives are American Association of

I presented NARP's Vision of expanded passenger train routes, and the surprisingly similar vision in the 2007 report of a federal commission. I noted the value that conservatives put on choices—including those that let people avoid road congestion—and cited trains' relative energy efficiency.

--Ross Capon

State Highway and Transportation Officials, American Public Transportation Association, Association of American Railroads, EPA, FAA, and TRB itself.

Twenty-two voting members come from academia, state DOTs, major freight and commuter railroads, Amtrak, the Alaska Railroad, Federal Railroad Administration, and a major engineering firm.

Some of the research projects:

- Building and Retaining Workforce Capacity for the Rail Industry (\$725,000; see May *News*, p. 5, regarding the importance of this subject);
- Passenger Rail in the Context of a Competitive Economic Market (\$500,000; would examine competitive relationships between rail and air, intercity bus and private automobile);
- Passenger Rail Project Delivery and Operations Through Multi-State Organizations (\$400,000).

Seven projects are at http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/ncrrp/docs/NCRRP_Announcement2012.pdf