

## **Amtrak Plans for Upgrades in Bid to Push Faster System**

By [RON NIXON](#)

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WASHINGTON — [Amtrak](#) is promoting a \$151 billion expansion plan that includes a major revamping of Union Station in Washington, which was unveiled here Wednesday, as well as the upgrading of its hubs in New York and Boston. The plan represents a bid for federal support to transform the service into a [high-speed rail](#) operation.

Amtrak released its updated “Next-Generation High-Speed Rail Plan for the Northeast Corridor” report earlier this month, but financing remains a matter of concern.

The federal government provided money to the railroad through the economic stimulus programs and gave an additional \$450 million for a 24-mile stretch of railroad in New Jersey last year after Florida turned down federal money for a high-speed rail project.

Amtrak’s president and chief executive, Joseph H. Boardman, said the first thing Amtrak needed to do was get a plan in place. “We can worry about where the money is coming from, but we need to have a plan in place so when it does, we’re ready,” Mr. Boardman said in an interview this month.

“Look at the \$400 million we got last year,” he said. “We already had a plan in place, so when it fell in our laps we were ready to go.”

Under the plan, the rail company envisions trains traveling at up to 220 miles per hour, going from Washington to New York in just over an hour and a half and from Washington to Boston in a little more than three hours. Both goals would amount to about half the travel time Amtrak offers now on its fastest trains.

The first step in the upgrade would be the addition of 40 Acela high-speed trains to the Amtrak fleet.

Ridership on Amtrak has grown to record levels in the past five years, and the railroad is responsible for 75 percent of the air-rail passenger traffic along the Northeast Corridor, up from about 37 percent in 2001.

Ridership is expected to climb to 43.5 million riders a year by 2040. The trains, however, are nearing full capacity, and many rail lines, tunnels and stations need to be upgraded or replaced, the railroad said.

Older bridges and parts of the railroad limit speeds that trains can now travel.

At Union Station, the proposal calls for doubling the number of trains the station can hold at one time and adding new platforms and stores.