



Rail Passengers Voice Opposition to House Transportation Budget

The National Association of Railroad Passengers announced that it will fight implementation of the House Appropriation Committee's Fiscal Year 2014 transportation funding levels. The draft bill, which the subcommittee will consider tomorrow, slashes Amtrak's budget by a third, threatening Amtrak's very existence. The bill also fails to include funding for the High Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail Program. Not only does the bill include no new funding for the highly over-subscribed TIGER grants—a competitive, multi-modal program—it rescinds \$237 million in previously appropriated FY 2013 TIGER funding that is not yet obligated.

The House proposal denies state and local leaders the resources they need to develop the modern transportation network necessary for mobility and economic growth. It comes as economic experts and the International Monetary Fund criticize the U.S. for plunging ahead with austerity even as low interest rates make borrowing for projects unusually affordable, America's unemployment rate remains unacceptably high, and the need for transportation infrastructure investment is widely acknowledged.

The House committee's bill has just \$950 million for Amtrak, a 29% cut from the final 2013 number [\$1,344 million]. This includes a \$350 million operating grant (21% below the FY 2013 level), and \$600 million in capital (33.5% below FY 2013).

These numbers are even more disappointing when compared to President Obama's FY 2014 request of \$6.7 billion for passenger rail. That request targeted \$2.7 billion for current rail service, including \$675 million for the Northeast Corridor, \$300 million for state corridors, and \$800 million for Amtrak's long-distance routes. The President had proposed moving Amtrak from the discretionary funding pot and reclassifying it as mandatory spending.

“The proposed House budget is extremely disappointing in its unwillingness to tackle America's growing infrastructure crisis,” said NARP President Ross Capon. “Millions of Americans depend on the U.S. rail network to commute to work everyday, and for millions more Amtrak is a vital intercity connection, allowing them to travel for work and for family. This is especially true in smaller and rural communities where trains serve as the only alternative to driving, connecting residents to essential services in larger cities. Curtailing service at a time of growing demand makes no sense.”

The committee has also trashed the Administration's proposal to continue development of a National High Performance Rail System. The President proposed \$3.7 billion in FY 2014 for the development of world-class high speed rail and upgrades to conventional rail service.

“Elected officials at the local level depend on the Congress to aid them in maintaining and developing the transportation network that is foundational to our community, our economy, and our way of life,” added Capon. “That infrastructure is crumbling, and we are living off the investments made by previous generations. This House budget is another instance of Congress kicking the can down the road. If enacted, it will be a disaster for future generations of passengers.”

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.