



## Texas Eagle Support Team Turns 10

*NARP's Goal: Create Similar Groups for All Long Distance Trains!*

The Texas Eagle Marketing and Performance Organization (TEMPO)—formally organized in 1997 to block Amtrak plans to kill the *Texas Eagle*—celebrated its 10th anniversary on Sept. 15, 2007. Meanwhile, NARP is bringing together advocates across the country who are forming citizen route support teams, aiming to do for other routes what “TEMPO” has done for the *Eagle*.

TEMPO convened in Marshall, TX, 10 years to the day after the first TEMPO meeting, also in Marshall. On hand were Amtrak Chairman David Laney and President Alex Kummant, Amtrak managers and union employees, host railroad representatives, NARP Communications Associate Matthew Melzer (see page 3), and a bipartisan collection of politicians and civic leaders. Awards were given to TEMPO members and *Eagle* supporters

for years of tireless work.

In keynote remarks, Kummant said he was “overwhelmed” by the dedication of TEMPO supporters. “Amtrak has a lot of respect for this group and for the things the members have accomplished.” He noted that Amtrak’s focus on expanding corridor services would “not be at the expense of” national network routes.

He said the *Texas Eagle*’s future is secure because of its usefulness to on-line communities and his efforts to “reframe the debate” towards a focus on Amtrak’s “strong overall fundamentals,” including growing ridership and revenue and highly efficient equipment utilization (compared to freight and commuter railroads). He promised to address *Eagle* reliability problems, but was less optimistic about restoring certain lost connections before reliability improves.

TEMPO’s initial success came before its official formation, when it was an ad hoc group of Amtrak officials, on-line mayors, and other civic leaders advising Amtrak on local marketing. After Amtrak announced that the *Eagle* would be cut May 10, 1997, community leaders lobbied the Texas legislature to give Amtrak a \$5.6 million grant to support *Eagle* operations to the end of the fiscal year.

A veto threat from then-Gov. George W. Bush led *Eagle* boosters to convince Amtrak and Texas leaders to agree to a loan, secured by 20 ex-Santa Fe Hi-Level cars. This spared the *Eagle*, albeit at the 11th hour—Amtrak had posted train-off notices and stopped selling tickets. The vital *Eagle-Sunset Limited* through-car operations ceased May 10, 1997, and—thanks in part to NARP pressure—resumed May 17, 1998.

In 1999, Amtrak repaid the loan to the State of Texas early. During 1998-2001 Amtrak extended a fourth weekly *Eagle* to Los Angeles.

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### More VRE-CSX Investment on the Richmond-Washington Line



—Ross Capon

New track capacity went into service near Capitol Hill the weekend of August 10-12—a freight track (r.) that partially segregates freight and passenger movements most of the way across the District between the Potomac River (new interlocking at 14th Street, SW) and the west end of the freight tunnel that leads to the Anacostia River in SE Washington. This August 13 view looks east from L’Enfant Plaza Virginia Railway Express station towards Virginia Ave. (where line to Union Station turns left and freight continues east). Entering service in October is VRE’s emergency storage track (l., just beyond platform), funded by the Dept. of Homeland Security, which will let VRE serve L’Enfant Plaza even when Union Station is inaccessible. (August 2006 *NARP News* has other track improvements in this corridor.)

### Capitol Hill Update

The Senate approved \$1.37 billion for Amtrak on September 13. President Bush has threatened to veto most appropriations bills, including the Transportation-HUD bill that contains Amtrak funding, and any omnibus bill. The House (Sept. 25) and Senate (Sept. 27) passed a Continuing Resolution to fund all government programs until November 17 (the new fiscal year begins October 1).

On September 21, the Senate Finance Committee approved a passenger rail bonding package of \$900 million a year for three years. If approved by the full Senate and a House-Senate conference, it would be the first dedicated, multi-year federal funding for state investment in passenger rail.

## Detroit Line Ownership Change: Guarded Optimism

Likely ownership changes on part of the important Chicago-Detroit line prompted NARP and Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers to file statements with the Surface Transportation Board (STB).

Norfolk Southern and WATCO Industries have agreed to create a joint venture—Michigan Central Railway LLC (MCR). WATCO would control MCR, which would get most NS Michigan lines west of Ypsilanti (and down to Elkhart, IN).

This includes the Ypsilanti-Kalamazoo part of Amtrak's Detroit line, which now has three daily round-trips trains, plus one Chicago-Port Huron run using the same line as far east as Battle Creek.

Amtrak CEO Alex Kummant routinely cites Chicago-Detroit—a federally designated high speed rail corridor—as a line that could be improved and expanded rather easily. In 1976, the 95-mile Porter, IN-Kalamazoo segment was conveyed to Amtrak, as Penn Central planned to abandon it. Thanks to advanced signaling, top speeds on this segment have been raised to 95 mph.

But, east of Kalamazoo, the line stayed with Penn Central, which later became Conrail. NS got the line during the CSX-NS takeover of Conrail.

The NS/WATCO deal raised fears of a rerun of the late 1980's sale of the Chi-

cago-St. Louis line by the Illinois Central Gulf Railroad to the Chicago Missouri and Western. CM&W quickly encountered financial turmoil. Tracks deteriorated and ridership fell. Fortunately, Southern Pacific wanted an entrance into Chicago, acquired the line and rehabilitated it

NARP's August 2 statement to the STB cited growing ridership on the Amtrak *Wolverine* service and Chicago-Port Huron *Blue Water* and expressed concern "that a short line operator could let the top speed for passenger trains fall below...79 mph. NARP requests that the STB study this proposed acquisition carefully and if it does approve this transaction, condition...approval on inclusion of adequate safeguards to maintain passenger rail service at no less than its current level of quality."

In a detailed filing, the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers (MARP) echoed NARP's concerns, expressing concern about "WATCO's financial and technical capacity to maintain passenger track and signals to the standards currently used by Amtrak. None of WATCO's properties involve passenger train dispatching, Centralized Traffic Control, or maintenance of track to Federal Railroad Administration Class 4 track standards [needed for 79 mph]."

Amtrak, WATCO, and NS reached an



—John DeLora

**An Amtrak Wolverine service train stops at Jackson, MI. The station is along the 115 mile route that Norfolk Southern proposes to sell to WATCO Industries.**

agreement to preserve passenger rail frequencies and track standards along the route. The agreement won support for the transaction from the State of Michigan, which joined the parties in a Sept. 18 release announcing the agreement.

This includes specific maintenance work to be performed each year and the securing of a \$12 million letter of credit that Amtrak can access to support track maintenance should WATCO fail to do the work the agreement requires.

The agreement calls for an Amtrak/Michigan/WATCO dialogue on improving the line, and says MCR will work with Amtrak to increase speeds and frequencies.

Based on the agreement, Amtrak will not oppose the NS/WATCO transaction. NARP and MARP will continue to monitor the situation closely. ■

## Update on Amtrak Management Changes

Many new people, and a few "returnees," are helping guide Amtrak forward.

**William H. Campbell** is Chief Financial Officer. Treasurer Dale Stein had been Acting CFO after the departure of David Smith (February 2007 *News*). Campbell most recently was director of KPMG LLP's Federal CFO Advisory Services division. During the first term of the current Bush Administration, he served the Department of Veterans Affairs as assistant secretary and CFO.

**Anne Witt**, who held five different vice presidencies within Amtrak from 1994 to 2002, has returned as Vice President of Strategic Partnerships & Business Development. In 2003-2006, she won high praise for her work as Director of the District of Columbia's Department of Motor Vehicles. In 2005, the DC Federation of Citizens Associations named DMV the most improved government agency - "where service is now a reality".

She has major responsibility for carry-

ing out Kummant's stated goal of "pivoting" Amtrak towards more state partnerships. Witt praised her predecessor, **Gil Maltery**, who has left Amtrak, for pioneering successful partnerships with California, Oregon, and Washington: "These and other corridors around the country are largely due to Gil's efforts going back to early state planning and continual service expansion partnerships over the years."

To expand on these efforts, Witt will oversee a newly structured department that includes seven direct reports, featuring leadership at the regional level for State and Commuter Partnerships (**Drew Galloway** – East, **Mike Franke** – Central, and **Don Saunders** – West). In addition, her direct reports include **Bruce Looloian** heading Real Estate, **Paul Nissenbaum** leading Policy, Standards, and Business Integration, and **Paul Vilter** of Host Railroad Relationships. **Carol Mitten** is Project Manager for Moynihan Station Redevelopment, dedicating full-

time staff to represent Amtrak's interests as the expansion of New York Penn Station and the Farley Post Office facilities across Eighth Avenue proceeds. All but Mitten are Amtrak veterans; Saunders has been General Superintendent of the Central Division in Chicago.

In March, **Richard Phelps** was promoted to Vice President of Transportation. He is widely respected for his work as General Superintendent of the Southwest Division in Los Angeles, where **Mike Chandler** now is Acting General Superintendent.

**Ira Silverman** is Senior Director Product Management—East. From 1995 to 2007, he was at Maryland MARC commuter rail—as Chief Transportation Officer and briefly as Acting Director. Before that, he served Amtrak from 1975, mostly as Director of Route Marketing.

Recently appointed Chief Information Officer **Ed Trainor** will oversee three

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Ten years ago, one of the early champions within Amtrak was Joy Smith, then *Texas Eagle* Product Line Director, now Assistant Superintendent of Passenger Services, Southwest Division.

Thanks to the involvement of her and other managers, a local revenue management team was born that lets those closest to local travel patterns market space and manipulate fare buckets to maximize revenue. The volunteer team of Amtrak District Manager Jesse Padilla and Ticket Agent Griff Hubbard and NARP Board Member Bill Pollard began work August 23, 1999, promising then-Amtrak President George Warrington \$1 million in added revenue the first year. They delivered \$1.6 million and their work continues to this day.

Indeed, it has expanded to include the Ft. Worth-Oklahoma City *Heartland Flyer*, whose success heavily depends on that of the *Eagle*, with which about one-third of *Flyer* passengers connect.

On May 21, 2000, Amtrak began daily service between San Antonio and Chicago. TEMPO's revenue managers gave Warrington a large cardboard check symbolizing the \$1 million in added revenue achieved four months ahead of the one-year target. Also, Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) coined the slogan "National or Nothing" to reflect the importance of passenger trains to cities large and small around the US.

The revenue management work ties in with TEMPO's marketing programs, including the web site [www.TexasEagle.com](http://www.TexasEagle.com), maintained by volunteer (and NARP Board Member) Matt Fels of Fort Worth, with input from other TEMPO members. This site—seamlessly integrating with [www.Amtrak.com](http://www.Amtrak.com)—provides many more details about the route, including local events, information about local accommodations and attractions, and a customized, detailed route guide. This helps Amtrak customers and gives exposure to the civic and commercial interests that support TEMPO.

One of TEMPO's greatest benefits has been to help sell the concept of passenger trains to local elected officials and civic leaders. When a mayor or a convention and visitor's bureau recognizes Amtrak as an asset in terms of tourism or travel choices and quality of life, other local civic leaders also begin to take a proprietary interest in the train.

As Pollard puts it, "When 'the train'

**A Novel, Efficient Way to Get Future Riders**

TEMPO has spearheaded selling of Sightseer Lounge space on the *Texas Eagle* to big school groups traveling one stop. This increases revenue without requiring more coaches. It also gives future customers a taste of train travel.

The future can be very near term. Amtrak's Griff Hubbard: "The next week [after these trips], I see the same kids bring their parents back to the station to buy tickets for their Spring Break travel."

becomes 'our train,' local elected officials become much more protective of the service, and as we are now seeing, begin to want more. If confronted with operating problems or unfavorable Amtrak service decisions, these same local officials are not shy about voicing their concern to their representatives in Congress.

"The methods for achieving local sup-

**Matthew Melzer, NARP Communications Associate**

Matthew Melzer joined NARP as Communications Associate on July 23. His major responsibilities include NARP member and other external communications, our weekly News Hotline, the NARP Blog, and other forms of e-communication. He will also work on our newsletter and be the primary facilitator for our long-distance route support teams effort.

A native of Los Angeles, Melzer holds deep concern about the impacts that transportation and development have on the quality of life for all Americans in cities large and small. He has traveled by rail on three continents and would like to add at least three more.

Melzer served as marketing and planning intern for Monterey-Salinas Transit in Monterey, CA, and worked as an ADA paratransit eligibility specialist there.

He was a NARP intern for six months in 2005. He gathered and analyzed information on rail advocacy and his experience here. He used this knowledge to write his undergraduate thesis on the history and near-term prospects of the rail advocacy movement. He received his Bachelor of Arts with Honors in Community Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz, in June, 2006.

He is a member of the Transportation Research Board (TRB) Committee on Intercity Passenger Rail Systems, and

port will likely vary with each route, but our experience shows that the process results in a strong coalition of people from diverse backgrounds, all with a singular vision of expanding rail passenger service."

NARP views TEMPO as a model for similar interests across the country to unite behind other routes in Amtrak's national network. Route support teams are currently organizing, and dozens of concerned advocates and citizens already have enlisted. Clearly, tremendous energy is needed to build coalitions, garner exposure and do a fraction of what TEMPO has done.

The time is right to educate local political and civic leaders on the benefits of passenger trains, and to encourage them to become rail champions. NARP stands poised to assist the teams as they unite behind our national network of intercity passenger trains. ■

For more information, visit TEMPO's website at [www.tempo-rail.org](http://www.tempo-rail.org). For more on NARP's route support teams, go to [www.narprail.org](http://www.narprail.org).



co-editor of the committee's newsletter. Melzer has written and programmed for TrainWeb.com, and served on the board of the Rail Passenger Association of California (2002-2007). While in Santa Cruz, he was appointed to the Santa Cruz METRO Advisory Committee (2003-2005), and was a news and public affairs correspondent for KZSC-FM. ■

**Correction:** The table on the front page of the August *NARP News* should have defined the "climate impact" numbers shown as "CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per passenger-mile in kilograms."



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OUR MISSION: A MODERN, CUSTOMER-FOCUSED NATIONAL PASSENGER TRAIN NETWORK THAT PROVIDES A TRAVEL CHOICE AMERICANS WANT.

## Upgraded Lounge Cars for Lake Shore Limited Dining

Lake Shore Limited dining service for now is provided on upgraded Amfleet II lounges (April News, p. 2) instead of Heritage dining cars. The train still has a “regular” lounge car as well. This is a change from what we reported in April, when Amtrak said they had no plans to remove the elderly diners.

Amtrak Vice President—Marketing & Product Management Emmett Fremaux told NARP this is due to “an increasing incidence of Heritage Diner equipment failures. Efforts to shore up the single-level fleet with Diner overhauls are taking place, but in the short term we made what we feel is the best adjustment to stabilize

the service and allow the Mechanical Department to get ahead of the curve on the Diner issues (addressing both the galley equipment and car/body aspects).” ■

### TRAVELERS’ ADVISORY

**Transit**—Portland Streetcar opened its 0.8 mile extension to SW Lowell on August 17. Boston’s MBTA Greenbush Commuter Rail line (18 miles, Braintree-Greenbush) is scheduled for an October 31 opening. Check [www.mbta.com](http://www.mbta.com) for further updates.

**Amtrak Guest Rewards Double Points Promo**—Earn double points for all Amtrak travel Sept. 17 to Dec. 14. You must register to participate in the program; it’s free and easy at [www.amtrakguestrewards.com](http://www.amtrakguestrewards.com).

**Two Reservation Hold Limit Changes**—Unticketed reservations cancel only after the first train actually departs. If a train scheduled to depart before midnight is running, say, three hours late, you no longer need to rush to the station by 11:59pm to save your reservation.

However, if you are not ticketed and fail to use the first segment of your reservation, the entire reservation will cancel—even if your first segment is short (say, a San Francisco-Emeryville Thruway connecting bus, which you might skip because

a friend drives you to Emeryville). If you are not going to use that first segment, tell Amtrak by phone before departure of your first scheduled train.

**BWI Rail Station Elevators out of service**—Sept. 17 - Nov. 16 for major renovation; southbound platform will not be accessible to passengers who use a wheelchair or require an elevator. Southbound passengers requiring such assistance will detrain at Baltimore’s Penn Station where Amtrak will provide alternate transportation to the BWI Rail Station. Northbound passengers are unaffected by this project.

**New Amtrak Guest Rewards Credit Card**—Chase Bank is accepting applications for the new Amtrak Guest Rewards credit card. Cardholders earn two Amtrak Guest Rewards points for each dollar charged for Amtrak purchases, one point per dollar for all other transactions. Apply at [www.amtrakguestrewards.com](http://www.amtrakguestrewards.com). or by phone at 1-800-385-4995. Full terms and conditions are available on the application.

### NARP In The News

NARP Executive Director Ross Capon is this year’s winner of Railway Age Magazine’s W. Graham Claytor Award for Distinguished Service to Passenger Transportation. Full details about the award are in a news release posted at [www.narprail.org](http://www.narprail.org).

Capon had letters published in the Aug. 27 *Financial Times* and Sept. 24 *Washington Post*. The first responded to an op-ed column by former Sen. Warren Rudman (R-NH) and Felix Rohatyn, “senior advisor to the chairman of Lehman Brothers,” which had defined U.S. infrastructure without including rail. The second noted that *Post* editorials on congested airways failed to mention rail as one part of the solution. Capon also referenced NARP’s 40-year Vision to expand service.

### Amtrak Management *from page 3*

new Group Information Officers, who will be charged with increasing Information Technology collaboration with other departments and will thus be “dotted-line” reports to Chief Operating Officer **Bill Crosbie** and Vice President of Marketing & Product Management **Emmett Fremaux**. ■