

“Our mission hasn’t changed—Amtrak is here to help move people, the economy and the nation forward. With the right investments we can continue to deliver on that mission now and into the future.”

WICK MOORMAN, AMTRAK PRESIDENT AND CEO

Bring the Fight for A Connected America To Your Town

NARP’s staff and Council of Representatives are already preparing for our April 25th Day on the Hill, where advocates from all over the country fly in to represent America’s passengers at the highest level. With a new president and a new congress, it’s crucial that they hear from their constituents demanding investment in a modern, people-focused passenger rail system.

All February, NARP’s leadership and membership have been traveling to the in-state offices of their Congressional Senators and Representatives to press for more investment in new train equipment and fast, frequent service, growing the movement for a strong national network beyond state capitals and Washington, D.C. Now, we need you to join us in taking the next step, and asking your mayors to support better trains and transit—for A Connected America. Go to narprail.org/MyTownMyTrain to build the movement today!

We’re making advocacy easy, with a list of resources, including links to NARP-created

legislative asks, a guide to effective engagement, and a list of rail “shovel-ready” rail infrastructure projects—all available on our Membership Materials page at: narprail.org/our-issues/promotional-materials.

And stay tuned for alerts as NARP continues the march toward April... and beyond!

NARP’s 1-2-3 Guide for Local Engagement

In 2017, we plan to aggressively lay a foundation for our Day on the Hill activities. In the past, NARP’s leadership has traveled to Washington, D.C. to advocate for passenger rail in the U.S. This year we’re asking the entire NARP membership to help initiate these conversations starting now, in your own town, with direct conversations with in-district staffers. By talking with mayors’ offices, you can expand your local network of engaged policymakers to more

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NARP Opposes Job-Killing Regulations Aimed at Texas Train

NARP rallied its members this month in opposition to a draft of job-killing regulations aimed at the private-sector project to connect Houston and Dallas with high-speed trains.

Matching the state’s rapidly growing reputation as an incubator for cutting edge technology, Texas is currently home to one of the most exciting passenger rail projects in the country. Not only would this new rail corridor connect Dallas and Houston via a cutting-edge transportation corridor, served by trains capable of hitting 205mph, the project is being developed



Potential train that could be used in Texas between Dallas and Houston. Photo Credit: Texas Central Partners

by Texas Central Partners, which is helping to introduce a new model for private sector-led

transportation investment to the U.S.

However, a set of misguided bills targeting the project have been filed in the Texas State Legislature. The bills would impose government regulations that restrict certain business activities and investments. Some of the bills even target passenger rail, specifically, creating an uneven playing field on which transportation companies can compete.

“If passed, these bills would deal two blows to Texas. First, by killing 40,000 direct jobs in construction and engineering that would be

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NARP Opposes Another NIMBY Attack on All Aboard Florida

NARP submitted a letter to the heads of Florida's State Legislature opposing two proposed bills that would hamstring rail projects in the state. The bills target All Aboard Florida's Brightline passenger rail project, which will connect Miami, Fort Lauderdale, and Orlando with fast frequent service.

While the bills are being sold as a safety measure, their intent is clear: to attack a private-sector company on behalf of rail opponents who have been unsuccessful in federal and state courts. To use the legislative process to attack one company through punitive and overreaching regulation—while exempting other transportation companies—is unfair to Florida taxpayers who will pay for the additional costs of these new regulations and the years of litigation this bill will surely create.

The bills would also seriously harm the efforts to restore rail service to Florida's Gulf Coast communities, which have been

disconnected since Hurricane Katrina damaged track and stations in 2005.

"There are tremendous benefits this private-sector passenger rail project would bring—not just for the four connected communities—Miami, Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach, and Orlando—but the entire state," wrote NARP in the letter.

"The project will create 10,000 direct construction jobs, and hundreds more permanent operating and maintenance jobs. That will generate over \$650 million in federal, state, and local tax revenue. It will also take three

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An All Aboard Florida Brightline passenger train. Photo credit: All Aboard Florida

Hoosier State Experiment Ends, Some New Amenities Should Remain

Amtrak and the state of Indiana are pledging to retain amenities such as Wi-Fi and business-class seating for the immediate future now that Amtrak has resumed full responsibility for operating the four-times-weekly Hoosier State between Indianapolis and Chicago, resuming full responsibility for operations from Iowa Pacific.

The train returned to an all-Amtrak consist on March 1, as rising costs ended what had been a promising and exciting experiment that saw the train run as a partnership involving Iowa Pacific Holdings, Indiana DOT (INDOT), Amtrak, and the cities of Crawfordsville, Lafayette, and Rensselaer. Iowa Pacific needed more money to keep operating the train, so INDOT decided to revert to Amtrak four months before the deal with Iowa Pacific was set to end.

INDOT spokesman Will Wingfield said in local press reports that Iowa Pacific was "looking for a minimum monthly subsidy that was outside the budget we had. Even under the

existing contracts, their needs were beyond what we had budgeted." Indiana paid Iowa Pacific \$500,000 for its service, while Amtrak got \$3.9 million for operating the equipment.

The Hoosier State suffered from poor on-time performance. Even so, Iowa Pacific's brief time operating the train proved that an operator can successfully drive ridership increases by providing enhanced passenger amenities, such as full-service dining and dome cars. Although some of those amenities can't be offered on the Amtrak service, ridership performance proved that the traveling public wants a better experience and will pay for it. NARP hopes this doesn't end efforts to experiment with new ways to balance a train's financial performance with a satisfying customer experience; solid amenities combined with an on-time service could clearly be a winner.

Train 851 will continue to run north on Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday mornings, with Train 850 operating south on Sunday, Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings. ■

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effectively build the case for investment in passenger trains and transit.

NARP is providing you with the tools, but we need your help doing three things this March:

✓ **Meet with your mayor or their transportation staffer, either in-person or over the phone, to:**

- Keep pressure on your state's delegation in Congress to move on an infrastructure bill, discuss benefits of local shovel-ready rail and transit projects.

- Ask the Mayor to express to your state's delegation how important passenger rail and transit grants are to your community, and to ask the

delegation to support full funding authorized by FAST Act rail and transit grants in FY2018 and FY2017.

✓ **Importantly: communicate significant points of agreement and disagreement back to NARP staff through our online form at: <http://www.NARPrail.forms.org>.**

✓ **Take a photo of yourself visiting + calling your Members of Congress, and post it online using the tag [#MyTrainMyTown](#) and [#AConnectedAmerica](#) (or email it to us at NARP@narprail.org, subject line "My Train, My Town").**

Thank you for all the work you do! ■

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created over four years, and an additional 1,000 permanent jobs in operating and maintenance. The second through the loss of a desperately needed alternative to the overcrowded highways connecting two of the country's fastest growing mega-regions, Dallas and Houston," said NARP Chairman Peter LeCody, who also heads up the Texas Rail Advocates. "On behalf of the millions of Texans who rely on trains, I'm calling on the state legislature to reject these job-killing regulations."

The bills seem to be a response, in large part, to a seriously flawed report released by the Reason Foundation that calls Texas Central's business model into question. Critically, the report relies upon an outdated data set collected by the Texas Department of Transportation—a data set that TxDOT has specifically identified as outdated, stating it cannot be used for comparison purposes. Texas Central also revealed that they have reached out to the study's author to ask him to review "proprietary programmatic information vital to providing him a complete and total picture of the project" (subject to a nondisclosure agreement), and that the author never responded to TCR's inquiries.

"Given these two missteps—the first through a lack of due diligence, the second through an absence of curiosity—it's hard to see this report as a good-faith effort to examine the project on its own merits," said Jim Mathews, President and CEO of NARP. "I'm afraid this is another ideological attack by people offended at the idea of an alternative to highways—any alternative—which is worrying for the hardworking Texans who are regularly stuck in traffic on the heavily congested Interstate 45 corridor."

Even in the face of this misguided opposition, Texas Central is making good progress on design work, engineering, and environmental reviews. The company hit major milestones in land acquisition for construction of the line, with the company announcing in February that it has reached option agreements on about 30 percent of the parcels needed for the line's route.

The company has also been responsive to the concerns of local landowners, who were concerned about earlier attempts to gain access for surveying work through legal methods. Texas Central President Tim Keith stated that the company is "stepping back and going back to conversations and taking some of the heat out of our process," preferring an "open dialogue" with the affected Texans.

NARP is providing opportunities for its Texan members to reach out to their elected officials and safeguard this exciting private-sector rail project from attacks by special interest groups.

Elsewhere: Texas Rail Picks Up Steam Statewide

In addition to Texas Central's Dallas-Houston projects, steps continue to be taken to develop fast, frequent service between South Texas and Monterrey, the capital and largest city of the northeastern state of Nuevo León, in Mexico.

On January 23rd and January 24th, 2017, U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar hosted an international meeting with the Federal Railroad Administration, state and federal agencies, and their Mexican counterparts to determine the possibility of an HSR line between the U.S. and Mexico. The meetings

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Federal Government Delays Grants For Caltrain Electrification

Despite efforts from NARP, as well as all 37 of California's Democrats in Congress and both Senators, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) decided on February 17th that it would withhold \$647 million in federal funding for the Caltrain Peninsula Corridor Electrification Project (PCEP).

In a letter to Caltrain's board, the FTA said it needed "additional time to complete review of this significant commitment of Federal resources." The federal agency plans to make a decision on Caltrain funding after the Trump Administration releases its budget for fiscal year 2018, which begins October 1st. "This decision by the FTA is highly unfortunate and does not consider the financial ramifications that the delay, or completely withholding of funds will have," said NARP President and CEO Jim Mathews, who wrote Department of Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao in February, urging her to fulfill the

Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) for Caltrain.

In addition to NARP's letter on February 14th, California's Congressional Democrats wrote Secretary Chao to emphasize the importance of Caltrain's upgrades in response to a letter from California Republicans that requested the funds be delayed. The February 3rd letter called out the Republicans' January 24th attack for making a "material misstatement of fact" regarding the electrification of Caltrain.

The Republican opponents of the California High-Speed Rail project (CAHSR) requested Secretary Chao to delay federal funding for Caltrain. This is a backdoor into opposing CAHSR because the electrification of Caltrain's Peninsula corridor, which runs between San Jose and San Francisco,

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STATES NEWS • STATES NEWS • STATES NEWS • STATES NEWS

Washington state Governor Jay Inslee included in his 2017-2019 operating budget a new proposal to study the feasibility of high-speed rail between Seattle and Vancouver, B.C. The possibility of a line has been discussed for a number of years, with hopes that people could connect between the two cities at speeds of 250 mph. The feasibility report is due by December 15, 2017.

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Elected officials in Colorado are looking at the possibility of developing a passenger rail line that would span from southern Colorado to Fort Collins. Known as Colorado's Front Range, some lawmakers are pushing Senate Bill 153 in order to study its feasibility. The line will help reduce congestion and connect various rural and urban areas. The bill would also expand a commission that was designed to preserve the existing Amtrak Southwest Chief rail line.

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The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) is set to release a request-for-proposal to study the feasibility, and the planning, of a new passenger line between Traverse City and Ann Arbor. Known as the "A2TC Train," MDOT officials expect to select a firm to begin the study within the next two months. Since 2011, when MDOT developed the Michigan State Rail Plan, a push for a rail line to northern Michigan has gained support due to increased congestion on Michigan's highways and at airports.

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In Roanoke, VA, a new Amtrak boarding platform is starting to take shape as crews began relocating exhibits and the performance stage on the David R. and Susan S. Good Railwalk. The railwalk and its historical and rail-related exhibits run along the train tracks and needed to be moved before construction could begin on a new section of track, and a



A worker begins to take down the stage on the Railwalk on Norfolk Avenue. Photo credit: The Roanoke Times

raised waiting and boarding platform. The exhibits were safely moved to the Virginia Museum of Transportation and will be housed there for 10 months while construction is completed. ■

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would allow the high-speed train to access rail lines in San Francisco.

All 18 GOP members of California's congressional delegation signed the letter to Chao, requesting a hold until a full audit is done on Gov. Jerry Brown's high-speed rail project.

However, the upgrades to the Caltrain corridor have independent utility, and would add capacity and reliability for commuter rail passengers in the near term. Caltrain spokesman Seamus Murphy stated that, "It's critical that we get the funding," and that the project would help create hundreds of jobs and help clean up emissions from the existing transit line.

In his letter, Mathews highlighted that more than "65,000 commuters depend on the Peninsula Corridor every day," and that the electrification of the line also has the ability to create jobs and strengthen domestic manufacturing.

These are key issues the that Trump Administration has pushed recently. According to the Caltrain Modernization Program, the project is estimated to create more than 9,600 total direct and indirect jobs.

The program has also been the driving force for the construction of a new railcar assembly plant in Salt Lake City, which will generate sustainable, family-wage jobs for 550 employees. "Deferral of the decision to execute the (grant) will prevent Caltrain from issuing the notice by this date and may jeopardize the viability of the project itself," Caltrain officials said in a statement.

Recognizing the challenges that CAHSR would face if Caltrain funding

would be delayed, Mathews also wrote a letter to Secretary Chao on February 9th to highlighting the job-creating and economic power of investing in both the CAHSR and Caltrain projects.

"With 119 miles of active construction already underway, the Los Angeles - San Francisco corridor is the most advanced attempt to bring express high-speed rail to the U.S.," Mathews wrote in the February 9th letter regarding the \$64 billion CAHSR project. "Even in its early stages, there is already evidence that CAHSR is spurring economic development, improving performance on environmental and energy-independence goals and creating jobs."

Through its development and beyond, Mathews stressed that the project is estimated to generate, "a total economic return to the state of California of about \$8 billion on its initial \$2.6 billion investment, and the economic development that will take place along the routes will add dramatically to that tally.

The project will create 66,000 new jobs for 15 years as this massive system is built. Each year, the high-speed train will eliminate at least 330,000 metric tons of CO2 emissions."

Mathews also emphasized that if the CAHSR project does not move forward, it's estimated that between \$158 billion and \$272 billion will be spent elsewhere on other transportation projects.

Specifically, California would have to build at least 4,300 miles of new highway, 115 new airport gates and four additional major-airport runways to cope with population growth in the state. ■

NARP Member Benefits

■ If you haven't done so already: claim your Travelers United Advocate Membership, and further broaden the support for consumer focus at <https://travelersunited.org/welcome-narp/>

■ Review the full and growing list of NARP benefits by logging into <https://www.narprail.org/MyBenefits>

Make Plans Now To Attend NARP's Spring 2017 Advocacy Summit & Meeting

NARP's State Representatives & Board; interested members and other rail advocates are preparing to come to Washington D.C., for NARP's Spring 2017 Advocacy Summit & Meeting, April 23-26, 2017. The host hotel is again the Sheraton Hotel in Silver Spring, Maryland.

The Advocacy Summit kicks off on **Sunday afternoon, April 23** with Board of Directors meeting, to be followed by a Welcome Reception, both open to all attendees. Highlights on Monday, April 24 will include advocacy engagement sessions, industry-related presentations and preparation for NARP's 'Day on The Hill'. A prominent lunch speaker will be featured.

On Tuesday, April 25, attendees will travel to Capitol Hill to meet with the members of their Congressional delegation and personally make the case for investing in America's passenger rail system. The 'Day on The Hill' will conclude with the Annual NARP Congressional Reception, where NARP President/CEO Jim Mathews will present NARP's annual Golden Spike Awards and the Dr. Gary Burch Memorial Safety Award.

Wednesday, April 26 will focus on NARP-related business sessions including the election of three Board Directors to serve 3-year terms. Wednesday's lunch will feature a notable closing keynote address.

Registration is NOW open. Early Bird rates are being offered through March 31st. Please visit the NARP event page, <https://www.narprail.org/events/spring-2017-meeting/>, for the most up-to-date agenda, more event information and to register. ■

Important Membership Reminder

■ Please do NOT use any old envelopes, membership renewal forms, or donation requests you may have saved from previous NARP mailings prior to March 2016. These forms and the PO Box address on the old envelopes are no longer in use and your checks or credit card payment submissions will NOT reach NARP. Please only use the new envelopes and renewal/donation forms you receive with our current mailings, which are addressed to: NARP, PO Box 17082, Baltimore, MD 21298-9485. If in any doubt, you may always send checks and other payments directly to our office at: NARP, 505 Capitol Ct, NE, Suite 300, Washington, DC, 20002-7706.

■ There are still openings for state representatives on the NARP Council of Representatives in several states, including one each in Alabama; Arizona; Delaware; Florida; Hawaii; Idaho; Missouri; Nevada; North Carolina; North Dakota; Ohio; South Carolina and Wyoming. If you are interested in becoming more involved with NARP and advancing our goal of 'A Connected America', please visit our website, www.narprail.org under 'About' to 'Leadership' to 'Council of Representatives' to 'Open Seats' for more information on applying and for a complete up-to-date list of the positions available. ■

••• And Save These Dates •••

NARP's 50th Anniversary Celebration – Chicago, IL

- ✓ Thursday, November 2 to Sunday, November 5, 2017
- ✓ Four days packed with an exciting array of presentations, speakers, exhibits, tours, and events
- ✓ Celebrating NARP's accomplishments over the past 50 years and looking ahead to the future of passenger rail in the United States
- ✓ Host Hotel: Millennium Knickerbocker - E. Walton Place at N. Michigan Ave.

Check the NARP Events Page for more information!

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million automobiles off the crowded Interstate 95 corridor. By 2030, Florida will have added six million residents, and the state needs to start expanding infrastructure capacity now.

“NARP also opposes government intervention into how this private

railroad can develop its property, which is currently an active railroad. These bills also blur the lines of federal and state authority with an ambiguous bill that penalizes both freight and passenger rail for doing business in Florida.”

WEB EXCLUSIVE! New R-Line Extension Opens In Denver Metro Area

Transit and elected officials, as well as members of the community, celebrated the opening of a new light rail segment in Denver on February 24th. The occasion capped years of planning, development and construction to complete the Regional Transportation District's (RTD) new R-Line train extension that required 10.5 miles of new track at a cost of \$687 million.

The R-Line now runs for 22 miles from Lincoln Station in Lone Tree to Peoria Station in Aurora, and links together the Nine Mile Station at Parker Road and Interstate 225 to the A and H Lines. The line now

provides simplified connections for Aurora commuters to areas in Denver that once posed a challenge, including the Denver International Airport, the Tech Center and downtown Denver.

The R-Line, which serves 16 stations, is part of Denver's FasTracks Program which is a transit expansion effort that includes the development of 122 miles of passenger rail lines. It also includes 18 new miles of bus service, 21,000 new parking spots at train and bus stations, and enhanced bus services. ■

NARP Board Director Elections

Nominations are now being sought from qualified NARP members interested in being elected to one of three available Board Director posts at the upcoming April Meeting. These positions will be for three-year terms, ending in April 2020. For more information on how you could make a difference as a NARP Board Director, including the specific

duties, responsibilities and required qualifications, go to <https://www.narprail.org/about/leadership/become-a-narp-director/>. If you are interested in seeking a Board Director position, you must complete and submit a Candidate Information Statement (linked from the this webpage) by the March 31, 2017 deadline. ■

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focused on the feasibility of a rail line between the countries, what safety and infrastructure regulations would be required, and if the U.S. and Mexico can both meet government standards for passenger rail service. Cuellar also highlighted how development of a rail line is an opportunity to increase tourism and boost economic development in cities along the line. Although this meeting is an early step in a multi-year process, Rep. Cuellar noted it as an example of how U.S. leaders are looking to work more closely with their Mexican counterparts on new projects.

Additionally, commuters traveling through Dallas/Fort Worth

International Airport will be able to count on a new transit connection. TEX Rail announced last month that a new station will be developed at the airport by construction company Archer Western. The new station will be built for Terminal B at DFW, and will be the last stop of TEX Rail's proposed 27-mile commuter rail project.

The project is designed to connect Fort Worth's downtown area to the airport to help reduce commuting. The new station will cost \$28.5 million, and service is expected to begin next in 2018. It's estimated that the new line will carry 8,000 riders a day in its first year. ■

NARP Traveler's Advisory

- ❖ In Springfield, MA, to accommodate a long-term track work project, several Springfield Shuttle trains will be canceled and bus service will be provided. On weekdays, Trains 470, 490, 493, and 495 will be canceled until May 31, 2017. Trains 476 and 479 will have normal schedules until March 1, 2017. Both trains will be canceled from March 2 through May 31, 2017. In addition, Southbound weekday buses will depart all stations 30 minutes earlier than the respective trains.
- ❖ Effective March 1 through April 5, 2017, eastbound Sunset Limited and Texas Eagle Train 2/422 will operate at 8 pm, two hours earlier from Los Angeles to San Antonio. The train will operate two hours earlier at all stations through its arrival in San Antonio at 2:50 am. Train 2/422 will depart San Antonio at its normally scheduled time of 6:25 am. This temporary schedule change is due to track work being performed by Union Pacific Railroad. *Please note that Train 2/422 will not operate two hours earlier on March 12, 2017. ■