

## NARP Defends FRA, National Network in Testimony

*LaHood, Capon Take On Critics of Administration's Handling of Passenger Train Grants*

NARP Pres. Ross Capon was one of five witnesses at a House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee hearing Dec. 6 called "The Federal Railroad Administration's High Speed Intercity

Passenger Rail Program: Mistakes and Lessons Learned."

Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood went first and vigorously defended the grant program and FRA's approach. FRA funded a number of projects that don't meet international high-speed rail standards, but will result in noticeably better train service in the near term.

He sparred with Chairman John Mica (R-FL), Railroads Subcommittee Chair Bill Shuster (R-PA) and some others who argued that grants should have all gone to the Northeast Corridor.

NARP's Capon praised FRA's handling of the grant awards and the important work funded so far: "Perhaps the most singular lesson

learned is that it takes a federal partner to advance passenger train improvements. In our view, it was essential that a substantial part of the [HSIPR] funds go to upgrading conventional...services. In spite of pleas from the states for over 15 years, federal funds generally have not been available to support state investments in intercity...trains."

Rep. Corinne Brown (D-FL) was one of several Committee members sympathetic to the Administration's approach. She noted Talgo had announced it would close its Milwaukee plant and asked Capon "what we need to do." He said, "If we have more *Downeasters* and more people that have trains in their lives, that makes it much harder to turn [trains] into a partisan issue."

*(continued on p. 3)*



-Voluntary Amputation on Flickr.com

A Portland-bound *Downeaster* arrives Exeter, NH on Jul. 19, 2007. This successful, state-supported service, with five daily round-trips and 519,668 riders in fiscal 2011, celebrated its 10th anniversary Dec. 15.

## Lawrence Depot Upgraded; Kansas Eyes New Service

### Plan Unveiled for Fort Worth-Kansas City Connection

The Kansas Dept. of Transportation released Dec. 1 a Passenger Rail Service Development Plan (SDP) exploring four service expansion options: extensions of the Fort Worth-Oklahoma City *Heartland Flyer* to Newton, KS or Kansas City, a new daytime Fort Worth-Kansas City train and a new Kansas City-Oklahoma City train.

Extending the *Flyer* to Newton, connecting there with the *Southwest Chief*, would cost \$132.5 million in infrastructure improvements to start up, including the cost of engineering and environmental work, and 30% extra for unforeseen contingencies. Zero equipment cost is assumed, as these options use the *Flyer's* locomotives and cars.

A new Fort Worth-Kansas City train  
*(continued on p. 4)*

### Grassroots Effort Brings About Lawrence Station Upgrades

Amtrak dedicated a new 500-foot platform, canopy, exterior lighting and parking lot access Dec. 2 at the vintage 1955 Santa Fe depot in Lawrence, KS, served by the Chicago-Los Angeles *Southwest Chief*.

Funding came from the City of Lawrence and Amtrak, with assistance from the Federal Railroad Administration and station owner BNSF Railway. This followed years of grassroots pressure from local volunteer organization Depot Redux, led by NARP member Carey Maynard-Moody.

Depot Redux has coordinated a team



-Chuck Hatler

City of Lawrence, Amtrak and Depot Redux representatives cut the ribbon on the new platform at the station Dec. 2

of volunteer station hosts to assist passengers. This is particularly valuable as the station is unstaffed and the trains stop at 5:47 AM east and 11:52 PM west.

"Thank goodness for Depot Redux," said Joseph Rago, Amtrak's Philadelphia-based Director of Station Programs  
*(continued on p. 4)*

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Ross B. Capon



The universe of people who believe in the intercity passenger train is diverse. Some think NARP should devote 100% of its efforts to improving

and expanding our conventional passenger network. At the other end of the spectrum are those who consider “high speed rail” (HSR) the only way public policy should go.

There is room in NARP for people whose thoughts fall all along the continuum between those extremes. Day in, day out, we work hard for the maintenance and improvement of existing services.

When special opportunities to support serious high speed rail efforts arise, we are there. Here are two examples.

We had a staff member on the ground in California in the run-up to the 2008 referendum which resulted in approval of the \$10 billion bond issue—\$9 billion to HSR and \$1 billion to conventional.

In 2004, when Doc Dockery was fighting the Florida governor’s effort to undo the constitutional amendment mandating high speed rail, we supported his efforts, though they ultimately were unsuccessful.

Several years ago, a savvy Washington HSR lobbyist observed, “Anyone who thinks HSR is going to be built on the ashes of Amtrak is mistaken.”

Along the same lines, there is growing awareness in the U.S. that high speed rail works elsewhere because it is part of a network that includes conventional rail connections – both local and intercity. In the testimony I presented to the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee on December 6, I noted that 70% of intercity passengers

## All Are Welcome Inside NARP's Big Tent

in France are on non-TGV services.

Today, intense battle lines have been drawn within California about the state’s HSR project. Reasonable people can differ about whether the world is entering an “age of austerity” in which the ability to keep existing transportation running—and maintain our lifestyle—increasingly is in doubt.

But the case for California high speed rail is strong. As I wrote in a letter *The Washington Post* published November 19, California “is projected to have 60 million people by mid-century, up from today’s 38 million. If California tries to meet the transportation needs of those people overwhelmingly with cars and airplanes, the state’s quality of life would be seriously harmed.”

But conventional trains in California are bulging with passengers. Federal grants to expand capacity on short-distance routes are encouraging, but precious little equipment is in the pipeline for the overnight trains and none at all for overnight trains operated with Superliner (bi-level) cars.

Here are some sobering comments from Jeffrey Sachs, director of The Earth Institute at Columbia University, in his Dec. 16 *Financial Times* op-ed: Spending on “education, energy, environment, roads, training, science and much more have been hit hard” by budget cuts since 1980, with worse to come. “According to July’s debt agreement...non-security discretionary programmes will be further squeezed to below 2 per cent of GDP by the end of the decade...Other than war and a few transfer programmes, government programmes are being asphyxiated.” The column is worth reading (subscription required, or visit a public library).

If the “austerity” argument is right, development of conventional rail may be all we can get in the foreseeable future. We will have to work hard even for that. Funding for all forms of transportation is in short supply, and some with limited or no experience with Amtrak

## NARP News

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This has news through Dec. 22.  
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have negative preconceptions about it.

Sooner or later, things will become so desperate that politicians will begin to pay attention to the need to raise the federal gasoline tax. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is already there. As way opens, we must press to earmark part of the increase for intercity passenger trains. Other sources of funding for trains, including the sale of broadcast spectrum and airline ticket taxes are also worth considering.

Years ago, a Transportation Research Board report on High Speed Rail suggested consideration of the air ticket tax as a source of funds for rail projects that could alleviate air congestion. More widespread tolling of highways could help address overall transportation funding needs, possibly including rail. Robust federal funding could leverage private funds, but “robust” means reversing the downward trajectory of federal funding.

We are the National Association of Railroad Passengers. That includes conventional rail (short-, long-distance), high-speed rail and local rail. ■

**Help NARP! Please Enter NARP as your favorite charity at [www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com) and use their search engine**

Rep. Bill Shuster (R-PA) asked the witnesses if Amtrak needs “major reform,” and insisted on one-word, yes-or-no answers. Witnesses Kenneth Orski, Rick Geddes, and NY Transportation Commissioner Joan McDonald said “yes,” while Capon answered “no.” Later in the hearing, Capon said his “no...does not mean I regard Amtrak as a perfect organization.”

Rep. Chip Cravaack (R-MN) asked Capon if he believed FRA was right to “spread the money thinly over numerous projects.”

Capon repeated LaHood’s statement that 90% of the money went to just five corridors, and noted that sending all the money to the Northeast Corridor would not have gone far in addressing that Corridor’s needs.

Capon added, “I can agree that some of the rhetoric that the administration has used does not track...with all of these projects. But that does not mean that the projects are not worthwhile.”

## Federal Grants to Southeast HSR, New Illinois Train

Planning for a Washington, DC-Atlanta high-speed rail corridor and infrastructure improvements leading to new Amtrak service between Chicago and the Quad Cities will begin soon thanks to two High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) grants announced Dec. 12 by Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood.

- **Georgia** gets \$4.1 million for engineering and environmental work on the Atlanta-Charlotte portion of the Southeast corridor, the **District of Columbia** gets \$2.9 million to evaluate alternatives for the replacement of CSX’s Long Bridge over the Potomac River (a 1903-built structure, rebuilt in 1943 and used by VRE commuter trains, all Amtrak trains running south of Washington, and numerous CSX freights).

- **Illinois** gets \$177 million to buy equipment and to build a new Geneseo station and a Rock Island layover facility for service expected to start in 2014. This will employ nearly 2,000 workers starting this spring.

Cravaack emphasized the nation’s fiscal plight, noting that “these trains aren’t going to mean a thing...if we don’t have a viable economy” and the government is “imploding.” He asked Capon, “Where do you see the funding [for trains] coming from?”

Capon mentioned a gasoline tax increase and highway tolling.

Rep. Richard Hanna (R-NY) asked Capon “how you would estimate the value of the pressure [high speed rail] would take off of, say, LaGuardia and Boston and the Thruway, and all the roads in between?”

Responding later for the record, Capon quoted from the TRB’s Airport Cooperative Research Program (ACRP) Report 31, *Innovative Approaches to Addressing Aviation Capacity Issues in Coastal Mega-regions* (2010). This report said high speed rail “could have massive impacts on air passenger demand.” And he cited work on U.K.’s London-North “HS2” project, includ-

The Georgia and DC grants come on top of nearly \$581 million already awarded to the Southeast corridor. Most recently, Virginia got \$44.3 million for environmental analysis and preliminary engineering for Washington-Richmond. North Carolina received \$4 million for environmental and design work for restoring a direct Raleigh-Petersburg line that could reduce Raleigh-Richmond travel time by 90 minutes.

Announced separately Dec. 12 was a \$13.8 million TIGER III discretionary grant to the **City of Alton, IL** to build a new multi-modal transportation center. A Regional Multi-Modal Transportation Center will serve intercity and local buses adjacent to a new Amtrak station on the modernized Chicago-St. Louis corridor.

Alton Mayor Tom Hoechst joined Sen. Dick Durbin, Gov. Pat Quinn, Rep. Jerry Costello and Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel (all D) for the announcement, which also unveiled funds for two Chicago-area transit projects. ■

ing a 2043 forecast that about 11,000 car person trips a day would switch to HS2 and M1 motorway southern section traffic would fall around 1%. ■

Capon’s written testimony is at [www.bit.ly/rosshsipr](http://www.bit.ly/rosshsipr). All written testimony and a video of the hearing are at <http://1.usa.gov/hsiprhng>. The U.K. report is at [www.hs2.org.uk/assets/x/77832](http://www.hs2.org.uk/assets/x/77832)

## Amtrak Leadership Changes

Chief Financial Officer D.J. Stadtler temporarily has assumed the duties of Vice President for Operations. Jeff Geary, who previously held that position, departed Dec. 16.

VP—Transportation Richard Phelps, General Manager—West Bill Duggan, and Central Division General Superintendent Daryl Pesce took voluntary separation offers and left in December.

Thus, Stadtler’s new direct reports include the general manager—East and the West Coast general superintendents as well as the chief engineer and chief mechanical officer. Controller Gordon Hutchinson is handling CFO responsibilities during this period. ■

### Donate Your Old Car to NARP

Call 1-855-NARP-CAR (toll-free) or visit [www.bit.ly/narpcar](http://www.bit.ly/narpcar) to arrange for free pickup of a car, light truck or SUV anywhere in the U.S. Proceeds will support NARP’s work.

### MIDWEST CORRECTIONS

Six Business Café cars are on order for Chicago-St. Louis, two for Chicago-Quincy. Each train will have one Business Café.

By 2014, Chicago-St. Louis running time is to be reduced by 45 minutes, to four hours 45 minutes for five round-trips. Top speed will be 110 mph.

We got these facts wrong in the December *News* print edition (p. 4).



—which would be in addition to maintaining the *Heartland Flyer* as-is—would require \$368.2 million, including infrastructure work, new cars and locomotives, preliminary work and a 30% add-on for contingencies.

An additional scenario would see the nighttime service implemented first, and the daytime service added later.

Any state supported service would need further refinement and much more detailed environmental and engineering work. Ongoing operating grants—not included in the above figures, but estimated at \$4.4 million per year for the *Flyer* extension and \$10 million annually for a new train—also would be needed.

The SDP is the first step towards applying for federal funding for either proposal. KDOT will present it to the state legislature in the 2012 session.

For the past decade, the Northern Flyer Alliance (NFA), headed by NARP Council Member Deborah Fischer-Stout of Overland Park, KS, has undertaken grassroots and legislative advocacy work pursuing a Fort Worth-Kansas



-Northern Flyer Alliance  
**Deborah Fischer-Stout**

City connection.

Fischer-Stout said in an NFA statement: “[KDOT staff told us] no form of transportation pays for itself, so KDOT was shocked to see

how close this project will come to paying for itself through direct benefits only ... No indirect benefits such as economic development were considered in the analysis.”

“Such additional benefits are not allowed in FRA’s standard calculations, but should not be ignored when analyzing overall benefits to society.”

NFA compared the projected costs of both train alternatives to several major highway projects in the region, each costing over \$475 million in federal and state tax dollars from dedicated funding streams that trains can’t get. ■

Read a copy of KDOT’s SDP at [www.ksdot.org/passrail](http://www.ksdot.org/passrail).

[ksdot.org/passrail](http://ksdot.org/passrail). NFA’s Website is [www.northernflyeralliance.org](http://www.northernflyeralliance.org)

**Lawrence**

from page 1



- Chuck Hattler

The new Lawrence platform on Dec. 5.



-Depot Redux  
**Carey Maynard-Moody**

in the Engineering Dept. “Carey Maynard-Moody and her group are great ambassadors for Amtrak.”

Warren Corman and Warren Jones, both graduates of the University of

Kansas in Lawrence, designed the depot. The exterior has changed little since 1955 and the interior retains almost of all its original appointments, furniture and materials. The facility is now Americans with Disabilities Act compliant. ■

**Funds for New Michigan Station Rejected**

The Troy, MI City Council voted 4-3 on Dec. 19 to reject \$8.5 million in TIGER III funds, intended for a new intermodal transportation center.

The project was supported both by Gov. Rick Snyder (R) and the Troy Chamber of Commerce.

But, after a contentious meeting, the majority sided with Mayor Janice Daniels (R), citing concern about the federal deficit. The center was to replace the Birmingham shelter and platform on the *Wolverine* line. ■



**Donald P. Robinson**

Robinson, a passionate advocate for passenger trains who served 20 years on NARP’s Board of Directors/Council of Reps., died Dec. 6 in his hometown of Rockford, IL.

Born in Philadelphia, he lived most of his life in Utica, NY. An electrical engineer with General Electric 33 years, he also was a talented organist. He was in the U.S. Army six years, stationed in Germany.

He had a pro-Amtrak message on his voice-mail. He encouraged everyone he knew to join

NARP, even those who’d never ridden a train. And he rode trains often.



**Repair of ND Builder Route a Step Closer**

To enable Amtrak’s Chicago-Seattle/Portland *Empire Builder* to continue serving Devils Lake, Grand Forks and Rugby, \$97.4 million is needed to raise and rebuild 17 miles of track, including a new bridge at Churchs Ferry, 23 miles west of Devils Lake.

BNSF Railway and Amtrak each have committed \$32.5 million. In December, the state of North Dakota got

a \$10 million “TIGER” grant from the US Dept. of Transportation. (TIGER = Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery)

Sens. Kent Conrad (D-ND) and John Hoeven and Rep. Rick Berg (both R-ND) said, “We will continue to work with the state and our partners to raise the balance, and bring this project through to the finish line.” ■

## Advocates: Pittsburgh Needs More Trains!



-Michael Alexander

**Pittsburgh City Councilwoman Natalia Rudiak addresses reporters in the trainshed of the city's Amtrak (ex-Penn-RR) station on Nov. 22, 2 days before Thanksgiving.**

Western Pennsylvanians for Passenger Rail (WPPR), a grassroots group headed by NARP Council Member Michael Alexander, held a news conference Nov. 22 at Pittsburgh's Amtrak station, while passengers boarded Amtrak's eastbound *Pennsylvanian* and a Norfolk Southern double-stack container train rolled through.

The event was held to press for more frequent service between Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and New York, as well as west towards Chicago—and to underline the inadequacy of current service. Pittsburgh has just one train a day each to New York, Chicago and Washington.

Allegheny County Executive-elect Rich Fitzgerald, Pittsburgh City Councilwoman Natalia Rudiak (both D) and Railroad Development Corp. President (and long-time NARP member and Pittsburgh resident) Henry Posner III spoke to reporters. They were joined by Alexander and NARP Council Members Ken Joseph (PA) and Charles Riecks (WV).

Also present were staff for U.S. Rep. Jason Altmire (D-PA) and State Senate Minority Leader Jay Costa (D-Pittsburgh). Local WPXI (NBC-TV), KDKA-AM (CBS Radio, clear channel) and the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* covered the conference, held the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, a busy travel time.

A WPPR fact sheet was distributed. It had Amtrak statistics for the nation and Pittsburgh, and data demonstrating rail as the "green" mode of transportation and as a potential boost for the Pittsburgh economy. There also was a comparison of Pittsburgh-Philadelphia train, plane and bus service between today and 60 years ago, showing a dramatic decline in travelers' choices. ■

### TRAVELER'S ADVISORY

**Faster *Ethan Allen*:** Thanks to Vermont Rail System trackwork, the trip is shortened by 15 minutes between Ft. Edward and Rutland; all times same south of Ft. Edward. See new schedule at [www.bit.ly/fastethan](http://www.bit.ly/fastethan).

***Texas Eagle* change Jan. 3-Feb. 1:** Due to Union Pacific trackwork, Amtrak will operate a Ft. Worth-Longview "bus bridge" stopping at Mineola and Dallas. All through passengers will have to use bus over that segment. Southbound train will operate Ft. Worth-San Antonio one hour later during this period.

**No *Crescent* south of Atlanta on select dates Jan. 12-Feb. 15,** due to annual

Norfolk Southern trackwork Mon.-Thurs. (Sun.-Wed. New York departure). No substitute buses. Consult [www.bit.ly/uLzhc8](http://www.bit.ly/uLzhc8) for full details.

***Coast Starlight* changes Jan. 3-Feb. 8:** Northbound train 14 operates two hours later Jan. 3-30; will not stop at Richmond; will not connect to train 28 at Portland. Train 14 detours via Tehachapi Feb. 1-8, missing all intermediate stops between Los Angeles and Oakland.

***Cascades* changes Jan. 4-30:** Train 508 (6:15 PM northbound Portland departure) canceled during this period; special train 1514 serves all stations one hour earlier than 508's schedule.

## 40th Anniversary Train Tours California



NARP member David Weisman introduces a visitor to NARP in the Bakersfield, CA station during the Amtrak 40th Anniversary Exhibit Train's Nov. 19 stop there. (Weisman asked a passerby to take this photo.) NARP volunteers have been present at each of the train's 26 stops since May 8, sharing our vision for passenger train modernization with the public and encouraging people to support our work.

After weekends at San Diego and Los Angeles in early December, the anniversary train will head back east, making eight more stops: Fort Worth, Oklahoma City, San Antonio and New Orleans in January; one stop each in Florida and Georgia, Spencer NC and Richmond VA in February and March. The train returns to Washington, DC for National Train Day 2012 (May 12). For more information, visit [www.amtrak40th.com](http://www.amtrak40th.com)



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

## Coming This Year: A Revolution in Amtrak Ticketing, Fare Collection

*“E-Ticketing”: Enhanced Security, More Customer-Friendly Booking, Upgrading*

Amtrak is moving towards electronic ticketing—a much more complex task for Amtrak, with its lack of gate control, than for airlines.

The new system has been implemented on *Downeaster* and *Auto Train*. Next up: *City of New Orleans*, *Capitol Corridor* and *San Joaquins*. If all goes well, systemwide implementation will come before summer’s end.

Conductors will have iPhone-sized handheld devices—unlike larger devices used in a previous test. The new units scan barcodes.

**Passenger benefits:** Passengers can print a boarding document at home, obtain one from an agent or QuikTrak machine, or just display a barcode on their mobile devices.

Instead of needing a separate ticket for each leg of a trip, all legs of a given reservation will be listed on the same boarding document with the same barcode. “Ticketless” passengers won’t have to worry about losing the value contained in a lost paper ticket, or about having to obtain a document before boarding at an unstaffed station.

Reservation changes will be able to be made online or by phone up until the time of departure, even if a boarding document was already printed, and will take station agents less time to make.

Amtrak Guest Rewards members will see points posted faster, and there

will be enhanced on-board recognition of frequent riders.

**Benefits for Amtrak’s bottom line:**

- As paper-ticket volume declines, so will the costs of paying the contractor that processes paper tickets.
- Ability to sell down-line space after a train is under way will be enhanced. The hand-held devices will be linked in real time to the reservation system.
- On trains with lots of multi-ride tickets, Amtrak will for the first time have an accurate passenger count, to better inform decisions about how many individual tickets to sell. For the first time,

**Right: Sample of a print-at-home eTicket for a round-trip between Boston North Station (BON) and Old Orchard Beach, ME (ORB).**

**Below: Sample of an “eTicket Travel Document” issued by a station agent for a Boston-Portland round-trip, with both legs on same ticket.**

Amtrak will know the exact number of passengers on board and their names, enhancing security and allowing faster response to an incident.

- Ridership and revenue figures will be released faster.

