

# **NARPhews**

"These trains connect our major regions, provide vital transportation to residents in rural communities and generate connecting passengers and revenue for our Northeast Corridor and state-supported services."

WICK MOORMAN, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF AMTRAK

# NARP Opposes Trump Administration Budget Outline

**NARP denounced** the White House budget outline released March 16 by the Trump Administration, which slashes investment in transportation infrastructure. These cuts to Amtrak, transit, and commuter rail programs would not only cost construction and manufacturing jobs, but would place a disproportionate amount of pain on rural and working class communities.

The White House budget would lead to a nightmare scenario for people who depend on passenger rail in the United States, from Wall Street to Main Street. The proposal cuts \$2.4 billion from transportation, a 13 percent reduction of last year's funding, and includes:

• Elimination of all federal funding for Amtrak's national network trains, which provides the only national network service to 23 states, and the only nearby Amtrak service for 144.6 million Americans;

- Cuts to \$499 million from the TIGER grant program, a highly successful effort to invest in passenger rail and transit projects of national significance;
- Elimination of \$2.3 billion for the Federal Transit Administration's "New Starts" Capital Investment Program, which is crucial to launching new transit, commuter rail, and light-rail projects.

NARP has organized its members and other members of the broader passenger rail coalition—not just against these cuts, but in support of growing the train service in America. Passengers shouldn't have to settle for the status quo; we need new equipment and investment now!

**NOTE:** You can take part in NARP's campaign at www.narprail.org/action.

"It's ironic that President Trump's first budget proposal undermines the **BUDGET,** p. 6

## **April 2017**

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**Charger Beings Testing** 

# 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 and frequent service.

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 its track and stations in 2005.



A Brightline train pulling through a workshop (Photo Credit: Miami Herald)

The bills have already passed out of committee, and are being sold as a safety measure. However, 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 reg-

ulations and the years of litigation this bill will surely create.

**NOTE:** If you're from Florida, you can take part in NARP's campaign at

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# New Jersey Congressmen Propose Legislation For Train Safety Transparency

**Reps. Donald Payne Jr.** and Albi Sires (D-NJ) introduced legislation calling for greater transparency in train safety audits following last September's fatal train crash in Hoboken, New Jersey. The bill aims to inform the public when a railroad or rail transit agency is under investigation for safety concerns.

"I am pleased to introduce this legislation that will ensure that people know when the railroads they rely on are under investigation for safety reasons," Rep. Sires said in a statement.

If the legislation were to pass, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) would be required to notify lawmakers if they were to conduct safety audits on railroads or related rail transit agencies.

In addition, upon completion of the audit, federal transit agencies would be required to submit a Congressional report detailing the overview of the investigation within 90 days.

Rep. Payne also stated, "We need to make sure that safety audits are transparent in order for Congress to provide effective oversight of rail transit agencies."

Transparency from transit agencies, and the idea of an informed commuting public, is one that the National Association of Rail Passengers supports.

"We agree with and support the notion to provide greater transparency between commuter rail agencies and the passengers they serve on a daily basis," said Jim Mathews, President and CEO of NARP. "In order to provide safe and

secure transportation, we must first give passengers a reason to feel safe, and this legislation is a step in alleviating some of the stresses brought on by recent accidents."

Another important step would be determining how information is disseminated to the public, whether it's through social media channels, on mobile phone apps, or other forms of communication.

The legislation was proposed by Rep. Payne and Sires after a NJ Transit train crashed at the Hoboken Station, killing one woman and injuring 110 passengers and crewmembers. Following the accident, it was revealed that the FRA was auditing NJ Transit due to an increase in safety violations, but the public was not made aware of the violations nor the audit.

# Southern Rail Commission Meets On Gulf Coast

The Southern Rail Commission (SRC) met on Friday, March 3, 2017, in Baton Rouge. I had the distinct pleasure of attending the meeting at the Louisiana State Capitol. The SRC is a state supported coalition of passenger rail service advocates in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama. They have been one of the major forces behind the restoration of Amtrak service to the Gulf Coast, following the suspension of the Sunset Limited east of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

The SRC Commissioners meet quarterly in a public forum to receive updates on services, restoration of services, and potential future services in the region. Amtrak, T4America, and NARP have all been partners with the SRC for the Gulf Coast Service Restoration efforts. Last year's Amtrak Inspection train proved that the region is ready and citizens are eager for this important service to begin – a new service that will provide daily service between New Orleans and Orlando as a

continuation of the City of New Orleans. The Gulf Coast service will connect Chicago and the rest of the Midwest with Florida, without a change of trains on the east coast.

Although no date has been set for service to begin, negotiations between stakeholders to include the SRC, Amtrak, Congressional members, and host railroad, CSX, have been ongoing and positive.

Amtrak VP Mark Murphy was in attendance and presented a letter to SRC President, Greg White, from Amtrak President, Wick Moorman, pledging Amtrak's full support. Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards also joined the meeting to pledge his full support for the Gulf Coast service, commuter service between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, as well as consideration of service along the I-20 Corridor in northern Louisiana that would ultimately connect New York to Fort Worth, Texas via Atlanta and Meridian on Amtrak's Crescent.

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# Amtrak to Improve Customer Experience With Increased Wi-Fi Services

**Over the past year**, Amtrak has been rolling out improved Wi-Fi service for passengers in a pilot program at Baltimore Penn Station and Chicago's Union Station. The new service in Baltimore Penn Station, was part of a large station rehabilitation and replaces Wi-Fi service that was originally put into use in 2010.

"These improvements are a much-anticipated boost for our customers as the wireless connectivity in-station should be similar to what customers experience on their home networks, and will ensure they stay connected throughout their journey," said Executive Vice President of Marketing and Business Development Jason Molfetas said in a press release. "Baltimore Penn is the eighth busiest station in our national network so it was a natural fit to pilot the Wi-Fi improvements to the city's thousands of daily commuters and local students."

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# Public Transit Sees Boost In Major Cities

**In 2016, Americans took** to the open road and busy city streets in their cars for a total of 3.22 trillion miles driven. This is an increase from 3.1 trillion in 2015, and represents a 2.8 percent increase, according to data from the Federal Highway Administration. Despite the rise in driven miles, public transit ridership saw a substantial boost in several metropolitan cities like Seattle, Houston, and Milwaukee.

Last year marked the fifth consecutive annual increase in miles driven across the U.S, and this trend can be traced to two factors: Relatively steady gas prices and a stron-

ger, growing economy.

According to AAA, the national average for the price of gas sits at \$2.28 per gallon, which is about 12 cents cheaper than in 2015. Additionally, the combination of a low unemployment rate and the rise of discretionary income, indicates that consumers are more willing to buy new cars, and drive, rather than using public transit.

While more drivers on the road reflects positive signs for an improving

U.S. economy, it also illustrates the complications associated with more drivers. It has perpetuated significant congestion across cities and highways, increased risk of accidents and fuel consumption, and reduced overall productivity.

The TomTom traffic index recently concluded that congestion around the U.S. was two to four percent higher than in 2015. When looking at Los Angeles for example, which is ranked as the most congested city in the U.S. in terms of traffic, trips take an average of 44 minutes longer when compared to free flowing traffic.

Even though the U.S. overall saw a significant rise in miles driven, Seattle's public transit thrived, experiencing a 4.1 percent boost - providing nearly 150 million additional rides in 2016. Light rail ridership on Sound Transit jumped 66 percent in 2016, with

the addition of two new stations. In downtown Seattle, mass transit accounts for a whopping 70 percent of commutes, which was calculated after 45,000 new jobs were added to the area.

This highlights a major aspect of the study, "Who Rides Public Transportation," which was recently released by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). APTA surveyed 700,000 passengers between 2008, and 2015. Data showed that roughly 90 percent of public transportation has a positive

impact on the economy by connecting people to jobs, retail, and entertainment promoting consumerism across the country. The study found that 49 percent of passengers used public transit to get to work, 21 percent to shop, and 17 percent for "recreational spending."

Unfortunately, national public transit ridership data illustrates declines across the country. According to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), more people have opted out of using their available local public transportation, where ridership only increased in six of

the nation's 30 largest metropolitan areas. Cities like Dallas, Miami, and San Jose displayed a five percent decrease from 2015 to 2016.

The most notable decline in public transportation falls to Washington D.C. The city can take credit for causing the majority of the overall decline across the country. Ridership in the nation's capital fell an eye-popping 15 percent, losing 45 million passengers between 2015, and 2016. This decline overshadowed small gains in public transit use in other cities. Performance issues and poor train maintenance forced the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) to suspend portions of its service for an extended time as it made repairs during a safety surge dubbed "SafeTrack."



People wait to board a Sound Transit light-rail train (Credit: Sound Transit)

# **STATES NEWS • STATES NEWS • STATES NEWS • STATES NEWS**

A 3-mile "North-South" rail tunnel that would link North and South stations for the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority is gaining momentum. Transportation officials have been soliciting bids for the tunnel to create a fully connected rail route between D.C. and Maine. The study will provide officials with a technical and financial analysis for the project. The study is expected to cost \$2 million and take up to eight months.

#### Rail Advocates in New York State's

Southern Tier have formed a group to explore the feasibility of returning passenger rail service to Binghamton, Elmira, and Corning. Service would likely be an extension of long-sought,

restored trains operating from New York City to Scranton, PA, through New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The group hopes to raise \$100,000, to fund an economic feasibility study for the service. Visit www.urbancorning.com for more information.

Officials of the M-1 Rail in Detroit, MI, announced this week that the city's new QLINE will officially begin service on May 12,



A Q-Line streetcar from M-1 Rail in Detroit, MI. (Photo Credit: Detroit Free Press)

2017. Testing of the train continues, but officials are eager to return streetcar service to the city and welcome people and businesses to take part in the launch. The event will take place at the Penske Technical Center featuring local officials and dignitaries followed by an inaugural ride down Woodward Avenue.

# Two New Reports Highlight Progress For PTC Implementation

**The implementation** of the life-saving technology, Positive Train Control (PTC), has continued to make progress on passenger rail lines. According to two, new, separate reports from the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), passenger rail lines have seen a slight increase in installing the technology between the third and fourth quarters of 2016.

Based on membership data and reports from the FRA, APTA reported that 23 percent of 3,150 passenger route miles are either in service with PTC or are in full PTC demonstration mode and are awaiting approval. The FRA released its own findings, which showed that PTC was active on 24 percent of tracks required to be equipped the technology. Both data points represent a one percent increase from the previous quarter.

"The commuter rail industry continues to make significant progress in implementing positive train control," said Richard A. White, APTA Acting President and CEO, in a press release. "The progress on this complex safety technology demonstrates the industry's relentless focus on safety."

NARP has long been a supporter of commuter rail lines installing PTC, recognizing the critical safety benefits that the technology provides. NARP has called on Congress several times over the past decade to move forward with PTC - most



In June 2015, Southern Calif.'s Metrolink launched PTC in a Revenue Service Demonstration across the entire 341-mile network the agency owns. (Photo Credit: Metro Magazine)

recently in February 2015, when the association urged Congress to extend the original deadline.

"Utilization of PTC is incredibly important for commuter rail lines and it will help increase safety for passengers, as well as employees operating the trains and at stations," said NARP President and CEO Jim Mathews. "We cannot stress enough



# **NARP Member Benefits**

- If you haven't done so already: claim your Travelers United Advocate Membership, and broaden 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. ■

## It's Not Too Late To Register For **NARP's Spring 2017 Advocacy** Summit, 'Day on The Hill' & Meeting

There has never been a more critical time to make your voice heard and to take part in NARP's Spring 2017 Advocacy Summit, 'Day on The Hill' & Meeting, April 23 -26, 2017. The host hotel is the Sheraton Hotel in Silver Spring, Maryland.

The Summit kicks off on Sunday afternoon, April 23, with a Board of Directors meeting, followed by a Welcome Reception, both open to all attendees. Monday, April 24, will include advocacy engagement sessions, industry-related presentations and preparation for NARP's 'Day on The Hill'. On Tuesday, April 25, attendees will travel to Capitol Hill to meet with members of their Congressional delegations 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. Wednesday's lunch will feature a notable closing keynote address.

**Registration is STILL open.** 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; Florida; Hawaii; Idaho; Missouri; Nevada; North Carolina; North Dakota; Ohio; Pennsylvania; Virginia (2 seats) 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.

# ••• Save These Dates •••

## NARP's 2017 Passenger Rail EXPO & 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.

## **NARP's DC Office Is Moving**

To better serve our members and reach our goal of 'A Connected America,' NARP's DC office will be moving to new facilities in mid-May. Located adjacent to Washington Metro's Metro Center Station, the new headquarters will be in a modern, fully-accessible building and will feature a multi-function conference room; work space for

volunteers and vastly improved communication & technology

NARP's office phone number will not change. The new address will be 1200 G Street, NW, Suite 240, Washington, DC, 20005. Watch for notification of the actual move date in May.



#### **BUDGET,** p. 2

very communities whose economic hardship and sense of isolation from the rest of the country helped propel him into office," said NARP President Jim Mathews. "These working class communities—many of them located in the Midwest and the South—were tired of being treated like 'flyover country.' But by proposing the elimination of Amtrak's long distance trains, the Trump Administration does them one worse, cutting a vital service that connects these small town economies to the rest of the U.S. These hard working, small town Americans don't have airports or Uber to turn to; they depend on these trains."

"What's more, these proposed cuts come as President Trump continues to promise that our tax dollars will be invested in rebuilding America's infrastructure," continued Mathews. "Instead, we have seen an all-out assault on any project—public and private—that would advance passenger rail. These cuts and delays are costing the U.S. thousands of good-paying construction and manufacturing jobs in America's heartland at this very moment."

Long distance rail routes open up enormous economic development opportunities, which the Administration's proposal ignores or casts aside. At a minimum, the proposed White House



elimination of long distance routes would result in 225 towns and cities losing all Amtrak service.

#### **MEETING,** from p. 2

A special presentation was also made by NARP member Bruce Ashton of San Antonio, Texas. The SRC understands the regional implications of these new services and is working to include neighbor states in the discussions.

Bruce updated the SRC on NARP goals in Texas which include a Daily Sunset Limited campaign, looking at commuter service between Austin and San Antonio, and support for Texas Central Rail's (true) high speed service between Houston and Dallas.

The SRC meets quarterly, rotating between member states. The next meeting will be in June in Wetumpka, Alabama. More information on Gulf Coast service restoration efforts and the SRC can be found at www.southernrailcommission.org.



**L-R:** Jerry Gehman (Commissioner from AL), Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards, SRC President Greg White (AL). Location: Governor's Press Room, Louisiana State Capitol

#### PTC, from p. 4

that this technology could prevent accidents and save lives."

The FRA report noted that the one percent increase for commuter rail lines is heavily associated with Amtrak's efforts to install PTC. Amtrak has been able to implement the technology on 41 percent of its locomotives, up 12 percent from third quarter 2016. "We continue to closely monitor railroads' progress implementing Positive Train Control," said Patrick Warren, FRA Executive Director. "With less than two years remaining to complete the implementation process, it is imperative that railroads continue to meet implementation milestones."

Data from the APTA member survey, which was collected through December 31, 2016, also showed:

• 30% of the 3,400 locomotives and cab cars are installed with PTC hardware;

- 40% of the 35 back office control systems are ready for operation;
- $\bullet$  70% of spectrum has been acquired and 50% of the 1,000 radio towers have been erected;
  - 24% of the 13,000 employees have been trained in PTC; and
- 19% of commuter rail agencies were 100% PTC equipped by the end of 2016.

The implementation of PTC originally had a deadline set by Congress for the end of 2015, but commuter and freight rail lines were not able to meet the deadline due to logistical and financial challenges. PTC installation for commuter rail is estimated to cost more than \$3.5 billion, yet only \$650 million has been provided by Congress to supplement costs.

In light of these challenges, Matthew Rose, executive



#### **NIMBY**, from p. 1

### www.narprail.org/action.

"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 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 Organizes Against Job-Killing Regulations Aimed At Texas High-Speed

NARP is calling on leaders in the Texas State Legislature to reject a draft of job-killing regulations aimed at the private-sector project to connect Houston and Dallas with high-speed trains.

Reinforcing the state's rapidly growing reputation as an incubator for innovative technology, Texas is moving forward on one of the most exciting passenger high speed rail projects in the country. The new rail corridor, being developed by Texas Central Partners, will connect Dallas and Houston by trains capable of hitting 205 mph, and will introduce a new model for private sector-led transportation investment in the U.S.

However, a set of misguided bills targeting the project has been filed in the 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.

The Senate Finance Committee has already approved a

provision in the proposed two-year state budget prohibiting the Texas Department of Transportation from directing any funds towards planning, building, or operating the project, by a 14-1 vote.

"Texas Central engineers and employees need to be able to coordinate with TxDOT on the planning, engineering, and construction of the high-speed train to accommodate the state's growth," Texas Central Partners responded, emphasizing that the company would cover all costs associated with the actual construction of the line, but pointing to state permitting and review roles required by law. "By adding this rider, it creates vague and ambiguous questions about roles and responsibilities between the project and TxDOT that could put the project at risk."

**NOTE:** If you're from Texas, you can take part in NARP's campaign at www.narprail.org/action.

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

Even in the face of this 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, announcing in February that it has reached option agreements on about 30 percent of the parcels needed for the route.

#### WI-FI, from p. 3

For passengers constantly on the go, Amtrak focused on improving internet service on its trains in 2016. In the fall, Acela Express trains were the recipients of next-generation Wi-Fi solutions that are six times faster than previous services. In the spring, Amtrak increased access of its free cellular-based Wi-Fi service, AmtrakConnect. The service is now available to customers on multiple eastern and northeastern regional trains, including The Cardinal, Crescent, Lake Shore Limited, and Silver Service.

In 2017, Amtrak announced that *The Washington Post* will be the exclusive news provider on all Amtrak WiFi networks in the Midwest and the Northeast Corridor. Free news content from the Post was previously only available to customers on Acela Express trains, but Amtrak expanded the service to help improve the customer experience.

To use any of Amtrak's free internet services at stations or



Passengers use Wi-Fi at Baltimore Penn Station (Credit: Amtrak)

on trains, customers can select AmtrakConnect on their mobile devices or laptop computers.



# WEB EXCLUSIVE! New Siemens Charger For Amtrak Begins Testing

**Amtrak service** throughout the country is one step closer to providing passengers with an upgraded ride. Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and Amtrak are currently testing the new Siemens SC-44 Charger on the Amtrak Cascades corridor between Vancouver, British Columbia and Eugene, OR. After testing is completed and the locomotive has passed all requirements, it will receive a national certification.

"The Chargers will provide a much needed upgrade to Amtrak train service along the Amtrak Cascades, but it won't stop there," said Jim Mathews, NARP President and CEO. "We will see these new locomotives in use in the future in Illinois, California, Michigan, and Missouri."

The new Chargers, at 4,400-horsepower, were developed as part of a multi-million dollar contract that includes 32 locomotives, split between each state. WSDOT has ordered eight Chargers which are under construction at the Siemens plant in Sacramento, CA, as part of its \$800 million federally-funded Cascades High-Speed Rail Program. WSDOT expects to receive its Chargers in April.

### **PTC**, from p. 6

chairman of freight rail company BNSF, spoke in front of Congress earlier this year to encourage the government to provide additional funding. "As a freight railroad, it may sound out of line, but I actually urge Congress to fund passenger commuter rail funding for positive train control," Rose stated at a

Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation subcommittee hearing. "I can't imagine a more difficult train wreck for us to have to go to where we have the positive train control on the freight rail, and the passenger or commuter train didn't because of lack of funding."

# NARP Traveler's Advisory

- Effective through September 2017, to accommodate a long-term track work project in Massachusetts, several Springfield Shuttle trains will be canceled and bus service will be provided, as described below:
- Weekdays: Trains 470, 490, 493 and 495 will be canceled Monday through Friday until September 29, 2017. Passengers will be provided bus service at all stops on the route.
- Weekdays: Trains 476 and 479: Trains 476 and 479 will be canceled on weekdays from February 27 through September 29, 2017. Passengers will be provided bus service at all stops on the route.
- Weekday Southbound Buses Depart 30 Minutes Earlier: Southbound weekday buses will depart all stations 30 minutes earlier than the respective trains. ■