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CLAIRE BOWEN, WASHINGTON STATE COUNCIL MEMBER ALTERNATE AND BOARD MEMBER, ALL ABOARD WASHINGTON

Congress Passes Transportation, Budget Bills

For the first time in a decade, Congress successfully passed a long-term surface transportation bill, the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, which was signed by President Barack Obama on December 5. Then on December 16, Congress revealed -- and passed -- an omnibus budget bill to keep the government funded in 2016, including \$57.6 billion for transportation.

NARP Vice President Sean Jeans-Gail went through all 1,300 pages of the FAST bill to analyze each section, including provisions targeting the Amtrak’s National Network, the Northeast Corridor, the Gulf Coast restoration project, rail infrastructure and safety improvement, restoration and enhancement grants, composition of the Amtrak board, and route and serving planning decisions, among other items.

While the final bill was not perfect, it did authorize \$10.36 billion for rail projects—but not the dedicated funding NARP had sought for Amtrak. It also included \$199

million for Positive Train Control technology in FY 2017.

Jeans-Gail also studied the 2000-page budget bill here. Highlights include flat-funding Amtrak at \$1.39 billion (\$288.5 million operating, \$1.1 billion capital), while the FAST Act provided \$1.45 billion for Amtrak, \$98 million for rail infrastructure and improvements, \$82 million for rail state of good repair, and \$20 million for rail restoration grants. It also provides \$500 million for National Infrastructure Investment grants (a new name for the TIGER program).

The omnibus bill provides \$50 million in rail safety grants—\$25 million for railroad safety infrastructure improvements, and \$25 million in railroad safety technology grants to help railroads fund installation of the life-saving Positive Train Control technology.

The budget provides \$2.18 billion for the New Starts grant program, which has been an important force in incubating new

October 2015

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light rail and commuter rail systems around the U.S. And finally, the omnibus provided \$350 million for railway-highway grade separation in FY 2016. ■

NARP Targets Priorities for 2016

2015 was a big year for NARP, as it racked up some major victories, including rail-specific provisions in the newly passed transportation bill, the Supreme Court vacating a case to establish metrics and standards for Amtrak, pushing our “A Connected America” vision, working with membership on rail issues at the grassroots level and expanding our Millennials Campaign. The association also changed its banks, its website and its membership management system.

The NARP staff is ready to do even more in 2016. CEO and President Jim Mathews noted that thanks to the continued loyalty and backing of members nationwide, the association enjoyed legislative success at a level it hadn’t seen in decades. “NARP members helped to fend off House attacks on Amtrak six separate times. Our D.C. staff took a meaningful role alongside Senate staff in shaping its version of rail authorization, and our efforts helped to get the rail bill

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NARP President and CEO Jim Mathews

• • • M E M B E R S P O T L I G H T • • •

Claire Bowen: The Next Generation of NARP Membership

Claire Bowen, age 17, can't remember a time when she wasn't a NARP member. She is the daughter of Council Member Harvey Bowen, serves as a Washington state council member alternate and serves on the board of All Aboard Washington (AAWA).

"My father got us a family membership a long time ago and that has covered me. I decided to get more involved [with NARP] because I was elected to the board of AAWA and I was interested in what NARP was doing, said Bowen.

Bowen attended the Spring Meeting with her father after hearing about it from fellow AAWA board member Stephanie Weber, who is also the official Council Member for Washington. "She needed an alternate and asked for volunteers from our organization at the monthly meeting in January," she recalled. "My family was already going to be on the East Coast and I only missed a little school," she said. "I enjoyed the visiting with Congress people and their aides and learning about what was going on with NARP, so when I was offered the chance to be the alternate for Weber again for the Fall Meeting, I look forward becoming an actual council member once I turn 18 and am allowed." Things have been busy in Washington state. "AAWA's board members got an email from Executive Director Lloyd Flem about the Eastside rail line. He said the King County Council voted to rip up what is left of those tracks, even though they had said they would wait until at least January before making a decision," she said. "So many of us voted to have AAWA co-sign a letter to key legislators and others to try to postpone that destruction."

Mudslides and speed restrictions in the state are also a problem, both of which impact on-time performance and thus, rail likability, said Bowen. "They are already being addressed in part by [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act] money, but still are a problem. In fact, there was a mudslide south of Tacoma that made it so members north of Tacoma couldn't get to the monthly AAWA meeting by train," she said.

In general, AAWA isn't as concerned about preventing the removal of rail service as it is with the expansion of service, said Bowen. "For example, we are concerned about the lack of reasonable service to and from Eastern Washington. We have just the Empire Builder right now between Seattle and Eastern Washington, which could theoretically be a source of income from college kids that go home on holidays. Except that it only departs at 12:45 a.m. eastbound and 1:30 a.m. westbound," she said. "We are hoping to get a daytime train from Seattle to Spokane and a restoration of service to Eastern Washington through Stampede Pass in the future, but that isn't likely to happen very soon."

Bowen was among those who moderated a session at the Fall Meeting about Millennials and rail. "One of the major problems with passenger rail recently is that the groups of people who are very interested in rail are mostly older people. This is a problem not only because it can make legislators think that it isn't as important, but also because it means that those people who vocally support rail are dying faster than those who are becoming supporters," she said. "It is important to have more people my age involved not only because it means that there are more people involved, but also because it gives the impression to legislators and voters that rail is something that everyone wants, not just people who are enamored with the golden age of rail." "And having more young adults involved mean that fresh ideas can be brought into the organization and it can continue to be a thriving organization even as members grow old and are unable to participate," said Bowen.

Getting involved with NARP isn't as hard as it seems, said Bowen. "You could try going to one of the fall membership meetings to get a feel for how the organizational side of NARP works, if you are interested in that kind of activity, or you could try the Spring Meeting if you want to talk to legislators," she said. "Or if that is beyond your capabilities, you could send letters to your legislators, both local and national, or try to raise awareness in your community. There are really so many things you could do. It's just deciding what kind of thing you want to do." For more information on volunteering, go here: <http://narprail.org/get-involved/volunteer/>



NARP member Claire Bowen


NARPnews

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This issue has news through December 21, 2015.
Vol. 50, No. 1 was mailed December 24, 2015.

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In the Community: NARP Members Support Extended Rail Service in Northern California

A \$225 million project to extend rail service between Sacramento and Roseville, California -- the Third Track Project -- is a step closer after the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority (CCJPA) released its Final Environmental Impact Report.

In December 1991, the Capitol Corridor intercity passenger rail service began between Sacramento and Oakland, later expanding down to San Jose. In 1998, CCJPA took over management of the Capitol Corridor service, contracting with Amtrak to provide passenger rail services and associated bus feeder services. The CCJPA trains travel on tracks owned by Union Pacific.

Since then, CCJPA has grown into the third-busiest intercity rail service in the country, with 32 trains operating daily



PHOTO/Map of project

over 170 miles of track between San Jose and Sacramento, with additional service to Auburn. The Capitol Corridor's passenger ridership has grown from 463,000 in 1998 to 1,746,397 in 2012.

But as the economy continues to recover, traffic congestion is growing. California transportation agencies, both on the state and regional level, understand the importance of expanding passenger rail services as an alternative to automobile transportation.

NARP member Chuck Robuck, who has also served on the board of Rail Passenger Association of California & Nevada and lives in the region, said that RailPac strongly recommends that the Third Track Project **EXTENDED SERVICE**, p. 5

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included for the first time in 40 years in an overall surface-transportation measure," he said.

Mathews travelled to more than a dozen states building a coalition of significant grassroots support from mayors, metropolitan planning organizations and local officials for investment in the Southwest Chief, new service east of New Orleans and critical Northeast Corridor infrastructure projects. "What was the proof of the power of coalition building? Public statements both in committee meetings and on the Senate floor by key Republicans strongly advocating for our agenda -- by name," he said.

Meanwhile NARP has worked hard in the D.C. office to raise the bar on its internal processes. "We have upgraded our membership database with a new vendor, upgraded our website, brought in media and communications professionals at key moments, revamped and modernized our accounting structures, re-examined all of our vendor relationships, boosted attendance to record levels at our annual meetings by opening them up to the wider public and secured important financial support that will enable us to continue our work on a sound footing for the future," said Mathews. "And despite some lingering damage, we've weathered a storm sent our way by the U.S. Postal Service, which shut down our conduit for receiving member revenues for nearly five months due to a technical glitch that has since been repaired."

In 2016, Mathews intends to focus the slim, but hardworking NARP staff even more on grassroots and coalition building in the wake of its successes in 2015. "We will be even more visible on the road in 2016. We will begin planning in earnest for an even bigger and better Fall meeting -- this time, in Denver," he said.

With the passage of the FAST Act, NARP now can turn its

attention to grassroots outreach across the national network to ensure that passenger advocates, mayors and state and local officials are educated on how to best take advantage of the various programs targeted at expanding rail, said Vice President Sean Jeans-Gail.

"One of the first opportunities will come when NARP travels to California to hear from local officials and NARP members about what passenger rail investments they believe the Golden State need to thrive in the 21st century," said Jeans-Gail. "On the top of the list is sure to be maintaining momentum on the California high-speed rail project and ensuring transit is able to grow its market-share in the famously car friendly state."

Looking ahead, to celebrate NARP's upcoming 50th anniversary, the association is setting its sights on a landmark public convention and conference in Chicago in October 2017 under the theme, "The Next 50 Years of Passenger Rail."

"We will be launching an annual program this winter to award small grants for proposals on special research, advocacy and planning projects that will help to advance our vision of 'A Connected America,'" said Mathews. "And I'm kicking off a new membership drive to bring in Millennials, young professionals and students in record numbers.

All of NARP's achievements and victories in 2015 were boosted by the contributions of our members. Your donations and volunteer efforts had a direct effect on almost everything we touched during the year, and we urge you to continue those efforts in 2016.

"Over the long term, NARP should have at least 100,000 members nationwide to amplify the voices of all of our citizens who support passenger rail as one of the most effective economic engines ever devised," said Mathews. ■

• • • STATES NEWS • • •

Moody's Investor Services has cast doubt on the ability of the state of New Jersey to come up with its share of the \$20 billion needed to build new rail tunnels under the Hudson River. The state has exhausted its current transportation funding resources and will need to identify new revenues or significantly cut costs to issue debt," said the report. "Although the states have yet to identify specific funding sources, their contributions will ultimately be borne by taxpayers and transportation users in the New York City metropolitan area. Additionally, at least a portion of Amtrak's cost is likely to be paid by riders."

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An independent media analyst examined claims by opponents of the California High Speed Rail that the project has been abandoned by the private sector, and found them to be baseless. Politifact analyzed California Assemblyman Jim Patterson's (R-Fresno) statement that the California High Speed Rail Authority has "failed to disclose huge cost overruns and after they boasted private firms were interested in funding this project, we now know these firms are unwilling to put up any private money." After interviewing industry leaders such as AECOM and Siemens, Politifact determined the statement was "mostly false," containing some element of truth but ignoring critical facts.

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First New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio agreed to a plan by MTA to slash \$1 billion from its capital budget by nixing a project for a Second Avenue subway, reports WNYC radio. But then de Blasio joined a dozen state and city lawmakers to pressure the MTA to restore the funding. The project would have paid for digging the tunnel north from the Upper East Side to 125th Street in East Harlem. The agency said the decision was a practical one because it would not have been able to award that contract within the capital program period, which ends in 2019.

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Back in August, NARP President and CEO Jim Mathews wrote a blog post praising Jill Meyer, the then-new CEO of the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber, on her stance supporting the city's new streetcars. "The worst thing that can happen, however, is for the streetcar to fail. I know people outside of the city core think it's an extravagant amount of money for one part of the city. But it can be looked at as a first piece of a larger aspiration of making multi-modal transportation an integral part of this area," she said in an interview with the Enquirer. And now the streetcars are arriving in Cincinnati, reports the Enquirer. A 77-foot, 76,850-pound streetcar vehicle took a two-day, nearly 600-mile journey from the manufacturing plant in Elmira Heights, New York. The city expects to take delivery of four other streetcars by the end of February 2016 and the system will officially open to the public on September 15, 2016.

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Minneapolis city officials are questioning what numbers were



Image courtesy of the city of Cincinnati

being used to justify proposed cuts to the Southwest Light Rail Transit project, reports MinnPost. The Metropolitan Council, which oversees public transportation among other things, is looking to slash the budget for a \$1.7 billion extension of the Green Line.

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NARP member John James used an editorial on NPR station KJZZ to make the case of why intercity rail service should stop in Phoenix. "In Arizona we are lucky to have not one but two transcontinental trains serving our state. But there is a challenge with Maricopa. There is no scheduled way to go from the train station to central Phoenix," he wrote. "Amtrak has connecting bus service from the Sky Harbor Airport bus station to Flagstaff -- a distance of over 147 miles -- to meet the daily East and West-bound Southwest Chief, but no options connecting to Maricopa."

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NARP member Thomas A. Kenefick III made the case for expanding Amtrak east/west rail service in Massachusetts in a letter to the editor of MassLive.com. "I have long advocated expanding similar rail service to Springfield -- either by way of Amtrak's inland route or extending the "T" to Springfield. Why there has not been an overwhelmingly strong legislative demand for this expansion of service is incomprehensible in light of the fact that similar needs would be served as those met by the Worcester expansion," he wrote.

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And NARP Council Member Barry Green called on Congress to invest in connecting people, not in paving roads in an op-ed in the Billings Gazette. "Our country is at a crossroads with our transportation needs as a U.S. House/Senate Conference Committee reconciles the differences within the Surface Transportation Bill, H.R. 22, known as the DRIVE Act. In Montana, passenger rail service in the form of Amtrak provides a very important means of public transportation for an aging population, those that have medical needs and limited transportation options and also provides an economic benefit to tourist destinations within the state." ■

NARP Thanks Amtrak President Joseph Boardman For His Service

Amtrak President Joseph Boardman in December announced his retirement, effective September 2016. Upon the announcement, NARP issued a message of thanks and congratulations on his decades of service to the rail industry.

We have worked with Boardman from his days as head of the New York State Department of Transportation, through his service as chief of the Federal Railroad Administration, to his nearly eight-year stewardship of Amtrak.

“We don’t see eye-to-eye on every issue, but Joe has always been willing to listen to passengers and respect their right to have a voice in the process,” said President and CEO Jim Mathews in our press release. “NARP has greatly valued working with an Amtrak president who understands that for the railroad to thrive, it needs to be a national service, and that long distance trains are—as



Amtrak President Joseph Boardman

Joe said himself—the ‘backbone’ of America’s national network.”
 “[National Network trains] are vital to the communities and people they serve, and increasingly important as airlines and bus

companies abandon significant regions of America,” said Boardman in an April 2014 meeting with mayors. “We see the characteristics of our population are changing... people are coming back to the centers of cities. But they need to get between the metropolitan areas. That’s what intercity rail is about, that’s what Amtrak’s about. We connect the country border to border, coast to coast.”

“As Amtrak begins the process in selecting its next president, we will encourage its board to focus on candidates who are committed to a policy of national expansion and modernization,” added Mathews. “The U.S. is expected to add 100 million people by the year 2050. To accommodate that growth, Americans will need to be able to count on a strong and resilient Amtrak.” ■

NARP Members Celebrate All Aboard Florida’s Brightline Train Unveiling

NARP Members Stephen Sayles and Bill Hutchison attended a party held by All Aboard Florida at the Perez Art Museum in November to celebrate the group’s newly named Brightline train.

The party featured a set of rails and ties under the feet of guests, along with hedges that grew hands holding margaritas and an array of high-end foods. But the real reason for all the excitement was the train itself, with a laser light show and banners to unveil Brightline, what All Aboard Florida says depicts a new fun and practical way to travel.

Sayles and Hutchison caught up with Russell “Rusty” Roberts,

All Aboard Florida’s vice president of government affairs, letting him know that the Florida Coalition of Rail Passengers and NARP was behind them. “This is going to go a long way in promoting rail not only throughout Florida but the country as well,” said Sayles. After asking if Brightline would go to Tampa, Roberts didn’t want to discuss it in detail, but indicated they were quietly working on just that.

The first three train sets will speed between the Miami-West Palm corridor. Not long after, the last leg that will head into the Orlando Airport. It was a memorable evening with high expectations for all involved where the future looks bright running on rails.. ■

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 be extended to Rocklin.

In an email he sent to Placer County Supervisor Jim Holmes about the extension, he noted the following: the extension adds only four miles to the already proposed 17 miles of third track proposed between Sacramento and Roseville; there appears to be significant existing Union Pacific right-of-way between Roseville and Rocklin, and the terrain between the two cities is relatively flat, reducing the time and cost of extending the track to Rocklin; the project would

attract many more commuters from the Sierra Foothills because Rocklin is much more accessible than getting to the station in Roseville, which is a very circuitous, time-consuming route; and ending the extension in Rocklin rather than Roseville would allow drivers trying to get to the train to avoid the Highway 65/I-80 Interchange, one of the biggest bottlenecks in Northern California.

The proposed project would expand Capitol Corridor service between Sacramento and Roseville from its current single daily round trip (two trains per day) to up to 10 daily round trips (20 trains total),

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WEB EXTRA - NARP Makes the Call For Volunteers

As we outlined on Page 1, NARP had a busy year, on Capitol Hill and in state and local governments. We received a lot of help from a dedicated band of volunteers who helped make 2015 a successful year for the association.

We plan on being even more ambitious in 2016, but we can't do that without our members stepping up to volunteer. NARP is offering members meaningful opportunities that are a great way to jump-start your professional life and contribute to our ongoing efforts to advocate for an improved multimodal transportation system nationwide.

Volunteering with NARP is a win-win for everyone. Members get a chance to build up their resumes or add to their creative portfolios, while NARP gets more help in its ongoing advocacy. While these positions are unpaid, the results they produce -- for you as well as for NARP — are real. You'll make a difference while generating work products, references and networking opportunities.

No task is too small for volunteers. We're looking for members to volunteer in these key areas: state support coordinator; blogger; graphic designer; Routes Spokespersons; Certified



NARP members at the Fall Meeting in Indianapolis.

Photo courtesy of Ken Briers

Citizen Advocate; a Millennials Evangelist; and a Web Content Assistant. For a complete list of available volunteer positions, complete with job descriptions, go to <http://www.narprail.org/get-involved/volunteer/>. ■

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while preserving current freight operations and reliability within the corridor. In order to maintain the ongoing safety and viability of Union Pacific's freight services while increasing Capitol Corridor passenger service, infrastructure improvements will be required along

the 17.8 mile corridor that would connect Sacramento to Roseville.

The CCJPA will use a number of different funding sources to construct the project. These include local and regional sources, cap-trade funds, the State Transportation Improvement Program and high-speed rail bond feeder service funds. ■

NARP Traveler's Advisory

- ❖ Track and bridge work will affect Piedmont and Carolinian Service between Raleigh and Charlotte, North Carolina, effective Monday, December 7, 2015. Piedmont Trains 73, 74, 75 and 76, which normally operates between Charlotte and Raleigh, will be canceled. Carolinian Train 80, which normally operates between Charlotte and New York, will be canceled between Charlotte and Durham. It will operate normally between Durham, New York, and intermediate stations.
- ❖ Effective December 14, 2015, schedules for select Keystone Service trains will change. Due to the end of certain track and electrical projects at the Harrisburg Amtrak station, Train 671 will resume its normal schedule and will depart Philadelphia 10 minutes earlier and operate more than 10 minutes earlier at all remaining stations on the route. In addition, Trains 612, 619 and 622 will operate slightly earlier at all stations between Harrisburg and Philadelphia. Train 642 will operate five minutes earlier between Harrisburg and Coatesville to ensure smoother operations between Downingtown and Philadelphia with SEPTA morning trains.
- ❖ To accommodate a long-term track work project, several Springfield Shuttle trains will be canceled and bus service will be provided through July 29, 2016. Trains 470, 490, 493 and 495 will be canceled on Monday through Friday until July 29, 2016. Passengers will be provided bus service between New Haven, Wallingford, Meriden, Berlin, Hartford, Windsor, Windsor Locks and Springfield. ■