



Photo Credit: Jeff Oswald



FRIDAY HOTLINE

#1442

JUNE 5TH, 2026



Association News

U.S. House Committee on Appropriations Moves Transportation Budget on Party Line Vote

On June 3, 2026, the U.S. House Committee on Appropriations [approved its fiscal year 2027 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development \(THUD\) appropriations bill](#) by a 34–27 party line vote, sending to the House floor a funding measure that would stymie the recent progress made on passenger rail and public transit.

While Republican leaders framed the bill as a “modernized infrastructure” proposal for highways, ports, and aviation, transit advocates sharply criticized the bill for deep cuts to rail and transit programs and for relying on a controversial \$7.9 billion repurposing of previously enacted infrastructure funds.

Rail and Transit Funding: Cuts, Restructuring, and Reprogramming

The bill provides roughly \$3.1 billion in new appropriations for passenger and freight rail, alongside targeted allocations such as:

- \$1.45 billion for Amtrak’s National Network
- \$650 million for the Northeast Corridor
- \$523 million for CRISI grants
- \$100 million for rail crossing safety improvements

At first glance, some of these figures represent stable or even increased funding within the constrained discretionary topline. However, the broader funding picture is far more negative.

The legislation eliminates or repurposes billions in advance appropriations from the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail program, resulting in a net loss of rail investment compared to FY2026 levels. By shifting previously committed capital funds, the bill trades long-term expansion for short-term operating support, undermining the pipeline of new intercity rail projects.

[Click Here To Read More](#)

What Makes Transit ‘Family Friendly’?

by Jim Mathews / President & CEO

Yesterday, the Federal Transit Administration published a [Request for Information seeking public input on what it calls “Family Friendly Transit.”](#) There’s a 60-day comment period and yes, we’re planning to offer our thoughts.

At first glance, the phrase may strike some readers as a political slogan. In today’s environment, many transportation discussions quickly become proxies for broader cultural and ideological debates. And I’m not naïve: this Administration has used that term to score culture-war points for a while now. It has become, weirdly, a loaded term. But after reading the notice, I think that there is, nonetheless, an opportunity here for a much more useful conversation.

I think the questions FTA is asking are really, at their core, still customer-service questions. Things like “Will I feel safe?” or “Will the station be clean?” or “Can I navigate the system with my children, luggage, stroller, or

mobility device?" or "Will the train or bus arrive when it's supposed to?" or "Will I know what's happening if something goes wrong?"

For decades, transit agencies have measured success primarily through ridership, passenger miles, and similar operational metrics. While important, they don't fully capture the experience of the people who actually use the system or, crucially, who maybe choose NOT to use the system even if it might be the better option.

In its request document, FTA explicitly recognizes the difference between actual safety and the perception of safety. A station may have relatively low crime rates and still feel uncomfortable or intimidating. Conversely, a station located in a challenging environment may feel welcoming and secure because it's well-lit, easy to navigate, visibly staffed, and well-maintained.

For women traveling alone, teenage girls, older adults, families with children, and occasional riders unfamiliar with the system, those perceptions can be every bit as important as the underlying statistics. If people do not feel comfortable using public transportation, they often won't use it.

This is an area where transportation researchers have been doing [important work](#) for years.

[Click Here To Read More](#)

Meet Our Class of '26



For years, the Rail Passengers Association's partnership with the Fund for American Studies (TFAS) [D.C. Academic Internship Program](#) has brought fresh perspectives and incredible talent to our team. This year is no exception.

Our latest trio represents a diverse cross-section of America, united by a shared goal: learning how to protect, preserve, and expand the nation's passenger rail network while building their future careers in law and public service.

Please help us welcome our summer "Class of 2026"

We are on Substack!



**Rail Passengers
Association**

Read and subscribe at
railpassengers.substack.com



Giving you new opportunities to interact with us. Read, comment, and chat! We are working on adding new contributors to write exclusive blogs for the site and throwing around ideas for more content (podcast, anyone?)

[Check It Out Here!](#)

Field Notes

Please email Joe Aiello if you have any local, state or regional stories/projects (even something you know or experienced happening overseas) that you would like to write about and see highlighted in the Hotline.

Calling All Readers!

Do you have a favorite transit/train photo (or photos) you have taken from your travels around the country, or even around the world? Would you like to see them featured in our Hotline social media post each week (with credit, of course)?

Send them to us @ hotline@narprail.org with the subject "HOTLINE PHOTO"

Hotline Links

A curated selection of passenger rail and transportation stories from this week. Check out our social media feeds to read breaking news and join the conversation!

[2 studies released: Intercity passenger rail Austin to San Antonio is one baby step closer](#), Texas Rail Advocates

Two new studies from the Texas Passenger Rail Advisory Committee show that intercity passenger rail between Austin and San Antonio is feasible, with options including a new 125mph corridor along SH-130/I-10 or expanding service on UP tracks.

[Gateway awards \\$711M contract to build the route for tracks to new tunnel](#), NJ.com

The \$771M contract, the 7th awarded so far for the Gateway Program, will help eliminate a major bottleneck leading into the Hudson River Tunnels as well as update tracks, signals, etc.

[Exclusive renderings of Penn Station overhaul show Trump's name with presidential seal](#), Gothamist

After the news last week that the USDOT and Amtrak had picked Penn Transformation Partners as the "master developer", now renderings of the more classical station plans have leaked.

[Chicago area begins transition to Northern Illinois Transit Authority](#), Trains

The road to the September 1st switchover from the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) to the Northern Illinois Transit Authority (NITA) has begun with the 0.25% RTA sales tax increase across 6 counties.

[America 250: The creation of Amtrak](#), WTOP News

As part of their ongoing "250 Years of America" series, DC's WTOP News takes a look at the creation of Amtrak as one of the pivotal moments in our country's history.

[Heartland Flyer funding uncertainty raises concerns in Oklahoma](#), KOCO News 5

The fate of the Heartland Flyer was discussed by officials and advocates during this week's Oklahoma DOT public meeting on the state rail plan.

[Pacific Surfliner urges early reservations, adds service for World Cup matches](#), NBC Los Angeles

Starting next Thursday (June 11th), all passengers will be required to have a reserved ticket and additional evening service will be added. The changes will run til the end of the World Cup in July.

[Mt. Pleasant Amtrak Station celebrates \\$5.5 million in improvements](#), Southeast Iowa Union

The ribbon-cutting "reopening" celebration for the updated Mt. Pleasant (IA) station took place last week.

[Less than six percent of \\$98 New Jersey Transit tickets to MetLife Stadium sold](#), New York Times (Gift Article)

Maybe, just maybe, the price point was a little high?

[Foxboro gets new train station in time for World Cup](#), Sun Chronicle

While it took the biggest sporting event in the world coming to the States for it to get done, but passengers on the MBTA's Franklin/Foxboro line will have a brand new station to enjoy.

[STB website adds 'case status' feature](#), Trains

The Surface Transportation Board is adding a new level of transparency to its website to help the public better understand the Board's process.

[Next generation Amtrak Northeast Regional trainsets head to Colorado for testing](#), Delaware Business Now

The first of the NEC-bound Airo sets has left "the nest" in Sacramento for testing at the Transportation Technology Center in Pueblo, Colorado



**WE ARE WORKING ON A DISCORD SERVER.
STAY TUNED FOR MORE INFORMATION**

If you aren't following Rail Passengers on social media, you should be! We are covering all the breaking news America's passengers need to stay informed on local, regional, and national issues.

Upcoming Events

Association Events



[Click Here For The RailNation Website](#)

Local Meetings + Events

[Greater Northwest Rail Summit](#), August 25-27

Please contact Joe Aiello (jaiello@narprail.org) to have a local, state or regional meeting added to the Rail Passengers calendar (print and on-line) of upcoming events!

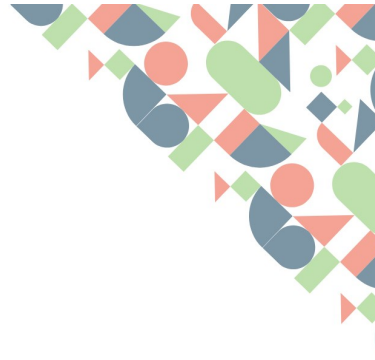
Staff Updates

Your staff is at the table, in the field, having the conversations that make a difference for passengers across the country. Learn what they're up to each week and how you can support your Association's key missions!

- **Jim Mathews, President & CEO**, welcomed our Association's new interns to Washington, D.C., talked with the Washington Post about summer travel, and midweek headed – briefly – to Maine to present at TrainRidersNE's annual event alongside the Federal Railroad Administration and the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority, celebrating 25 years of one of the biggest single rail success stories of our time: the thriving Downeaster service!
- **Sean Jeans-Gail, Vice President of Policy**, spent the week tracking Congressional action, including this week's House Committee on Appropriations markup of the Fiscal Year 2027 Transportation, Housing & Urban Development bill, working with allied organizations to craft a response to proposed cuts to transit and passenger rail.
- **Jonsie Stone, Chief of Staff**, welcomed/onboarded interns - Christine, Lucy and Trevor to the team, processed membership dues and donations sent to the DC office, worked on fundraising creatives, tended to the administrative/operational needs of the Association.
- **Joe Aiello, Director of Community Engagement & Organizing**, spent the week tending to a number of internal Association issues and continued work on the upcoming fall meeting.
- **Kimberly Notarianni, Membership Management Consultant**, continues to support members with navigating the portal, processing new and renewal memberships, resetting passwords, and assisting with household setup for membership levels that include sub-members. If you need assistance, we encourage you to visit our Membership "How-To" page for quick guidance: <https://www.railpassengers.org/all-aboard/join/how-to/>. Of course, we are always here to help if you need additional support.

Apply for Volunteer Staff at Rail Passengers Association

**VOLUNTEERS
NEEDED**



[railpassengers.org/volunteer](https://www.railpassengers.org/volunteer)

Rail Passengers Association

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE!](#)

Membership How-To

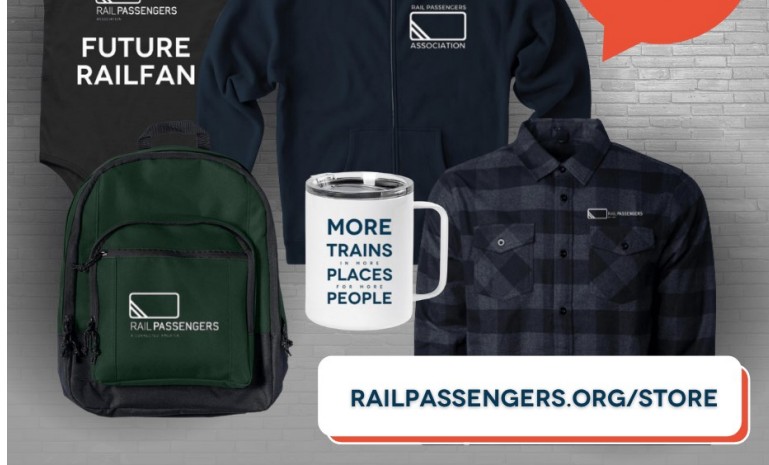
Are you a current member and need help with your account number, username, etc.?

[Click Here For Our Membership "How-To" Page](#)

We Have Merch!

New items available!





 [Tell Us Your Story](#)

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 [Service Updates & Timetables](#)

 [Visit the General Membership Group](#)

 [View Webinars](#)

 [Rail Passengers' Social Media](#)

 [Take Action](#)

Rail Passengers Timetables



Our Timetables Manager, Chris Jukins, has created a spring update for us. He is still working on a few stragglers, but we should have those up soon.

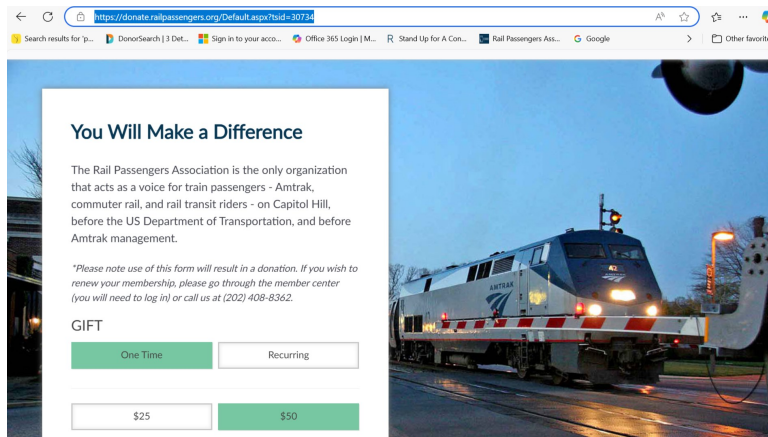
[CLICK HERE](#)

NOTE: Because we do update the links on our website - please bookmark **the main page** and not the individual schedules

Donate Online with Confidence

You can donate to the Rail Passengers Association online with confidence, knowing your credit card information is secure. Charity Engine uses

industry-secure SSL technology to keep your information secure. Don't wait for a paper appeal to donate, support the Association today by donating here. When the web browser shows a lock next to the URL, it means that it's an HTTPS, and it's secure:
<https://donate.railpassengers.org/Default.aspx?tsid=30734>



You Will Make a Difference

The Rail Passengers Association is the only organization that acts as a voice for train passengers - Amtrak, commuter rail, and rail transit riders - on Capitol Hill, before the US Department of Transportation, and before Amtrak management.

**Please note use of this form will result in a donation. If you wish to renew your membership, please go through the member center (you will need to log in) or call us at (202) 408-8362.*

GIFT

One Time Recurring



Do more with your donations. If you have questions about employer match, gifting a membership, or other questions about how to make a bigger impact, let us know! Your staff is here to help with:

- Online Donations
- Donor Advised Funds
- Employer Match
- RPA Signature Visa Card
- Gift of Membership
- and More!

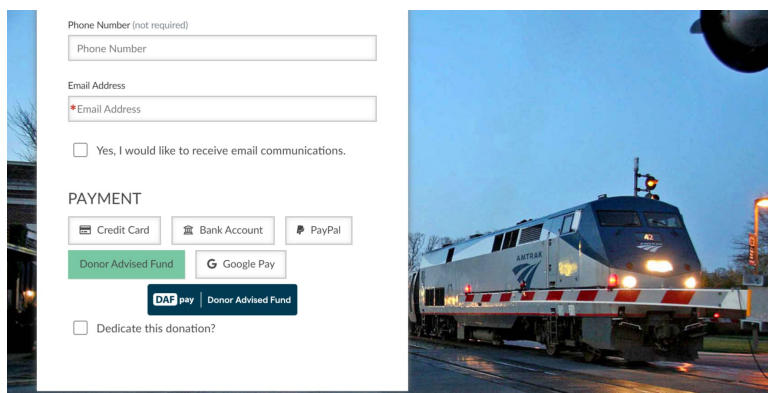
With multiple secure, protected methods of payment, you have more flexibility in the way dues are paid. Skip the hassle and [contact us](#) today for help setting up automatic or online payments.

- Setup ACH or E-Check with your bank of choice
- Use a Debit or Credit Card to pay online, or
- Send a check to 1200 G Street NW Suite 520 Washington, DC 20005

Use Your Donor Advised Fund (DAF) to Donate, Renew or Join Online

You can now donate or join/renew your membership, online, through your donor advised fund using DAFpay. All Rail Passengers forms now include a "Donor Advised Fund" button under Payment.

Donation Form:



Phone Number (not required)

Phone Number

Email Address

*Email Address

Yes, I would like to receive email communications.

PAYMENT

Credit Card Bank Account PayPal

Donor Advised Fund Google Pay

DAF pay | Donor Advised Fund

Dedicate this donation?

Membership Form:

Rail Passengers' Webinar Series

Other

Yes, I prefer communication by email rather than by mail.

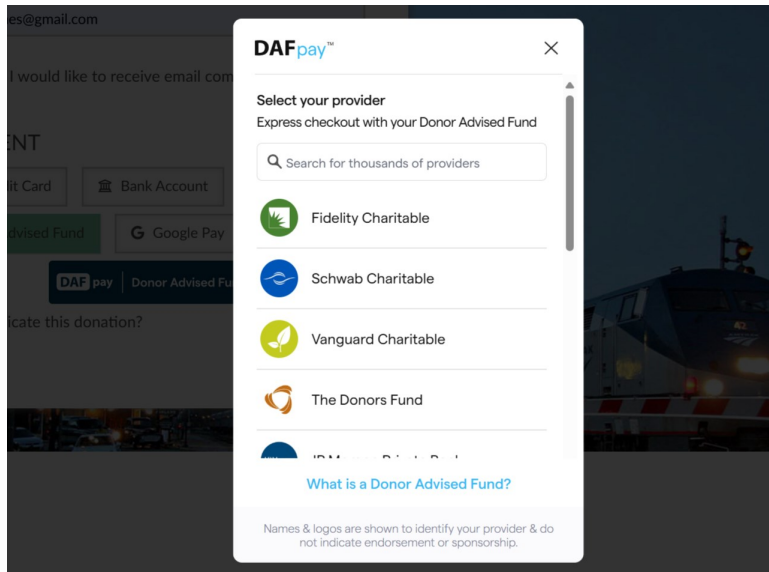
PAYMENT

CAPTCHA

I'm not a robot

Donor Advised Fund

After selecting Donor Advised Fund as your payment preference, you will be taken to a DAFpay screen to select your donor advised fund provider, ie., Fidelity Charitable, Vanguard Charitable, Daffy, etc.



Select your provider, then follow their prompts. If you need to provide information on Rail Passengers Association, please use the below:

National Association of Railroad Passengers, Inc.
dba Rail Passengers Association
1200 G Street, NW
Suite 520
Washington, DC 20005
Contact: Jonsie Stone, jstone@narprail.org
Tax ID: 36-2615221

Member & Donor Notices

- **The Rail Passengers Association is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. Our federal tax identification number is 36-2615221**
- **To help facilitate dissemination of electronic thank you receipts,** please make sure your contact information, **specifically your email address,** is up-to-date in your Neon profile.
- **If you need assistance with your membership,** please call the Office at 202-408-8362.
- **While our staff continues to work remotely, we are unable to provide permanent membership cards.** You can print a temporary membership card by creating an account at www.railpassengers.org (select "My Account" on the homepage).
- **Complete all information!** -- Before sealing your envelope, PLEASE double-check the credit card information on the buck slip!
 - Print credit card information clearly.
 - **Include an expiration date, month and year, as well as the CVV number.**
 - Without **COMPLETE** information, your membership renewal or donation can't be processed.
- **If you have your financial institution send a check on your behalf,** without a bucks slip, PLEASE instruct them to add:
 - a notation in the memo field if the payment is for membership dues or a donation, AND,
 - your Rail Passengers Association member ID. If we have multiple

members with the same name, i.e., John Smith, it can be hard to identify the correct member to attribute the payment, without the member ID.



Rail Passengers Association members have access to a full service, nationwide federal credit union with extensive product and service offerings. Signature FCU is the exclusive provider of the [Rail Passengers Association-branded Visa credit card](#) with our logo, which supports our work by giving back to our organization, and gives you 1 point for every \$1 you spend to redeem for travel and merchandise. The card has no annual fee, no balance transfer fees, no foreign transaction fees, and has a very low interest rate.

Charity Navigator



◆ **THREE-STAR** ◆
2026

Rail Passengers Association Earns 3-Star Rating from Charity Navigator

Rail Passengers Association's strong financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency have earned it a 3-star rating from Charity Navigator, America's largest independent charity evaluator. Our Charity Navigator profile can be found by clicking [here](#).

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS:



If you have questions, feedback, or submissions for next week's hotline, send us your thoughts! Help us spread the word about your local, regional, and national passenger rail wins.



Contact Us



RAIL PASSENGERS

EST. 1967

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