



RAIL PASSENGERS
ASSOCIATION

FRIDAY HOTLINE

#1414

OCTOBER 17TH, 2025



Take Action

NOTE: Our office has been getting a number of questions as of late about our printed "Passengers Voice" newsletter. We, unfortunately, stopped production in the Spring of 2020 and, as of this notice, do not have plans to start up again.

Association News

Harvard W. Morehead: An Appreciation

by Jim Mathews / President & CEO

In my very first phone call with Harvard around 2017 or so, he cheerfully offered to come work in the office at our front desk...for free. Really! From that point forward, he was like a regular employee, commuting back and forth, taking his place at the front desk, fielding phone calls from members and the general public alike – the “rail-curious” who called us looking for basic info or just wanting to talk about trains.

And Harvard could definitely talk about trains!

Today, as you read this, Harvard's family and friends are gathering in suburban Washington, DC, to remember his life. We lost Harvard in March of this year to a stroke, and there's a hole in our staff and our hearts that's still open.

You probably knew Harvard as the friendly voice who helped with membership issues. And if you were used to calling the office and hearing his voice, you probably noticed his absence yourself a while ago.

But here's what you and a lot of other people might not know – he was much more than just a volunteer answering our phone. Harvard was a truly steady, principled, and thoughtful voice for better trains and safer, more reliable service, and a better community in areas far beyond rail. Of course, he represented Marylanders on Rail Passengers' national Council of Representatives, as well as serving as Vice Chair for the Maryland organization. But apart from those formal roles, he was well known – or at least his name was well-known – to Washington-area readers of the Washington Post and other papers, signed “Harvard Morehead, Gaithersburg,” offering thoughtful letters on public policy and civic life.

He brought that same care and civility to his rail advocacy.





Whether working with our members to solve problems with membership lapses, the self-service tools on our website, or patiently explaining to angry callers that we are not Amtrak and can't refund a fare, Harvard was calm, professional, even cheerful. And more often than not, those conversations turned into memberships, renewals, or donations. A bonus.

He took part in our weekly staff meetings, helped us with preparing large-volume mailings in the office, and clawed back thousands of dollars in lapsed memberships by just calling people and talking about trains. He was very much a full-time employee. And he didn't get paid a dime.

Harvard was genuinely well loved by the staff; all of us saw him as part of the family. He was devastated when his declining health kept him off our phones and out of our office. We were, too. I had hoped to recognize him for his service with an award during our 2023 Fall meeting in Meridian, Miss., but he became too ill to make the trip.

"When I became a new chair of Rail Passengers and was feeling a bit insecure, Harvard gave me a pep talk and offered his services as a mentor and supporter," recalled Rail Passengers Association Chair Meredith Richards.

This month we're unveiling an extensive volunteer-staffing initiative with the objective of filling some 23 volunteer positions across the organization in functions ranging from fundraising to PR and technology. One of the pillars of that new volunteer program will be an annual award for the best and most-dedicated volunteer. We'll call it the Harvard W. Morehead Volunteer Staff Award. It won't make up for the presentation we could not make in 2023. But I think it's a fitting tribute to a truly generous and gentle soul who made all of us better.

Can a Train Really Be 'Mistake-Proof'?

[by Jim Mathews / President & CEO](#)

Did you happen to catch the Inside Edition TV show last Friday? [A few people sent me a link to the piece](#), highlighting Brightline's record of fatalities on Florida's at-grade crossings, wondering whether I'd seen it. **Actually, I was interviewed for it.** We spent half an hour with their team. But they didn't use a single word or idea I'd shared with them...so I'll share the basics of what I said here with you.

Let's start with the obvious. Any death is tragic, and we should all mourn with the families of those lost. My 13 years in the fire service gave me a closer relationship than most people have to what happens when lives end suddenly, and I know how real the pain is for those left behind to grieve and to make sense of it all. I truly do, and in some ways, I even struggled with how to write this.

Unfortunately, however, one way survivors try to make sense out of tragedy is to find someone or something to blame. It's perfectly natural, it's human nature. But creating a narrative implying that Brightline is running rogue trains killing innocent unwitting victims, and that higher speed trains are somehow uniquely dangerous, is just flat-out wrong. Worse, it could even discourage (maybe on purpose?) more investment in passenger rail anywhere, and particularly in modern, higher-speed services.

This is a genuinely harsh thing to say, and I'll admit here that it sounds harsh, but if you drive under or around closed gates...you might get killed. If you walk across an at-grade crossing when the gates are down, the lights are flashing, and the bells are ringing...you might get killed. If you ignore warning signs and walk past the end of the fenceline to walk over active railroad tracks...you might get killed. And if you decide to walk inside the tracks with earbuds in your ears...you might get killed.

Would more fencing help? Yes, it probably would. Would more intrusion-detection systems help? Yes, they probably would. Would more prominent warning signs and signs offering suicide prevention care and hotlines help? Yes, they probably would, though with a caveat that in my experience someone determined to use the tracks in this way will see little deterrence in a sign.

[\[TO READ MORE, CLICK HERE TO CONTINUE TO OUR WEBSITE\]](#)

Council Elections



JOIN OUR COUNCIL

WE ARE LOOKING FOR
TALENTED ADVOCATES
WHO ARE READY TO
MAKE AN IMPACT AND
JOIN OUR VOLUNTEER
LEADERSHIP

WWW.RAILPASSENGERS.ORG/COUNCIL

Every other year, we give interested Rail Passengers members the opportunity to take their support for more and better passenger trains to the next level by taking part in our national volunteer advisory body, the Council of Representatives. [We are now accepting candidates wishing to be elected to the Council as State Representatives](#) for the two-year term ending February 29, 2028.

The application submission deadline is 11:59 PM Eastern time on Monday, December 1, 2025.

[Click to see the number of available seats per state](#)

With the State Representative elections coming up, **it's more important than ever to be sure your membership shows that you are paid and in good standing.** The Candidate Certification Committee will use the final membership roster as of November 30, 2025, as the guide to eligibility. If you were due to renew in September and haven't yet gotten around to it, or your membership is due to expire in October or November, please be sure to get that renewal in place in time for you to be counted on November 30th. Postal Service delays could extend the time it takes for your renewal to reach our offices, so please act as soon as you can. We encourage you to [renew online](#) using a credit or debit card or bank account, but if you plan to mail a check, we recommend that you mail it to the office address (**1200 G St. NW, Ste 520, Washington, DC 20005**). Make sure that you indicate that this is a renewal of your dues and not a donation.

Any Rail Passengers Association member who meets the qualifications may apply for a State Representative seat on the Council of Representatives. Before applying, it is highly recommended that you review these position responsibilities and qualifications:

[Position Description for State Representatives](#)

[Council of Representative Handbook](#)

Please note that current State Representatives must also submit a Candidate Information Statement by the December 1 deadline in order to seek re-election.

If you are interested in applying for a State Representative seat, please complete and submit this form:

[CLICK HERE FOR THE CANDIDATE INFORMATION STATEMENT FORM](#)

The submission deadline for candidates to appear on the January 2026 election ballot is Monday, December 1, 2025, at 11:59 PM Eastern time.

Please contact Steve Musen at musensth@cox.net if you have questions or would like to know more about our Council of Representatives.

Thanks for all you do to bring about a more connected America!

Field Notes

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)?

New Trains for Wisconsin and How to Advocate for Them

by Chris Ott, Board Member, Wisconsin Association of Railroad Passengers

It's a pivotal time for passenger rail in Wisconsin, with threats to current trains but also opportunities for new and better service. Learn more and get involved at WisARP's fall meeting at Monona Terrace in Madison, Saturday, October 25 from 9 am to 3 pm:

<https://wisarp.wordpress.com/2025/09/03/reminder-wisarp-fall-2025-general-membership-meeting/>

You or interested friends can also attend a session that will be free and open to the public from 1 to 2 pm, called "New Trains for Wisconsin and How to Advocate for Them." This discussion will feature state lawmakers who are part of Wisconsin's new Passenger Rail Caucus, and other advocates. Registration for this one-hour session is free, but please RSVP!

<https://wisarp.wordpress.com/2025/10/14/new-trains-for-wisconsin-and-how-to-advocate-for-them/>

European Passenger Rail Roundup

by Philip Mayer, Association Volunteer

New Passenger Rail Line Opens Between Bucharest, Romania, and Kiev, Ukraine

Despite the current conflict between Ukraine and Russia raging on, a new passenger rail line opened between Kiev, Ukraine, and Bucharest, Romania, on October 10. Ukrzaliznytsia launched the new daily service between the two cities situated 464 miles apart. The new route will take about 24 hours and will pass through Vinnytsia, Zhmerynka, Mohyliv-Podilskyi, Velichinē (Moldova), Ungheni (Moldova), and Iași (Romania). Notably, the city of Iași, with its international airport, is a key logistics hub for Ukrainians traveling to European Union countries.

"Every new international route is not only about passenger convenience but also about integrating Ukraine into the European transport network. Recently, we opened the first Euro-gauge line directly connecting Uzhhorod with three European capitals. We are already working on expanding it in several directions, particularly in Zakarpattia and Volyn. Ukraine should become part of the broader European TEN-T transport corridors, which shape the future of logistics in Europe," said Vice Prime Minister for Ukraine's Recovery and Minister for Communities and Territories Development, Oleksiy Kuleba.

Serbian Section of Belgrade-Budapest Railway Opens

The opening of the Belgrade to Budapest rail line is expected by early 2026. A major development on the Serbian side happened on October 3, with the opening of the passenger rail segment between Belgrade and Subotica, a Serbian city on the border with Hungary, about 205 kilometers from Budapest, Hungary.

Once completed in early 2026, rail transportation between the Serbian and Hungarian capitals will be reduced from 6 hours to under 3 hours. Freight transport is expected to begin in December 2025, with passenger service expected to begin in either February or March of 2026.

Spain to Offer a Luxury Train Service From Madrid to Seville in Early 2026

Starting in Spring of 2026, rail travelers will be able to travel the 330 mile distance from the Spanish capital of Madrid to Seville in a 7 day luxury train. The train will traverse through Spain's storied wine and olive producing regions as well as Córdoba, home to the 10th-century Mosque-Cathedral; Cádiz, one of Europe's oldest port cities; and Mérida, with its remarkably preserved, 8th-century Roman amphitheater and aqueduct.

The train's vintage carriages, originally built in France in 1929 and 1930 for the British royal family, have been meticulously restored with art deco detailing, polished mahogany paneling, and velvet and silk upholstery. Meanwhile, amenities like air-conditioning and Wi-Fi appeal to modern-day travelers.

The train service will not provide overnight accommodation, with the vintage 1929 trains staying in train yards overnight. Tickets for the new route start around €6,600 per person (roughly US\$7,740, based on current conversion rates), including meals (both those served aboard and in local restaurants), excursions, activities, and accommodations.

Please email [Joe Aiello](mailto:Joe.Aiello@trainspro.org) if you have any local, state or regional stories/projects that you would like to write about and see highlighted in the Hotline.

Hotline Links

A curated selection of passenger rail and transportation stories from this week. Check out our social media feeds on [Twitter](#) & [Facebook](#) to read breaking news and join the conversation!

[Commuter railroads applaud bipartisan House bill on liability insurance](#), **Trains Pro**

This is a topic the Association has been watching very closely and something our President & CEO wrote about last month. (<http://railpax.org/Amqm50Xbp1f>)

[Amtrak to hold public board of directors meeting in New Orleans](#), **Trains Pro**

Amtrak will hold its annual public board meeting on Dec. 4th in NOLA

[Michigan Central transportation hub proposal includes Amtrak service](#), **CBS Detroit**

A \$40M Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been signed by Michigan Central, MDOT, and the City of Detroit to initiate research & engineering for a new multimodal hub adjacent to historic Michigan Central Station - bringing passenger rail back to the station for the first time since 1988.

[Make your voice heard during MTA's fall 2025 customer survey](#), **PIX 11**

NYC commuters! Participate in the MTA's bi-annual Customer Count Survey, running now through November 2nd.

[All Aboard: Amtrak could be headed to Shreveport](#), **KTBS**

Could passenger rail come to the Ratchet City for the first time since 1969? City officials certainly think so.

[Amtrak route between St. Paul and Chicago proves to be popular](#), **KFGO**

Tell us something we don't know.

[Transportation Meeting Hails Third Amtrak Train For 2026](#), **Webster Kirkwood Times**

ICYMI: Missouri's Highways and Transportation Commission, the governing body that oversees the work done by MoDOT, announced at a meeting on Oct. 1st that the River Runner is getting a 3rd STL to KC roundtrip.

[MORPC, rail partners commit \\$650,000 toward Chicago to Columbus train route](#), **Columbus Dispatch**

Calling it a "strategic investment in the future quality of life in small towns, suburbs, and big cities across these routes", the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission is committing funds to a Chicago-Fort Wayne-Columbus-Pittsburgh passenger rail route.

[NY: City chooses developer for LaSalle Metro station properties](#), **Mass Transit**

Buffalo's LaSalle Crossing project will deliver 465 mixed-income homes, retail, green space, and a new station entrance integrated into a six-story building - advancing equitable, transit-oriented development in Western New York.

[2025 Holiday Train schedule and music line up](#), **CPKC**

The CPKC Holiday Train, running Nov. 19 - Dec. 21 with 196 stops across the US and Canada, has raised over \$26M for local food banks along the route since 1999.

[Amtrak Pacific Surfliner, SeaWorld San Diego Partner for Ticket and Travel Discount](#), **TravelPulse**

Skip the traffic, enjoy the coast, and dive into the fun!"



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

[RIARP Annual Elections and Fall Meeting](#) - Monday, October 20

[WisARP Fall 2025 General Membership Meeting](#) - Saturday, October 25

[Improving Passenger Rail In The Empire Corridor](#) - Wednesday,
November 19

Save the Date(s)!

A promotional poster for the 2026 DC Workshops + Days on the Hill. On the left is a photograph of the US Capitol building at dusk. On the right, the Rail Passengers Association logo is at the top, followed by the text "2026 DC WORKSHOPS + Days on the Hill" in large, bold letters. Below that, the dates "April 20th - April 24th, 2026" are listed, along with the location "Rail Passengers Office, 1200 G St NW, Suite 520".

2026 DC WORKSHOPS + Days on the Hill
April 20th - April 24th, 2026
Rail Passengers Office
1200 G St NW, Suite 520

Registration and council business meeting information to follow.

Note: Attendees will be responsible for securing their own lodging needs.

A map of the United States titled "2026 DC WORKSHOPS + DAYS ON THE HILL". The map is color-coded into regions: Southwest, Northwest, Mountain & Plains (blue); Mid-Atlantic + Midwest (green); Northeast + South (orange); and Council Business Meeting (red). Callout boxes provide dates for each region: Southwest, Northwest, Mountain & Plains (April 23 & 24); Mid-Atlantic + Midwest (April 21 & 23); Northeast + South (April 20 & 21); and Council Business Meeting (April 22). A legend indicates that each group has Day 1 - In Office Workshop and Day 2 - On the Hill Meetings.

2026 DC WORKSHOPS + DAYS ON THE HILL

Southwest, Northwest, Mountain & Plains
April 23 & 24

Mid-Atlantic + Midwest
April 21 & 23

Northeast + South
April 20 & 21

Council Business Meeting
April 22

Each Group:
Day 1 - In Office Workshop
Day 2 - On the Hill Meetings

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**, got to the end of the week and declared, "What a whirlwind!" Jim split his time responding to three congressional requests and three press inquiries, while also preparing for the October Board meeting, handling some Amtrak issues on behalf of our members, and attending to Association business and banking issues.
- **Sean Jeans-Gail, Vice President of Policy**, attended the Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER) Rail Summit in Portland, Oregon, where he moderated a panel on the grassroots effort to restore the Pioneer.
- **Jonsie Stone, Chief of Staff**, processed membership dues and donations sent to the DC office, prepared future fundraising messages, and tended to the operational/administrative needs of the Association.
- **Joe Aiello, Director of Community Engagement & Organizing**, attended to a number of Association items this week, including the submission process for the upcoming council elections.

- **Kimberly Notarianni, Membership Management Consultant**, spent this week catching up on correspondence after being out of the office for the extended holiday weekend. If you've recently tried to reset your password and haven't received the reset email, be sure to check your SPAM or junk folder as it may have landed there. It's also possible that you previously opted out of receiving emails from us, which prevents password reset messages from being delivered. In that case, please reach out to Kimberly directly at knotarianni@narprail.org so we can manually send you a reset link and help you regain access to your account.

Keep Your Contact Info & Preferences Up to Date

We want to be sure you never miss important updates, membership news, or your transaction receipts! You can easily update your email address, phone number, mailing address, and communication preferences anytime through the CharityEngine Constituent Portal:

<https://membership.railpassengers.org/usercenter> (we recommend bookmarking this link for easy access)

Getting Started

1. Visit the Login page and enter the User Name and Password associated with your CharityEngine account.

Log in

The login form consists of two input fields: 'User Name' and 'Password'. Below these fields is a checkbox labeled 'Remember me' which is checked, and a blue link 'Forgot password?'. At the bottom of the form is a dark grey button with the text 'LOG IN' in white capital letters.

2. Once you're logged in, you'll see your account dashboard. Click "Update Your Info."

The dashboard has a dark grey navigation bar with links: Home, My Info & Preferences, Reports & Tax Statements, Events, and Settings. The main content area features a 'CONTACT INFO' section with a profile picture placeholder labeled 'avatar'. The contact details are: Name: Tom Train, Email, Phone, Address: 1200 G St Nw, Washington, DC 20005-3814, US. To the right of these details are four communication preference toggles, all currently set to 'YES': Receive Email?, Receive Phone Calls?, Receive Mail?, and Receive SMS?. Below the contact info is a blue link 'Update Your Info'. A welcome message reads 'Welcome To Your Membership Dashboard'. At the bottom are three buttons: 'Renew Membership' (red), 'Donate' (green), and 'Board - Council Directory' (blue).

Making Updates

On the Edit Contact Info screen, you can:

Update your personal details like email, phone, and address.

Adjust your communication preferences—switch the green "Yes" button to red "No" (or vice versa)

Click **UPDATE** to save your changes.

The 'EDIT CONTACT INFO' screen has a 'Home' link at the top left. The form fields are: First Name (Tom), Middle (empty), Last Name (Train), DOB (MM/DD/YYYY), and Email (empty). To the right is a 'COMMUNICATION PREFERENCES' section with a checked checkbox and four 'YES' toggles: Receive Email?, Receive Phone Calls?, Receive Mail?, and Receive SMS?.

Phone (703) 555-5555

Address 1200 G St Nw Washington DC 20005

▼ Enter Unit Number or Other Details

UPDATE CANCEL

A Quick Tip

Since transaction receipts are sent by email, having your current email address on file will ensure you receive everything without delay.

We Have Merch!



Visit our Store

Discuss This Week's Hotline

Service Updates & Timetables

Visit the General Membership Group

View Webinars

Rail Passengers' Social Media

Rail Passengers Timetables

Thanks to a collaborative effort between Rail Passengers NYS Council Member Nathanael Nerode & juckins.net's Chris Juckins, we have been able to completely update our timetables resource page.

**WE HAVE A FULL SUMMER UPDATE,
INCLUDING THE NEW *MARDI GRAS* SERVICE**

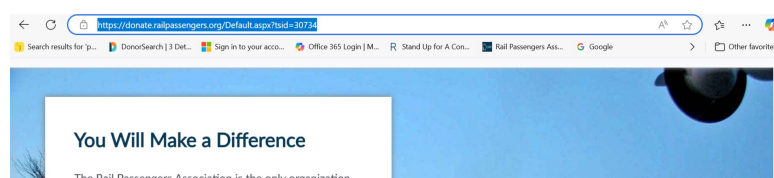
[CLICK HERE](#)

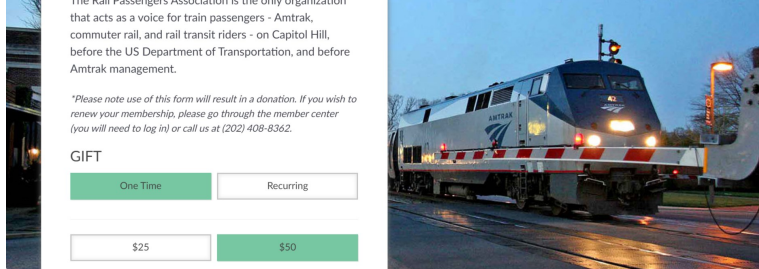
NOTE: Because we do update the links on our website - please bookmark **the main page** and not the individual schedules

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-standard 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>





LOOKING FOR SMARTER
WAYS TO DONATE?



MAKING A CONTRIBUTION
HAS NEVER BEEN EASIER!



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!

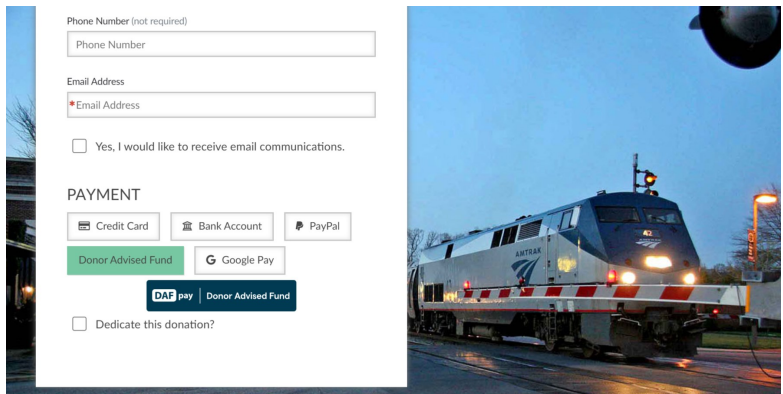
With multiple secure, protected methods of payment, you have more flexibility in the way dues are paid. Skip the hassle and [contact us](#) today for help setting up automatic or online payments.

- 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

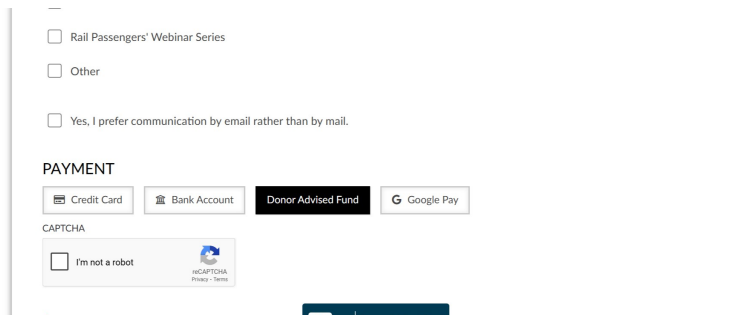
Use Your Donor Advised Fund (DAF) to Donate, Renew or Join Online

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.

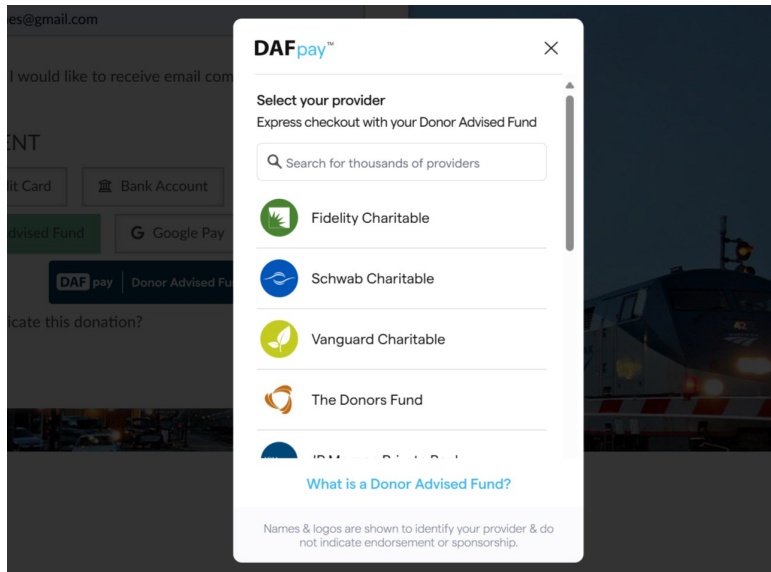
Donation Form:



Membership Form:



After selecting Donor Advised Fund as your payment preference, you will be taken to a DAFpay screen to select your donor advised fund provider, i.e., 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 buckslip, 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.



Rail Passengers Association Earns Coveted 4-Star Rating from Charity Navigator

Rail Passengers Association's strong financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency have earned it a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator, America's largest independent charity evaluator. Our Charity Navigator profile can be found by clicking [here](#).

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.



THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS:



RAIL PASSENGERS

EST. 1967

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F 202.408.8287

www.railpassengers.org

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