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FRIDAY HOTLINE

#1439

MAY 15TH, 2026



Association News

Senators Want Guaranteed Rail Money

By Jim Mathews / President & CEO

A bloc of 44 Senators on Wednesday kicked off the fight for a new surface bill that includes advanced appropriations, just like the five-year Investment in Infrastructure and Jobs Act (IIJA), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, did when it passed in 2021.

Senators reminded Senate leadership [in a coalition letter](#) that by providing nearly \$37 billion every year in guaranteed funding for half a decade, IIJA bought something much more crucial than just enough money to build bridges, fix tunnels, or start other badly needed projects -- IIJA bought certainty, the kind business needs to commit to big projects. And in the U.S., unfortunately there's no such thing as a small passenger rail project.

One thing I think sometimes gets lost in all the noise around Washington budget fights is that the rail programs created and expanded under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act aren't theoretical.

They're not "wish lists," or PowerPoint slides. And they aren't abstract debates between think-tanks. They're real projects, employing real people, building real things all across the United States right now. After only five years of predictable investment in passenger rail, we've already seen a reinvigoration of the U.S. passenger rail manufacturing base across the U.S. These green shoots include:

- Stadler expanding manufacturing in Utah, with [a commitment to invest another \\$190 million](#) in capacity over the next 15 years;
- Siemens Airo production generating [new domestic manufacturing across the country](#), with 3,500 parts manufactured by nearly 100 suppliers in 31 states;
- Siemens [opening a new manufacturing plant in Lexington, NC](#), which will create 500+ local jobs by 2028 and grow North Carolina's economy by \$1.6 billion over 12 years;
- Alstom investing \$75 million to build and outfit an expansion of its Hornell, NY manufacturing facility; and
- Amtrak making investments for a more reliable fleet by building, upgrading and expanding maintenance facilities in Seattle, WA; Philadelphia, PA; Boston, MA; Washington, D.C.; New York City, NY; and Rensselaer, NY.

New trains. New stations. New bridges. Accessibility upgrades. Track improvements. Signal systems. Grade crossing eliminations. Manufacturing orders. Engineering contracts. State corridor planning. Equipment procurement. The biggest pipeline of passenger rail work this country has seen in several generations.

And now all of that faces an investment cliff.

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Highlights from Senate Report on Rail Investment Cliff

Rail Passengers Association [joined earlier this week with a coalition of Senate Democrats](#) who announced they are working to extend the guaranteed funding for rail programs—both in the current annual budget process and the next multi-year surface transportation reauthorization.

As part of that effort, the coalition of Senators issued a report titled [“American Rail on the Chopping Block”](#), which lists the number of rail projects funded by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), while attempting to with the size of the investment needs that remain.

The document is worth reading in its entirety, but *Rail Passengers* is sharing a few highlights from the report.

Historic Investment in Rail

The report details over 500 rail projects in 49 states that received \$49 billion in IIJA funding. It also [includes an interesting state-by-state breakdown of rail projects in Appendix B](#) (unsurprisingly, NEC states were the biggest winners in these first rounds of funding).

Program	Description	Advance Appropriations over 5 years
Amtrak National Network	Funds new rolling stock and addresses Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance at stations.	\$16 billion
Amtrak Northeast Corridor	Addresses backlog of rolling stock, facilities, stations, and infrastructure needs on Amtrak assets for the Northeast Corridor.	\$6 billion
Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (FSP)	Three programs in one. FSP-National supports planning and capital investment for enhancing rail outside the Northeast. FSP-NEC addresses the state of good repair backlog on the Northeast Corridor between DC and Boston. Corridor ID plans the pipeline of projects for the future.	\$36 billion
Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI)	Supports small-business railroads and rail infrastructure safety improvements.	\$5 billion
Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE)	Funds projects to separate rail and road traffic to reduce congestion and improve safety.	\$3 billion

Program	Projects Funded	Funding Awarded
CRISI	192	\$3.9 billion
RCE	186	\$1.7 billion
Amtrak NN*	various	\$12.8 billion
Amtrak NEC	various	\$4.8 billion
FSP	123	\$26.1 billion



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LIRR Strike Looms, Negotiations Continue

Long Island commuters might want to skip [the bottle of white or the bottle of red](#) tonight and head straight for something much stronger. With a 12:01am strike deadline ticking down, the only "scenes" happening this weekend won't be at an Italian restaurant - they'll be at the emergency shuttle bus lines

The situation:


The Long Island Rail Road is currently sitting right on the edge of its first work stoppage since 1994. Unless a last-minute breakthrough happens, a strike by five major labor unions representing about 3,500 workers (including engineers, conductors, signalmen, and machinists) is legally set to begin immediately Saturday morning. The dispute has been dragging on for months, even [after two separate attempts by federal Presidential Emergency Boards \(PEBs\)](#) to mediate stalled out.

What they want:

- Workers haven't seen a contractual raise since 2022. [The coalition of five unions is holding out for a total wage increase of 16% over four years, including a 5% general wage increase for 2026.](#) They are pushing back on one-time lump-sum proposals, arguing they don't offset recent inflation.
- The MTA has already settled 3-year, 9.5% increase contracts with other LIRR unions, and they argue a massive standard raise beyond that will jeopardize their budget and trigger steep fare hikes or service cuts that affect riders. [Their latest offer includes a 4.5% effective raise for the fourth year, but they want it structured partly as lump-sum payments and contingent on "work rule" changes - such as capping continuous work shifts at 18 hours and reducing specific dual-locomotive penalty pay rules.](#)

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We are on Substack!



Rail Passengers Association

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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

HOT DESTINATIONS, ROUTE MAP, EVENTS, AMTRAK® SPECIAL OFFERS | THE ULTIMATE EMPIRE STATE GUIDE

new york by rail



All Aboard the [newest and 23rd annual issue of New York By Rail](#) - a 16-year running National Award-Winning, and official Amtrak magazine! This issue is packed with great articles about fun Amtrak getaways and Car free experiences within New York, Vermont, and Canada and can be picked up at most NYS Amtrak stations. The magazine includes a letter from Amtrak President Roger Harris. Articles are also available online at [newyorkbyrail.com](#) where you can sign up for our weekly e-newsletter and request a printed copy.

RPA Council member's Publisher's letter speaks to the relevance and popularity of a 23-year-old print magazine fueling a robust digital 360-degree content program. In fact, this is how Hope Henchey from Chattanooga, TN (now Editor-At-Large) found us at a Rensselaer Amtrak Station passing through NY during an Amtrak USA Rail Pass that inspired her to plan a series of Car free Amtrak trips through New York State that can be watched on our Instagram page: <https://www.instagram.com/newyorkbyrail/>

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!

[What Amish Country Can Teach us About The Future of Rail](#), The Transit Guy

Nearly 45,000 Amish residents live in Lancaster County, PA, and it just so happens that Lancaster station (with it's 14 trains a day) is the 2nd busiest station in the Commonwealth.

[NJ Transit plans to make train stations smell like lavender](#),
Gothamist

The NJ Transit "Rapid Action Plan" includes a number of improvements for riders, such as: better GPS tracking for buses/trains, installations of more elevators/escalators at stations, the creation of a new "crime center"... and scented stations?

[Check out Amtrak's new high-speed train decked out in American colors](#), **Timeout**

Have you seen the "America 250" train yet?

[Wisconsin Democrats Dust Off 2010 High-Speed Rail Playbook in 2026 Governor's Race](#) - **The Heartland Post**

Former Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker's decision to wave off federal funding (and about 14k new jobs) for a high-speed line between the state's two largest cities 15 years ago is coming back around as a central part of this year's Governor's race.

[METRO to Increase Frequency, Extend Hours for FIFA World Cup 2026™](#), **Visit Houston**

For the 7 matches "Houston Stadium" will host during the 2026 World Cup coming up in June/July, METRO will increase frequency and capacity of its rail and bus network - but NOT the fares.

[Brightline's struggles highlight need to fund TriRail](#), **Miami Herald**

Brightline's current financial woes could create an opportunity for Tri-Rail funding to be restored.

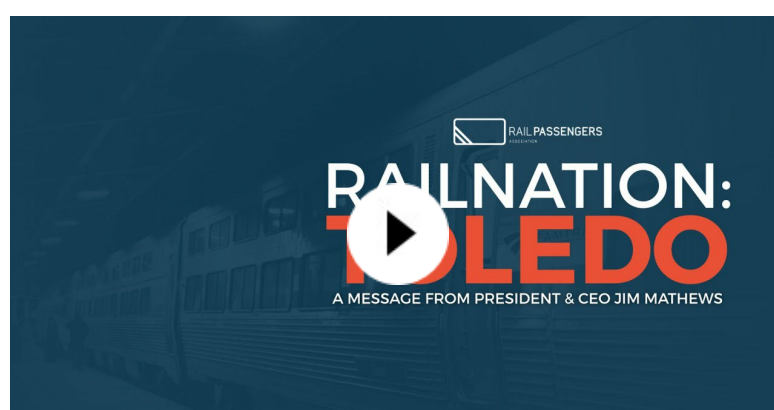


**WE ARE WORKING ON A DISCORD SERVER.
STAY TUNED FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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



Rail Passengers President & CEO Jim Mathews gives the official public announcement for our event coming up this October in the Glass City.

[Click Here For Our New RailNation Website](#)

Local Meetings + Events

[22nd Annual Southwestern Rail Conference](#), May 18-19

[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**, spent most of the week co-chairing this year's U.S. Rail Interiors Innovation Summit organized by Red Cabin, bringing together rail component makers, designers, operators, and car-builders Alstom and Siemens, to tackle challenges in making trains cleaner, safer, more enjoyable, and more functional. He also held meetings with manufacturers, collaborated with congressional staff in advance of a Senate letter on reauthorizing the IIJA, and spent some time with Alstom designers for a briefing on rail car design.
- **Sean Jeans-Gail, Vice President of Policy**, attended rail and transit events in Washington, D.C. and New York City this week, receiving the latest updates on high-speed rail and high-priority transit projects in the U.S. He also worked with several Congressional offices on specific transportation policy proposals.
- **Jonsie Stone, Chief of Staff**, attended the Railway Interior Innovation Summit in Arlington, VA, developed email solicitations and direct mail appeals, continued preparations for the FY2025 audit, and tended to the administrative/operational needs of the Association.
- **Joe Aiello, Director of Community Engagement & Organizing**, after taking a couple of days off earlier this week, was back working on more agenda building for the fall meeting, building out our new Substack page, and speaking to supporters from around the country on various passenger rail & transit projects.
- **Kimberly Notarianni, Membership Management Consultant**, continues to support constituents with renewals, new memberships, User Center access issues, and password resets. When requesting a password reset, please be sure to check your junk or spam folder, as these emails can occasionally be filtered; marking us as a safe sender can help prevent this. When logging into your User Portal, we encourage you to review and update your communication preferences and mailing address as needed. To avoid duplicate accounts, each member should have a unique email address associated with their membership.

Apply for Volunteer Staff at Rail Passengers Association

**VOLUNTEERS
NEEDED**



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](#)

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New items available!



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 Discuss This Week's Hotline

 Service Updates & Timetables

 Visit the General Membership Group

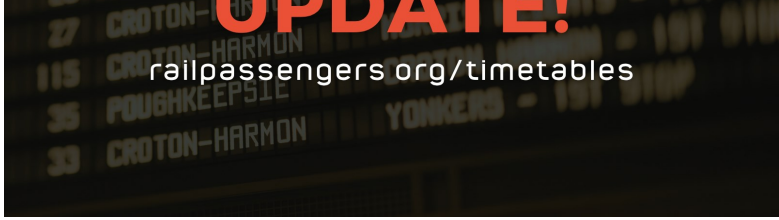
 View Webinars

 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.

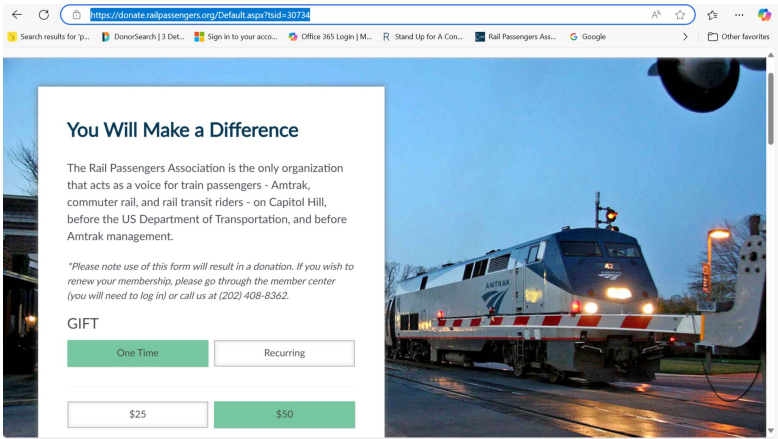
[CLICK HERE](#)

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

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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>



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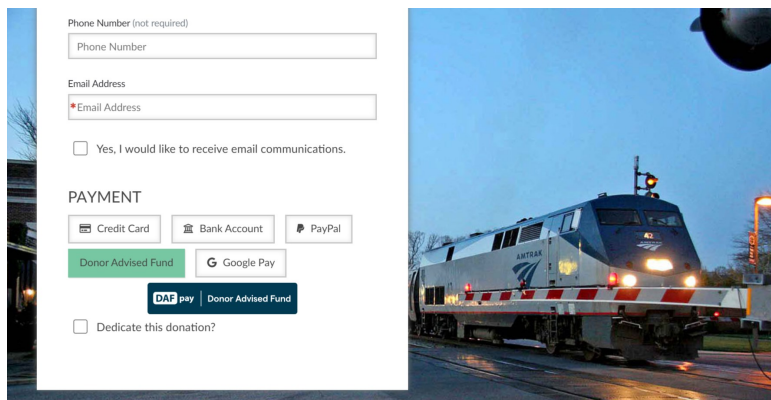
With multiple secure, protected methods of payment, you have more flexibility in the way dues are paid. Skip the hassle and [contact us](#) today for help setting up automatic or online payments.

- Setup ACH or E-Check with your bank of choice
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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.

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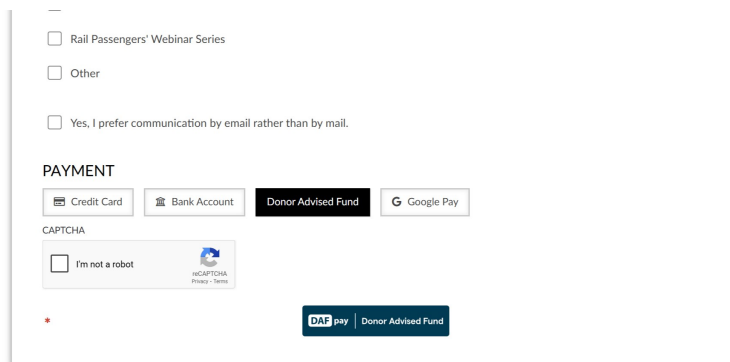
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Rail Passengers' Webinar Series

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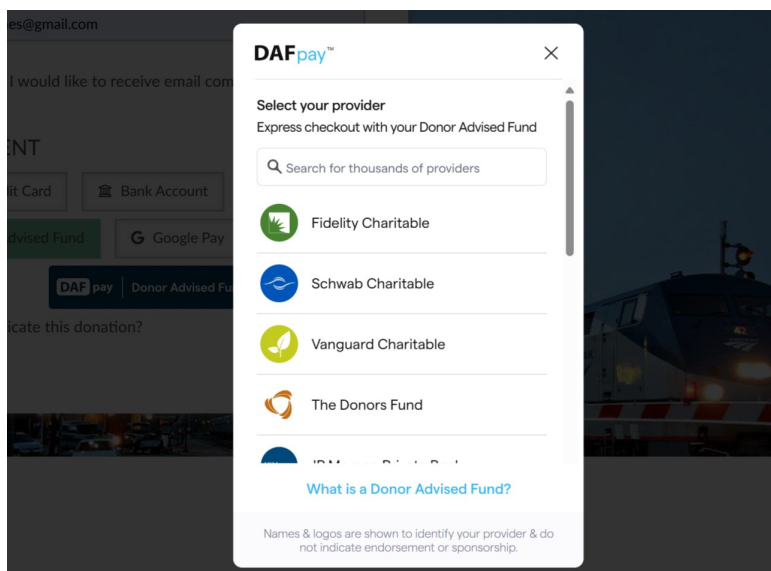
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dba Rail Passengers Association
1200 G Street, NW
Suite 520
Washington, DC 20005
Contact: Jonsie Stone, jstone@narprail.org
Tax ID: 36-2615221

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](#).

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.





RAIL PASSENGERS
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