



Photo credit: Robert Herring



FRIDAY HOTLINE

#1406

AUGUST 15TH, 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

Celebrating the Life of an Advocate and Friend

Kent J. Patterson, a dedicated railroader and passionate rail advocate, passed away on August 8, 2025, at the age of 70 after a brief illness. A longtime member of the Empire State Passenger Association (ESPA) and the Rail Passengers Association, Kent devoted 37 years to the railroad industry, working for Penn Central, Conrail, Amtrak, and Metro-North.

[Read more about Kent in this wonderful "In Memoriam" from our friends at ESPA.](#)

USDOT Dissolves Critical Rail Safety Advisory Body

by Sean Jeans-Gail | VP of Gov't Affairs + Policy

The U.S. Department of Transportation dissolved the Rail Safety Advisory Committee (RSAC) this week, an industry advisory body to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) on safety programs and technical issues. The move came as part of a department-wide move to disband all advisory committees convened under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, which a DOT spokesperson said would allow the Administration to reconstitute membership to better align them with the Administration's priorities.

As a member of the RSAC, Rail Passengers Association President & CEO Jim Mathews received the notice on Wednesday.

"RSAC plays an essential role in bringing rail industry voices representing operators, workers, passengers and shippers into a single room, and it is capable of producing valuable work," said Mathews. "That includes the Tier III equipment rule, developed with assistance from the Engineering Task Force (ETF) that operates under the auspices of RSAC."

Despite these successes, there is frustration over the lack of implementation of RSAC's recommendations. One such example is the Confidential Close Call Reporting System (C3RS), a proven mechanism for allowing frontline railroad workers to report safety incidents and concerns without fear of retaliation from their employers.

"C3RS is a commonsense safety program that has been widely embraced in the aviation industry, enabling early identification of safety trends and allowing for risk mitigation," said Mathews. "Its limited adoption in rail reflects a broader resistance to change within the industry."

As discussions swirl about which voices will be represented on the new-look RSAC, Mathews emphasizes the need for America's rail passengers to have a seat at the table.

"The path forward requires not only continued oversight from the FRA but also a renewed commitment to translating expert guidance into actionable policy," said Mathews. "The safety of America's rail workers and passengers depends on it."

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)?

Send them to Joe Aiello @ jaiello@narprail.org with the subject "HOTLINE PHOTO"

"Race To Chicago"

By Joe Aiello, Director of Community Engagement & Organizing

As I mentioned in my staff update in last week's Hotline, I had the pleasure of playing "co-host" in my hometown as a number of advocates from Ohio raced in via the *Lake Shore Limited* and the *Cardinal* (the LSL team won, by the way) last Saturday.

I joined [High Speed Rail Alliance](#)'s Rick Harnish and Lena Reynolds and Kevin Brubaker from the [Environmental Policy & Law Center](#) as we welcomed Nathan Halm and the crew from [All Aboard Ohio](#).

You can read all about the details of the day from Nathan at the link below, but I did want to add something I brought up in the Q&A we had at the EPLC office after our walking tour. To anyone reading this, if you are struggling to figure out a way to start a local grassroots effort to promote, support, or fight to start passenger rail service - just look at what All Aboard Ohio has done on the state level. Especially in a place that has been so hostile to rail in the past.

I was honored to be part of this excursion, and I can't wait for the next group of like-minded advocates to come through.

[Read "How Rail Fans Raced on Amtrak from Ohio to Chicago" from All Aboard Ohio here](#)

SEPTA to Impose Major Cuts as Pennsylvania Lawmakers Fail to Reach Transportation Agreement

By Philip Mayer, Association Volunteer

Pennsylvania lawmakers failed to secure funding for SEPTA (Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority), by midnight on August 15, 2025. The transit authority, which operates regional rail, subway, bus, and trolley services throughout the Philadelphia area and into New Jersey and Delaware, will introduce a 20% across-the-board service cut across the service beginning on August 24th.

Fares will then rise by 21.5% by September 1st, with a weekday ride rising from \$2.50 to \$2.90. This will be followed in January 2026 with a hiring freeze with a drastic reduction in services. At that time a 9pm curfew will be imposed on existing rail services, which currently extend until 1:30am.

These service cuts will impact countless area workers, students, residents, and visitors to the region. Before the deadline, SEPTA warned that if the cuts are made necessary, it would not be able to provide additional service in 2026 for celebrations involving the nation's 250th anniversary. The Philadelphia region also seems as if it will be left without adequate transit operations to serve riders attending the 2026 Major League Baseball All Star Game in Philadelphia, as well as soccer games as part of next year's FIFA World Cup.

SEPTA's rail service to Delaware will be severely cut on August 24th, and eliminated in 2026. DART, (Delaware Transit Corporation), is responsive to its riders' needs and will provide a bus service between Philadelphia's 30th St. Station and Delaware locations in Newark, Wilmington, and Claymont.

On Monday, Aug. 11, the Pennsylvania House passed a Democratic-backed transit funding bill that would have included funding for highways as well as increased aid for transit agency operations by \$292 million, or about 25% more, with the majority of the money going to SEPTA. The Pennsylvania Senate did not approve the bill, however.

On Tuesday, Aug. 12, the Senate passed a Republican-supported funding plan for SEPTA that would have used money from a state transit fund and required fare increases every other year tied to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Republican State Sen. Joe Picozzi said the bill would "provide \$1.2 billion for Pennsylvania's transportation networks over the next two years, including mass transit and roadways."

On Wednesday, Aug. 13, a House Committee voted against the Republican-backed bill, with Democrats, SEPTA General Manager Scott Sauer and PennDOT Secretary Mike Carroll all speaking out against it and taking issue with the portion of the plan that called for using the state transit fund to cover SEPTA's \$213 million budget deficit. Carroll stated that the amount fluctuates and that moving the money would have detrimental effects across the state, while Sauer said there wasn't enough unallocated money to cover SEPTA's deficit.

Republican President Pro Tempore State Senator Kim Ward (R-Westmoreland County) thought Democrats could compromise and go with the Republican-backed plan, at least in the short term. "I think if the Democrats would come back to the table and say we'll take this for a year, but let's keep working," Ward said.

The Pennsylvania state legislature was unable to come to an agreement on public transportation in the Philadelphia region. Philadelphia has been one of the few major United States cities which offers both affordability and above average transit access. That may no longer be true, as residents and visitors to the region will have far less access to public transportation.

Please email [Joe Aiello](mailto:Joe.Aiello@septa.org) if you have any local, state or regional stories/projects that you would like to see get 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!

[Is U.S. Passenger Rail Having a Big Moment?, Streetsblog USA](#)

The boss sits down with Streetsblog USA to talk congressional support, high-speed rail, freight mergers, and the blueprint for reauthorization.

[Electrified Caltrain Boosts Ridership 76%, Planetizen News](#)

Are you telling us that when service frequency goes up, then ridership will follow that same direction? This is our shocked face:

[U.S. Sen. Roger Wicker looks ahead to return of passenger rail service, talks national defense and economic projects, WLOX](#)

Next time someone tells you "all Republicans hate passenger rail" - have them give Senator Wicker's office a call.

[Bedford secures funding for new Amtrak stop after 50 years, WSET](#)

Thanks to a \$1.5M grant to cover the environmental study and nearly a third of the station design, the city of Bedford (Virginia) could see passenger trains roll through once again.

NOTE: We did email a correction to the station - the last train stopped in Bedford in 1979 (Amtrak's Hilltopper), not 1971

[Baton Rouge has a new link to the New Orleans-Mobile Amtrak train service: 'Why wait?', The Advocate](#)

Residents of the Red Stick soon will be able to enjoy lunch in Mobile without having to get in their car.

[Protections for Amtrak's Southwest Chief gaining steam, CPR](#)

In 2018, the Association spearheaded a campaign to save the Southwest Chief from a failed "bus bridge service" plan under former Amtrak CEO Richard Anderson and, seven years later, language is making its way through Congress to codify the fight to protect long-distance service.

[The Sound Transit CEO answers your questions, KUOW](#)

Sound Transit's CEO Dow Constantine joined KUOW Public Radio in Seattle to talk about the recent successes, and setbacks, of public transit in the

Emerald City.

[DDR's "Lost In Connecticut" Captures the Restless Tug Between Home and the Road, Buzz Music](#)

Hey, Mumford & Sons! Time to pull onto the siding. We have a real Amtrak tour coming through. 24 shows, in 13 states, over 3 years - all by train - with more to come.



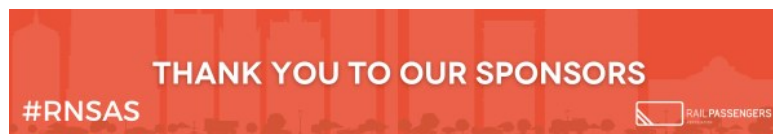
If you aren't following Rail Passengers on social media, you should be! We are covering all the breaking news America's passengers need to stay informed on local, regional, and national issues.

Upcoming Events

RailNation: San Antonio



[Click Here for the RN:SAS Event Page](#)



Individual Sponsors:

Bruce Ashton
Tom & Christy Compson
Gary Moline
J.R. Price
Michael Robinson
Miles Schulze

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**, divided his time between Association business issues and preparing for two upcoming events – a meeting of the Surface Transportation Board's Passenger Rail Advisory Committee in Chicago, and the long-awaited launch of Amtrak's Mardi Gras service between New Orleans and Mobile.
- **Sean Jeans-Gail, Vice President of Policy**, spent the week working with allied groups and Hill offices on Fiscal Year 2026 budgeting action, spoke with reporters about safety issues affecting the rail industry, as well as developing surface transportation proposals.

- **Jonsie Stone, Chief of Staff**, worked on upcoming solicitations, met with CharityEngine to continue fine-tuning enhancements in support of our constituents, processed membership dues and donations sent to the DC office and tended to the administrative/operational needs of the Association.
- **Joe Aiello, Director of Community Engagement & Organizing**, enjoyed his time with members of All Aboard Ohio last weekend. Joe has also been hard at work planning the fall meeting, staffing Jim as he heads to New Orleans to celebrate the launch of Mardi Gras service, assisted with a number of internal Association projects, and corresponded with members and advocates from around the country.
- **Kimberly Notarianni, Membership Management Consultant**, and Jonsie had a productive meeting with our software development team, and they are working closely with them to enhance your constituent portal experience. One exciting change you'll notice right away is that our **Membership Benefits** button is now live! This feature makes it easier than ever to view all membership levels and the benefits that come with each one. Kimberly continues to work one-on-one with members to assist with renewals, update portal information, and help recover usernames or passwords. Your engagement and feedback are invaluable as we make these improvements together.

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

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

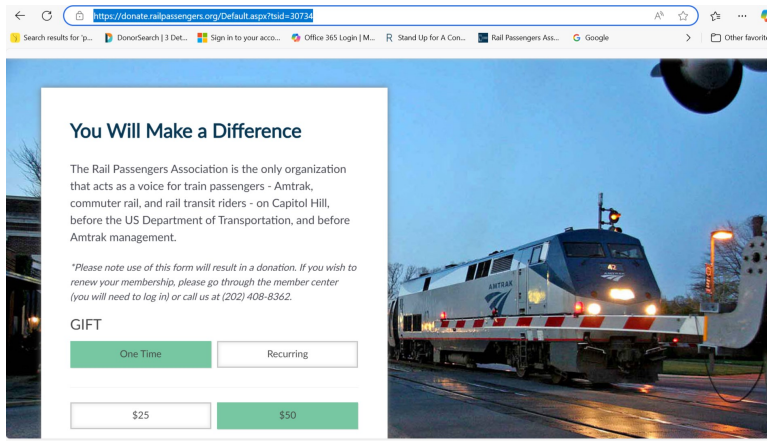
Making Updates

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)

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!

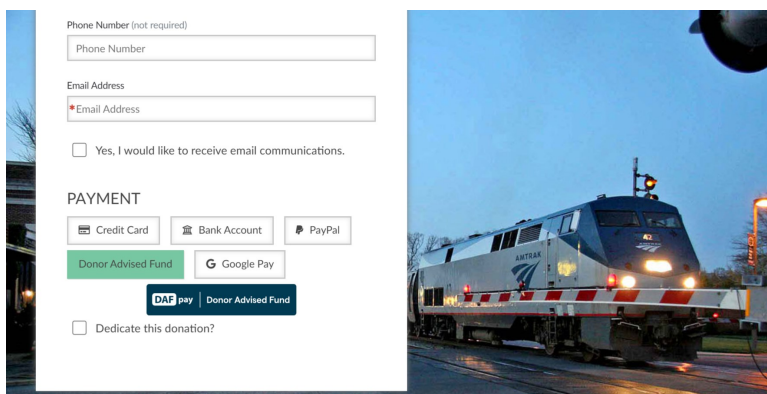
With multiple secure, protected methods of payment, you have more flexibility in the way dues are paid. Skip the hassle and [contact us](#) today for help setting up automatic or online payments.

- 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

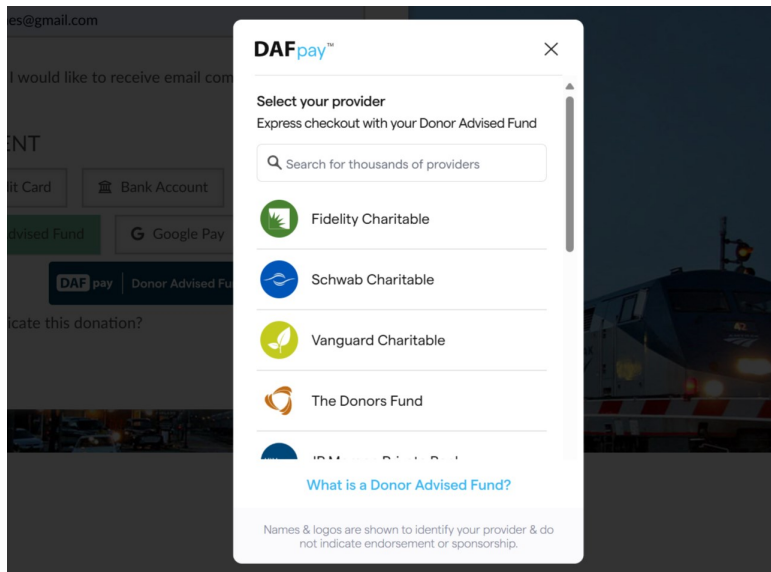
Dedicate this donation?

Membership Form:

The screenshot shows a membership form with the following elements:

- Three checkboxes: "Rail Passengers' Webinar Series", "Other", and "Yes, I prefer communication by email rather than by mail."
- A "PAYMENT" section with four buttons: "Credit Card", "Bank Account", "Donor Advised Fund" (highlighted in black), and "Google Pay".
- A "CAPTCHA" section with a checkbox "I'm not a robot" and a reCAPTCHA logo.
- A "DAF pay | Donor Advised Fund" button at the bottom.

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 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

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