



Louisiana Association of Railroad Passengers

P.O. Box 6231 New Orleans, LA 70174-6231
www.LARPrail.com

July-August Newsletter

John Sita, Jr.-Editor
jsitajr@cox.net

Amtrak

National Happenings

Unless something happens and Congress gets really productive, they will adjourn without passing any of the twelve appropriation bills. Amtrak funding for FY17 will be included in a stopgap Continuing Resolution and likely be frozen at the FY16 level. None of the FAST Act has been funded. It's disappointing but not unexpected as Congress has been mired in petty partisan fights that have pretty much brought legislation to a halt. Under the current leadership, Congress has become totally dysfunctional.

The two major political parties have released their platforms, and passenger rail is mentioned by both - keep in mind that platforms are loose guidelines that are basically ignored by politicians and most everyone else. The RNC attacked mass transit and Amtrak saying they only serve relatively few people and should all be privatized, although Donald Trump has said that infrastructure spending on rail should be increased. In their platform Democrats have called for an expansion of passenger rail as part of larger infrastructure spending.

In a major victory for rail passengers, the Surface Transportation Board (STB) has reaffirmed that passenger trains have priority over freight trains. In addition, the STB has proposed changing how on time performance is calculated from endpoints only to intermediate points as well. The Association of American Railroads (freight industry lobby) is trying to stop the new rule's implementation.

Gulf Coast

The Gulf Coast Working Group has continued to meet and their report to Congress is due in September. In the meantime, the Mobile City Council and the Jefferson Parish Council have passed resolutions in support of the return of train service.

Dining Cars

Some of Amtrak's 60-year old Heritage dining cars are failing with frame defects and have been withdrawn from service, and reports are that only 12 dining cars remain for the eastern trains. Dining cars have been removed from the *Lake Shore Limited* and been replaced by limited service AmDinette cars. The new Viewliner dining cars are supposed to start entering service in September and have supposedly been testing on the Northeast Corridor, and the Lake Shore is supposed to get full dining car service back when the new cars come on line. Also, the *Crescent* has been running occasionally with the one original prototype Viewliner diners.

Amtrak's New CEO

Amtrak's new CEO is Wick Moorman, the former CEO of the Norfolk Southern freight railroad. Moorman is a highly knowledgeable railroad executive with many industry ties who should do well as the head of Amtrak. Having a freight background will be of great benefit to Amtrak as he can see the other point of view, and also will know when a railroad inflates a cost figure to add new service/frequencies. Moorman takes over September 1st.

Amtrak National Business Performance

Time Period	Passenger Totals	% +/- Last Year	Ticket Revenue	% +/- Last Year	Cost Recov. %	Recov. % Last Year	Employee Total
May 16	2.73M	+9.7%	\$193.0M	+11.9%	96%	84%	20,704
Jun 16	2.76M	+2.7%	\$197.8M	+2.0%	99%	101%	20,539

The chart above highlights totals for all of Amtrak's business units. M stands for million. In May and June, ridership was generally up on many routes, although one truncated route (Palmetto) was up over 100% which may have skewed the statistics.

Amtrak Regional Business Performance

Detailed performance statistics for Louisiana regional trains. M stands for millions.

Time Period	<i>City of New Orleans</i>	<i>Crescent</i>	<i>Sunset Limited</i>	<i>Texas Eagle</i>
May 16 Riders	22,537	22,958	8,541	26,061
May 16 Rider % +/- last year	-0.9%	-7.7%	-6.0%	-3.3%
May 16 Revenue	\$1.69M	\$2.63M	\$0.92M	\$1.83M
May 16 Revenue +/- last year	-1.4%	+2.6%	-9.7%	-9.7%
Jun 16 Riders	23,019	24,623	9,321	30,302
Jun 16 Rider % +/- last year	-0.2%	-10.8%	+6.0%	+13.6%
Jun 16 Revenue	\$1.76M	\$2.73M	\$1.05M	\$2.29M
Jun 16 Revenue +/- last year	-1.4%	-8.3%	-3.7%	+1.5%

In May, the *Sunset Limited* and *Texas Eagle* were both negatively impacted by flooding. In June, ridership/revenue was generally up over last year, except for the *Crescent*.

On-Time Performance

The On-Time performance for the entire Amtrak system was 80.8% for May and 76.2% for June.

Route Name	May 16 OT%	Jun 16 OT%
<i>City of New Orleans</i>	83.9%	83.3%
<i>Crescent</i>	66.1%	35.0%
<i>Sunset Limited</i>	70.4%	52.0%
<i>Texas Eagle</i>	46.8%	20.0%

The on-time performance goal for Amtrak's long-distance trains is 80%. Most of our regional trains improved in May over the same month last year. In June, on-time performance was generally very bad, except for the *City of New Orleans*.

Odds and Ends

- LARP now has an active Facebook page with about than 1,300 followers – “Like” us on Facebook to get rapid notification of news. Our website *LARPrail.com* has also been updated recently and you can now safely **pay your dues on the website**. Check both our Facebook page and the website frequently and get up-to-date information on meeting times, notices, and blog posts.
- The new St. Claude streetcar in New Orleans will run from the corner of Elysian Fields all the way to Union Passenger Terminal. Service is expected to commence sometime this fall.
- Many of Amtrak's trains have several hours of padding as illustrated by a recent run of the westbound *Sunset Limited*. The train departed New Orleans about four hours late and still managed to arrive Los Angeles 26 minutes early. The southbound *CITY of New Orleans* frequently arrives New Orleans 50 minutes early, as well as arriving Memphis early both northbound and southbound. Better and more precise handling by the freight railroads would permit the schedules to be tightened.



The northbound *Southern Crescent* at Purvis, MS in 1974. This photo is the background of LARP's Facebook page – follow us on Facebook to frequent updates, news, and photos.

2016 LARP Officers

John Sita, Jr. President; **John Turner** Vice-President, **Louis Bangma** Secretary/Treasurer

Dues were payable January 1, 2016.

Join the Louisiana Association of Railroad Passengers and help reconnect our cities by passenger rail once again. Your membership helps LARP advocate for trains and also entitles you to receive a subscription to our newsletter. LARP is a non-profit consumer organization supported solely by yearly dues and contributions of its members. The next regular meeting will be **10:00 a.m., Saturday, September 10**, at New Orleans Union Passenger Terminal, 1001 Loyola Avenue.



LARP Membership Application

Single member \$20 Family Member \$30

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

I can work actively for LARP. Please contact me.

MAIL TO: Louisiana Association of Railroad Passengers
P.O. Box 6231
New Orleans, LA 70174-6231



Louisiana Association of Railroad Passengers

P.O. Box 6231 New Orleans, LA 70174-6231

**Address Service
Requested**