



Louisiana Association of Railroad Passengers

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March-April Newsletter

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Amtrak

National Happenings

The Trump administration's position on Amtrak and rail transit is no longer a mystery – they have proposed in the FY18 budget to eliminate funding for Amtrak's entire national system as well as new rail transit starts. The loss of the national system would mean the complete elimination of service to Louisiana as well as 23 other states. It really is quite disappointing that Trump would come after Amtrak after saying during the campaign how our trains were so bad compared to the Chinese and how we needed high speed rail. Although some Republicans and nearly all Democrats are saying that Trump's budget is dead on arrival in Congress, we need to make sure Congress hears from us. Below are some reasons that WHY WE NEED AMTRAK that perhaps will be useful in your conversations with your Member of Congress or others.

- Increased Safety – train travel is much safer than automobile travel and about as safe as plane travel. The more passengers that choose the rail option, the fewer motorists will die on our nation's highways.
- Most Energy Efficient – airlines consume 20% more energy per-passenger mile than Amtrak, and automobiles consume 27% more per-passenger mile. More rail travel would lower our dependence on foreign oil.
- Least Polluting – using electric and low emission diesels, and by diverting millions of high-polluting automobile and airplane trips each year, Amtrak helps to mitigate air pollution. Passenger rail investment also benefits freight rail as increased rail capacity will remove more polluting trucks from highways.
- Expanded Mobility – Amtrak serves dozens of communities without commercial air or bus service. One in five Americans over 65 do not drive (expected to double of the next 20 years), and one in three Americans are afraid of flying.
- Reduced Congestion – trains provide a viable alternative to over-crowded highways and airports. More than two billion gallons of fuel and millions of hours are wasted each year due to highway congestion as many highways are at or have already exceeded their capacity. Airports are reaching their maximum capacity with flights taking longer than before due to congestion.
- Popular with Traveling Public – a 2006 Harris poll concluded that 79% of adults would like to see more traffic going by intercity or commuter rail.
- Good Return on Taxpayer Investment – Taxpayers provide only 30% of the cost of operating intercity Amtrak trains as the rest is covered by passenger fares. Amtrak provides a large direct economic impact to the communities it serves and provides wages for 20,000 workers nationwide.

FY17 Continuing Resolution

The entire federal government was operating under a Continuing Resolution (CR) that expired April 28, and at the last minute Congress passed another CR that funded programs through the end of the fiscal year ending September 30, 2017. Amtrak did well receiving \$1.5 billion, an increase over FY16's \$1.4 billion. Although funding in the new fiscal year is still in jeopardy from the Trump administration, the strong budget received for Amtrak from Congress this year bodes well for next year as this year's budget blueprint may be used going forward.

Gulf Coast/Baton Rouge/north Louisiana

Amtrak CEO Wick Moorman in a letter to the Southern Rail Commission expressed support for the return of New Orleans to Orlando service, plus the new services of New Orleans to Baton Rouge and an extension of the *Crescent* west from Meridian to Fort Worth. There have been several recent newspaper articles about Meridian to Ft. Worth as well as New Orleans to Orlando.

Amtrak National Business Performance

| Time Period | Passenger Totals | % +/- Last Year | Ticket Revenue | % +/- Last Year | Cost Recov. % | Recov. % Last Year | Employee Total |
|-------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Jan 17 | 2.33M | +6.7% | \$159.6M | +11.1% | 127% | 126% | 19,936 |
| Feb 17 | 2.15M | -1.7% | \$144.5M | -2.7% | 110% | 117% | 19,970 |

The chart above highlights totals for all of Amtrak's business units. M stands for million. For January, long-distance ridership was up 6.2% with revenue up 4.3%, and February ridership was down 4.0% with revenue down 6.2%.

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> |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Jan 17 Riders | 17,104 | 16,170 | 7,098 | 23,577 |
| Jan 17 Rider % +/- last year | +11.2% | -4.9% | +9.2% | +34.0% |
| Jan 17 Revenue | \$1.20M | \$1.77M | \$0.74M | \$1.68M |
| Jan 17 Revenue +/- last year | +13.9% | +7.4% | -0.3% | +24.7% |
| Feb 17 Riders | 16,406 | 13,046 | 6,181 | 22,042 |
| Feb 17 Rider % +/- last year | +3.7% | -18.9% | -1.7% | +21.4% |
| Feb 17 Revenue | \$1.15M | \$1.38M | \$0.61M | \$1.38M |
| Feb 17 Revenue +/- last year | -0.3% | -17.1% | -5.9% | +6.3% |

The *Texas Eagle* spike in ridership/revenue probably was likely due to annulments last year, and the big drop for the *Crescent* may have been caused by the NS maintenance blitz route closure extending an extra week this year.

On-Time Performance

The On-Time performance for the entire Amtrak system was 78.8% for January and 76.5% for February.

| Route Name | Jan 17 OT% | Feb 17 OT% |
|----------------------------|------------|------------|
| <i>CITY of New Orleans</i> | 72.0% | 85.7% |
| <i>Crescent</i> | 46.8% | 73.2% |
| <i>Sunset Limited</i> | 74.1% | 58.3% |
| <i>Texas Eagle</i> | 72.6% | 73.2% |

The on-time performance goal for Amtrak's long-distance trains is 80%. Compared with the previous January, the *City of New Orleans* and *Crescent* were worse, the *Sunset Limited* about the same, and the *Texas Eagle* improved. For February, the *City of New Orleans* was about the same, *Crescent* and *Texas Eagle* were much improved, but the *Sunset Limited* was worse.

Odds and Ends

- LARP now has an active Facebook page with more than 1,300 followers – “Like” us on Facebook to get rapid notification of news. Our website *LARPrair.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 *City of New Orleans* had a schedule change northbound during March to accommodate CN track work. The train departed New Orleans 4 hours later at 5:45 p.m. and then combined with the morning train out of Carbondale. The combined train was frequently late in Chicago. Then in April the southbound train was temporarily changed to add two hours of dwell time in Jackson, MS.
- The new Brightline train service to/from Orlando is at least 30 months away, according to Brightline. They do intend to implement service in phases this summer first between West Palm Beach and Fort Lauderdale, and then later into Miami later this year. However, financing and permitting issues are delaying construction west from Titusville to Orlando. Management says they are committed to the project, and the construction of the new Brightline depot at the Orlando International Airport is well underway.



NARP's graphic highlights the impact of what would happen to Amtrak service if the Trump budget was implemented. Please contact your member of Congress and tell them you support the long distance trains and ask them to support the fully authorized amount for Amtrak. Louisiana Senator John Kennedy's office phone is (202) 224-4623, and Senator Bill Cassidy is (202) 224-5824. Also please Google your Member of Congress by district and call them as well.

2017 LARP Officers

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

Dues were payable January 1, 2017.

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, May 20, 2017**, at NOUPT, 1001 Loyola Avenue.



LARP Membership Application

Single member \$20 Family Member \$30

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I can work actively for LARP. Please contact me.

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