

# *Louisiana Association of Railroad Passengers*

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

## May-June Newsletter

John Sita, Jr.—Editor  
[jsitajr@cox.net](mailto:jsitajr@cox.net)

### **Amtrak**

#### **National Happenings**

The National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) organized nationwide rallies to support Amtrak long-distance trains and oppose the White House plans to eliminate those trains. There was a Rally for Trains scheduled at NOUPT on June 23<sup>rd</sup> but it had to be postponed for logistical reasons. The plan is to reschedule the Rally in Bay St. Louis Saturday, July 29. Check LARP's webpage and Facebook page for more updates.

If the Trump budget were adopted it would result in the elimination of all Amtrak service in nearly all of the deep south, including Louisiana. The Trump administration seems to be determined to cut Amtrak. Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao recently defended the Trump Amtrak cuts before the House T&I Committee, saying that the long-distance trains account for much of Amtrak's financial losses. However, the reality is just the opposite - Amtrak would be worse off by the loss of these trains by some \$400+ million more next year alone, according to Amtrak CEO Wick Moorman. The reality is that the Trump administration does not have a real plan to invest in infrastructure, and the Administration plan to eliminate nationwide passenger rail service proves that fact.

The proposal to cut Amtrak service is short sighted and foolish as it would do far more financial harm than it would save in taxpayer dollars. The shutdown costs alone would be enormous, along with payouts to laid off employees. Also the removal of Amtrak service would hurt the local economies of the cities and regions that they serve as Amtrak returns taxpayer dollars five times in economic benefits. In addition think of all of the taxpayer dollars wasted in building new train stations and fixing up older ones, along with facilities built to maintain trains, etc. The best thing we can do as rail advocates is to make sure that our elected officials know to oppose the Trump administration's Amtrak cuts. Ask them to fight for our regional trains, and when speaking with them or their staff emphasize how personally important to you that the trains remain in operation.

Amtrak has a new CEO-Richard Anderson. Wick Moorman plans to retire by the end of 2017, and Anderson, a former Delta Airlines executive, will start January 1, 2018 officially but will work with Moorman for the rest of this year. Moorman has spoken highly of Anderson as well as members of the Amtrak Board.

#### **Gulf Coast/Baton Rouge/north Louisiana**

There is bad news for the return of Gulf Coast service. Negotiations with CSX have reportedly come to an end since the hedge fund takeover of CSX by Hunter Harrison. The Southern Rail Commission and Amtrak had gotten the cost of the project down from \$2.3 billion to less than \$800 million and were working to lower the cost even

more when CSX suddenly walked away from negotiations and went back to the \$2.3 billion figure. It will likely take strong political pressure on CSX to get them back to the negotiating table.

Concerning the Baton Rouge train, the failure of the state legislature to raise the gas tax did take away a small portion of the funding to help pay for the \$260 million cost of the project. However, state officials are still seeking federal dollars to pay for the bulk of the cost of the project and remain confident that a state match can be secured.

### Amtrak National Business Performance

Time Period	Passenger Totals	% +/- Last Year	Ticket Revenue	% +/- Last Year	Cost Recov. %	Recov. % Last Year	Employee Total
Mar 17	2.66M	-2.5%	\$185.6M	-0.2%	109%	108%	19,970
Apr 17	2.76M	+8.8%	\$197.8M	+10.7%	99%	107%	20,035

The chart above highlights totals for all of Amtrak's business units. M stands for million. For March, long-distance ridership was down 2.5% with revenue down 2.8%, and April ridership was up 11.7% with revenue up 14.0%.

### 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>
Mar 17 Riders	25,405	22,487	9,546	33,720
Mar 17 Rider % +/- last year	+17.0%	-5.5%	+20.1%	+14.1%
Mar 17 Revenue	\$1.66M	\$2.49M	\$0.98M	\$2.21M
Mar 17 Revenue +/- last year	+4.6%	+2.4%	+21.0%	+13.5%
Apr 17 Riders	21,156	22,905	8,294	29,142
Apr 17 Rider % +/- last year	+7.5%	+10.2%	+13.6%	+25.5%
Apr 17 Revenue	\$1.62M	\$2.64M	\$0.92M	\$1.88M
Apr 17 Revenue +/- last year	+9.0%	+14.0%	+15.2%	+16.1%

All of the Louisiana regional trains performed better than last year with the exception of the *Crescent* in March.

### On-Time Performance

The On-Time performance for the entire Amtrak system was 76.0% for March and 74.7% for April.

Route Name	Mar 17 OT%	Apr 17 OT%
<i>CITY of New Orleans</i>	57.5%	55.7%
<i>Crescent</i>	50.0%	21.7%
<i>Sunset Limited</i>	63.0%	80.8%
<i>Texas Eagle</i>	72.6%	71.7%

The on-time performance goal for Amtrak's long-distance trains is 80%. Compared with the previous March, the *City of New Orleans* was far worse, the *Crescent* the same, the *Sunset Limited* worse, and the *Texas Eagle* improved. For April, the *City of New Orleans* was again far worse as was the *Crescent*, and the *Sunset Limited* and *Texas Eagle* were improved. The *Crescent* for April was worse by 45 percentage points over last year.

## 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 *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 *Crescent* will have its schedule temporarily changed this summer from July 10 – September 1 to accommodate emergency track work at New York’s Penn Station. The train will operate only from New Orleans to Washington, DC, with passengers forced to change trains in DC for travel north. The schedule of southbound train 19 will also operate about 1-1/2 hours later during this time frame.
- Amtrak operated a test train on June 9 from Oklahoma City north to Kansas City. Service north of Oklahoma City was lost in budget cuts on October 1, 1979 when the *Lone Star* was discontinued. There has been a lot of support for the reinstatement of service. Amtrak is also looking to run a test train from Meridian to Shreveport sometime next year.
- The New York Governor’s office announced the closing of a \$1.6 billion deal to transform the Farley Post Office complex into a train hall for Amtrak and the Long Island Railroad, along with commercial and retail space. The new space at Penn Station will be a huge improvement over the underground space now available for Amtrak passengers. New York is served from New Orleans by Amtrak’s *Crescent*.



Two photos of Southern Pacific’s eastbound *Sunset* at Houston on its way to New Orleans June, 1969. The train was still operating daily but lacked a diner and sleeping cars (food service was an “Automat” car). The train in 1969 still had strong local coach ridership that mostly disappeared when the train was made tri-weekly the following year – however, the diner and sleeping cars returned. Photos by Roger Puta.

## 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 **Saturday, July 29, 2017**, in **Bay St. Louis** at the **Rally for Trains**. Check our website or Facebook page for updated details.



### LARP Membership Application

☐ Single member \$20    ☐ Family Member \$30

Name \_\_\_\_\_

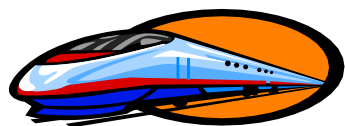
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☐ I can work actively for LARP. Please contact me.

MAIL TO: Louisiana Association of Railroad Passengers  
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