



Photo credit: Ken Briers



FRIDAY HOTLINE

#1415

OCTOBER 24TH, 2025



Tell Us Your Story

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

NOTICE: Members of the Association Board and Council, please check your emails for information regarding voting for the 2026 Fall RailNation location

Transportation Networks Start to Strain Under Gov't Shutdown

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

As the government shutdown stretches into its fourth week, the strain is beginning to show on the nation's transportation systems. Essential government functions underpinning air travel, Amtrak services, and public transit operations are continuing to take place. However, the absence of federal funding and delayed paychecks for workers are beginning to create ripple effects that compromise efficiency, safety, and reliability.

Amtrak Operations

As *Rail Passengers* reported before the shutdown began, Amtrak is able to operate with more autonomy than agencies like the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) due to its diversified sources of revenue—including ticket fares and payments from partner state governments. However, the protracted shutdown at the Federal Railroad Administration will likely result in delays to long-term infrastructure projects and state-of-good-repair work.

On a long enough timeline, the absence of federal operating assistance *will* result in a disruption to Amtrak service. If the shutdown extends well into November, *Rail Passengers* expects to hear Amtrak leadership sound the alarm bells about the holiday travel season.

One bit of cold comfort for passengers: a number of other critical government services will have collapsed before we get to the point where Amtrak needs to cancel trains, and so strong incentives exist for Congress to strike a deal before then.

Public Transit Operations

Public transit systems are operated by local or state governments, but—like highways—rely on the distribution of federal funds for capital projects and operational support. As with Amtrak, operations will continue uninterrupted, but projects awaiting disbursements may face bureaucratic hurdles, slowing down procurement and construction timelines.

Air Travel

Air travel is among the most visibly impacted sectors during a government shutdown. Most FAA and Transportation Security Administration (TSA) employees are categorized as “essential”, meaning they must work without pay. This includes air traffic controllers, safety inspectors, and airport screeners.

As the shutdown drags on, we can expect morale among these workers to decline, leading to increased absenteeism and slower operations.

The White House has sent Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy on a public relations tour to warn that air traffic controllers are seeking alternative income sources due to missed paychecks, which could result in staffing shortages and widespread flight delays.

“I can’t guarantee that your flight is going to be on time,” said Sec. Duffy this week at a Capitol press conference with House Republican leadership. “I can’t guarantee that your flight’s not going to be canceled. It’s going to depend on our air traffic controllers coming in to work every single day,”

[\[TO CONTINUE READING SEAN'S SHUTDOWN ANALYSIS, CLICK HERE\]](#)

Seems Like a Silly Thing...Until You Ride a Dirty Train

[by Joe Aiello, Director of Community Engagement and Organizing](#)

For better or worse, what I’m about to jump into is a topic that (1) has been covered a number of times by members of the Association staff (for example: [here](#), [here](#), and a mention from me [here](#)) and (2) shows up in my inbox multiple times a week.

And it’s actually not about how beautiful my son is. (I mean, he is, though).

We are going to briefly talk about clean trains. Again.

Don’t get me wrong, the title of this blog might seem like I’m making light of the subject. But if you have followed some of my work adventures on social media - especially recently - you will know that it has been a big pet peeve of mine.



I sent the above photos (this is from three different trips in the last few years out of Chicago) directly to contacts at Amtrak. It just became so bad. I don’t care if you are on the train for 3 days or 3 hours, you deserve to have a clear view of the outside world going by. It’s why traveling by train is so beloved.

So that brings me to why I am writing this today. I was invited to take part in a tour of the up-and-running wash facility (which started back on a regular basis last month) just south of Chicago Union Station. A building I have been passed about a thousand times growing up on the Southside. The group included members of the media, yard workers, and a number of Amtrak officials - including President Roger Harris.

[A quick note on Mr. Harris. Not only was he there for the tour - he was very involved, talking to everyone, asking the yard crew questions to better understand the process. While we were in the train waiting to go through the wash, he was fixing the recline on some seats in the car. Amtrak Execs, both rightfully and wrongly, catch a lot of flack from very passionate online circles. But I will give a stick tap to Roger on this one.]

[\[FOR MORE FROM JOE AT THE CAR WASH, PLEASE CLICK HERE\]](#)

Airos Head Northeast for Commissioning Tests

[by Jim Mathews/President & CEO](#)

When you win a battle to secure investment funding and it takes years for

that money to get spent, it can make you forget what you won. But this week, less than two months after watching Next Gen Acelas take to the rails in the Northeast Corridor for their first revenue service, [Amtrak's new Airo made its way to the Northeast Corridor for operational testing](#) – a real milestone on the way to carrying its first paying passengers on the West Coast next year.

All of our hard work and advocacy and investment is beginning to be tangible, with real trains coming online that you can see, hear, and touch. As Amtrak President Roger Harris [told attendees at our RailNation: San Antonio event earlier this month](#), "This is the first time in decades that Americans can see their [rail] tax dollars at work."

The first Airo trainset left the [Federal Railroad Administration's Transportation Technology Center test track in Pueblo, Colo., earlier this week](#) after months of safety and engineering certification tests, passing through Chicago – [and Chicago's new car wash!](#) – on Thursday on its way to complete several more months of operational tests along the Northeast Corridor.

Amtrak will base the Airo test train at Philadelphia's Penn Coach Yard facility (itself also getting [a huge infrastructure investment](#)) during this test phase, and later it will be joined by a second Airo train to complete commissioning testing before entry into service early next year on the Cascades service in the Pacific Northwest between Eugene, Ore., and Vancouver, B.C.

[\[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE ABOUT THE AIRO ROLLOUT\]](#)

Council Elections



Every other year, we give interested Rail Passengers members the opportunity to take their support for more and better passenger trains to the next level by taking part in our national volunteer advisory body, the Council of Representatives. [We are now accepting candidates wishing to be elected to the Council as State Representatives](#) for the two-year term ending February 29, 2028.

The application submission deadline is 11:59 PM Eastern time on Monday, December 1, 2025.

[Click to see the number of available seats per state](#)

With the State Representative elections coming up, **it's more important than ever to be sure your membership shows that you are paid and in good standing**. The Candidate Certification Committee will use the final membership roster as of November 30, 2025, as the guide to eligibility. If you were due to renew in September and haven't yet gotten around to it, or your membership is due to expire in October or November, please be sure to get that renewal in place in time for you to be counted on November 30th. Postal Service delays could extend the time it takes for your renewal to reach our offices, so please act as soon as you can. We encourage you to [renew online](#) using a credit or debit card or bank account, but if you plan to mail a check, we recommend that you mail it to the office address (**1200 G St. NW, Ste 520, Washington, DC 20005**). Make sure that you indicate that this is a renewal of your dues and not a donation.

Any Rail Passengers Association member who meets the qualifications may apply for a State Representative seat on the Council of Representatives. Before applying, it is highly recommended that you review these position responsibilities and qualifications:

[Position Description for State Representatives](#)

Please note that current State Representatives must also submit a Candidate Information Statement by the December 1 deadline in order to seek re-election.

If you are interested in applying for a State Representative seat, please complete and submit this form:

[CLICK HERE FOR THE CANDIDATE INFORMATION STATEMENT FORM](#)

The submission deadline for candidates to appear on the January 2026 election ballot is Monday, December 1, 2025, at 11:59 PM Eastern time.

Please contact Steve Musen at musensth@cox.net if you have questions or would like to know more about our Council of Representatives.

Thanks for all you do to bring about a more connected America!

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"

Please email [Joe Aiello](#) if you have any local, state or regional stories/projects that you would like to write about and see highlighted in the Hotline.

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!

[A 'Death Train' Is Haunting South Florida, The Atlantic](#)

The Atlantic's Kaitlyn Tiffany caught up with our President & CEO Jim Mathews during the Railway Interior Innovation Summit back in May as part of this eye-opening, long form piece on Brightline's safety record - at least 185 fatalities - since launching in 2017. Jim tried to add some context, pointing out that safety is a shared responsibility and that the money for infrastructure investments long needed along that line were finally released in September.

[Metro-North line expands to Albany, Amtrak's Lakeshore Limited revived, News 10](#)

Big news out of NYS this week - the return of the Lake Shore Limited between Boston & Albany starting 12/1 and a Metro-North extension connecting Albany with Grand Central for the first time since 1967.

[Governor Moore Announces Free Transit for Federal Workers on MARC and Commuter Bus during Government Shutdown, Maryland.gov](#)

ICYMI: During the current shutdown, the Maryland Transit Administration is offering free MARC & Commuter Bus rides to federal workers - who make up the state's largest workforce.

[MBTA announces service changes on Orange, Green, Red, Framingham/Worcester lines, WCVB](#)

A heads-up for our friends in MA. The MBTA has announced service changes for the Orange, Green, Red (Braintree), and Framingham/Worcester lines starting in November.

[Amtrak completes \\$30M-plus in upgrades at ND stations, Minot Daily News](#)

Thanks to a \$30M investment by Amtrak, five (of the seven) stations in North Dakota served by the Empire Builder are now in full ADA compliance.

[Metra Electric service to be impacted on 3 weekends due to work](#)

Part of a \$650M South Shore Line expansion project, Chicago's Metra Electric line will see schedule changes over three weekends in late October & early November.

[High-speed train station prep work will disrupt traffic on Las Vegas Boulevard](#), 8 News Now

Two infrastructure construction projects are set to kick off over the next two weeks to get Las Vegas Boulevard South ready for the future Brightline West flagship station.



**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

[WisARP Fall 2025 General Membership Meeting](#) - Saturday, October 25

[Improving Passenger Rail In The Empire Corridor](#) - Wednesday, November 19

Save the Date(s)!

RAIL PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION

2026 DC WORKSHOPS

+ Days on the Hill

April 20th - April 24th, 2026
Rail Passengers Office
1200 G St NW, Suite 520

Registration and council business meeting information to follow.

Note: Attendees will be responsible for securing their own lodging needs.

2026 DC WORKSHOPS + DAYS ON THE HILL

- Southwest, Northwest, Mountain & Plains: April 23 & 24
- Mid-Atlantic + Midwest: April 21 & 23
- Northeast + South: April 20 & 21
- Council Business Meeting: April 22

Each Group:
Day 1 - In Office Workshop
Day 2 - On the Hill Meetings

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**, did A LOT of press interviews this week, as well as continuing preparation for work on railroad liability

insurance, research for our eventual response at the Surface Transportation Board to the Union Pacific-Norfolk Southern merger proposal, advancing the Association's reauthorization ideas in Congress, and meeting with Amtrak leadership on customer-facing issues.

- **Sean Jeans-Gail, Vice President of Policy**, worked on a policy framework for engaging on the proposed merger between Union Pacific - Norfolk Southern, helped Rail Passengers Association Chair Meredith Richards prepare for her presentation on the national legislative outlook for rail programs to WisARP, and worked with several reporters doing stories on passenger rail in the U.S.
- **Jonsie Stone, Chief of Staff**, collaborated with our Accounting partners to close September financials, processed membership dues and donations sent directly to the DC office, worked on our state charitable registration forms, crafted fundraising messages and tended to the operational/administrative needs of the Association.
- **Joe Aiello, Director of Community Engagement & Organizing**, worked on a number of key internal Association projects this week and took part in a tour of Amtrak's wash facility in Chicago
- **Kimberly Notarianni, Membership Management Consultant**, continues to support our members by processing lapsed, renewed, and new memberships. For our members whose original accounts were set up in NEON, if you have not yet signed in to our new user center, please be sure you are signing in with this link: <https://membership.railpassengers.org/usercenter> The OLD link will not send you a password reset to allow you to access your account. If you are having difficulty accessing your account, please don't hesitate to reach out to Kimberly for assistance, she's always happy to help.

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

☒ Remember me [Forgot password?](#)

LOG IN

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

HomeMy Info & PreferencesReports & Tax StatementsEventsSettings



CONTACT INFO

Name	Tom Train	☒ Receive Email?
Email		☒ Receive Phone Calls?
Phone		☒ Receive Mail?
Address	1200 G St NW Washington, DC 20005-3814 US	☒ Receive SMS?

[Update Your Info](#)

Welcome To Your Membership Dashboard

Renew Membership

Donate

Board + Council Directory

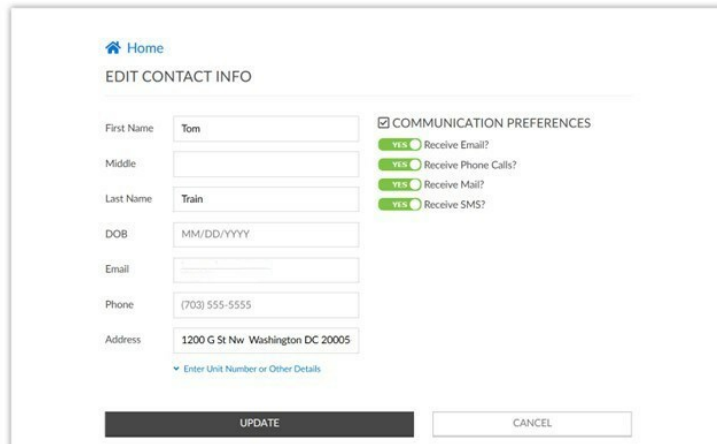
Making Updates

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)

Click **UPDATE** to save your changes.



A Quick Tip

Since transaction receipts are sent by email, having your current email address on file will ensure you receive everything without delay.

We Have Merch!



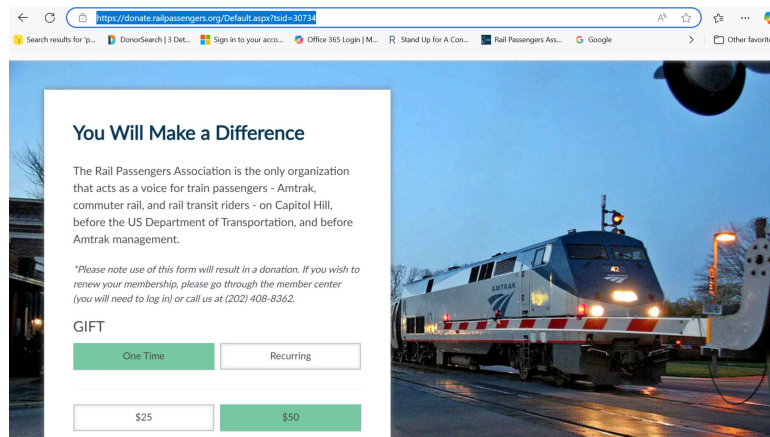
Rail Passengers Timetables

Thanks to a collaborative effort between Rail Passengers NYS Council Member Nathanael Nerode & juckins.net's Chris Juckins, we have been able to completely update our timetables resource page.

[CLICK HERE](#)

Donate Online with Confidence

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
- Employer Match
- RPA Signature Visa Card
- Gift of Membership
- and More!

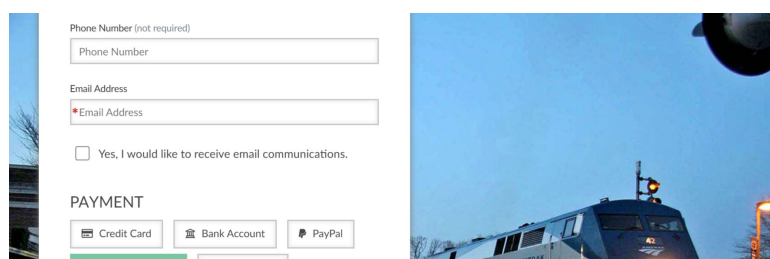
With multiple secure, protected methods of payment, you have more flexibility in the way dues are paid. Skip the hassle and [contact us](#) today for help setting up automatic or online payments.

- 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:





Membership Form:

☐ Rail Passengers' Webinar Series
☐ Other
☐ Yes, I prefer communication by email rather than by mail.

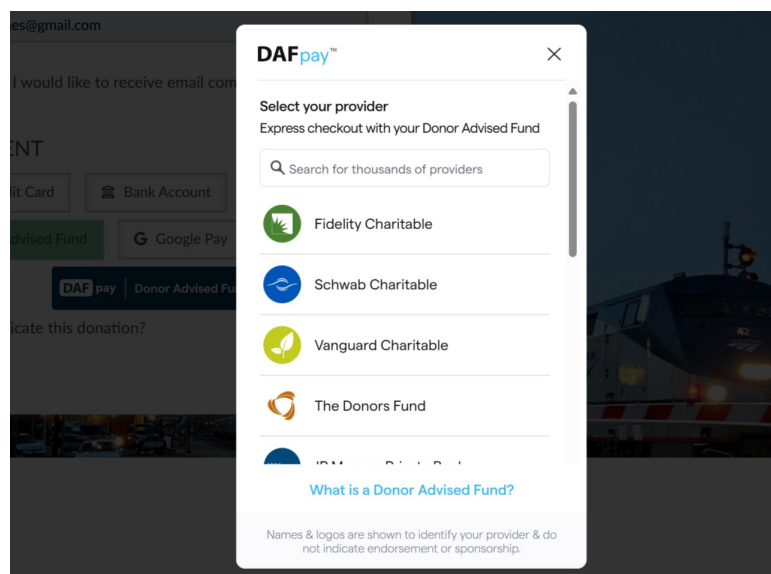
PAYMENT

CAPTCHA

☐ I'm not a robot

Donor Advised Fund

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 bucksip, 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.

Charity
Navigator

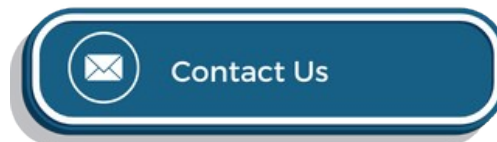


✦ **FOUR-STAR** ✦

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

EST. 1967

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