



FRIDAY HOTLINE

#1417

NOVEMBER 7TH, 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

Holiday Travel Alert

Thanks to doubledigit growth in early bookings and record-setting passenger numbers so far this year, Amtrak is urging early booking for the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday. Seats are filling fast.

For more - [CLICK HERE](#)

Sometimes We Can Still Do Big Things

by Jim Mathews / President & CEO

This was a great week for anyone who cares about passenger trains, transportation, and more broadly, transportation infrastructure: [Amtrak broke ground](#) on two more new expansive maintenance facilities, and [voters across America approved 13 out of 16 ballot initiatives to support or expand transit and public transportation](#).

On the heels of the [disappointing news about the huge Penn Access project](#), this week's events felt especially good.

There's a real through-line here. Four years ago, Democrats and Republicans were able to join together to pass the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, or IIJA, known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law after it was signed into law. They passed it because their voters back home wanted it. IIJA included more money than the U.S. had ever spent at one time on passenger-rail – \$66 billion over five years – and now this week voters have once again spoken and said they want \$11.8 billion in state money for public transportation in five states.

[Our friend Kea Wilson at StreetsblogUSA did an excellent review of those ballot initiatives, and it's worth your time to go take a look.](#) But the bottom line is simple. **People want public transportation. They want trains. They want mobility. And they're willing to pay for it, so long as the things they voted for actually happen.**

I had the honor to speak this week at not one, but TWO, groundbreaking ceremonies for new state-of-the-art maintenance facilities for Amtrak's new Alstom Next Generation Acela and Siemens Airo trainsets. Real shovels in the ground, real new tracks being built, and real accomplishment happening in a surprisingly short period of time.

[\[FOR MORE FROM JIM AND THIS WEEK'S EVENTS, CLICK HERE\]](#)

Understanding Amtrak's Latest Equipment RFI

[by Sean Jeans-Gail | VP of Gov't Affairs + Policy](#)

Many of our members reached out to *Rail Passengers* to hear our thoughts on [the Oct. 31 Trains' article](#) about Amtrak's Request for Information (RFI) on the sale and scrapping of over 500 railcars from its pool of legacy equipment.

"With 83 Airo trainsets set to replace the *Northeast Corridor* and regional workhorses starting in 2026, the Request for Information will eventually lead to Request for Proposals and contracts," [reported Trains' Bob Johnston](#). "At the same time, Amtrak is continuing the RFP process for replacement of Budd-built, long-distance Amfleet II coaches and cafes that date from 1981."

[Johnston's piece also includes a nice overview of the development and operation of the Budd cars for those looking for historical context.]

The RFI outlines the specific quantity and type of equipment that Amtrak is looking to offload:

- 370 Capstone Converted "Coach Class" passenger cars
- 58 Capstone Converted "Business Class" passenger cars
- 75 "Café Class" passenger cars
- 11 Former Metroliner Cab Control Coach cars

Many of our members expressed concern that Amtrak will be scrapping equipment that is structurally sound while equipment shortage plague corridors across the country. A few members who've been paying attention to *Rail Passengers'* [blueprint for reauthorization](#) wondered if this equipment could be refurbished and added to a National Equipment Pool, which states could utilize for new services or additional frequencies..

Mechanical Viability and Maintenance Costs

There are several larger questions that would be helpful in evaluating this RFI:

- What work has Amtrak done to evaluate the structural integrity of the cars in question?
- Is the RFI based upon an evaluation of the structural integrity of the cars, or the allocation of limited resources—both financial and manpower—needed to keep this equipment running?
- If an operator was interested in using these cars for operations, would Amtrak be open to selling it to them for those purposes?

Rail Passengers has reached out to Amtrak for comment and will share their answers when we receive them.

Like many issues facing U.S. railroading, there are structural roots to the problems we currently face. As Johnston cautions in his article, North American intercity passenger rail has been over reliant on "big-gulp" procurements. A predictable, dedicated source of federal funding for intercity rail would allow equipment manufacturers to develop a sustained production model without the inherent risks present in bidding on one-off mega contracts.

Senate Hearing Spotlights Potential UP and NS Merger

[by Sean Jeans-Gail | VP of Gov't Affairs + Policy](#)

On November 6, 2025, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation [convened a nomination hearing for Richard Kloster and Michelle Schultz](#), candidates for the Surface Transportation Board (STB). The hearing focused heavily on the nominees' preparedness to evaluate the proposed merger between Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern—which, if approved, would be the largest rail consolidation in U.S. history—and their commitment to impartiality amid the political controversy following the White House's decision to oust Board Member Robert Primus.

Senator Ben Ray Luján (D-NM) emphasized the STB's role in safeguarding competition and protecting consumers from unfair practices. He raised concerns about President Trump's removal of STB member Robert Primus, which is [currently being litigated](#), calling it unlawful and politically motivated. Sen. Luján (after emphasizing that neither nominee would fill Primus's seat) urged both Kloster and Schultz to commit to independence from improper political influence: "We need to have your firm commitment that you will carry out your duties independent of improper political influence, if confirmed."

Senator Tim Sheehy (R-MT) [voiced bipartisan concerns](#) about rail industry consolidation, noting that while he supports free market principles, the STB must ensure that mergers do not harm farmers, manufacturers, and rural communities. He asked both nominees to share their views on how the board should approach the merger. Schultz, who currently sits on the Board,

acknowledged the gravity of the case, calling it “the most monumental transaction that has ever come before the board,” and pledged to thoroughly review the evidentiary record and applicable law.

Kloster pointed to his decades of experience in the rail industry experience, saying “I’ve spent my whole career in the rail industry, and I’ve seen all the mergers—the successes, but also the failures.” He committed “to be objective, to be fair, to be impartial, to do all the research and analysis to come up with the right decision.”

Senator Tammy Baldwin pressed both nominees to uphold the STB’s [post-2001 merger standards](#), which require that Class I railroad mergers *enhance* competition, rather than simply preserve competition. Both Kloster and Schultz affirmed their commitment to follow the law and conduct a comprehensive evaluation.

The hearing underscored the critical role the STB will play in shaping the future of U.S. rail transportation, including for passenger rail. Our analysis of the UP and NS networks found:

- The UP and NS networks hosted 25 of 44 total Amtrak State-Supported and Long-Distance routes, or 57 percent.
- These 25 Amtrak routes carried more than 11 million passengers in 2024, or 63 percent of all Amtrak State-Supported and Long-Distance ridership.
- Of the 69 routes selected by the Federal Railroad Administration to be part of the [Corridor Identification and Development Program](#), 33 currently travel or would travel over UP or NS trackage – just short of 48 percent.

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:

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

New York By Rail Magazine Recognized for Contribution to Tourism Success

by Tom Martinelli, New York Council Representative & Chief Content Officer for Content Studio

New York By Rail magazine - through a 20-year partnership between Amtrak and New York - was recognized in a recent SAIPRC Economic Benefits of State-Supported Passenger Rail Services Report for the United States Congress, for its role promoting tourism to rail travelers along NY's State-supported routes by informing them of attractions, hotels, restaurants, art galleries, nature trails, and more that are all accessible by train.

The report further mentioned New York's State Supported routes have grown to a record 2.0 million in FY24 with more than 80% of riders traveling for recreation, leisure, or personal business such as visiting family and friends.

[Press Release](#)

Sal Pace Named General Manager of Front Range Passenger Rail District

by Kim Whittemore, California Council Representative

Colorado's Front Range Passenger Rail District has appointed Sal Pace as GM—great news for a corridor aiming at a 2026 ballot. I'm encouraged by the emphasis on near-term community engagement and practical next steps. This is exactly the kind of step that turns planning into progress.

[Press Release](#)

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

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"

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!

[Senators call on STB to closely scrutinize proposed Union Pacific-Norfolk Southern merger](#), Supply Chain 24/7

The Surface Transportation Board (STB) has been handed a letter written by Senators John Hoeven (R-ND) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) - and backed up by 16 of their colleagues - to conduct a "rigorous and comprehensive" review of the proposed merger between Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern.

[City Plans To Buy Greyhound Bus Station Downtown, Block Club Chicago](#)

An update to a story we covered earlier this year - after plans by Greyhound's new owner Flixbus to close the station in Chicago came to light, officials and advocates scrambled to find a solution. That solution is now on its way as the Mayor's office plans to purchase and upgrade the city's only intercity bus terminal.

[\[Video\] Amtrak breaks ground on Ivy City Rail Yard project, NBC4 Washington](#)

The FRA funded, \$705M project in Northeast DC will be a major upgrade to the current Ivy City Yard to prepare for Amtrak's new Airo fleet.

[Train talk planned for Nov. 8 in Baker City, Baker City Herald](#)

AORTA (Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates) VP for Eastern Oregon Matt Krabacher will be giving a presentation this Saturday on the restoration of Amtrak's Pioneer service.

[End of the line? North Texas cities debate leaving DART, CBS News](#)

While last month's celebrations for the opening of DART's Silver Line have since died down, a number of cities are looking at ways to end service completely.

[Amtrak San Joaquins Becomes Gold Runner, Marking a New Era for California Passenger Rail, Gold Runner Media](#)

Amtrak San Joaquins no more.

[NJ Transit completes Mahwah Station exterior renovations, Progressive Railroading](#)

Part of a larger statewide initiative, NJ Transit has successfully completed extensive exterior renovations at Mahwah Station, which include safety and structural integrity improvements.

[Latest movement on possible passenger rail from Austin to San Antonio, My San Antonio](#)

The I-35 corridor between Austin and San Antonio is going to be under construction for the next 8 years - causing more traffic and headaches - which is why plans for passenger rail between the two cities is once again gaining momentum.

[Full Hartford Line service to Springfield, Mass., to resume on Saturday, Trains](#)

After being suspended since May while the Connecticut DOT worked on the new Windsor Locks station, the Hartford Line is now back to full service.

[Five exciting Amtrak getaways for fall break, Columbia Spectator](#)

Looking for a fall getaway? Each of these cities is accessible by rail.

[Bye Bye, Breda: San Francisco Bids Farewell to LRVs, Railfan & Railroad Magazine](#)

The San Francisco Municipal Railway bids a fond and respectful goodbye to a fleet that served the city for three decades: the Italian made Breda LRV2 and LRV3 light rail vehicles.



**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

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

Save the Date(s)!



 RAIL PASSENGERS
ASSOCIATION

2026 DC WORKSHOPS

+ Days on the Hill

April 20th - April 24th, 2026

Rail Passengers Office
1200 C St NW, Suite 520

Registration and council business meeting information to follow.

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



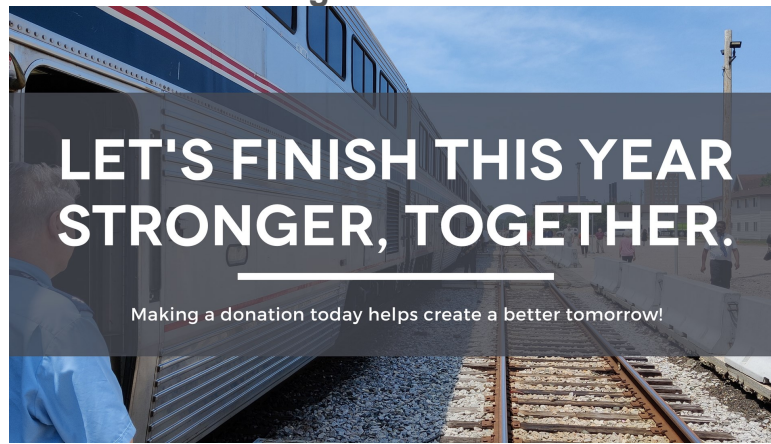
Please contact Joe Aiello (jaiello@narprail.org) to have a local, state or regional meeting added to the Rail Passengers calendar (print and on-line) of upcoming events!

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**, spoke at two groundbreaking ceremonies this week in DC and Boston to mark the kickoff of Amtrak constructing new maintenance and servicing facilities for the Siemens Airo and Alstom Next Generation Acela trainsets entering service.
- **Sean Jeans-Gail, Vice President of Policy**, prepared for and covered a Senate hearing on nominees to the Surface Transportation Board, continued to do background research on how a proposed merger between UP and NS would affect passengers, and worked with reporters to understand the Air Traffic Control system slowdown might affect Amtrak.
- **Jonsie Stone, Chief of Staff**, worked on the Association's GivingTuesday campaign, began closing October financials, processed membership dues and donations sent to the DC office, and tended to the Association's administrative/operational needs.
- **Joe Aiello, Director of Community Engagement & Organizing**, assisted Jonsie in getting materials ready for GivingTuesday, finished editing the videos from RNSAS (more on that next week), connected with members & supporters on various items of note from the field, and put together some new items in our fundraiser store.
- **Kimberly Notarianni, Membership Management Consultant**, continues to process membership requests and assist members in accessing their online portal accounts. If you're requesting a password reset, please note that a reset email will only be sent if you've opted in to receive email communications from us. If you've selected "Forgot Password" but haven't received a reset message, it may be that the email was sent to the inbox associated with your original account registration, or that your email preferences are currently set to opt out of receiving messages. As always, if you need additional assistance, please reach out to Kimberly at knotarianni@narprail.org

End of Year Giving



The Rail Passengers Association would be honored if you choose to include us in your End of Year giving plans. If a check is your preferred method of distributing financial support, we encourage you to [download the attached mail-in donation form](#) and mail it to the DC Office.

Mail to:

Rail Passengers Association
1200 G Street, NW, Suite 520
Washington, DC 20005
ATTN: End of Year

Your partnership allows us to work for you, your fellow passengers and communities across the country. Thank you for your support!

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."

[Home](#) [My Info & Preferences](#) [Reports & Tax Statements](#) [Events](#) [Settings](#)

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

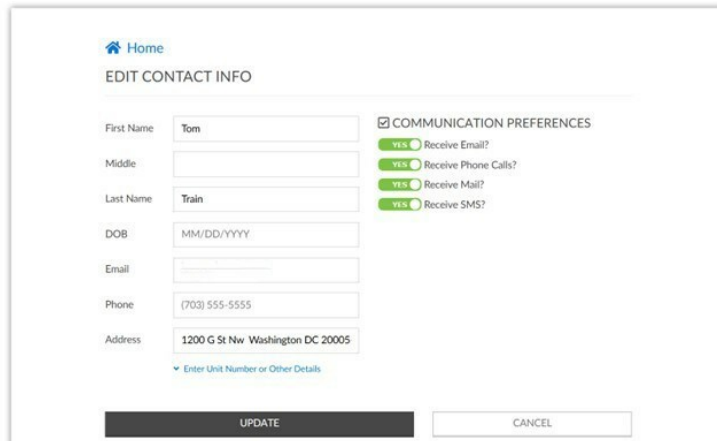
Making Updates

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.

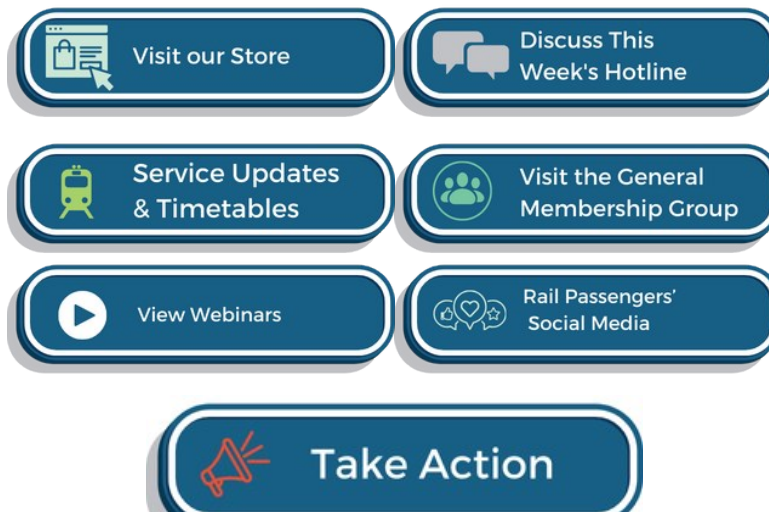


A Quick Tip

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

We Have Merch!

STAY TUNED TO THIS SPACE - WE HAVE SOME FALL/WINTER ITEMS COMING



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.

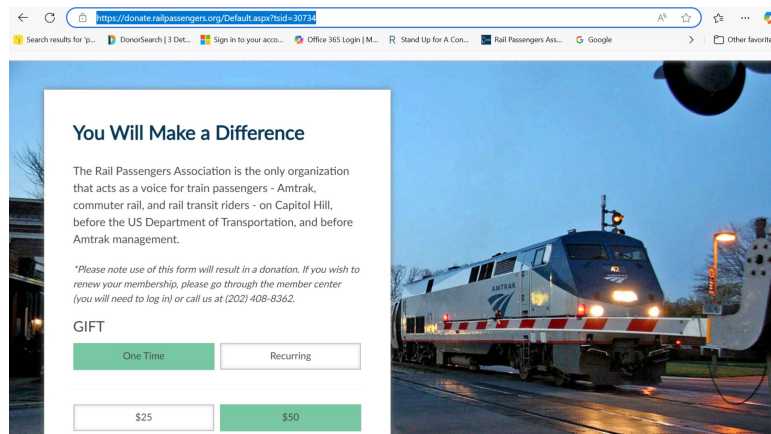
[CLICK HERE](http://railpassengers.org/timetables)

NOTE: Because we do update the links on our website - please bookmark **the main page** and not the individual schedules

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>



LOOKING FOR SMARTER
WAYS TO DONATE?



MAKING A CONTRIBUTION
HAS NEVER BEEN EASIER!

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:

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

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.



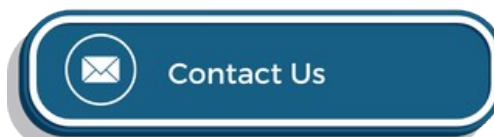
Rail Passengers Association members have access to a full service, nationwide federal credit union with extensive product and service offerings. Signature FCU is the exclusive provider of the [Rail Passengers Association-branded Visa credit card](#) with our logo, which supports our work by giving back 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

EST. 1967

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