



RAIL PASSENGERS
ASSOCIATION

FRIDAY HOTLINE

#1433

MARCH 20TH, 2026



Association News

STB Sides With DOJ, Seeks 'Ordinary Course' Info From UP-NS

by Jim Mathews / President & CEO

The Surface Transportation Board, which will decide whether Union Pacific should be allowed to swallow up Norfolk Southern, sent another strong signal this week that they expect both companies to share real operational and financial detail to support their transaction, rather than just [vague hand-waving and status-quo assurances](#).

On Wednesday [STB issued a decision siding with the Dept. of Justice](#), which filed a brief before the Board early this month looking to make sure that UP and NS included the same kinds of documents and records that non-railroad companies supply to Justice or the Federal Trade Commission when they want permission to merge.

The Board gave UP and NS until April 7th to comply.

The legal term for these is "ordinary course" documents, and they include most of the things you might expect senior executives and corporate officers to review -- things like competitive analyses, market studies, confidential memos about the details of the proposed sale, and third-party studies or opinions from bankers or consultants which supported the corporate leaders' decision to move ahead with the transaction.

"In this proceeding where Applicants seek approval to 'create America's first transcontinental railroad,' the highly probative nature of these documents is clear," STB ruled in its March 18 decision. "And, as discussed below, the Board requires a targeted search for documents that Applicants may have already initiated."

Supplying these sorts of papers is standard procedure if you're a big automaker, or a bank, or a manufacturer going before the FTC, for example. But railroads don't do that. Instead they go before the STB to get their transactions approved. After Justice filed their brief arguing that STB should compel UP and NS to supply "ordinary course" documents, the would-be merger partners responded by saying that while they weren't refusing to supply them, they didn't support importing FTC and DOJ procedures into the Board's rail deliberations.

STB disagreed, dismissing UP's and NS's concerns about protecting confidential information in the docket and focusing instead on how this is precisely the kind of detail the Board needs to make the best decision it can.

[READ MORE](#)

Rail Policy and Transit News Roundup

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

The Rail Passengers Association [Spring Advocacy Summit](#) is only a month away, and—just in time—Congress is beginning to mobilize to tackle the 2026 transportation workload.

Want to get involved? Sign up for Rail Passengers' [series of advocacy webinars](#) to prepare for the critical stretch of legislative and regulatory action. The series begins next week with two kickoff briefings. [Register now!](#)

- **Passenger Rail Advocacy Week Launch Meeting (Eastern Time)**
 - Date: Monday, March 23rd
 - Time: 7pm Eastern
 - Session Description: Hear from *Rail Passengers* staff about the structure of this year's week of advocacy in Washington, D.C. We'll provide an overview of logistics, survey the 2026 policy landscape, and take questions from attendees.
- **Passenger Rail Advocacy Week Launch Meeting (Pacific Time)**
 - Date: Tuesday, March 24th
 - Time: 7pm Pacific
 - Session Description: Hear from *Rail Passengers* staff about the structure of this year's week of advocacy in Washington, D.C. We'll provide an overview of logistics, survey the 2026 policy landscape, and take questions from attendees.

As our members prepare to serve as the voice of passengers in Washington, D.C. next month, we'll be providing you with all the latest news with implications for passenger rail, transit riders, and the broader rail network.

Surface Transportation Bill Timeline Coming into Focus, Establishing Stakes for Passenger Rail

House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chair Sam Graves (R-Mo.) told state highway officials his committee is hoping to begin moving a draft surface transportation reauthorization bill as early as April. With the current law set to expire on September 30, this would leave Congress just a few short months to negotiate a sweeping, multi-year transportation package.

Chairman Graves indicated the House bill could total \$500–\$550 billion. However, his early framing—which emphasized roads and bridges over multimodal investments—has raised red flags for passenger rail and transit advocates. While Chairman Graves has recently softened his rhetoric and acknowledged broader transportation interests, continued signals around prioritizing highway funding, permitting reform, and electric vehicle fees underscore the risk that passenger rail and transit programs could be sidelined without sustained advocacy.

Why it matters for passengers: This reauthorization will shape federal rail investment for years to come, including funding for Amtrak, intercity passenger rail grants, State-supported corridors, and new equipment. With timelines tight and modal priorities still contested, rail passengers must stay engaged to ensure rail is treated as essential infrastructure—not an afterthought.

[READ MORE](#)

2026 Leadership Election Process Begins

As a member of the Rail Passengers Association, you have more than just a seat on the train - you have a seat at the table. With 2026 shaping up to be another landmark year for passenger rail, there's never been a better time to help steer our organization's future.

We are now accepting nominations for dedicated members to step into leadership roles. If you're ready to advocate for the future of rail, we invite you to submit a **Candidate Information Statement (CIS)** for the following positions:

- **[Board of Directors](#)**: Serve as an Officer or Director to manage the Association's high-level strategy.
- **[Council of Representatives \(At-Large\)](#)**: Join our nationwide body of volunteer advocates.
- **[Membership Action Review Committee \(MARC\)](#)**: Help oversee internal member processes.

CLICK ON THE ABOVE LINKS TO BE TAKEN TO THE CIS FORM FOR THAT POSITION

NOTICE: General membership is allowed to run for Board Director and the At-Large Council seats. You must be a sitting member of the Board or Council to apply for Board Officer. MARC members must be a member of the Council.

THE DEADLINE TO FILE A CIS FOR THE UPCOMING ELECTION IS MIDNIGHT EASTERN ON MONDAY, APRIL 6TH

The elections will take place during our **Spring Council Business Meeting on April 22nd**. Candidates will have the opportunity to introduce themselves and give a brief presentation before the vote.

Ten At-Large Council Representative seats, carrying two-year terms, and five MARC positions, carrying one-year terms, will be determined by in-person voting during the meeting. The nine Board Director and Officer positions - serving three-year and two-year terms, respectively - will be decided via an online ballot following the close of the business session.

- [Learn about the Council of Representatives](#)
- [Learn about the Board of Directors](#)
- [Review the Association's Governing Documents](#)

Field Notes

Amtrak Pro-Tip: If you have companion coupons, or Amtrak Guest Rewards 10 percent discount coupons, or something similar to use the next time you book a trip, for the time being you might be better off calling Amtrak Guest Rewards directly to apply the coupon and finish booking your trip. That's because the program rules say that you must apply coupons at the time of booking -- but lately both the Amtrak app and the Amtrak website are struggling with getting coupons applied to transactions. Sometimes it's not even offering the passenger an opportunity during the booking process to enter the coupon code. It's a known issue, and they're working on it, but the Call Center advised me this week that you'll always be able to use the coupons if you call them directly at 1-800-307-5000.

Please email [Joe Aiello](mailto:Joe.Aiello) if you have any local, state or regional stories/projects (even something you know or experienced happening overseas) 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 us @ hotline@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!

[Teamsters Rail Conference concludes quadrennial convention, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen](#)

Representing over 70,000 members in two unions (BLET and BMWED), the Teamsters Rail Conference held their own version of the Olympics (once every 4 years) last week

[Second Presidential Emergency Board sides with LIRR unions again in contract dispute with MTA, raising strike concerns, Long Island News 12](#)

New ask, same result. A 2nd Emergency Board, once again, sided with the unions in their contract fight with the MTA. A 60-day clock has now started in order to reach a deal - or the workers are free to strike starting May 16th.

[Could Amtrak rail yard sale in the South Loop lead to a new Chicago White Sox stadium?, New York Times \[Gift Article\]](#)

With Amtrak in talks to build a brand-new maintenance facility at UP's Canal Yard, the future owner of the White Sox (our Dir. of Community Engagement's favorite team) could be scouting a future location for the team.

[Kansas City mayor eyes commuter rail expansion as KDOT looks at Amtrak extension in south-central Kansas, KSHB Kansas City](#)

Elected officials and advocates alike are pushing for more rail connections in the Sunflower State - including a Heartland Flyer extension to Newton, a plan now a couple of decades in the making.

[FRA: Installation of shunt-enhancing antennas for passenger trains not imminent, Trains](#)

The grant money was awarded and the equipment was ordered but -

because the FRA is taking their time with installation of the antennas - over a dozen superliner cars will remain in Illinois for the foreseeable future.

[North Station commuter trains suspended for Fridays in March, April, WCVB 5](#)

To make up for lost time due to recent snowstorms, the MBTA is adding suspension of Friday service for the next 4 weeks to the weekend closure calendar while working on signal and track upgrades at North Station

[Portal North Bridge opens for NJ Transit riders, restoring regular routes and service, CBS New York](#)

With the cutover work done to connect to a track on the brand-new Portal North Bridge over the Hackensack River - NJ Transit service is back to normal service on Monday.

[Editorial: Grant is a big help for promising San Rafael Transit Center plans, Marin Independent Journal](#)

San Rafael, in California's North Bay, is one step closer to a brand-new transit center to support the near 9,000 weekday multimodal riders

[Amtrak tops out steelwork for new Seattle maintenance facility, Trains](#)

Amtrak's new facility in the Emerald City hit a major construction milestone this week.

[MassDOT In Talks With Connecticut for Hourly Springfield-NYC Amtrak Service, Streetsblog Massachusetts](#)

While still many moons (and a few capital projects) from now, MassDOT and CTDOT are having early conversations to bring hourly service between Springfield, MA and NYC - a plan that could bring an additional million passengers to the corridor a year.



**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

Advocacy Workshops + Council Business Meeting



[DC ADVOCACY WORKSHOPS REGISTRATION](#)

Registration is \$125.00

Due to the space limitations of our office, each of the sessions is **limited to 20 tickets** and there will be no on-site or virtual registration. Please attend the session for the state you reside in. **Registration ends at Midnight eastern on Friday, April 10th.**

The in-office workshops will run from 8:00a to 4:00p. Lunch will be provided (*attendees are responsible for their own breakfast*). Attendees will be responsible for securing their own lodging needs.

Stay tuned to www.railpassengers.org/dc2026 for more information.



[2026 SPRING COUNCIL BUSINESS MEETING REGISTRATION](#)

In-person registration is \$99
Virtual registration is free

The 2026 Spring Council Business Meeting will take place on Wednesday, April 22nd from 8:00a to 4:00p. Lunch will be provided (*attendees are responsible for their own breakfast*). Registration ends on Friday, April 10th at Midnight eastern. There will be no on-site registration.

Stay tuned to www.railpassengers.org/2026SpringCouncilMeeting for more information.

Local Meetings + Events

[Tour the Restored Michigan Central Station](#), Saturday, March 21, 10a

[22nd Annual Southwestern Rail Conference](#), May 18-19

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

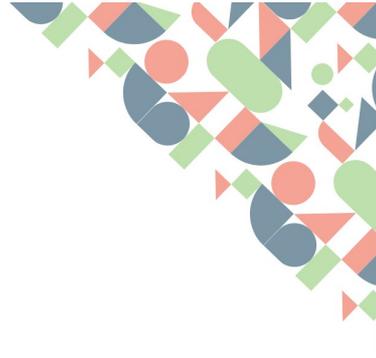
Your staff is at the table, in the field, having the conversations that make a difference for passengers across the country. Learn what they're up to each week and how you can support your Association's key missions!

- **Jim Mathews, President & CEO**, began the week by meeting with Passenger Rail Advisory Committee colleagues working to solve a looming commuter-rail liability insurance crisis, sat for a press interview, and then traveled to Germany as part of the initial meeting of the 3M Rail Advisory Board, returning before the weekend to examine a consequential decision by the Surface Transportation Board in the lead-up to considering whether UP can buy Norfolk Southern.
- **Sean Jeans-Gail, Vice President of Policy**, continued to develop legislative proposals for the surface transportation reauthorization, while also developing the agenda for the upcoming month of webinars that will get our Council Members and Members briefed for April's rail passenger advocacy week.
- **Jonsie Stone, Chief of Staff**, processed membership dues and donations sent to the DC office, collaborated with Bryce to create an email series, worked with CharityEngine on enhancements to the system and tended to the Association's administrative/operational needs.
- **Joe Aiello, Director of Community Engagement & Organizing**, worked with our CCC members to start the process for the Association's Board of Directors election, set up a number of meetings for Jim and Jonsie's follow-up trip to Toledo, as well as catching up on emails and calls from last week while I was out.
- **Kimberly Notarianni, Membership Management Consultant**, continues to work closely with our constituents on membership renewals, new memberships, troubleshooting access to the User Center, password resets, and adding additional sub-memberships for those who qualify for that benefit. If, after renewing an existing CharityEngine membership because your account was not set up for auto-renew, you notice that you have been assigned a "new"

CharityEngine ID number (this does not apply to individuals who have not yet renewed from the NEON software by Neon One), please contact Kimberly so she can consolidate your accounts. Your original CE ID number remains the valid number for your membership record.

Apply for Volunteer Staff at Rail Passengers Association

**VOLUNTEERS
NEEDED**



railpassengers.org/volunteer

Rail Passengers Association

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE!](#)

Membership How-To

Are you a current member and need help with your account number, username, etc.?

[Click Here For Our Membership "How-To" Page](#)

NOTICE: Looking for your 2025 membership/donation tax documents?

[Click here](#) for instructions.

We Have Merch!

New items available!



Tell Us Your Story



Rail Passengers Timetables



Our Timetables Manager, Chris Jukins, has created a spring update for us. He is still working on a few stragglers, but we should have those up soon.

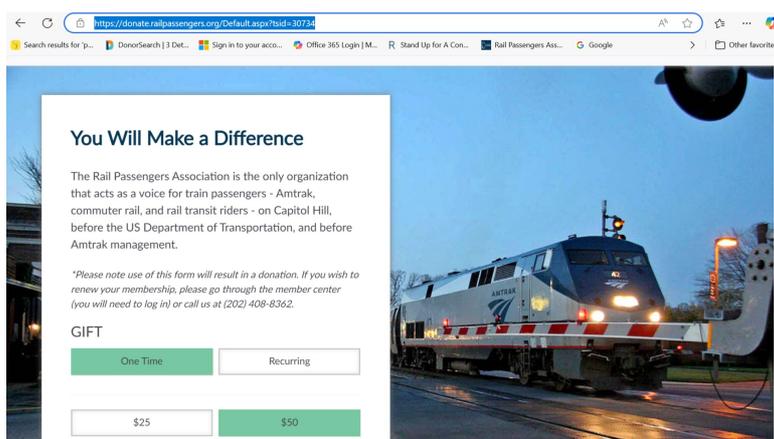
[CLICK HERE](#)

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:

Phone Number (not required)
Phone Number

Email Address
*Email Address

Yes, I would like to receive email communications.

PAYMENT

Credit Card Bank Account PayPal
Donor Advised Fund Google Pay

DAF pay | Donor Advised Fund

Dedicate this donation?

Membership Form:

Rail Passengers' Webinar Series

Other

Yes, I prefer communication by email rather than by mail.

PAYMENT

Credit Card Bank Account Donor Advised Fund Google Pay

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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.

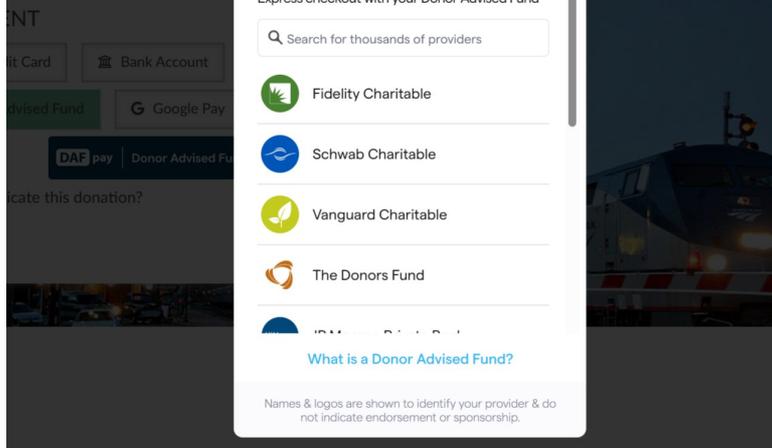
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Express checkout with your Donor Advised Fund



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 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



Rail Passengers Association Earns Coveted 4-Star Rating from Charity Navigator

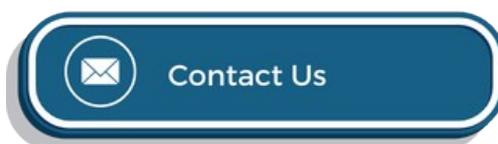
our organization, and gives you 1 point for every \$1 you spend to redeem for travel and merchandise. The card has no annual fee, no balance transfer fees, no foreign transaction fees, and has a very low interest rate.

Rail Passengers Association'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](#).

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS:



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.



RAIL PASSENGERS

EST. 1967

Rail Passengers Association
1200 G St. NW
Suite 520
Washington, DC 20005

P 202.408.8362
F 202.408.8287

www.railpassengers.org