



Rally Event Host Guide – “Rally For Trains”

Coordinated by the

National Association of Railroad Passengers

June 2017

*On Friday, June 23; Saturday, June 24 or Sunday, June 25, The National Association of Railroad Passengers is encouraging rail passenger advocates to host and/or attend a series of rallies across the country to oppose proposed federal budget cuts that will effectively eliminate the national rail network and isolate more than 220 communities across the United States. This budget will leave 23 states with no long distance rail service. Please join us as we fight for the preservation **and enhancement** of passenger rail!*

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Overview

Rally Event Host Guide Overview

This rally event guide provides tools, resources, and guidelines to help you effectively host your own, “Rally For Trains.”

While every rally event will be different and customized to your community, in this event guide you will find a detailed checklist with a series of *suggestions* to make a plan, spread the word, and host a rally on either Friday, June 23; Saturday, June 24 or Sunday, June 25.

Please note that the preferred Rally date is Friday, June 23, but we recognize that local circumstances and resources may mean that holding the Rally on Saturday, June 24 or Sunday, June 25 is necessary and/or is most desirable.

The checklist includes a sample timeline to follow, to aid in the planning and execution of a rally. It also covers ways to publicize your event through local media outlets and on social media.

NARP has produced materials (posters; flyers and template documents) to help you recruit volunteers, promote the event, attract media coverage and to use at the rally. A description of these materials is included below.

When you have confirmed your rally information with us, electronic files with these items will be furnished to you.

Additional rally assistance can be requested from NARP online at: www.townswithouttrains.com or by emailing rally@narprail.org.

While NARP will be promoting and publicizing the overall initiative nationally and to mainstream media, it will be up to our grassroots constituency to rally local communities to the cause.

What is “Rally For Trains”?

The “Rally For Trains” is a multi-city event that is one part of a much longer, “Towns Without Trains” initiative to promote—or save, as the case may be— passenger rail.

The mission of the overall initiative is to speak loudly as one collective voice of rail passengers to ensure that the proposed federal budget is not implemented without serious amendments to restore--and even increase--funding for trains. The initiative will take place over many months—or, as long as it takes for Congress to decide on a final funding package that adequately reflects the interests of rail passengers.

As part of the initiative, there are many other events and activities planned nationally and locally in addition to the June 23, 24 and 25 “Rally for Trains.” Stay tuned to www.narprail.org and www.townswithouttrains.com and follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/narprail and Twitter at @narprail.

“Rally For Trains” Goal: Take Action

The main goal of the June 23, 24 & 25 rallies should be to garner positive local media attention **AND** to get rail passengers, supporters and advocates to contact their Congressional representatives either by emailing or calling:

- To send an email to Congress visit www.townswithouttrains.com. The website offers an easy to use form that will direct your customized letter to the appropriate office.
- To call, dial: 202-224-3121. This will connect you to a switchboard that will direct you to your representatives in the Senate and House.

What Happens at a Typical Rally?

While each rally will be different, a typical rally will take place at your local train station on the date & time you select. Rally participants should include anyone who believes in the need for a robust transportation system in America. Invited guests may include public and elected officials, distinguished members of the community, business owners, members of organized labor, rail passengers, bike advocacy groups, and anyone else who supports rail.

Ideally, volunteers should be at your selected station during all scheduled train times, starting in the morning before the official rally start time. Volunteers should hold posters, hand out flyers and talk to other rail passengers and citizens to raise awareness. The size of your official rally may just be a few committed advocates or a larger crowd, depending on the community. While attracting a crowd for the rally is desirable, don't be concerned if you aren't able to do so. Getting our message out via local media coverage of the event to your community is very important.

During the event, rally organizers should plan to have at least one major photo opportunity period during which high-profile individuals will be present and can provide brief remarks. Local media should be invited and encouraged to attend to hear about the importance of rail to the community. All of the activities should be photographed and communicated widely on social media.

Rallies ideally should be timed to last no more than 45 minutes. Speakers should be encouraged to limit their remarks to no more than 5 minutes each! Plan a time and location for a specific opportunity for a media photo opportunity with the event speakers and invited guests.

Seeking Permission To Hold Your Rally

In today's world of heightened security awareness, it is vital that you seek and obtain advance permission/authority to hold your rally at the location of your choice. Unexpected groups of people, with media coverage are generally not welcomed by facility management and security staffs.

Once you have selected where you will hold you rally, we can assist you with the name of the owner of the facility and suggestions on how best to seek permission.

Safety & Security

In all cases, rally organizers should consider what efforts should be taken to ensure safety and security of everyone involved. All rally goers should acknowledge the risks involved, and commit to participating in nonviolent ways and in accordance with the law. Rally hosts and rally goers should commit to work to de-escalate confrontations with opposing persons or others. Everyone who participates in the rally should agree not to engage in any act of violence or violation of any applicable law and to obey the orders of authorized event marshals and law enforcement authorities.

As safety is **ALWAYS** the top priority around active rail lines, do not plan your event to occur on the actual station platforms at your local station or at any other locations near or adjacent to in-service/active tracks. Event attendees and participants (including the media) should be reminded to stay away from all in-service/active tracks, regardless if trains are present or not. In particular, the media often attempts to capture images or video while standing on tracks; this should not be allowed!

Amtrak's Involvement, Participation and Support

Amtrak can **NOT** actively participate in (i.e. Amtrak staff cannot speak during the rally) or support your rally. This is policy set by Amtrak's senior management and reflects the very delicate political tightrope that Amtrak must always walk. While many of us may likely disagree with this position, please remember that it is not made at the local level; local Amtrak employees must follow the direction they are given.

This being said, you should already know your local Amtrak station staffs and based on these hopefully positive relationships, it is possible that the local staff may assist you as they are able to do so.

What's Our Message?

The White House released a detailed budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2018 in May that doubles down on an initial proposal to eliminate funding for long-distance trains, and guts infrastructure spending.

While infrastructure investment was a major theme of President Trump's campaign, his administration's first budget slashes \$2.4 billion from transportation programs, jeopardizing mobility for millions Americans, and endangering tens of thousands of American jobs. Ironically, this budget targets rural communities and small towns that formed the core of support for President Trump during the election.

Cuts include:

- \$530 million in federal funding for Amtrak's national network trains, which provides the only Amtrak service to 23 states, and the only nearby Amtrak service for 144.6 million Americans;
- \$499 million from the TIGER grant program, a highly successful program that invests in passenger rail and transit projects of national significance;
- \$928 million from the Federal Transit Administration's "New Starts" Capital Investment Program, which is crucial to launching new transit, commuter rail, and light-rail projects.

Congress has the power of the purse, and the Senate and House can defeat this proposal. Given the positive FY2017 budget passed in April -- which saw increased funding for Amtrak, transit, and intercity rail programs -- this is a fight rail passengers can win. Members of Congress should recognize that advocacy groups, local officials, and members of the public are motivated and engaged on this issue.

Rally Event Host Guide – Additional Locations

National Materials

NARP has designed and will provide you access to the following materials for your use.

1. National Press Release – Pre-Event

- a. NARP has written a national press release announcing the “Towns Without Trains” initiative and “Rally For Trains” event starting on June 23.
- b. This is being distributed to media nationally prior to the event on or about June 7, 2017.
- c. Feel free to share it with media as broadly as you wish.

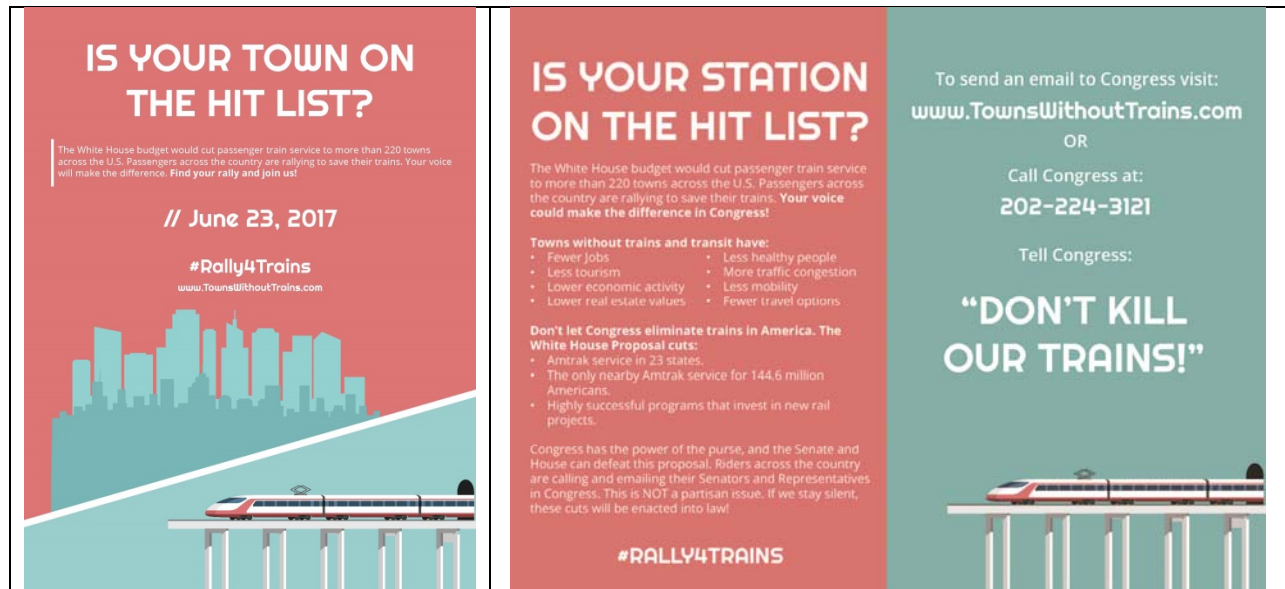
2. Posters

- a. NARP has designed and produced three different 24 x 18 posters that can be displayed during your rally event (see below).
 - i. Don’t Cut Trains
 - ii. Trains = Jobs
 - iii. Defend Train Service
- b. The posters can be downloaded from the Towns Without Trains website and printed locally.
- c. We can assist you in locating retail locations (Fed Ex/Kinkos; Office Depot; Staples, etc) that can print these posters in small quantities.



3. Flyers

- a. NARP has designed and produced two different flyers for your use (see below).
 - i. A graphically designed, color flyer, with the date of your event can be posted around your community in advance to recruit rally participants.
 - ii. A separate, call-to-action flyer can be handed out on the day of the rally event, encouraging attendees and supporters to contact Congress.
- b. A link to both flyers will be sent to you for printing locally.



Template Materials

The rally event 'kit' you will receive also includes the following templates. Templates are documents that you can customize and edit for your specific event. All of the templates are written as Microsoft Word documents and can be printed in black and white or greyscale. Please make sure to customize the template documents to include details about your local rally. If you have questions about these documents, please email rally@narprail.org.

1. Letter to Representatives (Template)

- a. Reach out to your elected officials to invite them to attend or to comment on the "Rally For Trains."
- b. Find your local representatives online at <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>.

2. Media Pitch Letter (Template)

- a. A customizable letter, or email, that can be used to contact local reporters to gain their attention and encourage their attendance to your local rally.
- b. Send this letter with the National Press Release as additional information.

3. Media Alert (Template)

- a. A customizable, one-page document to send to media to give them the basic details of the event and photo opportunities you are planning.
- b. Be sure to send this several days before your event so they can plan.

4. Flyers (Template)

- a. A customizable, template flyer can be edited by you with the time and location of your event, printed locally, and shared around your community to recruit rally participants
- b. A separate, call-to-action flyer can be printed out in grayscale and handed on the day of the event.

5. Local Press Release (Template) – Post-Event

- a. A customizable press release you can send to media, who did not attend, immediately after the event to notify them of the rally that has taken place.
- b. Be sure to add rich detail about your event including the number of people who attended, notable people who spoke, interesting activities that occurred, and demonstrate the value of trains.

Event Checklist

Two Weeks Out (or ASAP)

1. Ask other local rail advocates to help you plan and execute the event.
 - a. Convene a planning meeting or a group phone call
 - b. Assign roles for each person (e.g. venue, publicity, volunteer recruitment).
2. Select the best date for the event – Friday, June 23; Saturday, June 24 or Sunday, June 25
 - a. Base this on your ability to host and organize the event and on the ability of other volunteers to assist.
3. Select the best time for the event.
 - a. Check the train schedules for the busiest times at the stations.
 - b. Having the event timed to coincide with the arrival & departure of a National Network train is best.
 - c. Try to have volunteers at the station all day long when passengers would be there.
 - d. Determine a specific 30-45 minute event time/window for the rally, which would include a short photo opportunity for media and invited special guests.
4. Identify a venue for the rally, preferably your local train station.
 - a. We will provide you with information on what entity actually owns your particular station (this is not likely to be Amtrak).
 - b. Visit the site to inspect the exact location of your rally in the station. Make sure it is very visible to passengers, BUT IN A SAFE AREA!
 - c. Contact the station management or ownership to confirm availability and investigate the need for advance permission or for a permit in order to hold the rally there.
 - d. Identify security concerns, if any.
5. Email “Letter to Representatives” to invite elected officials (Town Council, Mayor, Governor, Congressperson, etc.)
 - a. Call them to follow up.

6. Call local business owners, economic development groups, commuter advocates, or others.
 - a. Ask them to volunteer, attend, and/or speak at the event.
 - b. Ask them to bring a friend(s).
7. Send “media pitch letter” to local media outlets informing them of your event.
 - a. E-mail is best for this distribution.
 - b. If you don’t have it already, ask NARP for a suggested media contact list for newspapers, television, radio and other media in your area.
8. Email and/or print flyers to invite the community to participate.
 - a. Distribute at community centers, coffee shops, transit hubs and train stations.
9. Use suggested Social Media messages to spread awareness.
 - a. Use photos of your event/ train station in the posts.
10. Engage a professional photographer or videographer to cover the event, or ask a talented volunteer.
 - a. Cameras and lights help draw crowds.
 - b. As an alternative, a cell phone will usually provide adequate pictures.
 - c. If possible, plan to “live stream” the event on Periscope or Facebook Live. (Call NARP at 202-408-8632, or email rally@narprail.org if you need assistance with this.)
11. Consider the need for other logistics such as:
 - a. Podium or table
 - b. Sound system

One Week Out

1. Call invited guests to confirm their attendance.
 - a. Plan a schedule to have volunteers at the station all day long, for specific blocks of time.
2. Re-confirm with venue and make sure you have proper permitting or permission
3. Plan the rally.
 - a. Plan for someone to emcee the rally event. Plan brief remarks and the order in which they will be given.
 - i. Make brief introductory remarks to any group that has assembled.
 - ii. Ask elected officials to make short remarks.
 - iii. Ask other special guests to make brief remarks.
 - b. Create a short agenda for the rally event. 30 minutes is enough (and NO more than 45 minutes!)
4. Plan a photo opportunity.
 - a. Identify a specific location at the rally location.
 - b. Make sure there is room for the number of people you expect to attend.
 - c. Consider what will be in the background of the photos and video
5. Send “Media Alert” to local media with the exact time and location of the rally & photo opportunity.
 - a. Call media to invite them to attend.
6. Continue to promote over social media.
 - a. Remember to include the hashtag #Rally4Trains in your posts.
7. Double-check to be sure you have fliers and posters to distribute that day.

8. Acquire other necessary items for rally.
 - a. Speakers, megaphone, additional A.V. equipment, podium.
9. Confirm a photographer (or at least a designated person to take pictures/video)

Day of Event – Friday, June 23; Saturday, June 24 or Sunday, June 25

1. Coordinate volunteers to arrive at a specific time.
 - a. Distribute posters and flyers to volunteers.
 - b. Deploy volunteers at strategic locations throughout the train station.
 - c. Plan for people to be there all day long if possible
2. Hold the rally and photo opportunity at the stated time; start on time!
 - a. Make brief introductory remarks to any group that has assembled.
 - b. Ask elected officials to make short remarks.
 - c. Ask other special guests to make brief remarks.
3. Ask every volunteer to share photos and key messages on social media during the rally
 - a. Promote the use of the hashtag #Rally4Trains.
 - b. “Tag” @narprail and any supporters you can.
 - c. Encourage others to share and post photos of the rally on social media.
4. Take note of who attended.
 - a. Estimate how many people were there.
 - b. Write down any good sound bytes you hear from your special guests.
 - c. Take note of other interesting sights, sounds, or anecdotes you see that demonstrate the importance of trains to your community.

Post-Event

1. As soon as the event is over, customize and distribute your local Press Releases to local media.
 - a. Be sure to include any quotes from high-profile individuals.
 - b. Be sure to add information about your event such as the number of volunteers who attended, the number of passengers who traveled through the station, or other facts.
 - c. Include photos from the event highlighting participants or speakers.

Rally Assistance

- rally@narprail.org
- **Bruce Becker – Vice-President Operations**
716-880-7291

A Word on Social Media...

Please like, invite, and share the NARP Facebook page at www.facebook.com/narprail, spreading awareness of the national event and your local participation.

When you confirm the details of your rally, including the date, time and place, notify NARP at rally@narprail.org so the event can be posted to the Facebook page (and so we can track the data).

Also, follow the NARP account “@narprail” on Twitter.

Make sure to utilize social media as much as possible when announcing your rally and spreading awareness. When posting, make sure to use the #Rally4Trains hashtag.

Here are some sample Twitter, Facebook and Instagram posts which you are free to use verbatim, or to slightly customize. This copy can be reused multiple times from now until the actual event. Be sure to edit/add your own handles where there are placeholders, and to add photos or videos to each:

- **Twitter:** Are you attending your local #Rally4Trains? Find the rally closest to you and learn more, here: <http://townswithouttrains.com/>
- **Twitter:** Is your town on the list? Join us on June 23 for a #Rally4Trains! Learn more about how to get involved: <http://townswithouttrains.com/>
- **Facebook:** Trains are a lifeline for this town. Join us for a #Rally4Trains on June 23 and make sure our voices are heard. Call Congress to let them know how important Passenger Rail is and that it cannot be defunded. <http://townswithouttrains.com/>
- **Instagram Post:** Join us on June 23 for a #Rally4Trains! Learn more about how to get involved: <http://townswithouttrains.com/>

When possible, include a mention or tag of your rally venue, notable invited guests or other influential social media users who would be interested, including the local media and reporters.

Media Relations 101

Who cares about trains more than the rail passengers and advocates who ride them? If we don't tell the story of trains, someone else will, or the story just won't get told. Below are a few brief points on media engagement that ought to help you in the event media cover your "Rally For Trains."

➤ You Have Support

- Let NARP know which media is coming and who attended your event.
- If you have questions about how to manage media, email rally@narprail.org.
- Assign someone to be your support at the event; this allows you to focus on the interview, have someone else take notes about the interview content and at times, deflect or defer questions to you can't answer.

➤ Interview Basics

These general rules will mitigate some of the inherent angst of conducting interviews and will help you stay "on message."

- Know what you want to say before the interview. See "What's Our Story?" above.
- Be positive.
- Sell the benefits of trains.
- Deliver your message, and then STOP TALKING.
- Listen to the question; pause and think about your response; then answer.
- Be confident. Don't argue, don't be intimidated.
- If you disagree with a reporter's premise or question, say so POLITELY.
- Use your messages to clear up the misunderstanding and make your point.
- Never speculate – if you don't know the answer to a question, it is OK to admit that you don't know, and then offer to follow-up with the answer after the interview.
- Even the most experienced spokespersons know this rule: the information provided during any interview can be used; the point is, keep the interview on the record; if you don't want information to be become public, don't use it.

➤ Practice

- Define your message: Establish your key points, and then practice delivering them.
- Do your homework: Review the interviewer's previous work.
- Anticipate tough questions: What are the opposition's arguments against trains?
- Prepare sound bites: Short answers are the best; try to keep to about 15 to 20 seconds.

➤ Television Tips

Here are additional suggestions for preparing to talk with a television reporter.

- Consider the setting and background.
- Look at the reporter, not the camera.
- No sunglasses or hats.

- Ignore the technology – the microphone, the lights and other equipment; focus on the interview and your messages.
- ALWAYS assume the camera is on.
- **Developing Effective Messages**
 - **Do Your Homework**
 - If you don't fully understand the subject, you can't distill what is important and you can't defend or convince someone about the messages.
 - You know your topic better than anyone. Anticipate the questions people might ask and make sure your messages are responsive to those questions.
 - **Show...while telling**
 - A message has more impact if you can show how someone is affected on an individual basis, if it can relate to their life.
 - A message that can quickly garner someone's attention is a message an audience will better understand, find interesting, or support.
 - **Simplicity is best**
 - If a message point takes more than one or two sentences to explain [about 15 seconds of talking], it's too complicated, or too long.
 - Three points are best for talking about an issue; remember – "Snap, Crackle, Pop."
 - **Prove it**
 - All messages need proof points to give them credibility. Statistics are helpful, but use them sparingly. Jargon is confusing and deflects attention away from the main message.
 - For a regional television station interview, don't use statewide statistics. Instead, tailor your response to the audience. For example, "More than 11,000 rail passengers use our station every day. We have spent \$4 million revitalizing this station and it is a centerpiece to our downtown area. It has led to an estimated \$100 million in economic development in the last 10 years."

After the Interview

After the interview, you have several options.

- Ask them when the story will run.
- If you like the story, share the story with everyone you know.
- Let NARP know what has run so it can be shared nationally as well.
- If the interviewer misstates information in the story, notify rally@narprail.org, or call the reporter to request a correction.

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