

Hotline #1,072: Bus Substitution Considered for Segment of Southwest Chief; NY Times Highlights Koch Support of Anti-Transit; Alabama Will Not Support Reintroduction of Amtrak; MBTA: NSRL To Cost Up To \$21.5B; SEPTA Offers Look at "Downtown Link"

We Need Your 'Nose For News'! When you see rail-related news stories, op-eds, editorials, or letters to the editor in your communities, send them along to us! We include them in our social media efforts, along with the weekly Hotline. Send your news items to Bob Brady, bbrady@xenophonstrategies.com, and we will share it with members. Are you holding a rally, a community meeting, or another kind of rail-advocacy event? We can help spread the word if you send them to us. We can put them on the website, [here](#). Please follow RPA on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) to stay up to date on all things passenger rail.

Citing the high costs of maintenance and implementing Positive Train Control (PTC) safety technology, Amtrak submitted a proposal to substitute chartered bus service on the Southwest Chief between Albuquerque and Dodge City or La Junta. Rail Passengers opposes this proposal, and is working with Congressional delegations in Kansas, Colorado, and New Mexico to ensure that train service is continued.

An Amtrak proposal to substitute chartered bus service on the Southwest Chief between Albuquerque and Dodge City or La Junta, citing the high costs of maintenance and implementing Positive Train Control (PTC) safety technology. Rail Passengers opposes this proposal, and is working with Congressional delegations in Kansas, Colorado, and New Mexico to ensure that train service is continued.

Amtrak has previously warned about the PTC issue on a 219-mile segment in Colorado and New Mexico where the passenger railroad is the sole user of the track; the cost of installation is estimated to be \$55 million. However, [Amtrak additionally cited maintenance and operation costs](#) for BNSF tracks on which the Chief is the sole user, which effectively reneges on a prior commitment to work with local communities to secure federal grants to fund capital costs.

"The failure to involve key stakeholders in developing alternatives to bus substitution is a failure on the part of Amtrak to meet its obligations to the taxpayer," said Jim Mathews, President & CEO of RPA. "It also demonstrates a lack of understanding of the Congressional mandate to run a national railroad by its Chief Executive Officer, Richard Anderson. Our association is committed to ensuring this proposal does not become reality."

In addition to working on the Hill, Rail Passengers is developing a corridor-wide campaign to activate mayors, local officials, and citizens in defense of this rail service. Stay tuned for updates as this campaign develops.

Do you support the work Rail Passengers Association does on behalf of riders? Your [generous donations](#) help fund campaigns. Please [help us](#) to keep up the fight on behalf of America's passengers.

This week, *The New York Times* published an in-depth look at major, wealthy, private campaign donors who are committing millions of dollars [to stop public transit projects across the country](#). These secretive campaigns are directed by brothers Charles and David Koch, who are conservative billionaire industrialists and political activists. The most notable group supported by the brothers is Americans for Prosperity, which used its campaign efforts to kill the Nashville public transit project this year.

Overall, the activist group has campaigned against seven local or state-level ballot measures for public transit development. It has also opposed more than two dozen other public transportation projects since 2015 *The New York Times* said. They have pushed for lower taxes and fewer government regulations, and even argued that transit projects, like that in Nashville, would “contribute to traffic and congestion and are completely unadaptable to changing traffic patterns.”

“When we compare our transportation infrastructure with that of European and Asian countries, and the connectivity between these countries, the U.S. is falling behind,” said Jim Mathews, Rail Passengers Association President and CEO in response to the Times story. “Cities with burgeoning metropolitan areas like Nashville, and even rural areas, deserve a strong public transit system in which people can use buses, light-rail and intercity passenger rail to get to and from work, school or visiting friends and family.”

There is a major gap in transportation services for the 62 million people who live in rural communities, or “Fly Over Country.” Of these millions, a quarter of them are veterans, and another quarter are seniors over 65. In addition, 1.6 million people have neither a car nor access to public transit, shutting them off from jobs, fresh food, education and even healthcare. Often they need to travel great distances to hospitals or other centers for care unavailable in their hometowns and this can easily be accommodated through the development of public transit services.

High-speed rail is also an effective transit tool, and its proven throughout Europe and Asia - connecting people seamlessly between major metropolitan areas at speeds not seen here in the U.S. Developing high-speed rail here would allow for the U.S. to be more competitive in the global marketplace, while strengthening local economies.

Past studies have shown that HSR development can create 24,000 highly skilled jobs for every \$1 billion invested in HSR. In addition, there is a \$4 return on economic benefits for every \$1 invested in HSR, which supports local communities along HSR lines, as well the whole country.

"For decades we have felt the impact of the federal government's underinvestment in rail and various anti-rail groups opposition to public transit development that has left the U.S. behind and this decision to halt public transit development should not be made by a select few with billions of dollars and private interests," said Mathews. "Out of the 22 countries worldwide that operate high-speed trains, the U.S. is ranked second to last. If underinvestment continues, we will see the U.S. fall further and further behind."

In an unfortunate decision for rail advocates, Alabama Governor Kay Ivey will not commit any state money [for the reintroduction of Amtrak service along the Gulf Coast](#) and will rather focus state resources on other ways to reduce congestions on the state's highways. Three states - Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi - had until Thursday to pledge a total of nearly \$35 million over three years to restore service from New Orleans to Mobile. Louisiana and Mississippi had committed money to the project. Even members of the Mobile City Council asked that Governor Ivey approve the funding to restart service, which was halted after Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

"It is unbelievable to think the Gulf Coast passenger rail service still has not been replaced since Hurricane Katrina struck more than a decade ago. Worse still, we have to fight the Governor of Alabama to replace what was lost. Instead of helping people have mobility options that contribute to the local economy for the future, Governor Ivey has opted to deny essential access to her own constituents," said Rail Passengers President Jim Mathews. "Although Governor Ivey has chosen not to support passenger rail service for her state, it will not be an end to our advocacy efforts."

In a statement, Alabama Governor Ivey said:

"I am hopeful that one day we may have the luxury of providing financial support for passenger rail service, but now is not the time when we have other challenges which must take priority."

Governor Ivey's decision not to support the project has been met with strong disapproval and criticism from mayors along the route who were hoping for service to return.

Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox said, "After exhaustive research and study, Governor Ivey's own appointees to the Southern Rail Commission recommended an investment that would vastly enhance Alabama's tourism industry for decades to come by creating new jobs and revenue for a 21st Century economy. This is not about passenger rail versus freight -- this is about the past versus the future. This decision continues Governor Ivey's pattern of outdated governing that keeps Alabama at or near the bottom in everything that matters. In missing this opportunity to position Alabama at the epicenter of passenger rail travel on the Gulf Coast, Governor Ivey proves that Alabama is not 'on the right track.'"

Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson's office released a statement that said: "We appreciate the thoughtful consideration given by Governor Ivey to this project and we will continue to work closely with her Administration to find a solution. Passenger rail represents a great opportunity

for Mobile, particularly with our expanding tourist economy and a revitalized downtown. If done right, we believe it can co-exist with commercial rail service vital to the port. Bottom line: We have more work to do to make it a reality. So, we will roll up our sleeves and continue to work closely with the State of Alabama, the Port of Mobile and with our neighboring communities along the Gulf Coast."

Support The National Network

Amtrak service is changing. There has been a recent wave of new developments for Amtrak, ranging from new menus to the end of private and charter cars to the dismissal of 18 station agents.

We have received reassurance that Amtrak long-distance service won't be terminated, but as passenger rail advocates, we need to be observant of what Amtrak's changes and new practices all mean. This also means we need to look to the future for a vision of the National Network in the coming reauthorization with Congress.

As we move forward in support of Amtrak and long-distance trains, there are three ways in which you can support our advocacy work:

1. [Call your members of Congress today and let them know](#) **that we want continued support for long-distance routes!**
2. [Members of Amtrak-served communities can sign on to a petition](#) with the message that we support the railroad's efforts to grow passenger rail service **in the fight to preserve and expand the National Network.**
3. **You can also help Rail Passengers in our fight for America's trains through [your generous contributions!](#)**

So don't wait, get involved today!

Although Amtrak has eliminated 18 station agent positions this month, [including the position in Havre, MT](#) without showing any signs of reversing the decision, Mayor Tim Solomon and the City Council want to let Amtrak know they are not happy with the change. Mayor Solomon regularly receives complaints from community members and travelers about the lack of service available in Havre without an agent present. With the ticket agent dismissed, there is no one at the station to meet the train and departing riders. This was the case for one Empire Builder train that arrived to Havre when the station was closed and locked. Mayor Solomon said he has not yet been able to speak to an Amtrak representative about the station change, but said that when he does, he wants to them to know that it's not working.

Construction and renovation work on the Chicago Transit Authority's (CTA) [Garfield Green Line station kicked-off last week following a groundbreaking event](#) with Mayor Rahm Emanuel

and Chicago Transit Authority President Dorval R. Carter, Jr. The Garfield Gateway project will run \$50 million and will focus on providing a better transit experience for Green Line riders.

“CTA always seeks to create and enhance a sense of community when we build or renovate our rail stations,” Carter said in a press release. “These facilities are far more than just places to catch a train or bus; they are travel hubs that frequently become part of the fabric of the communities we serve.”

The project includes:

- Extending platform canopies for additional shelter,
- Upgrading platform accessibility,
- Improving elevators and escalators,
- Installing public art and landscaping, and biggest of all
- Rehabilitating the original Garfield station house built in 1892.
 - As a note, the station house is no longer used by riders, but is still owned by the CTA.

In 2016, CTA received \$25 million in federal funding for the project through the Department of Transportation’s *Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery* (TIGER) grant program.

The proposed North South commuter-rail project known as the North South Rail Link in Boston could cost between \$12.3 billion and \$21.5 billion, based on the initial draft of a feasibility study conducted by the engineering firm Arup on behalf of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). The study is looking at the options of building two-track tunnels and four-track tunnels to connect the city’s North and South Stations, which sit 2.8 miles apart.

The two-track option would range between \$12.3 billion and \$14.4 billion, while the four-track alignment projected cost is \$21.5 billion. MBTA said that the costs would include tunnel construction, new or additional locomotives or coaches, improvements to support higher service levels, and risk contingencies.

[Some NSRL advocates have said that the preliminary numbers](#) are exaggerated so it’s easier for the city to say “no” to the project. Others, like Chairmen of the MBTA board, Joseph Aiello, say it’s too soon to make the final call.

“I think it would be premature to say, yay, we’re going to build something, or no, we’re never going to build something,” said Aiello. “I think there’s still some learning to do.”

The NSRL has been analyzed for years as a way to bridge the gap between the two stations for MBTA riders, while also increasing frequency of service on the entire MBTA commuter rail network. The project has been repeatedly put on the shelf over the years, but was recently brought back to attention by two former governors, Democrat Michael Dukakis and Republican

William Weld, and U.S. Representative Seth Moulton, as a far-sighted alternative to the proposed enlargement of South Station.

789 Games and Counting – Meet White Sox Superfan Laura Williams

By Jacob Wallace, Summer by Rail Correspondent

Laura is a White Sox superfan who, when I visited her on June 17, was attending her 789th White Sox game. When she began her streak, on August 12, 2008, she had no idea what she'd embarked on, she was just a Southsider who'd enjoyed baseball since she was 10. As time has gone on, she's become known around the park as one of the team's most dedicated fans.

To read more of the new Summer by Rail blog post about Laura Williams, and to follow Jacob's Summer by Rail journey, visit www.summerbyrail.com.

Glenview, IL village officials are continuing to push against the development of a proposed two-mile freight train holding track from Glenview to Northbrook, putting \$400,000 behind their efforts. The holding track is part of a plan by the Illinois and Wisconsin departments of transportation and the Federal Railroad Administration to expand Amtrak Hiawatha service from seven to 10 daily round trips between Chicago and Milwaukee with stops in Glenview.

To stall or even prevent development of the project, the Glenview Board of Trustees is supporting state resolutions that urge for the completion of environmental impact statements for similar projects and hiring a company to help the village work with the governor's office. An environmental impact statement is prepared if a proposed "major federal action is determined to significantly affect the quality of the human environment." An environmental impact statement is also more detailed and involved than an environmental assessment.

The village has also approved allocating \$400,000 toward communications, research, lobbying, potential litigation and a contingency fund to oppose the project. Under the \$400,000, the board has approved a \$50,000 contract with Jasculca Terman Strategic Communications to inform residents about the project and process, and another \$50,000 for legislative services with Morrill and Fiedler, LLC.

Deputy Village Manager Don Owen said the village agreed to spend money on legislative services in order to influence individuals "at a higher level," such as the governor and the Illinois secretary of transportation. In addition, the Citizens for ACTION group, which is a grassroots campaign to oppose the holding track, met with state representatives to discuss what actions could be taken to oppose the project, and the best option was a resolution, Owen said.

Caltrain has started a new one-year project that will see safety features at 15 grade crossings improved between San Francisco to San Jose. The improvements are intended to

prevent motorists from stopping too close to the train tracks or driving around down gates, as well as encourage pedestrians to cross the tracks at appropriate paths.

The \$3.5-million project's improvements include:

- More clearly-marked pedestrian crossings with new paint striping and lettering,
- Tactile pavement markers and guardrails, and
- Medians installed or improved at eight locations.

Construction at all sites is expected to conclude by summer 2019. Regularly scheduled work hours at and around each crossing will be Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. The project is partially funded through California's Senate Bill 1, which is providing another \$2.6 billion for rail and transit projects throughout the state.

Make plans to attend RPA's [RailNation Miami 2018 Advocacy Summit & Meeting in Miami, FL](#), Friday, October 19 through Sunday, October 21. The host hotel will be the Hyatt Regency in Downtown Miami.

Friday will feature a series of local tours & activities, including an exclusive opportunity to ride a chartered trip on Brightline. Saturday will include a full day of advocacy presentations, speakers and panels, followed by an evening networking event & fundraiser with entertainment. Sunday will cap off the weekend with additional presentations in the morning and a closing lunch with a keynote speaker.

Discounted group-rate room reservations are now available via this [link](#). In addition, the preliminary agenda, program, tour and event information is posted on the [RailNation Miami 2018 Event Page](#)!

Over the last few days, Summer by Rail correspondent Jacob Wallace has been checking out public transit, as well as ballparks in the midwest. He spent the majority of this past week in Chicago to visit the White Sox and Cubs of the MLB, as well as the Chicago Dogs, an independent league team right outside the city.

Jacob also recently made his way to Toronto to watch the Blue Jays and experience firsthand the transit systems in Canada's largest and busiest city, including a trip on a VIA train from Windsor to Toronto before using the local GO train and TTC streetcars & subways.

[In comparing the use and development of public transit in American cities](#), Jacob said, "There are a couple of cities like Cincinnati, where they have the baseline of, like, a streetcar that's got a 3½-mile loop. It's nice and people use it, but what you hear a lot is: the more service there is, the more use it gets. And I think people sometimes think if they just start out with one tiny little line

then it'll immediately be a smash hit. It requires support and funding in order to create a robust transportation system like it is here in Toronto."

To keep up with the rest of Jacob's journey, which will take him to Milwaukee, LaCrosse and the Twin Cities, please visit the [Summer By Rail blog](#), or follow @RailPassengers on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

The Regional Transportation District of Denver (RTD) will begin removing flaggers [from grade crossing on its University of Colorado A Line](#). The removal of the crossing attendants marks a major step for the transit agency's efforts to use wireless crossing-gate technology safely and for the establishment of quiet zones on the route. The RTD is also only able to remove the flaggers at six of 11 crossings following approval from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and Colorado Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). The flaggers have been working at the grade crossings for the past two years due to issues with the crossing technology.

"Over the past two years, we have safely and reliably carried more than 12 million passengers on the University of Colorado A Line," RTD General Manager and Chief Executive Officer Dave Genova said in a press release. "The flagger removal reflects the final approval by the FRA and CPUC that the University of Colorado's A Line wireless crossing-gate technology is acceptable and effective."

The removal of the flaggers will be in a phased approach, with some flaggers being removed starting today. The six crossings where flaggers will no longer be, include: Havana, Chambers, Clayton, Dahlia, Holly and Steele streets.

Member Forum Now Open

Rail Passengers Association has opened a new forum for members on Google Groups. Members can discuss and follow the latest passenger rail-related issues.

Click [THIS LINK](#) to sign up. It's free and open to the public, but users must join the group before they are able to post messages.

Member Benefit: Newsletter Archives Complete

A new feature for Members: every monthly Newsletter this organization has produced since the beginning of publication in 1969, can be accessed by [logging in here](#). If you have trouble logging in, or cannot reset your password, please [contact membership services](#).

The replacement bridge for the 100-year-old Portal Bridge that runs over the Hackensack River in New Jersey will receive [up to \\$600 million in funding following a decision by the New Jersey Transit Board of Directors](#). The board has made a financing agreement with the New

Jersey Economic Development Authority to spend up to \$600 million through the issuance of bonds to generate funds.

“We’re not going to kick the can down the road any longer,” Department of Transportation Commissioner and NJ TRANSIT Board Chair Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti said in a press release. “The time is long overdue for a new Portal Bridge, which is the foundation of many commuter frustrations. The taxpayers of New Jersey deserve a transportation system which will drive the economy and reliably get them to jobs, schools, and recreation.”

The Portal Bridge is a two-track, swing-type drawbridge that has become a major choke point for commuters due to mechanical delays. It currently sees about 450 Amtrak and NJ Transit trains per day traveling between Newark, New Jersey and Penn Station New York. The replacement bridge, currently under construction, will cost \$1.5 billion and it will be a fixed structure that can accommodate boat traffic on the river.

Rail Passengers Association Welcomes Summer Intern From Hungary

Hi! My name is Levente Szabados and this summer I am going to be an intern at The Rail Passengers Association. I was born and grew up in Budapest, Hungary and I recently received a Bachelor of Business Administration and Management at Corvinus University of Budapest.

During my studies, I took part in extracurricular activities in student associations, like the Students` Union. Currently I am a visiting student at George Mason University’s Institute on Comparative Political and Economic Systems.

Previously, I worked as a management consultant intern where I first met the rail industry. I was working on the strategy planning of a Hungarian railway company and analyzed how its business processes could be improved.

From the first day of this project I took it very seriously because of the importance of passenger rail in Hungary. With this work I focused on creating a more punctual and functioning transport opportunity for the people. Like in the United States, the rail-based transportation is very indispensable and deeply needed to fill the gaps between aviation and roads.

Nowadays, passenger rail needs all the support it can get in a developed country, and I am thankful that I can be a part of its development.

During my time here, I look forward to working on a variety of rail projects and to help improve passenger rail service in the U.S.

The California High-Speed Rail Authority’s project management program announced the other week that the Avenue 8 bridge design did not meet its “level of quality for a work product”

and showed “signs of distress.” This decision and the resulting cost of the new bridge was called into question in a story published in the [The Los Angeles Times](#).

“Having to tear down work and redesign it is an early warning sign of lack of program management,” said Robert Bea, a civil engineering professor emeritus at UC Berkeley and a member of the National Academy of Engineering. “It is very unusual. It is not common.”

As uncommon as it might be, Scott Jarvis, chief engineer of the California High-Speed Rail Authority, replied with a [Letter to the Editor](#) and said that the “the authority’s quality assurance program worked as it was intended” to find safety issues and make improvements.

Jarvis wrote that the Authority is “committed to ensuring the design and construction of our civil infrastructure is delivered in a manner that meets today’s safety standards.” Furthermore, Jarvis says that “the defective structure was discovered and the work was rejected far before it could be placed into service.”

Upcoming Regional Rail Passenger & State Association Member Meetings and Other Events:

- [Saturday, August 11](#) - Empire State Passengers Association Working Group Meeting - Utica, NY
- [Saturday, August 18](#) - Tennessee Association of Railroad Passengers Meeting- Jackson, TN
- [Saturday, September 26](#) - RailPac California 2018 'Steel Wheels' Conference - Sacramento, CA

Please contact [Bruce Becker](#) to have a state or regional event or meeting added to the RPA calendar of upcoming events!

Officials with the Virginia Museum of Transportation in Roanoke, VA are exploring other opportunities to allow [tourists to experience the Norfolk & Western Class J 611 steam engine](#). The museum had plans to set the train out on excursions this year, but Amtrak’s recent policy changes for private and charter trains won’t allow it.

Museum officials are still holding out hope that the train’s excursions are not completely over. Museum board member Todd Marcum said that running the train is important to the museum and that officials are in discussions with Amtrak about future excursions in 2019 and later.

Although the train often resides in Roanoke, the 611 is at the North Carolina Transportation Museum in Spencer, undergoing maintenance. The 611 likely won’t return to Roanoke until August or September, and Marcum said it will “be in the best shape that it’s been in decades.”

President Donald Trump plans to nominate Rick A. Dearborn [as a Member of the Amtrak Board of Directors](#). If appointed to the board, Dearborn would serve a five year term. Most recently Dearborn served as Deputy Chief of Staff for Trump between January 2017 and March 2018. He was also the executive director of the Presidential transition team following Trump's election.

Dearborn has strong connections with conservative groups from when he spent time as the director of congressional relations for the Senate at The Heritage Foundation.

Openings Available For RPA State Council Representatives

The following vacancies now exist for state representatives on the RPA Council of Representatives: Alabama (1 opening); California (7 openings); Delaware (1 opening); Idaho (1 opening); Illinois (1 opening); Louisiana (1 opening); Massachusetts (1 opening); Minnesota (1 opening); North Dakota (1 opening); Ohio (2 openings); Pennsylvania (1 opening); Washington State (1 opening); Wyoming (1 opening)

If you are interested in becoming more involved in passenger rail advocacy and serving in a RPA leadership role, this is your opportunity to be considered for an appointment by the Board of Directors to an open state representative seat. There is no deadline to apply and submissions will be considered on a rolling basis as they are received.

Please review the [position responsibilities & required qualifications](#) and complete & submit a [Candidate Information Statement](#) if you would like to seek a position.

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) is making significant [headway on its efforts to revitalize and re-envision the pedestrian tunnels](#) below Philadelphia's Center City under the Concourse Improvement Program. One of the first steps in the multi-year process was renaming the underground corridor the "Downtown Link," which allows people to connect to SEPTA's vast transit network including Regional Rail lines, the Market-Frankford and Broad Street Lines, City Trolley routes, bus routes, and the PATCO Hi-Speedline. The Downtown Link also allows people to connect to retail business, office buildings and historical attractions.

"These efforts are critical to sustaining our transportation network, and growing economic development in the city and throughout the region," SEPTA Board Chairman Pasquale T. Deon Sr. said in a press release.

During a celebration to mark the first stage of the project, people were able to see first-hand the improvements that are taking place, like:

- Upgraded elevators at 8th and Market Streets,

- Replaced escalators at 8th and 15th Street Stations,
- Structural repairs,
- Water leak remediation,
- Architectural enhancements,
- New emergency call boxes,
- Upgraded stairs,
- New lighting to enhance safety and visibility, and
- Illuminated artwork, pictures and signage.

SEPTA officials said that once the planned improvements are complete in 2020, the Downtown Link will be “a safe and modernized pathway for SEPTA customers to connect to transit, and for other pedestrians to reach destinations throughout Center City.”

Amtrak riders, as well as NJ Transit and Long Island Rail Road passengers [will see significant upgrades and improvements to New York Penn Station](#) once upstate trains return September 4. The passenger railroad held a conference call with reporters to share updates on the renovations that are taking place and how passengers will be more comfortable.

Stephen Gardner, executive vice president and chief commercial officer at Amtrak said that the station will see refreshed restrooms, lactation suites for nursing mothers, and the restoration of air conditioning in the concourse area, among other improvements for esthetics and appearance.

Gardner also said Amtrak is planning a new ticketed waiting area and a "refresh" of the Club Acela lounge. Amtrak is seeking requests for proposals to improve the cramped platform areas that are known for limited space.

As work moves along, trains from the Capital Region and other upstate areas continue to be redirected to Grand Central Terminal. This allows for work on the Empire Connection to Penn Station to take place, which has included using the Left Coast Lifter, a heavy duty crane to lift the Spuyten Duyvil rail bridge onto a barge so it could be rehabilitated. Tracks between the Spuyten Duyvil bridge and Penn Station are also being replaced.

The idea of a passenger rail line between Tulsa and Oklahoma City [is restarting following a Request for Proposal from the Stillwater Central Railroad](#), an indirect subsidiary of Watco Companies, LLC. On June 21, the company issued a release in which it requested a rail operator to submit “comprehensive proposals from providers of passenger rail services to operate passenger rail service called the Eastern Flyer between Sapulpa, OK and Del City, OK, otherwise known as the ‘Sooner Sub.’” WATCO set a deadline of Friday, July 27, 2018 for the proposals.

Mail Chimp Email (Not Included in the Hotline)

Rail Passengers was able to obtain a worrying proposal for bus substitution on the Southwest Chief, and is working with Congress to ensure that train service continues for communities in New Mexico, Colorado, and Kansas.

Additionally, the New York Times offered readers an in-depth look at how the billionaire industrialists Koch Brothers supported anti-transit groups, such as the Americans for Prosperity. This one group has negatively influenced numerous transit measures over the years, including the Nashville public transit project which was ultimately voted down this May.

This story highlights the many and very real challenges that passenger rail and public transit groups face when trying to advance projects that would provide greater access for people, economic growth, stronger tourism, and retail and living development.

Also in this week's Hotline, Alabama Governor Kay Ivey says "no" to funding for the reintroduction of Amtrak service between Mobile and New Orleans more than a decade after Hurricane Katrina struck; an early draft of a feasibility study estimates the NSRL in Boston could cost between \$12 and \$22 billion; New Jersey has committed up to \$600 million to fund the replacement of the old Portal Bridge; a chief engineer with the California High-Speed Rail Authority says that agency's quality assurance program is working like it should; and Denver's RTD has received approval to begin removing flaggers at grade crossings.

In addition, Summer by Rail correspondent Jacob Wallace continues his journey to visit 19 baseball stadiums. He is now making his way through Milwaukee, LaCrosse and St. Paul. Keep up with his trip at www.summerbyrail.com or on Twitter and Instagram by following @RailPassengers.

Have an enjoyable weekend.