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HIGHLIGHTS FROM RUN'S "WHO'S LOOKING OUT FOR YOU" CONFERENCE

By Richard Rudolph, Ph.D. Chair, Rail Users' Network

By all accounts, the Rail Users' Network conference held in Boston on April 29 succeeded in answering the question of "Who's Looking Out for You?" in the Boston area and New England regarding passenger rail/rail transit issues. The roster of speakers included managers from the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), Keolis Commuter Services, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), Amtrak, advocates and planners. All provided

invaluable insights regarding current services as well as efforts underway to expand passenger rail and rail transit in New England. The conference room was filled to capacity and included participants from all of the New England states, Ohio, Oklahoma, Montreal, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Virginia.

The conference opened with remarks by RUN's Chair, Richard Rudolph, who briefly reviewed the history of the organization. RUN was based on the British Passenger Focus model, the official passenger rail watchdog organization created by the British

Parliament in 1947. RUN is a 501(c)(3) organization committed to assisting transit advisory committees, rail advocacy groups and rail advocates to be more effective in carrying out their efforts to expand and improve passenger rail and rail transit services in North America.

Noah Berger, Special Advisor for Transportation at the Boston Foundation who is currently on loan from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), also gave "welcoming" remarks which focused on the foundation's effort to repackage the existing
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SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA RAIL REVOLUTION CONTINUES APACE

By Dana Gabbard

In a region famed for the automobile being the dominant form of transportation, it is fascinating to witness the swift transformation Southern California is undergoing as the rail network expands and as more and more proposals for further expansion proliferate. Here is a status report on the most recent developments.

The Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) has announced the extension of the Metrolink commuter train service between

Riverside and Perris will begin operation on June 6. The 24-mile extension includes four stations and will initially operate only on weekdays. More details are at the project website, perrisvalleyline.info.

The next Metrolink extension will open next year, extending one mile from the current San Bernardino station (the historic Santa Fe Depot) to a station in downtown San Bernardino at the new transit center. This is a precursor to a further nine-mile extension to Redlands slated to open in 2020. More details are at the project website, redlandsrailproject.org

RCTC meanwhile continues to coordinate a study of rail service between Los Angeles and the Coachella Valley (where Palm Springs and the famed music festival are located). This is being done in partnership with the Coachella Valley Association of Governments, California Department of Transportation and the Federal Railroad Administration. Per the project website, "Due to the trip length (141 miles from Los Angeles) and the approximate three-hour ride, Amtrak is viewed as the most appealing option for commuting and leisure travel."
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RAIL USERS' NETWORK MAPS OUT THE ROUTE AMTRAK MUST TAKE IN NAMING ITS NEXT PRESIDENT

Editor's Note: The following is an open letter from the Rail Users' Network to the Amtrak Board of Directors.

Anthony R. Coscia

Board Chairman
National Passenger Rail Corporation
March 19, 2016

Dear Mr. Coscia,

This open letter is in regard to the Board of Directors search for a new president at Amtrak given that the current President and CEO, Joe Boardman, has announced his retirement as of this coming September. As you may know, the Rail Users' Network is proud to be the only national organization that represents the interests of ALL rail passengers—long-distance, commuter and transit riders. Besides publishing a quarterly award-winning newsletter with articles of interest affecting the North American rail scene, RUN holds a yearly conference in various parts of the country providing rail advocates, customer advisory committee representatives, business people, civic leaders, environmentalists, planners, real estate developers and government and passenger rail officials a platform to discuss rail issues and solutions.

At our most recent board meeting, held at the MTA headquarters in New York, RUN board members identified qualities deemed necessary for the success of the new Amtrak president. First and foremost, the successful candidate needs to share the commitment that long-distance, regional and state

supported passenger rail service is a vital component of our national transportation network providing greater mobility for all while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

A successful candidate needs high visibility and must be willing to travel by train often to talk to passengers and on-board crew members.

A successful candidate should also have good relationships with state and local officials. State supported

The successful candidate needs to share the commitment that long-distance, regional and state supported passenger rail service is a vital component of our national transportation network.

rail service is a vital link to the national system—it provides greater mobility choices as well as promotes economic development and good paying jobs.

The new president of Amtrak needs to be committed to developing

an equipment plan to replace the aging fleet as well as to expand frequencies to increase its share of the transportation market. While it was an important first step to place an order for new diners and sleepers for the long distance eastern fleet, much more needs to be done. Amtrak needs additional coaches to increase the size of its consists, especially for trains on the northeast corridor which are frequently sold out. The equipment plan should also identify what is needed for state supported and long distance service and a timeline needs to be established to insure a regular flow of new equipment.

The new president also needs to develop and implement plans for expanding Amtrak service. Several ideas immediately come to mind. The *Twilight Shoreliner*, which traveled from Boston to Washington, should be restored once the new Viewliners come available. The Miami-Tampa train needs to be restored and a second train is needed between the twin cities of Minneapolis/St. Paul and Chicago.

While we understand it will be difficult to find a president who is up to the tasks at hand, we hope your board members will consider our thoughts on this matter. We certainly wish you well in identifying and selecting the next president of Amtrak.

Sincerely,
Richard Rudolph, Ph.D.
Chairman, Rail Users' Network
207-776-4961
rrudolph1022@gmail.com

CANARSIE TUBE SHUTDOWN SHOWDOWN

By *Andrew Albert*

Almost four years after Superstorm Sandy walloped the New York metropolitan area with tons of rain, winds, and salt water, its effects are still taking their toll on New York's transit riders. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) has been working on several under-river tubes for years following the devastating damage inflicted by this monster storm. Water from the East River flooded several of the tunnels connecting Manhattan and both Queens and Brooklyn.

Several have already been repaired, including the Montague Tube, which carries the R and N lines, and the Greenpoint Tube, which carries the G line under Newtown Creek, between Brooklyn and Queens. Ongoing work is continuing in the Cranberry Tube, which carries the A and C lines, the Joralemon Tube, which carries the #4 & 5 lines, and the 53rd Street Tube, which carries the E and M lines. Most of this tunnel work takes place on weekends, and in most cases, there are easy work-arounds for travellers, as many of these lines are interchangeable with

other lines, such as the Cranberry Tube, which can utilize the Rutgers Tube, which carries the F line, and meets the Cranberry Tube trains at both Jay Street/-Metrotech, and West 4th Street. In the case of the Joralemon Tube, the Clark Street Tube can be utilized between Borough Hall and Manhattan. The Canarsie Tube, which carries the L line, is quite another story, and one that is still unfolding.

The L line travels between the Canarsie area of Brooklyn, and travels through East New York, Bushwick, and Williamsburg, then under the East River and across 14th Street to 8th Avenue. It is one of the busiest and most frequent lines, and is largely responsible for a real estate and commercial boom in the Williamsburg and Bushwick areas of Brooklyn. But most importantly, no other line parallels it, and its tracks are not interchangeable with any other lines! The Canarsie Tube was seriously damaged during Superstorm Sandy—not enough to make the use of the tunnels unsafe, but bad enough that it must be rebuilt and repaired. There are two possible scenarios for this; they are quite different, and have split many

residents on both sides of the East River. Two community meetings have been held, one in Brooklyn, and one in Manhattan. The two scenarios were presented at these meetings for the public to see and understand. One would completely shut down the tunnel between Brooklyn and Manhattan for 18 months, with both under-river tubes completely fixed and fortified. This option would see a new ferry service between the ferry landing at North 7th Street in Williamsburg, and 20th Street in Manhattan. New “Select Bus Service” buses would traverse 14th Street, stopping where the L train stops now, and serving the ferry landing. Additional bus service would operate over a dedicated bus lane on the Williamsburg Bridge. In Brooklyn, L trains would continue to operate between Bedford Avenue and Rockaway Parkway, in Canarsie. No trains would operate along 14th Street in Manhattan, as there would be no place to service them. Additional service would operate on the J, M, and G lines, to help make up for the loss of the L train. It would be painful, but it would be the faster of the two options.

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The Rail Users' Newsletter is published quarterly by the Rail Users' Network, a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit corporation.

Current board members include:

Name	Location	Affiliation
Richard Rudolph, Chair	Portland, ME	NARP / TrainRiders Northeast, Maine Rail Group
Andrew Albert, Vice-Chair	New York, NY	New York City Transit Riders Council
Chuck Bode, Membership Secretary	Philadelphia, PA	Tri-State Citizens' Council on Transportation
Gary Prophet, Treasurer	Ossining, NY	Vice President, Empire State Passengers Association
David Peter Alan, Esq.	South Orange, NJ	Lackawanna Coalition
Steve Albro	Cleveland, OH	Cleveland RTA Citizen Advisory Board
Mela Bush-Miles	Boston, MA	Greater 4 Corners Action Coalition (MBTA)
James E. Coston, Esq.	Chicago, IL	Corridor Capital LLC
Bill Engel	Clinton, OH	Ohio Rail Tourism Association
Dana Gabbard	Los Angeles, CA	Southern California Transit Advocates
Steve Hastalis	Chicago, IL	National Federation for the Blind
J.W. Madison	Albuquerque, NM	Rails Inc.
Dave Mitchell	Virginia Beach, VA	Hampton Roads for Rail
Andy Sharpe	Philadelphia, PA	SEPTA

Please send comments, letters to editor or articles for possible publications to the Rail Users' Network at:
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CANADA'S NEW TRANSPORT MINISTER KICKS THE CAN DOWN THE ROAD



Canada's Transport Minister, Marc Garneau

By Ken Westcar

Hopes were high among passenger rail users and advocacy groups in Canada when our relatively new federal Liberal (Democrat-like) government appointed an established VIA Rail passenger and astronaut, Marc Garneau, to the Ministry of Transport post in Ottawa. Rather than quickly addressing the ailments at VIA Rail, he elected for status quo on service levels and kicked the can down the road on a new rolling stock fleet and consideration of VIA President Yves Desjardin-Siciliano's (YDS) enigmatic high frequency rail (HFR) strategy for the Montreal/Ottawa/Toronto triangle.

Transport Canada will take three years to study HFR, which continues to be largely bereft of a workable plan. With one breath YDS is saying that the Kingston VIA station, two tracks on the busy CN main line, will get a thorough makeover and trains will be "repurposed" (huh?) while a

second breath he uttered the concept of a freight-free route between Ottawa and Toronto on a completely new right-of-way. Even *Trains* magazine contributor Bob Johnston was unable to obtain any reconciliation from YDS on these apparent conflicting statements during a recent interview. YDS has recently made several more utterances on the profitability, private-sector funding and start date for the HFR project that have the advocacy movement and many other interested parties scratching their heads.

Canada's Auditor General (AG), an independent federal government body that evaluates the performance of ministries and federal crown corporations, recently released a Special Investigation Report on VIA's operations since the previous one in 2008. In summary, VIA's administrative performance received relatively high marks but the AG identified several areas where significant improvement is still required. It came as little surprise to VIA aficionados that capital projects including track

improvements and passenger car refurbishing had run wildly over-budget. This strongly suggests questionable contract management at VIA headquarters. Consequently, users and observers alike have grave concerns over any fleet renewal program and the distinct possibility that it could fail through poor administration, penny-pinching or lack of public consultation.

There is still some hope that service frequencies and on-time performance will improve when the new VIA timetable is released, supposedly in mid-2016, and perhaps in response to some of the Auditor General's criticisms. Meanwhile, the rumor-mill grinds on about what VIA has planned for services in southwestern Ontario. The jury is still out on whether it will be "Santa" or the "Grinch." If the latter, the fur will certainly fly as communities fight to preserve rail connectivity as an integral part of their sustainability plans.

Province of Ontario transit agency Metrolinx continues with study and planning for electrification of much of its GO Train system and has initiated new connector bus services to Brantford and Cambridge. The latter had high hopes of a train service branching off the GO line at Milton and, while the CP right-of-way could have been upgraded, it was considered financially unfeasible for the immediate future.

Passenger rail news from other parts of Canada remains sparse. Most provinces are running significant budget deficits, which makes it easy to rely on the status-quo of highways and short-haul flights for inter-city mobility. Perhaps this will change as governments in Canada move toward honoring their Paris COP21 climate-change commitments since transportation emissions are around 35% of the national total. Until then, the venerable Canadian and Ocean long-distance passenger trains will be tenuous survivors of the past hoping for better days ahead.

Ken Westcar is a Board Member of Transport Action Ontario.

NEW JERSEY TRANSIT'S TROUBLES GET WORSE, ALTHOUGH ADVOCATES WIN A SMALL VICTORY

By David Peter Alan

New Jersey Transit (NJT) has had more than its share of problems lately and, therefore, so have the agency's riders. Fares are high, there were some service cuts last year, and riders have been complaining that the remaining service is unreliable. Service at peak-commuting hours, particularly, has been plagued by problems. Commuters have been complaining, while NJT blames Amtrak, which owns and schedules the Northeast Corridor (NEC). Amtrak's NEC schedule drives NJT's schedules on most of its lines, but the commuters do not hold NJT blameless for recent service difficulties.

NJT can't make ends meet, a difficulty due in large part to the reluctance of politicians in Trenton to give it adequate funding. Gov. Chris Christie is a Republican, while Democrats control both houses of the Legislature. Legislative support for NJT has decreased 90% since Christie took office, although one-shot "fixes," like using highway tolls and federal highway capital dollars to help the agency year-by-year, have kept it going, at least until now. There are some similar "fixes" coming this year, too, but NJT is still saddled with a deficit of \$56 million, according to reports. It could get worse. NJT is facing labor problems with its two largest unions on the rails, which have not been resolved at this writing. It will cost money to pay for new labor agreements. Christie has promised that there will not be another fare increase until June of next year (2017), so there is only one way to make up the shortfall: by cutting service.

Rail labor had worked for NJT without a contract for five years and had threatened a work stoppage, but everybody was relieved to hear that management and a coalition of all rail unions had reached agreement on a new pact only 29 hours before the

threatened deadline for a strike or lockout. Then the unthinkable happened. The engineers and conductors voted it down by narrow margins, even though the members of all other unions approved it overwhelmingly and the head of the union negotiating coalition was the president of the conductors' union. At this writing, a 60-day "cooling-off" period is in effect, and there is a new strike deadline set for late June. Everyone hopes that the labor dispute will be settled and the trains will keep rolling.

Through all this, NJT did not have a permanent Executive Director. Veronique "Ronnie" Hakim, who held the post for only 22 months, returned to New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). Dennis Martin, General Manager of NJT Bus operations, was given the responsibility of the job in an "Interim" capacity, with the difficulties but without the job security. The Board of Directors of NJT held a special meeting six days in advance of their scheduled meeting, purportedly to offer the job to William Crosbie, former Operations Director at Amtrak. Unlike the resolutions that hired the last two holders of the job, the one for Crosbie did not specify the amount he would be paid or the terms for ending his employment. It is clear that NJT and Crosbie had not come to terms at the time of that meeting, since the Board resolution explicitly authorized the Board Chairman, who by statute is also the Commissioner of Transportation, "to negotiate and execute an Employment Agreement with William Crosbie setting forth the terms, conditions, salary and benefits by which he will serve as Executive Director as discussed in executive session."

Crosbie changed his mind and decided not to come to NJT, and Martin still has the job as "Interim Executive Director" and must still deal with the agency's problems. Some advocates for the riders have called for Martin to be

offered the job on a "permanent" basis, at least until Christie leaves office at the end of next year. While NJT was separated from the direct control of state government under the statute that established it (the Transportation Act of 1979), it is customary for the governor to choose a new Executive Director for NJT shortly after taking office. Martin has received high marks for making significant improvements in bus flow at the Port Authority Bus Terminal during the afternoon commuting peak, when he was GM of Bus Operations. He has also not done any harm to the rail side or the administrative side of NJT, and it has been argued that it makes more sense to let him keep the job on a long-term basis than to waste time and money searching for a short-term replacement.

Despite all of these difficulties, this writer has secured some small victories, acting for the Lackawanna Coalition. Last September, NJT cut 45 minutes off the service day on the Morris & Essex Line and an hour off the service day on the Gladstone Line, by eliminating the last outbound train on Monday through Friday nights, without notice to the riding public. We reached out to the media and to elected officials in the towns along our lines, and we got 22 minutes back for our riders on both lines.

The last inbound train on the Morris & Essex Line from Dover was eliminated as well, which imposed a curfew one hour earlier than it had been. After we started to campaign for restoration of the old schedule, the train came back, leaving only seven minutes later than the old departure time. The catch was that it skipped nine stops, which forced riders going to those places to wait for one half-hour for the last train of the night to take them the rest of the way home.

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ALBUQUERQUE TRANSIT, OR LACK OF IT

By *J.W. Madison*

As this is written, preliminary work, like underground utility relocation, has begun on our brave new Bus Rapid Transit line, known here as Albuquerque Rapid Transit (ART). There is considerable and noisy opposition along the East Central / Nob Hill route—"NO ART" banners on stores, shouting over one another at community meetings, and the like. This opposition homes in on the same issues that killed the Modern Streetcar proposal for the same corridor circa 2007: notably, traffic disruption, the possibility of adjacent streets becoming choked up with diverted traffic, isolation of local merchants from the auto trade, etc.

It has not yet been made clear to me and other local rail transit advocates whether ART, at a starting cost of \$100 million for approximately 10 miles, will be a carefully designed stepping stone toward future urban rail or a super-expensive bus route serving a corridor already well-stocked with local and express "regular" buses. Either way, efforts are still underway to stop the project in its "tracks."

I expect to hear more about these efforts in a week or two, after which I'll have another report ready.

The Hyperloop And Our Priorities

When the Hyperloop news first broke, we at Rails Inc discussed it among ourselves and various friends; passenger Rail advocates and otherwise. The off-the-cuff list of questions below is the result of these discussions.

The Hyperloop concept is potentially

promising and even exciting (look it up). Readers may be aware that this concept dates back to just after the Civil War, when a pneumatic-tube subway operated under Manhattan. The wood-leather-and-grease technology of the time was not up to the vision and daring of the project, but the thing actually ran for awhile. By way of further preface:

America (along with Canada?) is so far behind nationally and regionally in passenger rail that it would constitute a revolution merely to achieve a modern version of what we had until just after World War II: namely, a reliable passenger train network that served every significant destination in the country, and most in between, at roughly freeway speeds.

Rails Inc is among those who believe we need to restore and modernize our passenger track network to the connectivity of the 1940s, complete with the best modern safety technology. Further, these tracks should be publicly-owned, like our major highways, streets, airports, and waterways. Finally, we see Amtrak being converted to either a true "government" agency (with a stable funding stream) or a true private for-profit corporation; either way subject to the possibility of private competition where approved by the appropriate agencies and public input.

Having declared all this, we'd like to see progress made toward the Hyperloop (with private financing), a relatively short test "train" set up, and the following concerns addressed.

- How will outside temperature extremes affect the expansion and contraction of the tubes, if the passenger pods have to snugly fit within the tubes?

- How would fresh air be assured within the pods?
- Are there any solid energy consumption ("fuel economy") figures per passenger-mile?
- How to escape either the pod or the tube itself should the need arise? Different doors for the pods? Elevators and stairways at every few pylons? How would exit / escape platforms affect the vacuum capabilities of the tubes? If one pod has to grind to a halt, how to keep it from getting rear-ended?
- How about pod windows and transparent tube sections, for scenic benefits and to forestall claustrophobia?
- What about the sound barrier?
- What about the long-term medical effects of acceleration, deceleration, G-forces, magnetic fields, etc? Would any of this affect, say, pacemakers?
- Will personal electronic devices work in the pods?
- How does the Hyperloop compare in cost, efficiency and safety to "Urban" Mag Lev? For that matter, how far along is Urban Mag Lev?
- How big a market is there for the L.A.-San Francisco route with no stops between and no San Diego service?
- Will there be much of a cost or design problem running the Loop in and around freeway exits, flyovers and cloverleafs?

J.W. Madison is a RUN Board Member and president of Rails Inc, based in Albuquerque, NM.

CANARSIE TUBE SHUTDOWN SHOWDOWN

(Continued from page 3)

The other option would be to close one under-river tube at a time, and repair each. Trains would continue to operate under the river in the tube not being worked on, but with perhaps only 20% of existing capacity. As this is one of the busiest lines, your chances of getting on a train would be severely diminished. No trains would operate between Bedford Avenue and Lorimer Street in Brooklyn, but would continue to operate between Lorimer Street and Rockaway Parkway, in Canarsie. A fair amount of silica dust would be raised during the work, so rubber barriers would have to be installed at both ends of the closed tube. And the worst part is this option would spread the work out for 36 months!

In either option, many transfer points exist, with one new one to be created at Livonia Ave/Junius Street in Brownsville, which will allow a transfer to the #3 line. At Broadway Junction, L train riders can transfer to the A,C,J, or Z lines. At Myrtle Ave, L train riders can transfer to the M line. At Lorimer Street, L train riders can transfer to the G line. Meetings have been held with elected officials on both sides of the river, as well as the two public meetings mentioned earlier. Not everyone agrees on which solution would be better, but everyone

understands that this work must be done. Damage was done to electrical and communication equipment, lighting and power cables, fire protection equipment, emergency alarms, phone systems, and fiber optic cables. All must be repaired and these repairs are expected to be good for 100 years. So, the obvious question is, which is the best option: the do-it-all-at-once and get-it-over-with option, or the spread-it-out and inconvenience-fewer-people-in-total one.

The MTA will continue to meet over the next two months with Community Boards, neighborhood groups, and all areas along the L line to gauge opinion, and get a better idea of which way to go. The MTA Board is expected to finalize the decision by September or October, as a contractor must be lined up and inspections done as quickly as possible to qualify for federal Sandy-related funds.

Another important aspect is the damage that has been done to the Bushwick Viaduct, which carries the M line between Metropolitan Avenue in Middle Village, Queens, with Broadway/Myrtle Avenue in Brooklyn. Between the Central Avenue & Myrtle/Broadway stations is a portion of the viaduct that has seen significant deterioration, and must be repaired. Some homes may be vacated as a part of this work, as they are very close to the

viaduct. In addition, at the Metropolitan Avenue end of the line, the New York & Atlantic freight railroad operates under the viaduct, and some freight trains have struck the viaduct, so it must be fortified. And the kicker is: this work must be done **PRIOR** to the Canarsie Tube shutdown, as the M line is one of the important options to carry riders who would otherwise be on the L train.

So, many decisions will be made in the coming months which will affect transit users in New York for years to come. All are vitally important to maintaining the integrity and safety of New York's invaluable transit system, which is now carrying an **AVERAGE** of six million riders each day! All of these decisions will have far-reaching impacts on many neighborhoods and their stores, apartment houses, and real estate values. We will keep you posted on which way this goes. We expect there may be "incentives" in the contracts which could help speed up the work, and penalize contractors for late work. This has been tried and used effectively in other major contracts. New York's six million daily riders expect the work to be done safely, and in a timely manner. Stay tuned.

Andrew Albert is Vice-Chairman of RUN, the Chair of the NYC Transit Riders Council, and Riders' Representative on the MTA Board.

2016 Schedule of RUN Board Meetings:

Meetings for the remainder of 2016 are scheduled for June 4, September 10 and Dec. 3.

Board meetings take place at the MTA headquarters in New York City from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m., unless otherwise noted.

For more information, contact Richard Rudolph, Chair, at 207-776-4961.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S RAIL REVOLUTION

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Although stops and station locations are yet to be determined, the initial service plan would be for two daily round trips along the corridor." The full process from initial planning to opening is expected to take seven years. More details are at the RCTC website, rctc.org.

As I reported in our last newsletter, there has been slow but steady progress in implementing a rail option for commuting between Ventura County and Santa Barbara, north of Los Angeles along the Pacific coast. This involves an adjustment to the schedule of the Amtrak *Pacific Surfliner* and is currently at the stage of intense negotiations among the key players with the announcement of agreements hopefully to soon be forthcoming.

Streetcars are becoming a national phenomenon, with numerous cities undertaking or considering it as a component of urban revitalization. Four projects are being given serious consideration in Southern California.

The one that has received the most attention (including at the panel I moderated at our Annual Conference last year) would be in downtown Los Angeles, linking the Convention Center/LA Live entertainment district with the historic Broadway corridor, the Civic Center and Bunker Hill (location of the Music Center and Walt Disney concert hall). More details are on the project website, streetcar.la.

In Orange County, south of Los Angeles, two projects are being considered. One would link the Anaheim Amtrak/Metrolink station with Disneyland and the Anaheim Convention Center. It is currently in the environmental review stage with the hope to have it operating by 2018. More details at the project website, aconnext.com/arc. The other

would link the Santa Ana Amtrak/Metrolink station and a multi-modal transit center in adjacent Garden Grove through downtown Santa Ana along Santa Ana Blvd. and a portion of a historic Pacific Electric Red Car right-of-way. The project is being overseen by the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) and is currently in the design and engineering stage, with the hope it will begin operations in 2020. More details can be seen on the OCTA website, octa.net.

Riverside, east of Los Angeles, also is considering a streetcar for its downtown district along with serving the University of California, Riverside. A feasibility study is currently being prepared, with release anticipated later this year at which point the city will decide whether to go forward with the project. Further details are on the city's website at riversideca.gov/planning/riversidereconnects.

Construction of the 11-mile mid-coast extension of the San Diego trolley linking Old Town and the University of California, San Diego along the I-5 corridor with nine new stations is to begin later this year, with service to commence in 2021. More details can be found at keepsandiegomoving.com/Midcoast/midcoast-intro.aspx.

The most significant element of the rail revolution is in Los Angeles County and the burgeoning Metro Rail system. On March 5, the 11-mile foothill extension of the Gold Line light rail between Pasadena and Azusa opened. This was followed in turn on May 20 with the opening of the 6.6-mile Phase 2 of the Expo line light rail between Culver City and Santa Monica. The regional connector, a 1.9-mile project through downtown Los Angeles, will link the Gold Line and Expo and Blue lines. This will facilitate one-seat rides between Pasadena, East Los Angeles, Santa Monica, Long Beach, USC,

Hollywood and many points in between. It is slated to open in 2020.

The 8.5-mile Crenshaw light rail project is currently under construction. This will link the Expo and Green line light rail lines and also serve LAX (via a People Mover that will run from the rail station into the terminal area). This includes eight stations and is slated to open in 2019. Also under construction is the nine-mile extension of the Purple Line heavy rail subway along Wilshire Blvd. with seven new stations linking Westwood (near the UCLA campus), Beverly Hills and the Miracle Mile district. Phase 1 is due to open in 2023. Phases two and three are currently being planned, while funding is being secured to hopefully accelerate construction.

Part of the effort to accelerate involves an effort to augment local funding. A draft plan by Los Angeles Metro has been released proposing that the local transit sales tax Measure R be extended along with an addition half-percent sales tax. Extensive outreach is being done to shape the final proposal. MoveLA, an advocacy non-profit, is leading the effort to build community support to secure the two-thirds majority the measures will need to pass. The current plan is to have the tax measures on the November ballot. I am hopeful that unlike four years ago, when a similar effort just fell short by less than a percentage point, this time we will succeed.

Not so long ago, the only rail in this region was a few Amtrak trains. The explosion of Southern California rail services and enthusiastic efforts to expand rail is remarkable, notable and gratifying. Kudos to the advocates, officials, stakeholders and agencies that are making it possible.

Dana Gabbard is a RUN Board member and executive secretary of Southern California Transit Advocates.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM RUN'S "WHO'S LOOKING OUT FOR YOU" CONFERENCE



Former Governor Michael Dukakis told RUN conference attendees that rail was originally part of his vision for the "Big Dig" project.

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Fairmount Commuter Rail Branch as a rapid transit-commuter rail hybrid under the Indigo Line brand in inner-city Boston. At the FRA, he serves as Director of Planning and Program Development for the Region I Office.

The first featured speaker was Frank DePaola, formerly the Highway Administrator for MassDOT's Highway Division, and current General Manager of the MBTA. He pointed out that the "T," as it is known locally, is the fifth-largest transit authority in the country, serving 175 municipalities and providing 1.3 million daily trips. He said the agency's short-term focus is to upgrade and maintain 90% on-time

performance, and keep the system in a state of good repair. The long-term (25 years) focus is on understanding regional growth patterns and the need for public transportation to support environmentally sustainable economic development.

The second featured speaker, Gerald Francis, the General Manager of Keolis Commuter Services in Boston, focused on what his agency is doing to operate and maintain the MBTA commuter rail system's 394 route miles, serving 138 stations and 127,000 passengers each weekday. Keolis is working on making commuter rail on the "T" a "world-class system" that will drive economic growth and contribute to improving the quality of life in the Greater Boston area.

The motto among managers, he said, is "Thinking Like a Passenger" and that all headquarters employees are now trained as customer-service representatives, in addition to training for their specific jobs.

The third speaker, Astride Glynn, Rail and Transit Administrator for the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, provided an overview of MassDOT's activities and described the state's rail system, which includes rail under both public and private ownership. She said there is high demand in areas such as the Pioneer Valley, where there is strong local support for regional rail service from Greenfield to Springfield, and interest in better connections to Boston

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RUN's "WHO'S LOOKING OUT FOR YOU" CONFERENCE

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and New York City. Her department is primarily focused on activities outside the Boston area, working with neighboring states to develop rail corridors, including with Vermont and the Province of Quebec to restore the passenger rail route to Montreal. She also mentioned the efforts underway to renovate Union Station in Springfield, current construction to improve service between that city and New Haven, and the seasonal Cape Flyer train between Boston and Hyannis, on Cape Cod.

Our final morning speaker, Rina Cutler, Senior Director for Major Station Planning and Development at Amtrak, outlined several initiatives and gave advice to rail advocates. Before coming to Amtrak, she was responsible for the coordination and oversight of all transportation and utility functions in the City of Philadelphia, and served on the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transit Authority (SEPTA) Board of Directors. Her purview includes stations in the Northeast, as well as Chicago Union Station. Community and state-level support plus seed money, she said, are elements of successful advocacy for Amtrak service. Her advice to advocates also included: be realistic, pick your battles, understand the world of decision makers facing multiple demands, advocacy is political—understand governmental realities; money matters—where it comes from and where it goes; policies change in cycles—don't miss opportunities before cycles change; and finally, if you're not at the table you're on the menu—advocacy requires both long-term and short thinking.

Our luncheon speaker was Maggie Super Church, Ms. Church is an attorney working with the Conservation Law Foundation and Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation on metrics, structuring and capitalization for the Healthy Neighborhoods Equity Fund, a pioneering \$30-million private equity real estate fund.

She focused her remarks on health impacts of the built environment. She stressed the importance of healthy neighborhoods and said transit promotes active living and good health. People lose weight when they change from an auto-dependent lifestyle to using transit. She expressed concern about the difficulty of getting private-equity funding for neighborhood improvements like transit-oriented development (TOD) and noted the disparities in health between neighborhoods, citing a 33-year difference in life expectancy in two Boston neighborhoods: the affluent Back Bay (92 years) and low-income Roxbury (59 years).

The afternoon session featured three panels about rail advocacy in greater Boston and elsewhere in New England. RUN Chair Richard Rudolph moderated the first panel, which covered the status of passenger rail in New England, plans for expanding it and rail transit advocacy in the region. The first panelist, Timothy Brennan, Executive Director of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, provided an overview of passenger rail in western Massachusetts, including the ongoing improvements between New Haven and Springfield, and the work on the Knowledge Corridor north of Springfield and in Vermont. He said that local ridership on Amtrak's Vermonter has increased 75% since the train was re-routed to serve Holyoke, Northampton and Greenfield, and added that he is looking forward to the restoration of service to Montreal.

The second panelist, Stephen C. Smith, is the recently retired Executive Director of the Southeastern Regional Planning & Economic Development District, a regional planning agency serving 27 cities and towns in southeastern Massachusetts. It has been actively involved promoting the South Coast Rail Project over the past two decades. This endeavor would restore passenger rail service from Boston to New Bedford and Fall River. He called the lack of such service, which ended in

1958, "the black hole of the commuter rail system." The proposed project would cost \$2.2 billion and would provide 20 round trips on weekdays. The 52 miles of track involved would be electrified under the proposal. Smith said the project had been studied for 25 years, and that it is now time to build it.

The third panelist, Jack Sutton, former President of the Maine Rail Group (MRG), gave an overview of the existing rail lines in the Pine Tree State. His group, founded in 1988 to preserve the line between Brunswick and Augusta which is state owned, is pushing for more passenger trains in Maine, especially an extension to Augusta (the state capital), Waterville and beyond to Bangor. The final presenter on the panel, Mike Izbicki, Chair of the New Hampshire Rail and Transit Authority, is involved with efforts to extend commuter rail service beyond Lowell, Massachusetts to Nashua and Manchester, New Hampshire. He noted that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are working on a study together; a "first" for the two agencies. The proposal calls for 34 weekday trains to Nashua and 16 to Manchester. Izbicki, who drew criticism for not proposing that the service be extended to the state capital in Concord, suggested this could be accomplished as part of a second phase.

Andrew Albert, RUN Vice-Chair and Chairman, New York City Transit Riders' Council, moderated the second panel on advocacy, hosting four powerful spokespersons for their respective advocacy groups. Kristina Egan, Director, Transportation for Massachusetts, began with her take on the importance of parity for all neighborhoods with respect to air quality and access to good transportation. Mela Bush-Miles, RUN Board Member and Lead Community Organizer for the Greater 4 Corners Action Coalition, spoke about the importance of converting the MBTA's Fairmount Line into the Indigo Line, which would be a more transit-like

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RUN's "WHO'S LOOKING OUT FOR YOU" CONFERENCE



Members of the RUN conference's advocacy panel, from left: Kristina Egan, Mela Bush-Miles, Allentza Michel and Ellen Reisner.

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experience, with better frequencies, and a more complete schedule of service, matching the quality and level of service to other communities served by the MBTA. Allentza Michel, Principal of Powerful Pathways Consulting, explained her less than ideal (or equal) experience getting to school while growing up in the Fairmount/Blue Hill area of South Boston, and why having good transit service is vitally important, and how it gives residents of economically depressed communities a fighting chance for success.

Wrapping up the panel was Ellen Reisner, of the Somerville Transportation Equity Project, who have been fighting to get the

Green Line extended to Somerville, from Lechmere. (News flash: this will happen!) The number of additional riders this extension will bring to the Green Line and the economic benefits it will bring to Somerville and beyond should have made this extension a slam-dunk. In many other cities, it likely would have been. These four women brought a passion and excitement to the panel, and there's little doubt that the Boston area is a better place with these four advocates engaged in the battle for more and better transit for all.

RUN Board member David Peter Alan, Esq. moderated the last panel of the day which focused on "The Great Missed Opportunity: The North-South Rail Link; Why the 'Big Dig' was a highway-

only project and efforts underway to correct it." The first presenter, former Governor Michael Dukakis, served the Commonwealth of Massachusetts from 1974 to 1978, and from 1982 to 1986. He said he wanted a rail link to be part of the "Big Dig" project but the Reagan Administration removed the rail component and made it into a highway-only project. Governor Dukakis, who was also the nominee of the Democratic Party for President in 1988 and has served as a member of the Board of Directors of Amtrak, is working with Former Governor William Weld to convince the current Massachusetts Governor, Charlie Baker, to move forward with a \$2-million study for the North-South Rail Link.

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CONFERENCE ATTENDEES SAMPLE BOSTON TRANSIT

By *David Peter Alan*

Our conference in Boston was highly successful, both in terms of attendance and quality of the conference itself. The day after the conference, we offered a tour of the local transit lines and facilities. This year, about 20 conference participants stayed in town on Saturday, April 30 to complete their experience by sampling the means by which hundreds of thousands of Bostonians get around.

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA, known locally as the "T") is a diversified transit system with several different transportation modes; a variety equaled in this country only in Philadelphia and San Francisco. There is a 14-line "commuter rail" system and

three subway-style lines; the Red (which has two branches), Orange and Blue Lines. The "Green Line" is not a single line, but four light-rail lines which share common track downtown. An additional line operates with historic streetcars, and there are plenty of bus routes. A few use electric trolley buses (which some locals call "trackless trolleys"), and there are also seasonal ferries plying Boston Harbor during the summer.

The tour began with a look at the development occurring near South Station, the terminal for the South Side commuter rail lines. Architect Brad Bellows, who is actively promoting the proposed North-South Rail Link (which was left out of the now-infamous "Big Dig" project in the 1980s) led that portion

of the tour. Bellows also gave the group an orientation about the city's historic railroad terminals, as well as efforts to promote development near South Station and toward South Boston.

People who hold unlimited-ride passes on local transit, including day passes, can also use them on "commuter" trains, as long as they stay within bounds of the local-transit system. Attendees who came from other places purchased them and used them to ride to Fairmount on the Dorchester Branch. There is hourly service to Readville, the next stop, where connections are available for Franklin or Providence. The fare for that one extra stop is considerably higher than the Fairmount "local-zone" fare, so local

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RUN'S "WHO'S LOOKING OUT FOR YOU" CONFERENCE

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The second presenter, Peter M. Zuk, a lawyer who is now an infrastructure manager, gave an overview of infrastructure issues involved in building a North-South Rail Link. He called the Central Artery, built as part of the "Big Dig" project, "a proving ground for many technologies" that would prove useful in building a new rail link. Brad Bellows, an architect who practices in Cambridge and has advocated for the new link as a member of Gov. Weld's Central Artery Task Force in the 1990s and as a member of the North-South Rail Link Working Group today, gave the final presentation. He called the current lack of train capacity at the separate North and South Stations "a tax on us"; adding that through-running between the North and South Side commuter rail systems would save \$100 million per year, and that the link would increase rail capacity by a factor of ten.

He also said the existing system uses land inefficiently, and through-running would eliminate the need for much of the current midday storage space in town, which would open that land for development.

Bellows noted that soil conditions in Boston are suitable for using tunnel boring machines (TBMs), and cited many examples of adding through-running facilities in many European cities, as well as at Los Angeles Union Station. He concluded by warning: "We are about to miss the window of opportunity at very low interest rates" and also stated: "This is not a Boston project. It is a region-wide project."

The final speaker of the day, RUN Treasurer Gary Prophet, who is also Vice President of the Empire State Passengers' Association, (ESPA) gave some closing remarks. He advised his fellow advocates to "find the decision-makers and the

money, then build the coalition." He said that advocacy is hard work, and that it is necessary to get the media on your side. He concluded his remarks by saying: "It's not an easy process, but it's an adventure!"

Overall, the conference was a smashing success. Based on comments at the conclusion of the day, attendees enjoyed the experience and found it interesting and educational. Evaluation form results confirmed that it was a positive experience. Events such as this help us fulfill RUN's mission networking passengers, their advocacy organizations, and their advisory councils. By joining together, sharing information, best practice, and resources through networking, advocates have a better chance of occupying a vocal and meaningful seat at the decision making table that ultimately determines the quality of passenger rail and rail transit service.

CONFERENCE ATTENDEES SAMPLE BOSTON TRANSIT

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advocates are promoting the “Fair Fare for Fairmount” initiative to rationalize fares in the vicinity. They are also pushing to convert the commuter line to a local rail transit line with frequent service. They want it renamed the “Indigo Line” and they report that their campaign is making progress. One of the leaders of this campaign is Pamela “Mela” Bush-Myles, who is also a member of the RUN Board of Directors. She took a break from a community clean-up event to join the us on the train and tell us how the Dorchester neighborhood would be served by the proposed Indigo Line.

Fairmount is in the Hyde Park neighborhood, in the southwestern part of Boston. As we exited the train, local advocate Dennis Kirkpatrick conducted the next segment of the tour. Kirkpatrick, who lives nearby,

described the transit scene in the neighborhood while we waited for the bus to Mattapan, the only bus segment of the tour.

Then everyone took a journey back into transit history; a ride on a PCC car (for Presidents’ Conference Committee), a style of streetcar that was popular from the mid-1930s through the early 1950s) for a 12-minute ride to Ashmont. The cars feature the historic orange and cream color scheme of the old Boston Elevated Railway Company, later the MTA (Metropolitan Transit Authority), made famous outside Boston by the saga of Charlie, who could not get off the train because he did not have a nickel for the exit fare. Kirkpatrick gave the rest of us an overview of the line, its history and a history of the cars. State transportation officials have recently threatened to get rid of them, so it was essential for everyone on the tour have a chance to ride the PCC cars, while they are still running.

From Ashmont, we took the Red Line subway through another part of Dorchester and into downtown Boston, got off at Park Street and changed for a Green Line car to North Station. North Station is a transfer point between Green Line cars and the Orange Line subway. Until the station was rebuilt, they used different platforms and, for extra confusion, some Green Line cars turned around on a ground-level loop, while others continued on an elevated viaduct to Lechmere Square in Cambridge. Today, Green Line cars and Orange Line trains going in the same direction are located across the platform from one another, so it is easier to make connections.

The Boston & Maine (B&M) Railroad historically operated North Side commuter trains, as well as the predecessors of today’s Downeaster trains to Maine, from North Station. It was a waterfront terminal at one time,
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Get Involved with the work of RUN!

To find out how to volunteer, *write to:*

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or

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visit our new, improved website at:
www.railusers.net

CONFERENCE ATTENDEES SAMPLE BOSTON TRANSIT

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but is now almost hidden within a sports complex which abuts the tracks. The group observed the facility, which was not crowded at the time, but that was a Saturday afternoon, and the situation would be very different during the busy weekday peak-commuting time.

We had planned to take the train to Porter Square in Cambridge but missed it, so we had a late lunch instead. A two-stop ride on the Green Line to Government Center and a short walk took us to the rejuvenated Quincy Market and Fanueil Hall, a center of political activity at the time of the American Revolution. We had lunch at Durgin-Park, a historic restaurant in the market, which has been serving classic Yankee food (such as Yankee pot roast, fish chowder and local seafood specialties) since 1827.

There was more to see after lunch, so we walked back to the newly-reopened Government Center Station, where Green Line cars connect with Blue Line trains to East Boston, Logan Airport and Revere. After going back to North Station, we caught the train to Fitchburg (on the former B&M line from Boston that once went as far west as Albany) and rode one stop to Porter Square in Cambridge, about one mile north of Harvard Square and the Harvard campus. Porter Square is the deepest station on the Red Line subway, and we went from there to Park Street, where we transferred to the "C" branch of the Green Line. The "C" Branch is a streetcar line that emerges from the tunnel west of downtown Boston and then runs on Beacon Street in Brookline. Beacon Street has had streetcar service continuously since



A platform view of the MBTA's renovated Government Center Station, which reopened in March. (Photo: Pi.1415926535)

1889. The street itself is lined with stately apartment buildings from an earlier era, and the car was crowded with standees for most of the trip.

We got off at Cleveland Circle, the last stop, and took a short walk to Reservoir Station on the "D" branch, the longest streetcar line in the system. It has an interurban flavor, with no street-running. The line is also known as the "Riverside Line" and was originally a branch of the Boston & Albany Railroad, which the former MTA converted into a transit line in the late 1950s.

By the time we got to Park Street, it was time to end the tour. Everyone enjoyed the experience of riding a number of different transit modes in Boston and learning

more about the "T" system. There was also plenty of "local color" to absorb: Mattapan, Fanueil Hall, the Durgin-Park Restaurant, Beacon Street and more. Everyone left with a better understanding of transit in Boston, and an appreciation for the people who explained the history and operation of that transit. Between the conference on Friday and the tour on Saturday, RUN members and other attendees had an enjoyable and educational experience, along with a taste of the chilly weather for which Boston is famous, even late in the spring.

David Peter Alan is a member of the RUN Board of Directors and Conference Committee. He first rode the "T" during his days as a student at M.I.T., nearly 50 years ago.

NEW JERSEY TRANSIT'S TROUBLES GET WORSE

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With the May 15 schedule change, NJT restored five of the nine stops that had been eliminated, giving most riders a one-seat ride on a schedule similar to the one they had enjoyed before the initial cuts were made last September.

The campaign continues, as the Lackawanna Coalition continues to push for full restoration of the old schedules, along with service enhancements. NJT says it cannot afford to make any service improvements, due to lack of money, so the Coalition is campaigning for stable, secure and sufficient funding for NJT's operations. There is talk of raising money for the Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) by raising the user fees on gasoline and

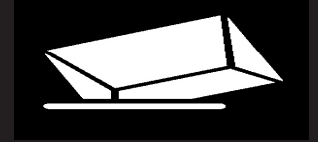
diesel fuel, which have not increased for 28 years (while transit fares have risen nine times). The TTF would only support highways and capital spending for transit, so the Coalition is focusing on the operating side, which would not be covered by the TTF. In addition, the Coalition is the first advocacy group in New Jersey to call for secure funding for transportation for seniors and persons with disabilities. New Jersey's counties run most of those services, and supporting grants for this year are less than half of what they were in 2008, because they are funded through a tax on revenue that the casinos in Atlantic City earned; revenue that has dwindled sharply in recent years.

There is an often-quoted Chinese curse that says: "May you live in interesting

times." For New Jersey's transit riders, and for the advocates who represent them, times at NJT have seldom been more interesting. As in most places in this country, transit is tied to state and local politics. Today, everybody who has access to a newspaper, a radio or a TV set knows that New Jersey politics are also "interesting" these days. Will they remain this "interesting" after Christie leaves office? Nobody knows for sure but, in New Jersey, the most likely answer is "Probably!" The same answer will also probably hold for the situation faced by New Jersey Transit and its riders.

David Peter Alan is a RUN Board Member and Chair of the Lackawanna Coalition in Millburn, NJ.

RAILROAD POST OFFICE



A Rider's Impressions of Nashville's New Commuter Rail Line

To the Rail Users' Network:

On April 21, 2016, I checked out Nashville's Music City Star commuter train. The Music City Star runs Monday-Friday on a single line between Nashville and Lebanon, Tennessee. A one-way trip for the entire route takes 50 to 55 minutes, and costs \$5.25. The train runs on former Tennessee Central rails; current freight operations are handled by the Nashville & Eastern RR.

The train runs only during morning and evening rush hours. There are currently no ticket vending machines at any of the stations, however tickets can be purchased at local stores and a ticket agent handles sales in downtown Nashville. The conductor did not know when ticket machines would be available. There is adequate (and underutilized) free parking at the outlying stations. In downtown Nashville, there is a "cross platform" transfer of sorts between local buses and the Star. I rode the outbound departure scheduled for just after 5 pm; there were a couple dozen (or more) people that transferred from the buses to the train.

The train operates with former Amtrak engines and Chicago-area double-deck gallery cars. The trains I rode, on a rainy Thursday, adhered close to the schedule times.

Mike Palmer

RUN Member
Torrance, CA

PLEASE BECOME A MEMBER OF RUN...

FROM THE RUN BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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As a grassroots organization, we depend upon your contributions to allow us to pursue our important work. Please donate to help us grow.

We invite you to become a member of the Rail Users' Network, which represents rail passengers' interests in North America. RUN is based on the successful British model, which has been serving passengers since 1948. RUN networks passengers, their advocacy organizations, and their advisory councils. RUN is working to help secure an interconnected system of rail services that passengers will use with pride. RUN forms a strong, unified voice for intercity, regional/commuter, and transit rail passenger interests. By joining together, sharing information, best practices, and resources through networking, passengers will have a better chance of a vocal and meaningful seat at the decision making table.

RUN members enjoy newsletters, international conferences, regional rail forums, and other meetings to share information while working to improve and expand rail passenger service.

Membership is open to passengers, official advisory councils, advocacy groups, public agencies, tourist and convention bureaus, carriers and other profit-making organizations.

We hope you will join — vital decisions and legislation affecting the North American rail transportation system are being made daily. Don't be left behind at the station!

Please register me/us as a member of RUN today

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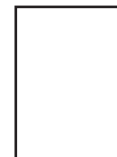
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