

**NEWS FROM ALL ABOARD WISCONSIN**

***December, 2015***

***Happy Holidays!!***

***From the Officers and Board Members of All Aboard Wisconsin.***

**PASSENGER RAIL ADDED TO “F.A.S.T.” SURFACE TRANSPORTATION LEGISLATION; BILL PASSES HOUSE AND SENATE, HEADED FOR PRESIDENTS SIGNATURE.** In a culmination of many years of work, the Amtrak reauthorization bill, formerly called the “Passenger Rail Reform and Improvement Act of 2015” or **PRRIA,** has been made a part of the overall federal surface transportation bill known by the acronym “FAST”. Both the addition of a Passenger Rail title to the bill, and the fact that Congress has adopted a six year comprehensive surface transportation bill covering highways, public transportation and now rail for the first time in 10 years, makes this an historic achievement. The measure passed in the House by a vote of 359-65, and cleared the Senate by an 83-16 margin. The intercity passenger rail provision, funding Amtrak operations and capital programs, was added to the overall bill in the House-Senate Conference Committee, chaired by Rep. Bill Schuster of Pennsylvania, Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and author of the Passenger Rail Reform and Investment Act (PRRIA) in the House that was basically incorporated into the overall bill. Representative Reid Ribble of Wisconsin’s 8th District, our state’s lone representative on the House “T&I” Committee, was also a member of the Conference Committee that crafted the final bill. Out of the full $305 Billion measure, a total of $10 Billion is included for Amtrak operations and capital costs over the coming 5 years, a portion of which will pay for Positive Train Control (PTC) implementation on the railroad, along with operational and capital costs.

**APTA HIGH SPEED AND PASSENGER RAIL COMMITTEE EXPLORES “GETTING TO THE TIPPING POINT FOR HIGH SPEED RAIL IN THE U.S.”** While Congress debated and ultimately passed the “FAST” Act in Washington this week, a few blocks away, the High Speed and Passenger Rail Committee of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) hosted a policy forum in Washington on December 2nd to discuss the progress toward and chances for the development and deployment of true high-speed passenger rail service in the United States. The meeting had been long-planned; so it was only coincidence that it happened on the same day as the announcement was made that passenger rail would be included in the overall federal surface transportation bill for the first time. A large audience composed of consultants, designers, Class 1 railroads, rail manufacturers, regional and national government rail interests, NARP and of course, our very own All Aboard Wisconsin spent the day listening to panels of experts from all fields talk, opine and recommend the steps that might be taken to move true high speed rail forward as a significant transportation mode in America. Of particular interest was a panel composed of, among others – Shaun McCabe of the privately-financed Texas Central Partners, who are in the midst of planning, raising funds, and working toward public consensus on a privately constructed and operated true high speed rail line (186 MPH initially, 200+ MPH at build-out) from Dallas-Ft. Worth to Houston using Japanese technology. Also speaking was Peter Peyser, who is involved in the financial development of the California high speed rail project – currently under construction in the “Central Valley” area, both of which propose to have “true” high-speed passenger rail up and running in their areas of the US within the decade. Their presentations were a fascinating – and eye-opening – look at the procedures, pitfalls and long-lead-time issues involved in locating, planning and constructing a 21st century high speed rail line “from scratch”. A parade of other speakers from federal, state and local governments, engineering consultants and advocates all weighed-in on “what it will take” and how to approach the development of high speed passenger rail in the US. The general consensus was that this will not be an overnight process, but rather require slow-steady progress, and the implementation of one or two projects that will actually demonstrate the benefits of true high speed passenger rail for the idea to finally “catch-on” in the country. APTA will produce a final report on the conference which will be shared with AAW members on our website when it is released.

**SAFETY ALERT – DESPITE WARNINGS, POSING FOR PHOTOS ON TRACKS STILL KILLING MISGUIDED PEOPLE.**  High-schoolers posing for graduation photos, friends taking a “selfie” to save memories of good times together, high school athletic teams proudly posing to demonstrate their intention to be “Back on Track” for the upcoming season, couples celebrating their relationships – all “Kodak Moments” in life worthy of that “special” photograph. Tragically, dozens of people are killed each year when they attempt to take these hopefully memorable photographs on railroad tracks, ignoring the safety risk in search of a unique photo background.

This important safety issue made it to national television when the NBC “Today Show” broadcast a segment discussing the tragic results of this trend; and demonstrating, with the concurrence and assistance of CSX Transportation, that two 4,400 horsepower diesel locomotives pulling dozens of freight cars can indeed “sneak up” on unsuspecting photographers on the tracks with disasterous results for those posing, their families and communities - and gut-wrenching effects on train crews who are helpless to stop thousands of tons “on a dime” to avoid them. Perhaps the most chilling image was one of three teenage friends posing for a “selfie” on the tracks…with a locomotive headlight shining over one girl’s shoulder, just a few hundred yards and mere seconds before tragedy struck.

A link to the Today Show presentation to “cut and paste” into your browser is included below. Don’t fail to watch it – then **don’t fail to follow-up and do something about it!** As someone who has an interest in and commitment to railroading, and some level of knowledge on the subject, take the time to talk to your kids or grandkids, nieces, nephews, friends and others about the danger (and legal consequences) of trespassing on railroad property and using the tracks as a photo studio. As the Today Show video points out; “…oh, we’ll hear a train if it comes in time to get out of the way…” is NOT the case. Call Operation Lifesaver and arrange a presentation to that service club or civic group that you belong-to, contact the student council advisor at your local high school and suggest a presentation to that group. If one life is saved, one tragedy avoided, one train crew not traumatized, it will be more than worth the time and trouble that you spent. (Thanks to AAW Board Member Craig Peachy of SMART-Transportation Division for calling the NBC show to our attention and providing information on this important topic.)

[**http://www.today.com/video/taking-selfies-on-train-tracks-dangerous-new-trend-is-ending-lives-562585155845**](http://www.today.com/video/taking-selfies-on-train-tracks-dangerous-new-trend-is-ending-lives-562585155845)

**AAW IS LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD MEN – *AND WOMEN*!** Corporate Secretary and Legislative Director Gary Goyke is in “recruiting mode” these days as he looks to fill a few openings on the Association’s Boards of Directors. As a result of retirements and folks moving out of the area, we do have a couple of vacancies on our 501(c)(3) Board that plans and oversees the day-to-day operations of All Aboard Wisconsin. In addition, Gary is recruiting for the new Board which will oversee the 501(c)(4) arm of AAW. This group will do direct work researching roll calls of legislators on issues of importance and working on direct political endorsements for those legislators and other elected officials that support and are willing to work toward implementation of our plans.

 **If you are interested in joining either of these Boards, please drop a line to Gary at our office, 754 Williamson Street, Madison, WI 53703.** Please state your interest in which Board you would like to join, and provide a short resume’ of the background and experience that you would bring to the Board.

**HAVE YOU RENEWED??** Last month’s newsletter included a reminder that your All Aboard Wisconsin ***“Dues were Due”*** for 2016. Dues notices were mailed-out to all current members last week.

***All Aboard Wisconsin corporate Secretary Gary Goyke sends kudos to the following members who have already sent-in their renewals for 2016!***

James and Eileen Carpenter Gary Goyke and Nancy Rottier Thomas Rygh

Lance Erickson Dave Mumma Phil and Patricia Swanhorst

State Representative Evan Goyke (D-18) Craig and Laurel Peachy Frederick Wolden

Please remember that dues paid at anytime in the 4th quarter of 2015 will “pay you up” for the entire year of 2016. YOUR dues are an important part if what keeps All Aboard Wisconsin moving forward. Not only do they help us “pay the bills” for the everyday expenses of your Association, they also serve as an example of our members’ support to foundations and other entities whom we are already approaching for grants which are needed to help us grow and expand our programs and reach as an organization. At this busy time of the year, please take the time to answer that dues invoice that should have arrived in the mail within the past week, and renew your membership in AAW. Also, please consider becoming a “Sustaining Member” or joining our “Advocates Club” if it’s within your means. Every dollar contributed helps our cause for ***“More Trains to More Places”*** in Wisconsin and the Midwest.

**AAW KEEPS MOVING FORWARD.** With the current year winding-down and 2016 just around the corner, All Aboard Wisconsin is continuing to keep-up the pace of its activities and planning for an active first quarter of 2016.

* **January, 2016**: First quarter AAW Board Meeting, 754 Williamson Street, Madison. (Date and Time To be Announced)
* **March 7** – **9, 2016:** AAW participates in APTA annual Legislative Conference and public transportation advocacy days on Capitol Hill. (Another meeting of the APTA High Speed and Passenger Rail Committee generally occurs at this time also.)

**THINGS WE’RE WORKING-ON.** We’ve no dates to announce yet, but watch for the following events in 2016.

* **Passenger Rail Forums:** Our goal is one per quarter around the state. We’re looking for locations – if you’re interested in hosting a forum in your area, please contact Nona Hill or Dave Mumma.
* **AAW Booths at Train Shows:** If you’ve ever been to one of the regional train shows in Wisconsin, you know that they attract a wide variety of folks, well beyond the dedicated model railroaders whose work people like me go to see and admire and try to replicate (maybe) at home. What you do see are families, kids, retirees and lots of folks who are lured to these shows by their love and curiosity about “all things railroad”. What better place to get our message about “More Trains to More Places” out to the public! Again, this takes people who are willing to donate a day of their time and man our booth. If you’re willing, please let Nona or Dave know!
* **Amtrak Train Day Promotion:** Last year AAW participated in Milwaukee and St. Paul. We’d like to expand that this year to other locations in Wisconsin. AAW can supply materials, but what we need is “person power” to show-up and set-up at a station near you. If you’re interested, again, please contact Nona Hill or Dave Mumma.