

## **BMWED Legislative Issues - 112th Congress**

### ***BMWED Journal - March/April 2012***

#### **AMTRAK ON PACE TO SET NEW RIDERSHIP RECORD**

Amtrak is on pace to set another new annual ridership record as passenger counts across its national network for the first six months of fiscal year 2012 (October 2011 - March 2012) are up 3.7 percent over the same period last year when the current record was established.

A closer look at the numbers show all Amtrak business lines experienced growth in the first half of FY 2012 as compared to the same period the prior year, including the Northeast Corridor (up 5.2 percent), long-distance trains (up 3.0 percent) and state-supported and other short-distance routes (up 2.7 percent.) This ridership growth continues a long-term trend that has led to eight records in the last nine years, including 30.2 million passengers in FY 2011.

"Amtrak achieving ridership records is important, but it is more critical that the right infrastructure be in place to continue this trend in the years to come and to provide safe, efficient and reliable rail transportation for all current and future passengers," said President and CEO Joe Boardman. "To do this in the Northeast, we must advance our proposed Gateway Program, as it is essential for the future growth and economic development of the entire region."

Boardman explained the Northeast Corridor (NEC) in particular has seen strong ridership growth in recent years and demand for passenger rail service on this line is expected to significantly increase as population grows, highway and airport congestion worsen, and gas prices rise throughout the region. He added that Amtrak is preparing to meet these challenges by beginning work on a comprehensive, long-term plan to improve the NEC and expand high-speed rail service, including through its Gateway Program to build increased tunnel, track and station capacity into the heart of New York City for intercity and commuter trains.

The regional highlights below (and the attached ridership chart) show both the breadth and depth of increased Amtrak ridership across the country:

#### **Northeast and Southeast**

For the first six months of FY 2012, ridership on the Northeast Regional service (Washington - Boston) is up 8.2 percent from the same period the prior year continuing a strong performance from its record-setting year in FY 2011. The Keystone Service (New York - Philadelphia - Harrisburg) also is seeing strong ridership growth with a 4.0 percent increase.

In addition, the Ethan Allen (New York - Rutland, Vt.) is up 9.0 percent, the Adirondack (New York - Montreal) is up 5.5 percent, the Empire Service (New York - Albany) is up 3.6 percent and the Downeaster (Boston - Portland) is up 3.3 percent. The Amtrak Virginia services had sizable gains with Washington - Lynchburg up 27.4 percent and Washington - Newport News up 16.0 percent. Also, the Piedmont (Raleigh - Charlotte) is up 15.1 percent.

#### **West and Pacific Northwest**

Ridership continues to increase on the San Joaquin (Sacramento-Oakland-Bakersfield) with 11.5 percent more passengers in the first six months of FY 2012 over the same period last year and the Capitol

Corridor (San Jose - Oakland - Sacramento - Auburn) is up 6.7 percent. Also, the Amtrak Cascades (Vancouver, B.C. - Seattle - Portland - Eugene) saw a slight increase of 0.5 percent.

### Midwest

Leading the ridership increase in the Midwest during the first half of FY 2012 vs. the same period in FY 2011 is the Chicago-St. Louis corridor served by Lincoln Service trains and the Texas Eagle, with a combined ridership gain of 10 percent. The highest percentage hike in the Central U.S. is a 10.6 percent increase in ridership on the Heartland Flyer (Oklahoma City - Fort Worth.) Both routes are the subject of new technology deployments, with demonstrations of 110 mph Lincoln Service trains planned for this fall and a new train control system installed on the Heartland Flyer.

### Long-distance routes

Several Amtrak long-distance routes are experiencing ridership growth in the first six months of FY 2012 over the same period the prior year. Among the routes with the strongest percentage increases include the Empire Builder (Chicago - Seattle/Portland) up 6.6 percent, the Coast Starlight (Los Angeles - Seattle) up 5.7 percent, the City of New Orleans (Chicago - New Orleans) up 5.5 percent, the Silver Star (New York - Raleigh - Tampa - Miami) up 3.5 percent, the Crescent (New York - New Orleans) up 3.3 percent and the Southwest Chief (Chicago - Los Angeles) up 3.2 percent.

### **Surface Transportation Bill**

The United States House of Representatives passed a measure that would extend current highway and transit funding levels through Sept. 30, speed up federal approval of the Keystone XL pipeline project and can serve to let Senate leaders open negotiations with the House on a long-term surface transportation bill. The House voted 293-127 for the extension (HR 4348), drawing 69 Democrats to join 224 Republicans in passing the bill. Although the White House threatened a veto over the Keystone provision if it reaches the president's desk, some key Democrats during the House debate signaled they would back the extension as a way to launch House-Senate negotiations on a final highway bill. Before the final vote, the House approved an amendment that would force the government to spend funds collected each year in the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund, an account that pays for dredging around ports and has an unspent surplus nearing \$7 billion.

The House also OK'd a proposal to leave states in control of regulating coal ash from power plants. That waste product from burning coal is heavily used as a concrete filler material and is a sizable cargo for railroads and trucks, but the EPA has considered regulating it after some coal ash holding ponds released harmful chemicals into streams. And House members solidly approved an amendment that would let states waive some environmental rules to speed up surface transportation construction projects.

## **Federal and State Election Updates**

**FEDERAL:** In the U. S. Senate, there are 15 competitive races. The newest competitive race is in Arizona, with Richard Carmona, former U.S. Surgeon General, running on the Democratic side. In Virginia, former Governor Tim Kaine (D) is outracing George Allen, with four other Republicans on the ballot in the primary. In Massachusetts, Elizabeth Warren (D) is running against Senator Scott Brown (R).

In the U.S. House, Tammy Duckworth won a primary for the IL-8<sup>th</sup> District. Ms. Duckworth is a veteran and has been endorsed by the BMWED/IBT. In addition, we have three of our own Teamsters running for the U.S. House: Jose Hernandez is running for CA-10<sup>th</sup> District; (He is a former Teamster and former astronaut). Gary McDowell is running for MI-1<sup>st</sup> District; (He's a 33 year Teamster member), and Liz Crowley is running for NY-6<sup>th</sup> District which is an open seat at this time.

**STATE:** Wisconsin-Governor Scott Walker's recall election is set for June 5<sup>th</sup>, with a primary on May 8<sup>th</sup>. Polls suggest it should be a competitive race in spite of the fact that Governor Walker has publicly attacked unions and public sector employees. Two likely candidates in this race are former Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk and current Mayor of Milwaukee, Tom Barrett.

**Michigan**-Organized labor in the state is collecting signatures for a protective ballot initiative that would amend the state constitution to protect collective bargaining rights for public and private sector workers.

**Ballot Initiatives**- Right-to-Work (for less) has been avoided in Minnesota and Missouri due to BMWED/IBT efforts but is still being pushed for by Michigan and Ohio Legislatures.

## **DRIVE-Democrat, Republican, Independent Voter Education**

Drive is our political action fund. Strictly voluntary and is utilized to strategically donate to campaigns of those who have or will defend our members and working class families throughout this country as well as support or oppose legislation that BMWED opposes or supports.

The fact is that no one can get elected at any level without campaign financing. None of us can financially afford on our own to influence politics effectively. We have to join together and pool our

resources just like a union should. Politically our PAC fund defines us. That's why unions are under attack by the anti-labor groups. We donate to pro-labor politicians.

Our DRIVE PAC is not for any specific party but for individual candidates. We, (Teamsters), are very strategic in where we spend our members DRIVE funds.

Our BMWED DRIVE funds are intertwined with the Teamsters and great thought goes into what candidates we support. Donate to DRIVE and be a part of the solution. Everyone can afford to help. Together we can make a difference. You can participate in defending you and your families future livelihood by going to the [bmwed.org](http://bmwed.org) website to sign up for DRIVE or call your legislative office at 202-508-6445.

Finally, as a railroad employee you must decide what you and your family needs to have dignity, security and a future. Take the time to find out which candidates at the federal, state, county and city level support your job security, your right to have a collective bargaining agreement, your right to enjoy a safe work environment and your right to support your family as well as give opportunities to your children. Then vote for those candidates!

