

Written Statement of

**Jack Dinsdale
National Vice President,
Transportation Communications Union (TCU/IAM)**

Before the

**House of Representatives Transportation & Infrastructure Committee,
Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials**

Hearing on

Amtrak Now and Into the Future

November 13th, 2019

Chairman Lipinski, Ranking Member Crawford, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Jack Dinsdale, and I am a National Vice President for the Transportation Communications Union (TCU/IAM). TCU is the largest union at Amtrak, representing over 6,000 ticket agents, red caps, customer service representatives, onboard service personnel, supervisors, carmen, coach cleaners, and others.

I have over 24 years of experience working for Amtrak, and an additional 21 years as a union representative for Amtrak employees. I have personal experience working in Amtrak's call center, as a ticket agent, in the commissary, as a baggage handler, in material control, as a maintenance yard clerk, in crew base operations, in time keeping and in other positions. And because of this broad experience I am well acquainted with the various work roles that exist at Amtrak.

Amtrak, including its employees, and the service we provide as a team, has been my life's work. I am extremely proud to be a part of our nation's storied passenger railroad.

The title of this hearing is "Amtrak Now and Into the Future," and it couldn't have come at a more appropriate time for Amtrak and its workforce. I am here primarily to speak about the changing culture at Amtrak, from what was once an enviable and proud workforce, to one that is full of employees who currently live in fear for their livelihoods and careers. But I will also speak as an advocate for Amtrak service, for what it was, and what the future could hold for our nation's passenger railroad.

I believe my 45 years of experience with Amtrak will provide useful insight into the history of the company, where it can improve, what various managements have failed to do, what various Congresses have tried and failed to do, and – hopefully – my testimony will provide some insight for you all as you embark on a new authorization effort.

Under its current leadership, Amtrak is engaged in a systematic campaign of union busting and union avoidance maneuvers: outsourcing good, skilled jobs of dedicated career employees to low-wage contractors with little to no experience; doing everything they can to reduce the internal, unionized headcounts, and giving false pretenses to Congress and the general public about their actions.

These actions, combined with efforts to sabotage its own services, point to only one conclusion: Amtrak will be asking Congress to make a false choice - to choose between long-distance service or a significantly reduced regional structure that only serves portions of America.

I am here to ask you not to fall for that trap. And I presume some of the other witnesses will ask the same.

Do not buy into Amtrak's narrative that tells of a declining long-distance ridership; or that certain services are not wanted or needed; or that customers like boxed lunches and re-heated airline food.

Do not be swayed by Amtrak's excuses that they are simply "following the law," and are continuing to operate as directed by Congress. These are, at-best, half-truths designed to deflect blame; and, at worst, they appear to be intentional attempts to mislead Congress while it executes its own internal vision of a regional route structure.¹

Amtrak workers were extremely grateful that Chairmen Lipinski and DeFazio led a bipartisan letter, cosigned by 89 of their colleagues, that questioned Amtrak about many of their labor practices. In Amtrak's response, Mr. Anderson stated that "we will not improve Amtrak on the backs of labor." To date, Amtrak has abolished at least 700 TCU members' jobs, and we've been told more are on the way.

Onboard Service Cuts

Let me start by talking about cuts to onboard service. TCU is part of the Amtrak Service Workers Council (ASWC), a group of three unions that also includes the Transport Workers Union (TWU) and Unite-HERE. Together we represent all of Amtrak's approximately 1600 onboard service personnel throughout the country. These include service attendants, dining car attendants, chefs, cooks, and others. And these aren't just "jobs" either, but careers that have provided a pathway for so many families to the middle class. They are the kinds of jobs that are the foundation our communities are built upon.

Our members are some of the most dedicated, hardworking employees at Amtrak. And they serve as the face of Amtrak every day.

¹ Figure 1, "Rail Corridors Network – 2030" map

These employees know how to put a smile on the faces of customers, they attend to families, they prepare meals from scratch, they turn down beds. In other words, they are skilled customer service professionals whose mission it is to make your ride on Amtrak as enjoyable as possible, and to keep you coming back. What often goes unmentioned and unnoticed is that these onboard employees know the equipment they work on and regularly perform maintenance enroute.

Whether it be getting inoperable bathrooms to work, or fixing the air conditioning in 100 degree heat, they have acquired these additional skills through their commitment to Amtrak and pride in delivering best possible experience to the traveling public.

Per federal regulations (49 CFR Part 239), these employees must be trained as first responders, ready to act at a moments' notice. They are trained in first aid and emergency evacuations. They are trained to identify human trafficking, and to be the eyes and ears for bomb and terrorist threats, or other criminal activity. For those handling foods, staff must be trained and certified on Food & Drug Administration (FDA) requirements.

But none of that does justice for the work our members perform when a disaster occurs.

In late February, 2019, the Coast Starlight 11 was travelling through a blizzard outside Oakridge, Oregon when the train struck a downed tree. The locomotive was immobilized from the collision, and approximately 200 passengers and personnel were left stranded for over 36 hours.

Amtrak's onboard personnel did not panic, but jumped into action, going above-and-beyond to ensure passengers were adequately cared for. When diapers ran short, a crewmember fashioned replacements out of napkins and safety pins. One passenger remarked that the "train crew was amazing. They were so professional and so kind. We really wanted for nothing except for maybe someplace comfortable to lie down."² Another passenger said of the crew's actions: "It rekindled my faith in humans...I've been so disappointed so many times in the last few years with how people treat each other. It gave me hope that maybe we haven't lost our humanity after all."³

When it comes to Amtrak, all too often we get mired in spreadsheets and data; that our employees are just numbers to be played with from a cubicle in Washington.

But these kinds of stories remind us that serving and caring for our customers is the primary goal of any transportation system. That our customers are not cattle to be herded and shuttled from station to station, but regular people that want to be treated with quality and dignity – the kind that attracts ridership, the kind that inspired the romantic description of train travel in the first place.

This is the Amtrak I grew up working on, riding, and loving. Sadly, under its current direction, that Amtrak is fading more and more every day.

² Selsky, Andrew. "Passengers Band Together on Train Stuck in Oregon Mountains." AP NEWS, Associated Press, 27 Feb. 2019, apnews.com/61a38cbfcd504bed8e2d159f4999d360.

³ McDaniel, Piper. "When Amtrak Train Stalled in Oregon Snow, Crewman Emerged as 'Source of Comfort'." Oregonlive, The Oregonian, 1 Mar. 2019, www.oregonlive.com/news/2019/03/when-amtrak-train-stalled-in-oregon-snow-crewman-emerged-as-source-of-comfort.html.

When I hired on at Amtrak in 1974, the goal was actually to rehabilitate the dining service from the self-sabotaging efforts the freights had inflicted upon their own passenger trains. In fact, one of the first advertisement campaigns Amtrak ran after being created was “We’re Making the Trains Worth Riding Again.”

In fact, as recently as 2017, our union was actively included in being part of the solution. In an attempt to better the financial performance of the Coast Starlight, our members - including chefs, service attendants and train attendants - were part of a labor-management collaborative whose mission statement was as follows: “Create and sustain a culture that fosters all departments working together in unity, for our people, for our customers, for our service. One Amtrak.”⁴

The collaborative successfully rethought onboard services, expanded products, increased revenue, which even resulted in reduced labor costs. The changes made included “Just for You” meals where the team designed a new fresh, affordable menu for coach passengers – a revenue increase of \$422,158; a business class initiative that converted “kiddie cars” into an entire new service class that resulted in \$3.4 million in revenue; and a “Cocktails on the Rails” program to offer signature cocktails to enhance the Pacific Parlour Car experience and resulted in an increase of \$71k in revenue (over only a short time – before Amtrak pulled the Parlour car altogether).

Unfortunately, Amtrak eliminated that collaborative effort that was successfully *working to reduce* the operating loss on food and beverage. The “Just for You” meals were eliminated a year ago, and Amtrak management has jettisoned any collaborative approach to improve service and revenue – opting for a my-way-or-the-highway attitude.

Today, Amtrak is doing exactly what the freights did by degrading the services instead of improving them. By weaponizing the FAST Act language, Amtrak is destroying fresh dining and food service options, and interpreting the mandate to eliminate losses on food and beverage service as a ban on loss-leader service products. They are interpreting the language as license to turn quality fresh meals into indescribable re-heated airline calories, with little regard to the overall bottom line.

Amtrak’s changes to “contemporary dining” options has resulted in the elimination of the jobs of our members, including chefs and service attendants. And on the routes that first observed these changes in 2018 - the Capitol Limited and the Lake Shore Limited - it appears the service has resulted in decreased ridership. For the rest of the routes, it’s admittedly too early to definitively quantify the impact of the service changes. However, this is becoming increasingly difficult considering the omission of Amtrak’s route-specific data reporting that conveniently coincided with these changes.

Indeed, we would urge the Committee to obtain this data, since it’s obviously available internally at Amtrak. In addition, we would urge Congress to mandate the publication of route-specific ridership data in reauthorization.

⁴ See attachment – “Starlight Highlights” document

Amtrak blames Congress and the FAST Act for mandating these service shifts, and they blame millennials for demanding seclusion from others and not caring for fresh food choices. They blame anyone, but themselves. And, as the father of a few millennials, I think they'd take issue with Amtrak's reductive assertion. Indeed, where's the fresh avocado toast?

One such millennial pushed back against Amtrak's service changes in an op-ed published in the New York Times:

The desire to “lure a younger generation of riders,” cited as part of the reason for the change, is an example of what feels like a message from society to millennials in particular: We're going to offer less and expect you to get more out of it. The suggestion that, as a 26-year-old, I should find meaning in something that's sparse, impersonal and temporary feels all too familiar.⁵

Our point is not to say that we shouldn't have change at Amtrak, or adapt to modern times and tastes. Rather, we would argue that the changes being deployed are not to better the experience of the traveling public, and they're certainly not good for those working the trains. Indeed, the only beneficiary of these changes are the managers reaping bonuses for cutting costs, and the leadership that wants to stop running long-distance trains all together.

Finally, we must remember the people who are impacted by these cuts. Again, these are not part-time jobs filled by unskilled workers. These are career positions of people who've dedicated their lives to this railroad, certified in emergency preparedness, and/or trained at culinary schools. They are good jobs, with quality benefits, and railroad retirement. They are the kinds of jobs that enable people to buy homes and send their kids to college. The kinds of jobs we hold in high regard in this country.

Rural Station Agents

Another source of public and employee frustration has been the arbitrary removal of station agents at 15 rural stations throughout the country. In 2018, Amtrak eliminated station agents as part of another misguided attempt to cut costs on the back of working people, and further degrade service for their rural ridership.

When Amtrak removed staff from these stations it replaced them with contract “caretakers” whose job was only – supposedly - to open and close stations, and take out the trash.

No ticket sales, no store operations.

In many of these stations, Amtrak runs long-distance trains that can be anywhere from one to ten hours late. That's a lot of time for passengers to wait at a station – even longer at one that isn't staffed. In addition to selling tickets, our station agent members cleaned the station and

⁵ Stauffer, Rainesford. “The Sterile, Efficient Life of a Millennial.” The New York Times, 28 Sept. 2019, www.nytimes.com/2019/09/28/opinion/sunday/millennial-dining-car-amtrak.html.

bathrooms, often sold ancillary items, shoveled platforms during snow storms, helped load baggage, chaperoned underage riders, and helped disabled passengers get on and off trains. In Cincinnati, one of the stations that was de-staffed in 2018, the station is particularly challenging for passengers as it includes multiple levels.

These agents are not simply loitering behind a glass window, as some of Amtrak's headquarters managers have suggested. Rather, they are an integral part of a customer service product, and they are valued members of the community.

The public backlash Amtrak faced from the small towns was immense. And, to be completely honest, we were blown away by the fight these small towns and cities put up. Town and City Hall meetings were held, articles were published, letters were written, calls were made – all in defense of their community's station agents. For me, it was a truly heartwarming moment and validated what I've always known: that our station agents aren't just ticket-selling automatons, but are valued neighbors, woven into the community. Unfortunately, Amtrak doesn't see them the way I do, nor do they appear interested in the opinions of rural America.



Amtrak Station Agent Matt Crouch in Charleston, WV, whose job was eliminated in Amtrak's 2018 cuts, along with many others.

Nevertheless, the response on Capitol Hill has been clear: both the FY2020 House and Senate appropriations bills include report language directing Amtrak to re-staff these stations with ticket agents. And, on behalf of our members who lost their jobs from these cuts, I will say that they are eager to come back home and get back to work.

Unfortunately, I was told last week that Amtrak will be cutting an additional 90 clerks from stations and facilities across the country – 70% of which work in customer service positions. It's important to note that, yet again, this was a "this is happening" conversation, not a negotiation. And it all stems from a directive from Amtrak leadership to cut \$8 million from stations across the country. My point being: these are not carefully thought out abolishments due to decreased service or need, but rather arbitrary cost-cutting without thought to how service will be impacted.

Outsourcing Call Center Jobs

The last example of outsourcing is perhaps the most egregious and callous: the closure of the Riverside, California call center on January 18th, 2019.

For background: in early 2018, Amtrak announced that it was contracting with business process outsourcer Teleperformance in Port St. Lucie, FL, to “work alongside” our in-house customer service representatives. At the time, we expressed concern that Amtrak was outsourcing our jobs, but were reassured several times – albeit verbally – that “No, we are not closing either of the in-house call centers,” and that the outsourcer was simply for “peaks and valleys” in call volumes and staffing levels.



Amtrak call center employees rallying and marching at Riverside City Hall to save their jobs. [Photo credit: Riverside Press-Enterprise]

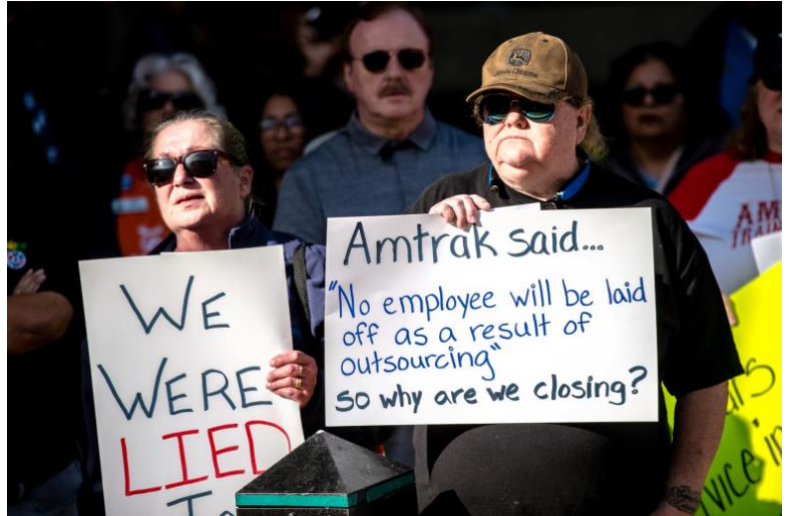
Amtrak proceeded to have our members fly out to the outsourcer to train these new customer service representatives, under the pretense that nobody would be losing their jobs back home.

That was a lie. Plain and simple.

On November 16th, 2018, Amtrak announced it would be closing the Riverside call center, and consolidating operations at its last remaining facility in Philadelphia. The 500+ employees at Riverside were blindsided by this announcement, made worse by the downright callous

timeframe of 60 days -- 60 days with Thanksgiving and Christmas right in the middle. 60 days to figure out how to sell your home, break your lease, take your kids out of school, and move across the country. All because Amtrak was afraid that Congress would stop it.

And stop it they tried. During this 60 days, Congressmen Mark Takano and Ken Calvert led a bipartisan effort to stop the closure of the call center; or, at the very least, give employees more time to make such a life-changing decision.



Amtrak call center employees rallied in response to being lied to by Amtrak management [Photo credit: of Riverside Press Enterprise]

Unfortunately, the government shutdown carried past the date of the call center closure. And despite bipartisan calls from 39 of California's House members and both Senators to halt the facility's closure, Amtrak continued unabated.

On the union side, our team - myself included - made every attempt to save these jobs: offering amendments to the agreements, and anything possible to save the company money and keep the work in Riverside. Nothing would sway Amtrak from closing the call center.

The end result was that some of our members took jobs elsewhere in the system, some took buyouts and early retirements, and a handful moved to Philadelphia. Many simply lost their job, like U.S. Army veteran Theresa Kolaras, whose position at the call center was perfect for her because she needed a position sitting down due to a service-related disability.⁶

But the story doesn't end there.

Amtrak claimed that the main reason for the consolidation of the work in Philadelphia was because of reduced call volumes and more passengers utilizing the website and mobile apps for booking reservations.

We would argue that point in itself, along with Amtrak's reluctance to provide such data to anyone, including Congress.

Regardless, we have now learned that Amtrak is employing at least 320 people at the Port St. Lucie outsourcer, and that they've contracted for a second facility in Westerville, OH, where they currently employ 35 people and are training two additional classes.

I count myself as among the great majority that can't just pack up on such short notice, and leave. I have small children and share custody, and I legally can't move my kids out of state....Telling my boys we can't have a real Christmas was hard, but telling them Mom will not be working for the train...that was the hardest.

- Theresa Kolaras
Former Amtrak Riverside employee
& U.S. Army Veteran

⁶ Figure 2 - Theresa Kolaras' letter that Congressman Takano read on the House floor.

500 jobs were abolished in Riverside because of a supposed lack of call volume. There are now a combined **350 people working at the outsourcing facilities** – the same facility that Amtrak said was only for “peaks and valleys.”

Amtrak management lied. They lied to us, and they lied to their employees – and, effectively, they lied to you.

This was never about lower call volumes. It was always about union busting. It was about taking good, union jobs with healthcare and railroad retirement benefits, and turning them into low-wage, no-benefit jobs.

Cuts for Cuts-sake

In my 45 years at Amtrak, I have never seen morale lower than it is today. And the impact isn't just affecting working people, it's affecting service. Since the changes have been put in place, many stations have seen steep drops in their Customer Satisfaction Index scores, and ridership on many of our storied long-distance trains is down as customers are frustrated at the continued degradation of the railroad they know and love (again, the Committee should demand route-specific data from Amtrak).

In total, 700 TCU jobs have been abolished under Amtrak's current leadership.

Unfortunately, this is what happens when the incentives for Amtrak's management are so heavily focused on cutting costs alone. In fact, Amtrak's Short-term Incentive Program for managers weighs 70% on financial goals, while a measly 20% is based on customer service, and a sad 10% on ridership.

Translation: Amtrak's management bonus structure is about cutting the railroad to the bone until there is no one left to defend it. Not about providing quality services, or improving ridership. It's about cuts. Period.

But don't just take my word for it. Here are the words of the former Amtrak CEO, the late Joe Boardman, when he was asked about Amtrak's management incentives, and what is different now:

Cost has become a driver in a way that it has begun to damage the system. We had an overall revenue goal. But individual management goals that influence monetary bonuses were based on cost targets, not revenue. The incentive program needs to be revamped so cutting expenses is not the sole focus. I mean, eventually what are you going to cut if it is the sole focus? Everything? And not run the trains?

The intent of Congress was to do as good a job as we could, but now it's just plain cost cutting: Throwing employees out of the stations and reservation centers, cutting meal service.

*This is what is amazing to me: The board felt they became more knowledgeable only because they had better financial information. **I insisted on transparency. [You're] going to have the confidence of Congress if [you] are telling them exactly what the numbers are. And that's exactly what they're not doing — on purpose — now, because they think they are smarter than everyone else. [Amtrak Chairman Anthony Coscia wants numbers lumped together] because they seem to agree with the blockheaded moves management is making right now. I don't think Richard Anderson ever did an honest assessment of what [the board was] up to and where they were going.***⁷

A Vision for Amtrak

But this hearing is not just about where Amtrak was or is, but what it could be. And to that we would offer a few comments.

The entire history of Amtrak has been a lack of proper financing married to a national vision. The politics at play result in the goalposts constantly shifting for Amtrak, often creating inconsistent services, and having customers, workers and communities caught in the middle.

Again, I'd compare Amtrak's current vision to that of former Amtrak CEO, the late Joe Boardman. When asked about "running Amtrak as a business," Boardman replied:

*Running this company like a business means the United States of America is a customer. They are paying the cost of maintaining the mobility. Making that mobility available. They're making an availability payment. **They're not subsidizing this railroad, they're paying the cost of providing it.***

The thing I see here is not only an imbalance in what the funding is, but a lack of understanding of what they're paying for. They're paying for this mobility and this connectivity and making this available to the residents of every one of the states of this union, except for two in the lower 48. Forty-six states, over 500 stations, get Amtrak service. And when you ride those long-distance trains, you will see sometimes a seven-passenger minivan that's in business to provide that last mile of service from some of those sparsely populated areas where we have stations.

*We bring business. I don't get it that people don't understand that.*⁸

One method by which to cure Amtrak's maladies may be for Congress to rethink its approach to Amtrak leadership. By reforming the Amtrak Board of Directors, Congress could rejuvenate Amtrak by properly addressing the needs of the country, and give voices to the stakeholders that

⁷ Johnston, Bob. "Trains' Last Interview with Former Amtrak President Joe Boardman." TrainsMag.com, Trains Magazine, 7 Mar. 2019, trn.trains.com/news/news-wire/2019/03/08-trains-last-interview-with-former-amtrak-president-joe-boardman.

⁸ *ibid*

actually care about passenger rail service and improving Amtrak rather than gutting it for its parts.

A new Board of Directors that properly represents various groups, communities, service lines, and workers would allow better, more thoughtful decision-making. These decisions would not be hampered by conflicting interests on the Board, but rather enhanced through negotiation and careful consultation. Such a Board – just like this Committee - should be familiar with such work, as it is often the most bipartisan, productive committee in Congress, and routinely works to get things done rather than quibble and posture.

Imagine an Amtrak Board that worked the same way, and that was full of people whose mission it is to see the railroad succeed, rather than a Board chock full of political appointments who view their position as little more than resume builders. A Board that agrees with people like Chairman DeFazio or Senator Moran, who both liken the importance of Amtrak's service to that of the U.S. Post Office – a service that may not make money, but provides vital transportation access to millions while spurring economic growth.

That kind of leadership could take Amtrak to the next level, and beyond.

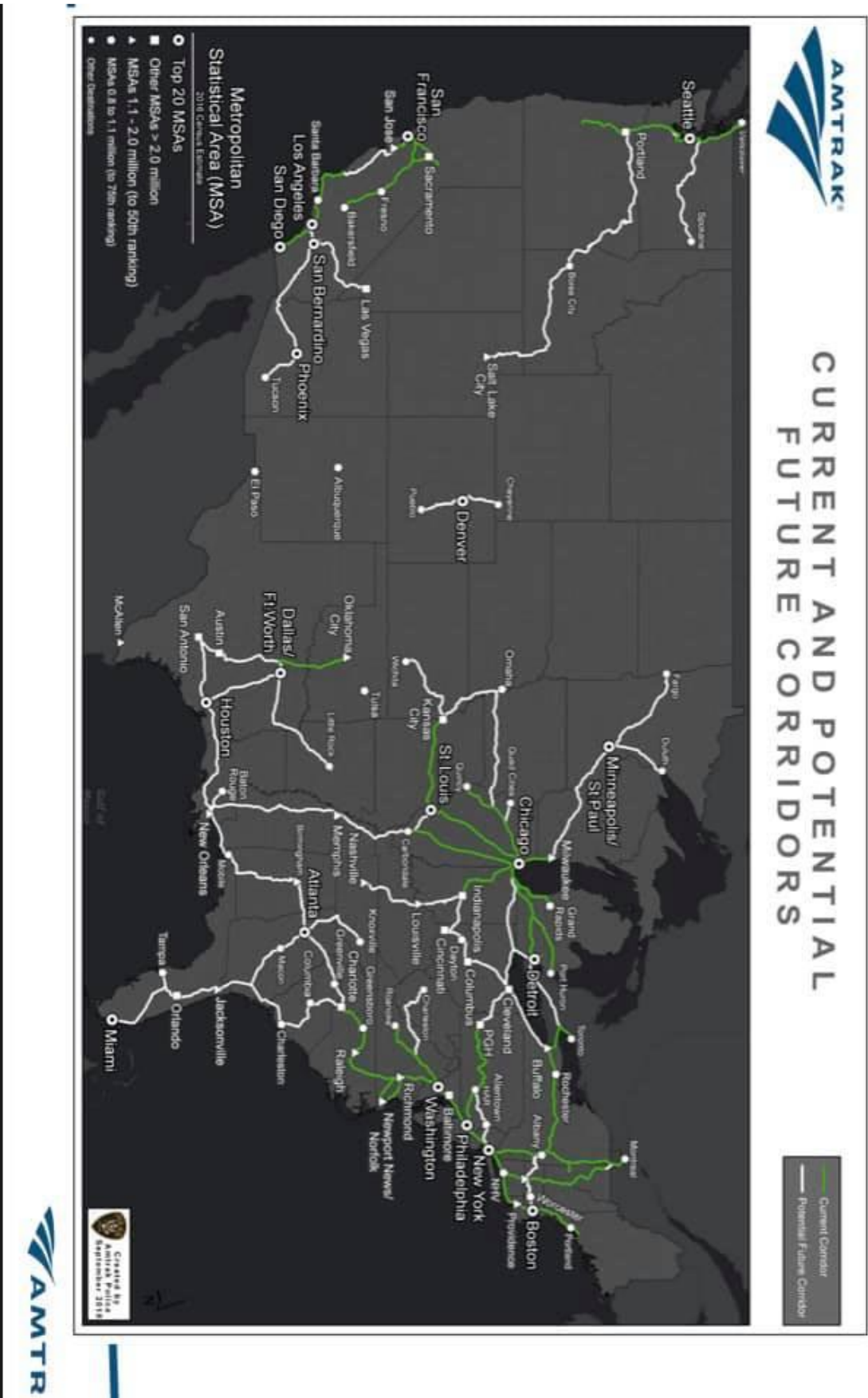
However, I caution this Congress about waiting for Reauthorization to draw a new future for Amtrak. As we see it, by the time Congress completes its reauthorization effort, there may not be much of a railroad left.

In the near term, Congress must hold Amtrak accountable through the appropriations process, and ensure that Amtrak commits to, and abides by, the *national* vision set forth in current law -- not the mission its current leadership seems to be forging ahead with, regardless of Congressional directive. Amtrak, after all, is not our regional or corridor but our National Railroad Passenger Corporation. And we must fight to preserve it as such.

Finally, our intention in testifying today was not just to talk about job losses or outsourcing or the conversion of good middle class careers into low-wage jobs. Our intention is to see Amtrak thrive and grow. Our members want Amtrak to be successful because it's the railroad they've known and loved, and it's their life's work. And who wouldn't want their life's work to succeed.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Figure 1. Amtrak's proposed route structure



STARLIGHT HIGHLIGHTS

A Monthly Publication of the Joint Communications Team and Member Unions



Joint Oversight Committee announces exciting new changes

Eric Hosey joins the Southwest Team as the new Deputy General Manager

Marketing Advertising: What's Happening Around the Coast Starlight

Los Angeles Mechanical: the blessing of an operating Upholstery Shop

***Coast Starlight* Initiatives: "Just for You," "Cocktails on the Rails," and Business Class**

The 411 on the use of cardboard boxes onboard trains

Let's Talk Safety with Dave Redding

Proprietary and Confidential: For Internal Use Only



Exciting New Changes to Come!

As you know, for the past several years, the *Coast Starlight* has been participating in a pilot project to close the Food & Beverage gap by increasing revenue with projects like the “Just for You” Meals and “Cocktails on the Rails.” Each project has been supported through a Union/Management collaboration by the *Coast Starlight* Joint Leadership Team (CSJLT) with the intent of improving the customer experience and increasing employee involvement with the *Coast Starlight* as the test train.

On September 7th, the Joint Oversight Committee (JOC), Tom Hall, Jack Dinsdale, Charlie Woodcock, Donald Boyd and Gary Maslanka met in Los Angeles. The purpose of the meeting was to agree on a plan for expanding the CSJLT labor management collaborative process to all Los Angeles based trains and operations. The labor management collaborative process will be the foundation for everything we do, moving forward. The resilient labor and efforts contributing to increasing revenue and sustained cost avoidance initiatives by all Onboard Service employees were acknowledged by JOC members. The JOC recognizes the labor management collaborative process is a direct path towards controlling our own destiny and the way Amtrak conducts business.

The CSJLT met on September 14th that outline a strategic plan for the new Los Angeles Joint Leadership Team. The Los Angeles JLT will apply lessons learned from the *Coast Starlight* process by utilizing the labor management collaborative process as a catalyst to improving Los Angeles based trains and operations.

Jack Dinsdale said, “We have a seat at the table and this is our opportunity to effect change.”

Coast Starlight Food & Beverage Report July 2017

by Oscar Viramontes, Budgeting and Planning Manager

	YTD for the Period Ending July 2017	YTD for the Period Ending July 2016	Variance vs. Prior Year Fav/(Unfav)
FY17 vs. FY16			
Revenue	\$6,870,000	\$7,047,000	(\$177,000)
Costs	\$13,701,000	\$14,699,000	\$998,000
Contribution/(Loss)	(\$6,831,000)	(\$7,652,000)	\$821,000
	YTD for the Period Ending July 2017	YTD for the Period Ending July 2015	Variance vs. Prior Year Fav/(Unfav)
FY17 vs. FY15			
Revenue	\$6,870,000	\$6,165,000	\$705,000
Costs	\$13,701,000	\$15,570,000	\$1,869,000
Contribution/(Loss)	(\$6,831,000)	(\$9,405,000)	\$2,574,000
	YTD for the Period Ending July 2017	YTD for the Period Ending July 2014	Variance vs. Prior Year Fav/(Unfav)
FY17 vs. FY14			
Revenue	\$6,870,000	\$6,098,000	\$772,000
Costs	\$13,701,000	\$17,703,000	\$4,002,000
Contribution/(Loss)	(\$6,831,000)	(\$11,605,000)	\$4,774,000

The *Coast Starlight* continues to make remarkable progress in reducing its Food and Beverage operating loss in FY17. Food & Beverage operating losses thru July 2017, compared to July 2016, are \$821,000 lower. We have seen a decrease in revenue of \$177,000, however combined with a decline in costs of \$998,000, the total operating loss has been reduced by \$821,000. The two most significant drivers for the decrease in costs are On Board Service Labor at \$493,000 and Commissary Provisions at \$240,000. Unfortunately, we have seen an increase of \$74,000 in Fuel costs. The reduction in the F&B operating loss is even more significant when we compare July 2017 to July 2015. Specifically, we have seen a reduction of \$2,574,000 (27.4%), and a reduction of \$4,774,000 (41.1%) when compared to July 2014. The tables above compare July 2017 to July 2016, 2015 and 2014.

COAST STARLIGHT JOINT IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

JOINT LEADERSHIP TEAM

Coast Starlight JLT Charter: Create and sustain a culture that fosters all departments working together, in unity
 • For our People • For our Customers • For our Services • One AMTRAK.
We will do this by: • Jointly involving employees & employee work groups in identifying & resolving business issues • Increase union, independent, management and cross-departmental collaboration • Provide input into business strategy and decisions • Provide a forum to prevent operational and workforce problems and to work through emerging challenges • Clear challenges systemic issues to allow progress to be made • Plan ahead and communicate to avoid "surprises" • Provide union & management business education • Charter & oversee • Various standing/steering teams • Task forces and Natural Work Groups • Major strategic initiatives • Joint business education & communication.

Eric Smith, CS SWC Route Director	Jack Dinsdale, TCU IAM National Representative	Daniel Perez, Coordinator CS Improvement Team
Mike Chandler, Deputy General Manager	Chris Schroeder, SL Train Manager	Melody Queros, ABA, National Representative
Craig Evely, Superintendent LAX Mechanical	Joy Cortez, TCU IAM Local 2508	Joanie Matsumoto, Train Manager
Eliseo Nara, CS Train Manager	Richard Montes, Local Chairman JCC Local 6357	Jaime Morales, EBBW President
Oscar Varamontes, B & P Manager	Mario Estrada, President JCC Local 6357	Mike Skidallit, ORG
Sharon Jimenez, TCU IAM Local 2508	Javier Ramirez, UTU Representative	Mike Hamer, ORG

COAST STARLIGHT IMPROVEMENT TEAM REVENUE INITIATIVES TOTAL GAINS \$4,946,022, Contributing to a 2 year reduction in Food & Beverage Operating Loss of \$3,996,000

ACTION TEAMS	PROJECT NAME	Team / Leader	Start Date	Objective	Current Status	% Complete	GOAL
OBS Committee	Business Class Initiative	Eric Smith	Jun-15	Improve Customer Service and Experience	Since start of service, June 2015, Business Class has generated \$4,185,521 with a maintenance cost of \$172,477 and OBS \$572,477 for an actual revenue of \$3,440,566	50%	Adds an alternative ridership experience in contrast to Coach Class and Sleeping cars. Convert 5 Kiddie Cars (34504, 34508, 34510, 34515, 34512) into Business Class with leather seats.
OBS Committee	Cocktails on the Rails	Eric Smith	Aug-16	Improve Customer Experience, Increase Revenue	To date the signature drink program has generated \$71,129 in liquor sales.	100%	Offer signature drinks in order enhance the Pacific Parlour Car experience
OBS Committee	Just For You Meals	Tim Corbett, Josh Lynn	Jun-16	Improve Customer Experience, Increase Revenue	Since start of the Just for You meal program in June 2015, has generated \$422,158	100%	Enhance on board lunch and dinner experience by offering at seat meals at an affordable price
OBS Committee	Top Off	Tim Corbett, Josh Lynn	Jan-16	Improve operating losses, Cut down on spoilage, simplify supply loading.	January 2015 - 2016, Top Off has contributed to commissary labor cost savings \$267,214	75%	Decrease food handling from commissary to train side, reduce food temperature abuse, and cut commissary labor cost.

COAST STARLIGHT COST AVOIDANCE/ CSIMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES

OBS Committee	Improve Defect reporting		Jan-16	Equipment Reliability, Customer experience	Phot program OBS utilization of end device for eMap defect reporting.	75%	Ensure accurate information is available to Mechanical to complete repairs.
Mechanical Committee	Improve Train Turnover	Joanie Matsumoto	Feb-17	Equipment Appearance, Customer experience	Interdepartmental teams are reviewing process.	20%	Increase the amount of time for servicing and repairs.
Mechanical Committee	Parlour car improvements	Matt Cahoon, Joanie Matsumoto	Dec-16	Equipment Reliability	One Parlour sent to Beech Grove. Remaining 4 are moving into PM this week.	50%	Prepare the Parlour Cars for optimal customer experience, increase sales.
Communications Committee	Starlight Highlights	Daniel Perez	Dec-17	Communication and Business Education.		100%	Communication
OBS Committee	Enhanced coach boarding	Joanie Matsumoto	Feb-16	Customer experience		100%	Customer stress reduction
Mechanical Committee	Carpet appearance task force	Hele Lara, Matt Cahoon, Joanie Matsumoto	Jun-16	Customer experience, Equipment Appearance		20%	Raise CSI scores. 5 -10 points
Mechanical Committee	Coast Starlight wifi	Eric Smith, Craig Evely	Jan-17	Customer experience, Customer Experience		10%	REAL WIFI!
Mechanical Committee	Carwash renovation	Todd Almili, Eric Ngolle, Dave Kinsey	Jan-16	Equipment Appearance, Customer experience	April target for one set of equipment to be un and running.	50%	Raise CSI scores. 5 -10 points
Mechanical Committee	LA Mechanical Employee Engagement	Hele Lara, Daniel Perez	Sep-16	Employee Engagement		75%	Improve mechanical support through employee engagement.
Mechanical Committee	Lounge Car Refrigeration	Jaime Morales, Matt Cahoon, Daniel Perez	Sep-16	Refrigeration Reliability		30%	100% uptime for refrigeration, improved work processes.
OBS Committee	Refresh OBS model	Eric Smith		Customer experience and service consistency		0%	Improve onboard leadership.
OBS Committee	Customer Experience Teams Workshop	Eric Smith	Jan-17	Customer experience		10%	Improve eCSI friendliness and helpfulness scores, reduce complaints.
OBS Committee	Set Up Train and Crew Performance Metrics	Eric Smith, Chris Schroeder	Jan-17	Performance Capturing		30%	Employee business education through performance data.
OBS Committee	Peer to Peer	Tim Corbett, Josh Lynn	Jan-16	Employee Performance		100%	

Figure 2. Letter from Theresa Kolaras, an Amtrak employee in Riverside & U.S. Army veteran

Growing up it was my dream to serve my country. That's why I joined the JROTC program in High School. And after 9/11, I enlisted with the U.S. Army with hopes of making a difference, and happy to have a career. My job wasn't glamorous: I was a Unit Support Specialist – MOS: 92 Yankee. But I was proud to be serving during a difficult time for our country.

Unfortunately, just as my platoon was readying to deploy, I suffered successive fractures in my foot that wouldn't heal. I was honorably discharged due to the injury, and just like that my dreams were cut short. At the time, nothing saddened me more than having to watch my friends deploy without me.

Saddled with my foot that wouldn't heal, I now had to figure out what to do with my life. Jobs were hard to find due to having to choose ones that kept me off my feet so much. I found many odd jobs here and there, and, within a few years, I started a family and continued my education.

In 2014, I was ecstatic to find out I was hired with Amtrak, as I come from a railroad family and was proud to continue the tradition. Being able to work at our call center in Riverside was a blessing for my family and I.

Amtrak's reputation for its passengers and its employees gave me hope for a brighter future. Living in California is nearly impossible, with its high cost of living. Especially being a single mother with two boys.

I was able to take care of my kids on the great benefits and wages at Amtrak. My boys love the train and enjoy our many trips we were able to take.

On Nov 14th, I got a sudden awakening as I got notice that Amtrak would be closing our call center in Riverside. A week before Thanksgiving and a month before Christmas.

Now, I was more than shocked, as in June we employees got a letter stating our jobs were *not at risk*, even though Amtrak was choosing to open up another call center in Florida.

Amtrak reassured us employees our jobs were secure. As the months went by, Amtrak started closing stations, putting employees out of work - and many of us in Riverside started to worry more about our jobs.

Now that feeling of worry is a *reality*, and we're left wondering why Amtrak has been so dishonest?

Amtrak sent out a letter to us stating they are not laying us off, but we are able to go to its Philadelphia call center. How does Amtrak think people in two months can get up and move to the East coast?

[Kolaras' letter continued]

Amtrak knows not everyone can just get up and go as people have homes and families. Is this why they decided not to give its employees notice?

Amtrak has opened up its non-union call center in Florida and the worst part being is them openly denying that they've done just that.

I count myself as among the great majority that can't just pack up on such short notice and leave. I have small children and share custody, and I legally can't move my kids out of state.

I honestly have no idea where my children and I will go. We have a month to figure out where to live, as I can't pay rent without a job, along with this injury that I still deal with every day.

Telling my boys we can't have a real Christmas was hard, but telling them Mom will not be working for the train...that was the hardest.

I am one of the many employees who are at a hardship, and one month away from closing we still don't have any real answers, or hope that we would at least have a severance package.

Amtrak has been quiet, and I am still in disbelief that this was once a company that was *known* for its employee and customer loyalty.

Many of us loved our jobs because we were proud of the railroad, proud to wear the name, and proud to help our customers plan their trips.

Now, at work these last few days, I see people with despair in their faces, and loss of hope in their eyes. Amtrak should ask themselves, is this the treatment they want to give its most dedicated employee base? I still have hope that Amtrak will wake up and realize that the direction they are going is hurting its customers and its employees, which are their biggest fans.

Is sacrificing the quality service Amtrak has provided (not just in Riverside but nationwide) worth losing to save money? On top of the numerous stations that have been closed under your regime, you are now putting not just 500 employees but 500 employees and THEIR FAMILIES in dire straits. This decision is both ethically and morally wrong. It's only fair to those hard working employees here in Riverside that we hear an answer.

Sincerely,

Theresa Kolaras

NEWS



THE TRAINS INTERVIEW

Boardman talks to TRAINS

Retired Amtrak CEO offers unvarnished opinions on the railroad since he left it

▲ Amtrak's westbound *Southwest Chief* approaches Lamy, N.M., on jointed rail in 2014. As the only train on this track, the Federal Railroad Administration maintains that positive train control is not required, but Amtrak management insists it is. Two photos, Bob Johnston

SINCE RETIRING as Amtrak's president and CEO in 2016 after eight years on the job, Joe Boardman has actively monitored developments at the company as Wick Moorman and Richard Anderson successively assumed his former role in each of the following years. He has been open in expressing opinions about apparent changes in the company's priorities since he left Washington for his home in Rome, N.Y. TRAINS spoke with Boardman to further explore his concerns and put perspective on his tenure.

Q What changes do you believe managers have made to Amtrak safety initiatives?

A We had a program that trained employees with extensive railroad knowledge — engineers and in some cases conductors and road foremen — as behavioral-based safety people and coordinators that could help us with risk assessment, but Moorman killed it. And the budget was wiped out for the Zero Defect Safety program at [New York] Penn Station under Wick's watch.

So that's why the [March and April 2017] Penn Station derailments occurred. Wick wasn't paying attention; he was only

there a day or two per week.

Decisions were made without reviewing the impact to safety, revenue generation, and customer service of allowing 400 non-union management people to leave the company in buyouts. After the accidents in Washington state [Amtrak *Cascades* No. 501 in December 2017] and the southbound *Silver Star* in South Carolina two



Joe Boardman

months later, senior leadership began to talk about Amtrak as being unsafe without positive train control. My argument is that Richard Anderson's comments were damaging to the company when there was no reason or necessity for that damage other than to cover your tracks.

I don't dispute the fact that operational positive train

control would have protected those trains, but we've been running a safe railroad long before PTC. The closest thing would be automatic train stop — ATS — on the *Southwest Chief* route and that's one they don't want to run at all.

Q How do you feel about Amtrak's different approach to working with BNSF Railway, states, and communities to keep the 'Southwest Chief' on its route?

A They talk about freight delays on the national network. Probably the most reliable service we could run is from Kansas City, Mo., to Albuquerque, N.M., about 950 miles where we are the only trains operating. That was my vision: No freight interference. Because the line has ATS, at some point we can increase that to 90 mph across Kansas and have even faster, more reliable service.

I really fault Amtrak management in pushing for positive train control on the exempted service right now. [There is no] way it should cost \$8 million a year to maintain a signal system. For Amtrak management to renege now [by not providing a \$3-million match to leverage a \$25-million federal

Public service

In military service

- U.S. Air Force Vietnam veteran

In New York service

- Ran transit authorities in Oneida and Broome counties in N.Y. 1975-1988
- N.Y. Transportation Commissioner 1997-2005

In Federal service

- Federal Railroad Administration administrator 2005-2008
- Amtrak president and CEO 2008-2016

Retirement in Rome, N.Y.

- Rome Community Foundation 2017-present

NEWS

infrastructure improvement grant] about what really could happen to improve that line is beyond me. ...

The Federal Railroad Administration has to be completely responsible for oversight of safety. For Amtrak to come in and say that it had decided to do something safer on an exempt-from-PTC-route such as the *Southwest Chiefs* — and then say it's too expensive so we won't run it — doesn't balance the risk with the need to provide the service. The Amtrak board's job is to carry out the national rail system policy of Congress, but instead they pass a mealy-mouthed policy saying they will only run on tracks that have that. And yet, they've asked for [PTC implementation] extensions.

Q Management argues the train is too expensive to operate. How was your administration more revenue focused?

A One of the things you find out when you get to Amtrak is that you just don't put butts in seats to maximize revenue. If you listen to the customers, they are willing to pay a greater amount for better service. We talked a lot about things we'd like to do with the dining cars, but if you'll remember, we had this Congressman [former U.S. Rep. John Mica, R-Fla.] who constantly



Joe Boardman used a *Southwest Chief* inspection train stop at Las Vegas, N.M., in August 2014, to meet U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich, D-N.M. (left), and local civic leaders. Bob Johnston

complained that you couldn't sell food unless you were making a profit with it.

We also viewed private cars and charters as a revenue opportunity. Once the short platform problem at the Miami station was mitigated and we were able to run trains in there, we put head-end power on some of the tracks at the existing station so we could generate revenue there. But now they don't want charters or the private-car business. Here's the problem: if you don't

follow through on what previous CEOs have done, then you lose your credibility as an organization.

Q Amtrak had management incentives when you were running the company. What is different now?

A Cost has become a driver in a way that it has begun to damage the system. We had an overall revenue goal. But individual

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management goals that influence monetary bonuses were based on cost targets, not revenue. The incentive program needs to be revamped so cutting expenses is not the sole focus. I mean, eventually what are you going to cut if it is not the sole focus? Everything? And not run the trains? The intent of Congress was to do as good a job as we could, but now it's just plain cost cutting: Throwing employees out of the stations and reservation centers, cutting meal service. ...

This is what is amazing to me: The board felt they became more knowledgeable only because they had better financial information. I insisted on transparency. [You're] going to have the confidence of Congress if [you] are telling them exactly what the numbers are. And that's exactly what they're not doing — on purpose — now, because they think they are smarter than everyone else. [Amtrak Chairman Anthony Coscia wants numbers lumped together] because they seem to agree with the blockheaded moves management is making right now. I don't think Richard Anderson ever did an honest assessment of what [the board was] up to and where they were going.

"ONE OF THE THINGS YOU FIND OUT WHEN YOU GET TO AMTRAK IS THAT YOU JUST DON'T PUT BUTTS IN SEATS TO MAXIMIZE REVENUE."

— JOE BOARDMAN, FORMER AMTRAK PRESIDENT

Q What structural changes would you like to see?

A Amtrak wasn't created to run the Northeast Corridor, it was created to operate the national network, which they are trying to get out of running on a regular basis. The

NEC's infrastructure needs to be owned and built by the U.S. government, and they can defer to the states using the Interstate Highway System model for the most efficient operation of Amtrak, NJ Transit, Metro-North, and the Long Island [Rail Road] — all publicly owned railroads in their own right.

I think a federal administration with an administrator should be responsible for Amtrak and run passenger rail in the U.S.; the person should have a five-to-10-year appointment. For that to happen, there needs to be a real passenger-rail-transportation policy — not policies that are half-hearted deflections to the Federal Transit Administration or the Federal Railroad Administration. The administrator should run it with a fairly small staff able to tap knowledge of real railroaders and demand transparency and accountability from management. We need a CEO who recognizes

what needs to be done on behalf of a national system and a board that needs to get the hell out of the way. If the board is only interested in the Northeast Corridor or [real estate] development, then they are missing their primary obligation of running a railroad.

A lot of those [Amtrak's directors] are honestly good people but they are not knowledgeable enough about policies that they should be about long distance trains. My view is that the investment we are making in the national network provides a backbone for the nation in the future, and is the core of Amtrak. — *Bob Johnston*

NEWS BRIEFS

Canada forces changes to railroader work rules

WORK RULES are changing for Canadian railroaders after Canada's Minister of Transport ordered the nation's railroads to update their work rules to address crew-fatigue issues in December. Transport Minister Marc Garneau says companies must submit updated rules for review by May 19, with the government to approve the updated rules by the end of June.

"We now have a better understanding of the extent to which fatigue can affect human performance and ultimately compromise railway safety. We need to make changes now," Garneau says.

Garneau's order requires railroads to revise worker schedules to account for minimum rest periods and cumulative time on duty, among other elements.



Seven Philadelphia "toaster" locomotives are avoiding the scrapper's torch for at least a little while as the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority leases six **AEM-7** locomotives and one **ALP-44** to NJ Transit for six months. Knowledgeable photographers spotted the string of locomotives on a SEPTA line before a move to NJ Transit just before Christmas. Gary Pancavage

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