



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
RAILROAD PASSENGERS**

TRAINS: A TRAVEL CHOICE AMERICANS WANT

900 Second Street, N.E. Suite 308 Washington, D.C. 20002-3557
Phone 202-408-8362 • Fax 202-408-8287 • narp@narprail.org • <http://www.narprail.org>

NARP Urges Congress to Better Address U.S. Transportation, Energy and Environmental Needs

Investment in passenger rail alternatives urged

For Immediate Release

Washington, D.C., June 26, 2007— At a Congressional hearing today, National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) Executive Director Ross Capon urged Congress to shift its traditional approach to transportation investment and instead ask itself: “What can we do to reduce our dependence on oil and further reduce carbon emissions, air and highway congestion and highway fatalities?”

The answer, Capon pointed out, is more investment in passenger rail.

Today’s testimony came one day after NARP unveiled a call to action for policymakers to adopt a nationwide ‘grid and gateway’ network connecting cities across the nation and expanding both freight and passenger rail capacity. “Utilizing existing rail lines and rights of way as well as corridor proposals already underway by states, localities, and freight railroads, the ‘grid and gateway’ network links the major metropolitan areas of America and enhances the capacity to move both passengers and freight by rail,” said Capon.

In his testimony, Capon emphasized that passenger rail:

- Provides transportation choices. Harris, Wirthlin, and other poll results urging an increase in transportation alternatives, including rail travel, have been backed up by regional and state ballot initiatives and referenda over the past years. With an aging population more prone to mobility impairments and medical conditions that impede travel by air or car, another alternative must be provided.
- Reduces environmental impact. According to Oak Ridge National Laboratory’s most recent data, automobiles and airlines respectively consumed 27 percent and 21 percent more energy than Amtrak in 2005. These numbers would be even more impressive if light trucks—heavily used for personal travel—were factored in.
- Improves safety. Almost 4,000 people a month die on the highways, and automobile accidents are the leading cause of death for teenagers. In contrast, rail transportation has consistently remained one of the safest modes of travel per passenger-mile.

**Our Mission: A modern, customer-focused national passenger
train network that provides a travel choice Americans want**

- Provides system redundancy. An interconnected rail system in tandem with existing air and highway networks will allow various modes of transportation to better back each other up when weather, accidents, or national emergencies shut down parts of the transportation network.

Noting that any list will have a “bottom ten”, Capon urged Congress to shift its thinking from the annual ritual of demonizing Amtrak’s ten worst-performing routes. Instead, he urged federal policymakers to adopt a more realistic measure of passenger rail – much as states and regional governments are doing.

He called on the federal government to match state investments in passenger rail. This would correct the present situation in which--due to lack of federal match--"a passenger rail investment needs to be five times as good as a highway investment in order to justify state funding." Those words came from another witness, Kevin Brubaker of the Chicago-based Environmental Law & Policy Center, who was referring to the fact that “the federal government pays 80% of the cost of highways, bridges, and even bicycle paths, but pays nothing toward state investments in passenger rail.”

Capon’s testimony was offered at a hearing on “Benefits of Intercity Passenger Rail” of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure’s Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials, of the U.S. House of Representatives. His full statement is available at www.narprail.org.

About NARP

NARP is the largest national membership advocacy organization for train and rail transit passengers. We have worked since 1967 to expand the quality and quantity of passenger rail in the U.S. Our mission is to work towards a modern, customer-focused national passenger train network that provides a travel choice Americans want. Our work is supported by over 23,000 individual members.