



Long-Distance Train Facts

- A long-distance train typically consists of sleepers, coaches, a diner and/or a lounge car.
- Long-distance trains travel as far as 2,800 miles and pass through as many as 12 states.
- Amtrak operates 15 long-distance trains over 18,500 route miles serving 39 states and the District of Columbia. These trains provide the only rail passenger service to 23 states.
- In FY 2008 these trains carried 4.2 million passengers accounting for 2.6 billion passenger miles—42% of Amtrak's total—and produced ticket revenues of \$415 million.
- The average long-distance train passenger traveled 626 miles in FY08.
- Long-distance trains run primarily on tracks owned and maintained by private freight railroads.
- These trains are *not* the big money-losers that they are often portrayed to be; only about \$300 million annually would be saved if they were eliminated, and only after a five-year period.



Long Distance Trains

AutoTrain	Coast Starlight	Silver Meteor
CA Zephyr	Crescent	Silver Star
Capitol Limited	Empire Builder	Southwest Chief
Cardinal	Lake Shore Limited	Sunset Ltd
City of New Orleans	Palmetto	Texas Eagle

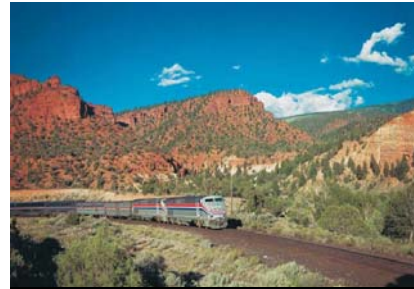
Background Information

Amtrak's long-distance trains provide an essential transportation service for many communities and to a significant percentage of the general public. Many long-distance trains serve small communities with limited or no significant air or bus service, especially in remote or isolated areas in the United States. As a result of airline deregulation and decisions by national bus carriers to exit many communities, rail transportation may provide the only feasible common carrier transportation option for a growing number of areas.¹

If long-distance trains were eliminated, 23 states and 243 communities would be left with no intercity passenger rail service and 18 other states would lose some service. No state or private operator has picked up a long-distance route that Amtrak has eliminated.

Importance of the Long-Distance Trains

The route across the northern tier of states, the *Empire Builder*, with 554,000 passengers in 2008, is the only public transportation service in many communities in North Dakota, Montana and eastern Washington. For most of the states along the *Empire Builder*, tourism serves as a major economic engine. A recent study identifying the economic contributions of the *Empire Builder* showed nearly \$14 million in annual economic benefits in Montana alone.²



Amtrak's *California Zephyr* follows the same route over Donner Pass as the nation's first transcontinental railroad.

Long-distance trains also provide transportation during periods of severe weather or emergencies that stall other modes of transportation. This was demonstrated after the September 11 terrorist attacks that grounded air travel. Additionally, these trains provide a strong economic benefit for the states and communities that they serve.

The majority of passengers on the long-distance trains do not travel between the endpoints, but rather to any combination of city pairs. For example, the *Southwest Chief*, which travels from Chicago to Los Angeles via Kansas City, has 33 stops, creating 528 possible trip combinations.

Measuring Financial Performance of Long-Distance Trains

Most of Amtrak's expenditures are due to the immense capital needs of its infrastructure, particularly the Northeast Corridor, not the operating costs of the long-distance trains. These operating cost figures should be cited with caution. Critics often refer to the "loss per passenger" of the long-distance trains. However, each long-distance train passenger is the equivalent of five short distance train passengers because of the greater distances traveled. More importantly, these "loss per passenger" figures often include not only the "avoidable" costs of operating individual long-distance trains (such as the cost of diesel fuel) but all of the shared costs that Amtrak incurs for the benefit of both long-distance and corridor trains (such as the cost of mechanical facilities, Amtrak's computer systems, and stations like Los Angeles Union Station). Including shared costs produces inflated and misleading "loss" figures, since these costs will not go away if long-distance trains are eliminated.

Eliminating all long-distance trains would produce negligible cost savings in the first few years because Amtrak must pay labor protection to impacted employees. When these payments end after five years, the savings would still be minimal—around \$300 million annually, or about a quarter of Amtrak's annual appropriation in recent years. Eliminating individual trains produces even fewer savings—most of the shared costs of Amtrak's long-distance network would remain. Additionally, Amtrak continues to make changes to its long-distance trains that will improve revenue and finances for the system. Amtrak exited from the mail and express business in 2004, resulting in shorter and more convenient schedules, with reduced labor costs. The repair of wreck-damaged equipment continues and will allow Amtrak to increase capacity, and therefore revenues, on long-distance trains, which often sell out. Amtrak began a Simplified Dining Service on most long-distance trains in early 2006. These changes will help further reduce the losses of long-distance trains.

¹ *Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation*: AASHTO, 2002.

² *Analysis of the Economic Benefits of the Empire Builder*, R.L. Banks & Associates: http://www.mdt.state.mt.us/tranplan/docs/empire_builder.pdf