

**AMTRAK 2024 ANNUAL PUBLIC BOARD MEETING****Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2024***Seattle, Washington – Embassy Suites hotel**Updated: 12/17***Public Q&A**

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*John Shea – Amtrak Corporate Communications*

We are going to begin our Q&A period of this Board meeting.

We are very excited for this. This is the public's opportunity to ask questions of our leadership team. We are going to ask people who are present, if you are interested in asking a question, please come up to this mic here.

**PUBLIC QUESTION: About the Roles of Congress and the Amtrak Management Team**

My name is Barry Green and I'm from eastern Montana and I take the Empire. I want to preface my idea in the previous Board meetings. Two years ago, you posted the Q&A on your website and this year, it omitted. I would appreciate if you would go back to posting the Q&As when you post the video of today's meeting.

My question is that Amtrak management consistently states they will do whatever Congress wants them to do. During my own meetings with the congressional staff, which I have done for the past 20 years, they ask, why are their boss, and the decision makers and Amtrak has its own Board and management team to make these decisions. What do I tell these younger individuals to figure out that we don't make those decisions, management does?

**CHAIR COSCIA**

Thank you for your question. And I appreciate your comment on Q&A, and we will make sure that happens also.

Let me answer your question and I will ask our CEO too. Congress does and the administration established both policy and passed the laws that govern the way that this company operates and govern the way that passenger rail operates, and they have mandates of how service is provided and other elements on how we conduct Amtrak's business. We obviously have to adhere to those things. We elected officials that make policy decisions and laws that Amtrak has to abide by. And Amtrak's Board has a responsibility to our mission to provide a safe and efficient passenger rail service

throughout the nation to the extent that is possible and also be proper stewards of our resources.

I think what you would tell young people who are looking at this, Amtrak is an entity that is 100% owned by the U.S. Government and the U.S. Government establishes policies from the elected officials and to administer. I don't think there is one that is exclusive of the other, they are both things that have to work simultaneously.

### **STEPHEN GARDNER**

I agree, Tony. Amtrak is governed by the U.S. Government and the instructions that we get from Congress and they are roughly 5 year bills and they set forward Congress' objectives and what they anticipate and the rules of the road so to speak and what we are supposed to engage in and not engage in and we every year through the Board of Directors and their decisions and come and say that this is what we need to deliver on the goals that you set forward and every year they put together the funds through that authorization level and we see the goals to do our job better, to improve, to enhance our investments and find more ways to improve value. And then, Congress goes through the process of appropriating dollars.

For the fiscal year is how it is supposed to work, but generally not how it often works, and we are operating with fiscal years for the next year without the funding. But the fiscal dollars give us the instructions that we are operating within.

We don't abdicate our role as management to fulfill the instructions of Congress and we have the role of managing the company. We are the operating arm of the Federal Government for implementing the policy of passenger rail and we rely on their funding and their missions and objectives to guide the mission of the company.

### **PUBLIC QUESTION: How do we achieve long-distance ridership goals with our fleet?**

My name is Jim Tilley and I'm here from Jacksonville, Florida. And I am vice president of the Aurora Group, and I had a question today about the 5-year plan that was released last February. In the plan, it indicated, and it was released in the second quarter, it indicated that Long Distance seat miles, as measured by, which is a measure of capacity were expected to grow by 10% during FY 24. When the year was over, the reality was that it was a 5% increase. By 2029, the same plan indicates that available seat miles would be projected to include those that are made available in 2019 when the Long-Distance fleet was much larger.

How do you plan to achieve these targets with the new cars, and constrained overhaul plan, and things that might be caused by catastrophic mechanical failure or derailments? And the FY 24 total plan includes 96 cars, and that is the same number for overhaul in '21, and it doesn't give you a net gain there. And the good news and the delayed news is that the (Indiscernible) will be overhauled again, but so that will be a plus to the fleet. It is a real

puzzle of how we get back to 19 when there is all of other constraints out there. Can you elaborate on some of the thinking that went into that plan?

**STEPHEN GARDNER**

Sure. Appreciate that question and to put the 5-year plan in context and we release them in the January, or the spring of the previous year and it reflects the forward view. We do spend a lot of time thinking about this exact question, as you have heard, and creating more seats and seat miles across the entire network because we have more demand than ever before and that is a constant focus.

In terms of getting more seat miles in the Long Distance fleet and the Long Distance network and prior to the addition of new fleet, which of course, we are working on and you heard from Karyn is a long term program that we are really excited about and will take some time and to ensure that we have all of the fleet that we can repaired and in service and that comes down to the corridor service of each rack and what the life is and the post investment because we have to make sure that we have good, sound, capital investments going into this fleet and getting the value out of it.

So, you will see the current status of the repair and availability of the recs and when I say "recs" it is the damage and where Amtrak has come in contact with infrastructure vehicles and the damage impact to those cars and we hope to get some incremental, it won't be much, but some incremental coverage that is getting better is the number of cars out in the field and you have seen the great work by the service and operation team and getting more capacity and even though we have been able to increase the M fleet and we have been able to get more trips out there.

There is a lot of work underway to deliver the equipment in service, higher availability, and less time in shop. Over the next five years, we are going to have to find our way to scrape and scrap whatever seats we can. And your point about the risk of loss is very real and there are components to take fleet out and that is a reality that we have to overcome.

I think that it is important that if there is always going to be a possibility that the goals and the objective to increase fleet capacity don't materialize, then there needs to be an assessment of what is where's the equipment shortfall going to be focused on?

Understood and we continue to take fleet extension studies to see how to get more life out of the existing fleet and knowing how long it takes to get new fleet. And we are going to continue to improve the fleet as best as we can.

**PUBLIC QUESTION: How can we tell ridership impact story better?**

I'm an economist with Davis & Associates here in Seattle and I work with ODOT. And to expand the Cascades service out to Portland and with this corridor and expanding the reach of the National Network. I want to congratulate Robby for letting the cat out of the

bag and we are going to see record ridership and I hope that all of the social media teams and media relations are ready to make a lot of fanfare when we hit that number. I'm especially excited about that because I know what it means.

I write a lot of cost benefits, and I can tell you this is really important stuff. For Washington State, 47% drive, and an astonishing 32% are passengers that fly. And even though we don't normally consider these trip times to be competitive, but those are the numbers. My only problem is that numbers are from 2016. These numbers are great. But only 10% of Cascades passengers otherwise would take a bus. The bus service that is coming up, is that going to put a dent in Amtrak ridership?

My question to you is how can you help me help you? We need to make sure that we get these numbers out and tell the story about the impact of ridership in our region. That means half a million ridership on I 5 and that is impactful numbers. How can we update this and disseminate it? These numbers track national numbers for Amtrak and looking at it by state, corridor, and congressional district would really help to tell the story about what you are doing across the country in ways that decision makers can understand.

#### **CHAIR COSCIA**

It is a great comment and question, and you are right. We are seeing that kind of result around the country and it reinforces what we have said several times today and the interest in passenger rail and this is a historic moment for us to grab that and make great use of the investments that we are making. Your comment is mostly about our messaging and getting the world to sort of understand that this resurgence has happened. I think that we have done a lot in the communications area. I don't know, Stephen or Roger, if you want to comment?

#### **ROGER HARRIS**

Working with our State Partners and finding a way to quantify regional and you are right, these considerations and even though they are national in scope, they are calibrated regional, and we need to work with our partners to calibrate our survey data or however the states would like us to work with them on. And I would like to make sure that people understand and introduce Jennifer Mitchell who is taking over for our VP of Strategic Planning. Jennifer is going to have a big role to play in that.

#### **PUBLIC QUESTION: How to we keep future plans moving forward with new administration?**

#### **JOHN SHEA**

I have an online question. With the upcoming change in the administration, does Amtrak have a plan to ensure that the future of Amtrak's plans talked about in today's presentation will move forward?

#### **CHAIR COSCIA**

We have for a long time and will continue, and the last question is a perfect set up for the response for this one and that is there is incredible demand for the service that we provide and in the past decade we have done a lot to make Amtrak a stronger company to deliver to that demand and we have done in the face of challenges. We are continually making the case to Congress and the administration for the support of passenger rail, and we are confident that support will continue.

**PUBLIC QUESTION: Amtrak's commitment to long-distance service?**

I'm George Chilson. I came up here from San Diego, "America's Finest City". I appreciate you all coming out to Indian country here in the West, the Wild West. And I want to thank you for your voice of support for what is known as the Long-Distance system.

I think that it is appropriate to call it the interstate services because what states are funding today are largely intrastate services. When you start to get into interstate services, you get into very complicated fights between states back and forth and how they are going to fund interstate services. For an outsider who is a frequent user of interstate services to see my family in Chicago, what I perceive is cognitive distance. On the one hand, Chair Coscia, you said that the Board is dedicated to the distance, and you had a plan 2.0 and that plan was to convert as many Long Distance groups and short distance groups that would be funded by states. That seems to be quite inconsistent with the pledge to continue operating the Long-Distance system and expanding it. To me, the importance is that it's the even a limited network is the only rail service available to 83 million Americans who live within 25 miles of an Amtrak station. Quite frankly, it is the most cost-efficient way of serving short, medium, and Long-Distance trips particularly, west of the Mississippi and the southeast. Has the Board approved that plan 2.0?

**CHAIR COSCIA**

I can tell you that the current policy and view of the Board is if there is an Amtrak 2.0 and a National Network 2.0, it is not curtailing it or modifying ways that alters. What we have now is a very fundamental thing that many people rely on and there are communities in the United States and the only form of transportation is the Amtrak National Network train that rolls through there and our goal is to find ways to increase it, not decrease. But it is absolutely, affirmatively the view of Amtrak as a company around promulgated by the Board and hopefully, supported by our actions that we are committed to building the National Network and the Corridor ID Program is a way of creating those supplemental additions. We think is an enormous amount that can be done. As far as the existing policy is that we are trying to find a way to maintain and make it stronger and grow it and more robust to the customers that rely on it.

**GEORGE CHILSON**

Let me follow, and the National Network is state funded trains, routes and Long Distance.

**CHAIR COSCIA**

That's right.

**GEORGE CHILSON**

The procurement for Long Distance is only for enough funding to replace the equipment that you currently have and no opportunity for expansion and as Mr. Gardner said in Tucson, no, was it Boise? And you will retire a Superliner car when you get a new car. So, that along with the state funded goal of eliminating an operating loss by 2029, how are you going to continue the operation and expand the long distance and are they all going to be short distance state funded?

**STEPHEN GARDNER**

What Congress has given us the dollars to do is to replace the current fleet. So, the prospect of expanding the current Long-Distance network beyond its borders to, so to speak, is being led by the FRA and their ability to expand the Long-Distance network. What we expect and certainly support is that Congress considering some of those opportunities to expand the Long-Distance network and provide the funding to expand those routes and of course, provide the fleet. That is a coming question that Amtrak will have a strong voice. But we haven't been provided the resources to change the current network yet. What we have been told is to operate that network, which we are doing, and make investments to improve it. An operational break even on our train business, and if you look at the entire company and we had a huge capital portfolio, and it has impacts on the P&L, and our goal is to get back to the point where we were prior to the pandemic, and we had enough net revenues from the entire network to cover the losses. That doesn't mean there will be no losses for the entire network. We know that the network requires subsidy and will require subsidies, and we are going to continue to maximize the value and service, which is why the Federal Government funds it in the first place.

**PUBLIC QUESTION: Board's role in defending Amtrak with stakeholders?**

My name is James Smith. I'm from Los Angeles, California. Vice president of the Organization Rail Path, a rail advocacy group.

My concern and what you just announced from someone that called in. You had two Amtrak presidents that I can recall that defended this institution to Congress and to anyone else. The two were David Gunn and the other one was W. Graham Claytor. I don't know what the future brings. I don't know if it is going to be a situation after you visit Ronald Reagan and David Stockman era. I don't know if we are going to have situations where we have amendments for anything that might come out of the appropriation process. I want to know what the Board is willing to do to defend the public, the institution, and your employees? That's my concern.

**CHAIR COSCIA**

James, thank you for the question, and thank you for being here. In fact, I'd say that you being here and all the other people who are here and the people who are listening online

and all of the other people who are really interested in supporting passenger rail and supporting the work that Amtrak does, that is the best thing that we could do to try to defend and preserve what we are trying to do here.

But I would rather not, frankly, put it in defensive terms. You heard the numbers today. 32 million people rode our trains in 2024. What we are providing to the nation is very vital, and it's our job to do the best we can. I think the best way for us to support Amtrak is to ensure that we continue to do our job well with every train that runs n time, with every passenger experience that is positive, with every person that makes it from Point A to Point B safely.

We are operating in environments that we don't entirely control – and that is true for every business. We are doing what we can control, and we are working very, very hard with an extremely committed Board and management team to run a really, really strong railroad that is responsive to our customers and meets that need. We make ourselves stronger and reinforce the need for what we do and hopefully, that is enough to convince policymakers to continue to support that. I'm optimistic that we are going to continue to be able to do that. That is something that we can all rely on. But it is a plan of vigilance, and we have to continue to work hard and not take our foot off the pedal and that is something that we are going to continue to do.

#### **PUBLIC QUESTION – What will Amtrak do to improve On-Time Performance?**

I am Tom White, Co-Founder of Climate Rail Alliance. I'm going to bring us back to On Time Performance and I know that it is complicated. I hear about all of the infrastructure, and it has been really nice. And then, you look at the remodeled coach in Chicago, and I hear about on a regular basis about the trains that don't make it to the platform and go back to the yard, and trains that die and they get as far as Glenview in Michigan some place, and when you look it up online, it is freight railroads. And if Amtrak can't run the trains out of the terminal on time, how can they plan how they are going to run?

And secondarily, it seems that people who directly control whether trains are on time or not, the trains managers receive a fundamental of checkers on training and get thrown into (Indiscernible) and the FRA has come up with licensing. I have gone through the licensing requirements. There is nothing that makes the trains run on time. There is stuff there that makes it safe, but it doesn't make it on time. Is there going to be any sort of thorough comprehensive investigation into the root causes of why the On Time Performance is so pathetic? It is more than the infrastructure because we just had a discussion about the On Time Performance of the Cascades and that is an \$8 billion infrastructure and guarantees On Time Performance. The railroad infrastructure I don't think knows how to run trains on time and you can't yell at them if they don't speak Zulu. So, is there going to be a comprehensive real effort to making the trains run on time?

**STEPHEN GARDNER**

We have seen successes in some respect and challenges with others. And you raise a whole number of topics and I'm sure that you acknowledge that On Time Performance is a multitude of things and all of which we are attacking in one form or another. Tony, do you want to add to that?

It is not as if we don't have issues to address on the Amtrak side of the equation. Some of them are stations to adding to passengers that are in a mobility device and other things, and we are generally in the mid-90s in terms of getting all of our transit out of the terminal out on time. It is something that we measure all of the time and religiously and focus on because our trains have to run on time to maintain a schedule.

There is no skillset building around the profession of how to manage rail and train freight. That it is one of the jobs that we have to elevate expectations and be good partners with our hosts and all look at the problem together and identify opportunities and solutions. I think that the work to get to root cause is out there and underway in a variety of factors. And we talked about the NTSB, and related to the Sunset, and there is work with the Department of Justice related to the Crescent, and we are engaged every day talking to our host railroads on how to gain improvements here.

And the infrastructure investments here in this corridor have been targeted and there is a growing opportunity and realization amongst our freight partners there are synergistic benefits, and we are not going away. In the '80s, they thought that we would be using jet packs by now and wouldn't need old trains. And the FRA has been a great leader in providing opportunities for investment and that is brings us together and getting results. It is not a one and done fix and it is a long term sustained program.

And what you have in the Cascades is the exceptional partnership with the two states and you have a passenger operator that understands the needs there. And we are working with the nation, and he has that little piece up in Vancouver that is really important to ensure that we are getting to BC on time. We fundamentally agree that the On Time Performance is the key to every passenger's experience and that is the most important factor always and every incremental improvement that we get is value to the passenger.

### **AMIT BOSE**

I want to add a couple of things here. I want express how interested the Secretary Pete Buttigieg has been. One tool that we have had is transparency and drawing attention to the rates that we are talking about and to FRA's credit and frankly, the last administration, they did set up the matrix for standards for On Time Performance and it was a huge undertaking. We can't forget the agreeing to the matrix and standards that we had and the litigation that went for 20 years that was finally resolved.

There are many, many obstacles in dealing with this. I wish it were simple and straightforward. Unfortunately, it is not. It is the nature of our system. And there are tools available. The Surface Transportation Board has tools available and the Surface



Transportation Board, at the same time, needs the resources to make sure those tools can be engaged and used in a time efficient manner.

Don't overlook the Department of Justice and what it has done since the late 70s and using the rail system as a tool and what the U.S. Government's expectations are for host railroads in providing these services and On Time Performance. Again, at the same time, the Surface Transportation Board fluctuates in their membership, and it doesn't move as far as the framework that was established to keep it move. And I can't forget what you said about the certification for dispatcher either. Actors have multiple bites at the apple, even after there is a final rule and there are petitions or reconsideration, which there is right now. There is a comment period for the rulemaking, and I think that I would remember if this was a comment, because it is a valid one. We could try to incorporate that into the final rule.

Again, the nature of our system is not quick on important topics, like this one, but we have to operate under that system until Congress changes it.

**PUBLIC QUESTION: Big Sky North Coast Service to more smaller towns?**

Hello, Mary Paterson. Thank you for a great morning.

I work with a number of organizations here in Washington and we formed the "Rail Can't Wait" campaign and urging our own legislators to work with the Department of Transportation and to have more ambitious service development plan for the Amtrak Cascades, which would reinstate 2.5 trip times. Our trip times from Seattle to Portland 2.75, Seattle to Vancouver BC a minimum of 14 roundtrips, and a minimum of five from Seattle to Vancouver, BC on the Cascades, and a reliability of 88%. We want this by 2030 to 2035 because of the climate crisis and the growing mobility needs.

So my question is not about Amtrak Cascades, but what I learned about today is being called the Big Sky North Coast service through central Washington, southern Montana and on to Chicago. Very excited about that because there isn't service and those smaller towns and smaller cities across central Washington would really benefit from this. How soon can this happen?

**STEPHEN GARDNER**

I appreciate your comments and question there. This proposal is through the FRA and the process there for development. I think that it is a multiyear process, and, in the end, all of these programs are going to rely on additional Federal Funding to be able to procure equipment and all of the infrastructure improvements.

I think that the realistic timeline for many of these efforts is going to be several years and rely a lot on the next reauthorization bill of Congress to follow on this initial infrastructure investment. And that's why we are so hard at work at trying to get today's investments in the ground and proving value, because we need to be able to go and articulate to Congress and

have our stakeholders articulate to congress members why there is value and still more left to do. And the Long-Distance network growth sets the plan in place and tees up the decision for Congress here and we are going to be advocating and looking for opportunities to grow.

The longest pole in the tent so to speak for all of these services is equipment. And going back to Karyn's presentation and getting the decisions as soon as we can for equipment is critical for the corridors and if we want to replace the fleet that we have and if we want to add to that fleet, we need to have the resources to do so. So, that is going to be the long-term lynchpin here is to get the fleet elements underway and we need Congress to make some decisions about what comes next in terms of these great corridors that FRA has outlined.

I want to add don't forget that FRA did award among its ten state awards to a project in Montana to help build that capacity and in partnership with Amtrak and Amtrak's partnership with Big Sky and the authority that is there. So, they can build that capacity for this bigger project down the road and also, they received a corridor identification award for that service development planning.

FRA is still in the final stages of completing the Amtrak Long Distance study and that service also that corridor is a part of. So, that work is ongoing. But to bring up the Corridor Identification Program and there is no pipeline of corridors, no structure to a national effort and thanks to that Corridor Identification Program, now that Big Sky Corridor is housed in that program and follow the process and not just something that is amorphous and if funding becomes available or not.

I want to recognize Big Sky's efforts and their commissioner, and the local and state support and we need to have that continue. But we do need ideally, for the states that are involved in that, that would benefit also to step up. Not to rely just on Federal Funding. I mean we can keep talking about Federal Funding, but we know that it can be inconsistent.

One way around that is if the states come up with the funding themselves and make rail a part of their transportation plans beyond highways and transit in some cases, to make rail a part of their core state department transportation funding that the state legislature supports on a bipartisan basis that can be really, really helpful too.

#### **MARY PATERSON**

Thank you for that. The citizens of Washington State will continue to advocate for the corridor east and west.

#### **PUBLIC QUESTION: Any plans to increase speeds to 160 mph?**

#### **JOHN SHEA**

We have one more online question. Any plans to increase speeds to 160 miles per hour?

**STEPHEN GARDNER**

Thank you for that question and our focus is introducing these new trains and operating at 160 on the portions of the corridor where that is capable. We are underway with three different efforts to try and reduce trip time and in some parts in the corridor it is making them slower and some making them faster. Getting out of the 55 or 60 or 80 and those kinds of improvements and some of it comes down to increasing curbs and that can handle trains at a higher average speed. As we look to increase the renewal and the replacement of the old electric traction system, it allow us to put in new infrastructure for our current trains that operate at 125 to increase the speed and creating the infrastructure that can handle higher average speeds and in terms of top speed, we are beginning the process with grants from FRA, of looking at new alignment opportunities at higher speeds, even above 160 between New Haven and Rhode Island to relieve the congestion and capacity problems that we have there. And we are working with Rhode Island and New York and taking the 70 miles per hour railroad there and raise it up to 110 and higher speeds.

**PUBLIC QUESTION: Expanding rail service in time for 2026 FIFA World Cup?**

I'm Tom Lang. I am the program manager at Pacific Northwest Economic Region.

The economy region and working across the states of the Northwest and the territories in Canada and on the project and I wanted to ask you about Vancouver and the Central Station and that the expansion of Amtrak Cascades service prior to the 2010 Winter Olympics really increased capacity along the corridor and record ridership. And for the upcoming FIFA World Cup in 2026 is going to bring travelers to our region and this is going to be a bigger series of events than the Olympics in 2010 and we are going to need all modes of transportation to work at maximum capacity to move those people safely and efficiently.

Can you speak to the work that is being done to expand and improve the rail service prior to 2026?

**STEPHEN GARDNER**

Thanks for the question. And of course, we are very excited about the World Cup, and we are host cities on the network all across the United States.

Three areas underway and the focus first and foremost is the security and ensuring that we have a safe event across the entire nation and the second area, which is service planning and coordination, and the simple answer is there is not a bunch of fleet laying around Amtrak that we can make available for this event. If people wanted to have a very different system in terms of availability for equipment, they needed to make that decision five years ago and not here and now.

So, we are going to have to try and adapt where we can serve the opportunity where it exists. All of that leads us to the point of coordination and in many cases, it is going to be our commuter partners and transit partners that are going to take on the service need and there is watch parties and a huge set of activities. There, we are looking to try to figure out how to support them and work together and see if there are activities for equipment and chairing and to serve other markets. And of course, the seamlessness and to make the travel simple and we have people from all over the globe coming here and they have to understand how to make those transfers work and a lot of opportunity to bring better connectivity and better coordination between the various partners and we are going to be working with Sound Transit and other providers around the city, and in Portland, obviously to provide that connectivity to give folks a good opportunity to get to the various matches and on time and with minimum hassle.

In terms of infrastructure improvements, again, I think that the die is cast in a lot of ways and there is work already underway to make improvements and to get better reliability and the system that we have is going to be the system that we have in the next five years. And Amtrak's goal is to be responsive to the two states and their vision for ridership and service during that period. So, we will be a strong partner there. But I think that it is important, that right now, the federal government and the United States has not come up with funding to support these activities nationwide and we think that just in the security piece alone, there is a lot of additional expense necessary to make sure that this goes off well. It is going to be an issue for all of the participants in the transportation space and how we can fund the intense operations. Thank you.

**PUBLIC QUESTION: Replacing equipment and increasing seat capacity?**

Good afternoon. Jeff Mills. Portland, Oregon.

My question pertains to the current Cascade Corridor operations. Recently a Togo set was put out of service. In the short-term, what is being done to replace any equipment and also increase seat capacity?

**ROGER HARRIS**

Thanks for your question and indeed, we had an unfortunate incident and one of the trains hit a large tree. I was just talking to Mike Jenkins at O-DOT today. He is the owner of that equipment, and he is working diligently to see what can be repaired and how quickly.

We are putting together a plan to make sure that we do all that is possible to return it to service. While we don't have everything confirmed yet, I'm optimistic that it can be returned.

**PUBLIC QUESTION: Restoring Empire Builder Trails and Rails program?**

My name is Stewart Schneider and I'm here as a private citizen to address the Board.

In your introductory remarks, you all cited the objectives of Amtrak, and you addressed them very well, except for one and that is my concern, and that is customer relations.

I have been a volunteer on the Empire Builder and the Coastal Starlight and out of Seattle here, it accounts for one half of the passenger contracts for Amtrak.

In 2017, when Amtrak suffered grievous cuts in their funding, your contacts nationally declined from 518,000 passenger contacts to less than half of that. That was further exacerbated by the pandemic and most of our 17 trails and routes that we talked to the customers about scenic and culture and historic scenes along the routes were practically eradicated.

And we've been making a comeback in the last couple of years. We made just over 120,000 passenger contacts nationwide, which coincidentally in the five-month program is just about the same amount t as Borealis has experienced in five months.

Additionally, 55,000 or almost half of those contacts were initiated by trails and rails programs sponsored out of Seattle.

So, my question, customer service wise, is to ask the Board to consider passing down the line the request to restore the Empire Builder trails and rails route through Montana, as it was prior to 2017?

Still seven years after that the cessation of that Montana route, I still get questions every time that I go out on the Empire Builder between Seattle and asking, when are you guys coming back to Montana?

Us being on the trail cost us nothing. We are providing overnight lodging on the crew car at no expense to the railroad. Would you please pass down the line our request to restore the trails and rails service through the national park.

Thank you for your consideration.

**PUBLIC QUESTION: Planned capital expenditures for more safety and security at Amtrak?**

I am Patrick Carnahan, Transportation Safety and Security specialist with Sound Transit Sounder team.

Very excited to see the capital expenditures planned that Amtrak has for the next few years and that Amtrak is being very considerate of its state and local partners such as through

the railroad procurement.

What should I, as a safety professional, look for in terms of safety and security? And what does Amtrak expect in return from its partners like Sound Transit and the DOT and other partners?

**STEPHEN GARDNER**

Thank you for being here and the question. Steve (Predmore) is our chief safety officer and the first thing that I would say is get to know that guy.

And safety is the better of thing that we are doing here, and we are in an era of unprecedented opportunity to invest in safety and that is because of the leadership of the FRA and the safety programs.

I want to highlight a couple areas first and foremost.

The great crossing improvement program are tremendous, and Washington is already a recipient there.

And it is really so important that we focus not just on sort of putting dollars in the ground, but time, research, and energy into understanding this interface.

We look across the entire safety profile of the company, we have done a lot to try, and I think have materially impacted safety for the better.

It has really changed the interface for train-to-train collision and the authority for pass limits, et cetera.

Where we see the biggest vulnerability today is the crossing at the highway and we are using different approaches and behavioral science activities and various partnerships to try and understand how to mitigate that risk of those interfaces and use new technology there. That and for all of our host railroads is at the front of collaboration that we are interested in exploring.

And with the FRA, we have a very good partner to invest in new technologies and the crossing fatalities continue to be a surge in and it is something that our employees and the public should not have to experience the way they do.

And the technology across the field and as we look at AI, data, et cetera, and we have a lot underway in the work with the simulators.

Joel (Szabat) talked about earlier how we are a tenant on other railroads, and we have this opportunity to bring expertise and focus to our hosts where we see risks and we can see trends that are a little different than our carriers can. And we want to make that data

available, and Steve's got a great team that there to partner with you and with Sound Transit, to see where we can identify risk and help raise the bar.

**PUBLIC QUESTION: Dining on Long-Distance Trains?**

Hi, I'm Warren Yee – a long-time resident of Seattle, and also a member of All Aboard Washington.

Thank you for mentioning that it's almost coming to the 7<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the accident down in DuPont, in which I lost two of my closet friends in that accident.

So it's almost time for lunch. With the food service on Amtrak, I would like to see Amtrak bring back the holiday meal during the holiday season like they have in the past.

And two, do we have time and anyone that takes Amtrak will not have to deal with flex bills and it would be nice to have distance bills at Amtrak.

Any time goals set for that? And the training for the chefs to work on the trains?

**ROGER HARRIS**

Thank you very much for that.

I will take away your request about the holiday meals and see what we can do there.

We have been gradually rolling out additional dining to more and more of our trains.

We have been kind of moving away from this very rigid definition between traditional dining and Flex dining.

It is not so much about what we call it, but about the food that we deliver to the customer given the environment of the train.

What you will see is a continuous evolution of the food service and not necessarily the format in which it is presented.

That is how we are moving forward, and we will eventually be moving away from what is characterized as Flex dining.

**CHAIR COSCIA**

With that, it brings to a close our 2024 Public Board Meeting.

Thanks to everyone for participating. Hopefully, this was helpful in gaining insight into things that are happening at our company.

We have a lot to be grateful for and we have made a ton of progress and there is still a lot of work to be done, and we are going to stay focused with all of that.

Happy holidays to everyone and have a safe trip home.