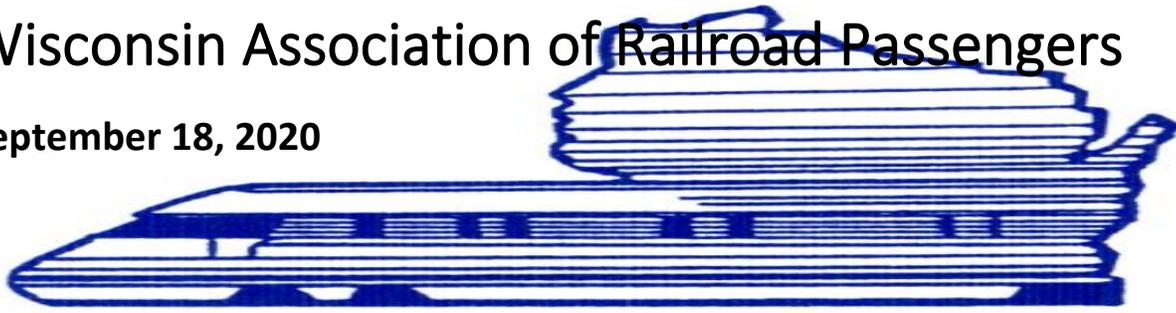


TCMC NEWSLETTER

Wisconsin Association of Railroad Passengers

September 18, 2020



EMPIRE BUILDER UPDATES

THREE TRAINS PER WEEK?

At the creation of this newsletter, the Amtrak Empire Builder is still slated to be reduced to three trains weekly beginning **October 19, 2020. NEW DATE!**

TCMC Newsletter in concert with All Aboard Wisconsin and All Aboard Minnesota are utilizing every means possible to reverse this decision. The news reported below is some of the latest news across our screens.

WisARP and All Aboard Wisconsin are hoping all city and county leaders along the Empire Builder and the TCMC route will take to action calling our U.S.

Senators Baldwin & Johnson. We need to make them aware of the potential damage to our



communities that reducing the Empire Builder to three trains weekly will do.

When you contact your senators, please ask them to include enough money for Amtrak to sustain the Long-Distance trains, in particular the Empire Builder. The appropriation needs to be combined with language that requires Amtrak to keep the Empire Builder and all Long-Distance trains as daily performers.

The long-distance Amtrak trains through the summer have been more resilient in their revenue than the short-distance trains and airlines. This makes Amtrak's decision to cut the long-distance service even more difficult to explain.

CONTINUING RESOLUTION?

Congressional budgetary avoidance and procrastination is called the Continuing Resolution. Earlier this week a CR was mentioned regarding the current budget discussions over COVID relief. This will end up being the prime strategy Congress can utilize stopping Amtrak from reducing Long Distance trains to three days per week.

If a CR is enacted by the Senate, will Amtrak be allowed to cut the LD trains to three times per week while funding is being debated? Sadly, the answer to this question will be yes. It already appears the Empire Builder will drop to three trains per week next month regardless of congressional action.

Amtrak Long Distance trains, like the Empire Builder, provide InterCity connections for people in "Flyover" territory that would prefer not to drive. Many travelers are not riding long distances of over 500 miles. They use the train as more of an InterCity service.

RailPassengers.Org has documented the positive economic effects of this service on the smaller communities all along the line. COVID-19 has reduced the economic benefits of the train already. But cutting the service to three times weekly would further depress the economy created by the train service. Restaurants, lodging, tourist, and traditional shopping and more would further suffer harm if the trains are reduced to three times weekly.

EMPIRE BUILDER UPDATE cont. from pg1

THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME

For those that are tuned in to the Amtrak history of the Empire Builder, the current threats of three trains weekly should ring familiar.

According to WisARP Treasurer Mark Weitenbeck, “The Empire Builder dropped to four trains per week in February 1995.” Weitenbeck is using historical copies of Badger Rails and other WisARP notes to document his dates.

Empire Builder
Chicago... St. Paul... Portland/Seattle

7		◀ Train Number ▶		8	
Dp Chicago Daily		◀ Days of Operation ▶		Ar Chicago Daily	
Read Down	Mile	Dp	Symbol	Ar	Read Up
3 15P	0	Dp	Chicago, IL-Union Sta. * (CT)	▲	4 20P
R 3 39P	17		Glenview, IL (METRA/Milw. Line)	▲	3 38P
R 4 51P	86		Milwaukee, WI	▲	2 35P
6 02P	150		Columbus, WI (Madison)	▲	1 10P
6 31P	178		Portage, WI	▲	12 40P
6 49P	195		Wisconsin Dells, WI	▲	12 20P
7 27P	240		Tomah, WI	▲	11 40A
8 12P	281		La Crosse, WI	▲	11 00A
8 47P	308		Winona, MN	▲	10 24A
9 54P	371		Red Wing, MN	▲	9 21A
11 23P	418	Ar	St. Paul-Minneapolis, MN *	▲	8 20A
Dp MoWeFrSa		Days of Operation to/from Seattle		Ar WeFrSuMo	
11 59P	418	Dp	St. Paul-Minneapolis, MN [M] * [W]	▲	7 40A
1 24A	481		St. Cloud, MN [M] [W]	▲	5 45A
2 30A	547		Staples, MN	▲	4 39A
3 28A	609		Detroit Lakes, MN	▲	3 40A
4 35A	658		Fargo, ND (Moorhead)	▲	2 45A
6 00A	742		Grand Forks, ND	▲	1 25A
7 20A	828		Devils Lake, ND	▲	11 58P
8 23A	885		Rugby, ND	▲	10 55P
9 50A	946	Ar	Minot, ND	▲	9 45P
10 10A		Dn		▲	8 20P

“There actually was a Chicago- Twin Cities regional train on the EB off days back then,” Weitenbeck continues. “This was all done in the name of cost cutting- budget cuts.”

Weitenbeck recalls the reason for the three trains per week regional train was Amtrak had a rather lucrative

mail contract that necessitated the regional train on the off days. It is not likely there will be a regional train on off days this time around. (This pic from 1995 researched by Mark Weitenbeck.)

It was a little more than two years before the Empire Builder returned to daily service. May of 1997 to be exact. Cutting the Empire Builder back in the 1990s did not produce the desired results. Many Amtrak business watchers say it will not work this time either.

When you look at the insert picture of the Empire Builder schedule from 1995, examine the line underneath the St. Paul-Minneapolis line. You will see the days of the week the train operated. Note that the EB was still a daily train between Chicago and St. Paul.

What is the purpose of the TCMC train? To create a SECOND daily train along the Empire Builder route. If the Empire Builder ceases to be a daily train, the goal of the TCMC train will be compromised.

THE HEARTLAND'S ECONOMIC ENGINE

The following is written by Joe Aiello, Field Coordinator from the Rail Passengers Association.

This is our last opportunity to get Congress to pass a coronavirus package for passenger rail. Success means we preserve daily service across Amtrak's National Network and keep transit running for our nation's essential

workers. If Congress FAILS to act, dire consequences await the U.S. transportation system – including the elimination of an unknown number of State-supported and long-distance routes, and deep cuts to public transit and commuter rail.

But we can't do this without YOU, our friends & members.

Over the last few months, you have already helped us send over 10,000 messages to elected officials in DC to tell them how much protecting daily train service means to you - and now we are asking you to get your friends and fellow advocates involved so we can make an even greater impact before the October 1st cuts become reality.

Go to <http://bit.ly/3xAdvocacyGuide> to find our full call to action, (continued page3)

Empire Builder riders will most likely return to riding the trains quietly and comfortably before a vaccine is available. This would most likely happen while the Builder is a daily service.



it is strongly suggested if you are planning travel by train, that you follow the timetable advice at Amtrak.com and the Amtrak App on your Smart Phone.

Amtrak now requires passengers to wear a face mask or face covering while at stations and on the trains.

TCMC NEWSLETTER
Is created and written by Terry Brown, Vice President Public Relations for WisARP and is solely responsible for its content.
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MORE EMPIRE BUILDER DISCUSSION

THE HEARTLAND'S ECONOMIC ENGINE *(continued from page3)*

several links to the various landing pages on the Rail Passengers website, a link to a graphics folder where you can download images to share, and several suggested social media posts based on the data from Jim Mathews' House T&I testimony.

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!

CONTACT YOUR SENATORS!

So many passenger rail issues over the past 10 months have been so critical to the health and well-being of passenger rail in Wisconsin and throughout the United States, that this request seems like a repeat from last month. It is, but it is not. Since the last TCMC Newsletter, details over how the U.S. Senate is dealing with COVID relief have changed.

Contacting our US Senators this time is requesting action from congress to maintain daily service throughout the Empire Builder line in Wisconsin in an anticipated Continuing Resolution. These circumstances are fluid, and repetitive

contacts of Senators Baldwin and Johnson are necessary to get our message across.

During the week of September 7, the Senate failed to pass a Republican authored relief bill. This bill did not have any relief for transportation. Many analysts do not believe Congress will come together to renegotiate a new relief bill. This will leave an old lawmaker friend, the Continuing Resolution as the only option to keep the Federal Government going through the end of the 2020 calendar year.

Congress has the capability of mandating the Long-Distance trains remain daily as a condition of operating subsidies if Congress acts to support and

sustain Amtrak. The above-mentioned CR could complicate this request.

The first sample letter you can use to write Senators Baldwin and Johnson dated August 25 is available on the WisARP Website: Wisarp.info. In this digital age communications can happen easy enough and arrive at the destination quickly.

Or consider using the sample letter for talking points and call your Senators. Many lawmakers are now keeping a running list of topics constituents write or call them about. Let's make sure there is a running list about daily Amtrak service.

A second sample letter with different bullet points will be placed on the WisARP website in a few days. Please consider using this letter if you have already used the first letter dated August 25 contacting your Senators.

UPDATE! The Empire Builder will switch to three trains per week beginning Monday, October 19 even if Congress does act to mandate Long Distance service remain daily. Pictures like this one during winter



will become tougher to capture.

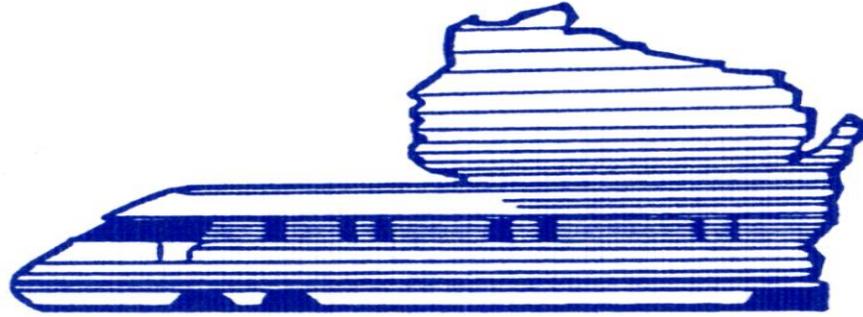
For the most up to date information about the congressional reaction to three trains per week, the best coverage lately has come from

the Trains Magazine Newswire, <https://trn.trains.com/> and RailPassengers.org.

Please contact your Senators

Senator Tammy Baldwin
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
Phone: (202) 224-5653

Senator Ron Johnson
328 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
Phone: (202)224-5323



Wisconsin Association of Railroad Passengers (WisARP) **New member sign-up form 2020**

Since 1977, WisARP has been the voice of the rail passenger in Wisconsin. Our strength is in the strength of our membership. A one-year trial WisARP membership is free. Besides our quarterly newsletter, WisARP also has email groups to provide members with the latest news.

It's been almost 10 years since the Walker administration turned back federal money that WisDOT had applied for to continue development of the Madison extension. The work of WisARP goes on. We are still focused on:

(1) You are seeing this New Member Sign-Up sheet in a newsletter keeping Wisconsin citizens informed over developments of the second train on the current Empire Builder route between the Twin Cities and Chicago (called the TCMC train.);

(2) Getting Improvements to the existing Hiawatha service and

(3) Implementation of the Midwest Regional Rail System.

If you would like to join WisARP for the journey ahead, it's simple. Just fill out the form below. Your first year is FREE with this special TCMC Newsletter form! Just \$10 per year afterwards.

Jim Sponholz
WisARP VP-Membership

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

Please add your email address below to receive the latest WisARP news including Badger Rails.

Email address _____

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