

The States for Passenger Rail Coalition

2011 Annual Report

Overview

For the third straight year, States for Passenger Rail Coalition (SPRC) members continued to compete for, obligate and administer the \$8 billion provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) for High Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) projects and the additional \$2.5 billion for HSIPR from FY 2010 Consolidated Appropriations Act. Many states completed negotiations with host railroads and various agencies of the federal government. By the close of calendar year 2011, nearly \$10.1 billion had been obligated.

This year also saw the completion of some projects, while others continued to conduct critical planning and environmental documentation activities. Others states held major rounds of public hearings to gain citizen input.

At the same time that states were working to put these funds to their intended use, other groups made strenuous efforts to stop the progress of projects and rescind the dollars. Further, legislative efforts were made to prevent Amtrak from funding state-supported trains. SPRC provided critical information to their state governments, elected officials and passenger rail support organizations to demonstrate the value and progress of the projects and funding. Ultimately, both the rescission of funds and the effort to prevent Amtrak from funding its portion of state-supported rail service did not prevail. However, an effort to provide \$100 million in additional federal funding for HSIPR through the FY 13 surface transportation appropriations bill also failed.

SPRC actively monitored the legislative progress of proposals to reauthorize federal surface transportation legislation. One area of potential assistance to passenger rail development was the initiative to make permanent the TIGER program of capital grants. SPRC regularly provided input and technical assistance to both House and Senate staff on the implications of this effort as well as various other legislative proposals.

2011 also witnessed great progress in the activities associated with major policy provisions of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PL 109-432), also known as "PRIIA." SPRC members were actively involved in the work of three particular PRIIA initiatives:

- Section 209, cost allocation methodology for Amtrak-provided service;
- Section 212, goals and future cost allocation for the Northeast Corridor; and
- Section 305, development of specifications and procurement of the next generation of intercity passenger rail equipment.

Updates were provided as a part of the bi-weekly SPRC conference call series. **Mission and Membership**

SPRC is a coalition of state departments of transportation and passenger rail authorities, planning bodies and commissions to advocate for federal funding and support for intercity passenger rail initiatives.

In 2011, the Coalition members were 33 states: Alabama, Arizona, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, as well as the (California) Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority, Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority, and Southern High Speed Rail Commission. .

Key Activities in 2011

In pursuit of the SPRC goal to give all members prompt, timely and accurate information regarding intercity passenger developments and federal funding, SPRC executed the following:

1. SPRC held three well-attended membership meetings during the year. These meetings had both SPRC and external observer participation:
 - a. January Membership Meeting in Washington, DC;
 - b. March Membership Meeting in Washington, DC; and
 - c. September Membership Meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina.
2. Coalition member conference calls were held on average of twice a month throughout the year. The calls afforded members an opportunity to share information; discuss topics of pressing interest; and get status updates on PRIIA section developments, legislative and regulatory matters, and project delivery. Members variously provided individual assistance in drafting materials or doing other outreach in pursuit of SPRC's support for passenger rail.
3. The Executive Committee held strategic conference calls or discussions via email to manage key activities.
4. SPRC renewed its contract with David Ewing to represent the group in Washington. David distributed material electronically and by other means to the collective membership and in response to individual requests. Over one hundred updates were transmitted. David Ewing represented SPRC at several meetings and conferences.
5. Washington State continued to manage the SPRC website. The site was enhanced greatly and witnessed increased use. The site now serves an archival function as well as a source of news articles and other information. The site has received compliments from partners and others.

6. SPRC ventured into social media, with the formation of a group on LinkedIn. This area and other coordinating and communication tools need to be more fully explored in 2012.

Key Messages & Venues

In pursuit of the goal to raise our collective voice in support of a strong federal partnership to create a dedicated source of funding for capital investment in intercity passenger rail equipment, infrastructure, and facilities, SPRC leadership and members engaged in a number of activities throughout the year. Examples of the efforts include:

- Feb 9: SPRC Chair Paula Hammond was quoted in a *Progressive Railroading* article “Passenger rail constituents applaud Obama’s \$53 billion rail plan; GOP’s Mica is skeptical”; and,
- Feb 4: Press Release - “National rail coalition supports proposed federal spending on high-speed rail.”
- June 23: SPRC Chair Hammond provided a statement to the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on its passenger rail proposal;
- May 4: SPRC members participated in National Train Day to highlight the importance of passenger rail.

In addition to the outreach activity listed above, SPRC Chair Hammond met with the President and Chief Operating Officer of Amtrak, Joseph Boardman. Numerous meetings were conducted with Amtrak staff.

Efforts were made to carefully coordinate with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the Association of American Railroads (AAR) and the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). SPRC members participated in OneRail activities with a variety of rail interests and David Ewing and state members participated in Congressional Bicameral High-Speed & Intercity Passenger Rail Caucus events.

Correspondence (Copies available on the SPRC website)

- November 2 SPRC wrote to the Senate Appropriations Committee regarding FY 2012 legislation and also signed a joint letter with other groups supporting continued funding for state-supported train service as well as funding for the HSIPR program; Governor Quinn of Illinois referred specifically to Chair Hammond’s letter in his own correspondence on the subject (November 10);
- October 21 Hammond issued a statement on PRIIA section 209;
- September 9 Hammond issued a statement regarding the Congressional Letter Supporting FY 2012 Transportation-HUD Appropriations Act;
- July 21 Hammond wrote separate letters to Senators Murray, Collins and Durbin supporting their legislative proposal S. 9420, to make the TIGER program permanent.

- June 29 Hammond wrote to the Senate Appropriations Committee and House leadership opposing the possible rescission of ARRA rail funds.
- May 17 SPRC sent a letter to the House T&I Committee asking Congress to improve the ease of access to RRIF loans.
- March 2 SPRC sent a letter to the Senate Appropriations Committee leadership empathizing with the challenges they face in funding infrastructure in a period of austerity and asking that any proposed cuts to intercity passenger rail be proportionate to reductions in other program areas.
- February 21 Hammond testified at the House T&I Committee's listening session in Vancouver, WA.
- February 18 Bob Franklin, Chair of the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority, sent a letter to Representatives Harold Rogers, Norman Dicks, Tom Latham, and John Olver regarding FFY 11 and 12 appropriations legislation.

2011 Officers

Paula Hammond, Secretary, Washington Department of Transportation, Chair;

Bill Bronte, Chief Division of Rail, California Department of Transportation, Vice Chair;

Caitlin Hughes Rayman, Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy, Maryland Department of Transportation, Secretary;

Donna L. Brown, Passenger Rail Planning Manager, Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Treasurer. In November, 2011, Donna Brown resigned as Treasurer due to a change of employer. Ron Adams of Wisconsin DOT agreed to serve out the remainder of the term, through the end of 2012.

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