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### [House Rail Legislation Includes Reforms, Raises Key Questions](#)

Washington, D.C.—Upon review of the **Passenger Rail Reform and Investment Act of 2015 (PRRIA 2015)** introduced by the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) finds many commonsense reforms but remains concerned that there are serious questions that are not addressed:

—**PRRIA Ignores Funding Question, Caps Capacity Improvements:** The bill caps Amtrak’s authorization at \$1.41 billion per in FY 2016, rising to \$1.46 billion in FY 2019. PRRIA 2015 also contains \$300 million per year in infrastructure investments, with 50 percent reserved for Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor (NEC). This falls woefully short of the national rail network’s most-basic needs. States and Amtrak have submitted hundreds of applications in previous grantmaking rounds that have gone unfunded. PRRIA 2015 does not allow states to invest in the major infrastructure, construction, and rolling stock acquisition projects their local officials have identified as necessary for improving and expanding the U.S. passenger rail system.

“A successful rail reauthorization must allow the U.S. passenger rail network to grow,” said NARP President Jim Mathews. “The American people are already voting for more trains with their wallets, setting 11 Amtrak ridership records in the past 12 years. Public use of trains is growing far faster than air or road travel or even the population itself. NARP believes that these people—and indeed all Americans—have the right to choose how they travel. As the U.S. continues to grow, with our population reaching 400 million people by 2050—frequent and reliable train service will be key in maintaining our country’s mobility and prosperity.”

—**PRRIA Fragments National Network:** PRRIA 2015 sets up a potentially destructive conflict between Amtrak’s NEC and the National Network. This could become a threat to national system services by creating the erroneous perception that NEC trains are “profitable,” while non-NEC trains are not. Separation of NEC and National Network accounts may lead Amtrak to focus on one service over another. NARP’s members who use trains throughout the country are very sensitive to any move that could diminish the national system. For the past 44 years America has had something it never had before, a truly national passenger rail network. NARP does not want to see our country lose this benefit.

—**PRRIA Shortchanges Equipment And Rolling Stock, Potentially Risking Safety:** NEC and National System trains operate with an aging fleet that is too small to meet current needs. Reliability and safety of outdated equipment is also a concern. PRRIA 2015 dedicates a \$14 billion loan fund for NEC projects, but nothing for system equipment acquisition.

—**PRRIA Defines Success Too Narrowly in Evaluating Routes:** PRRIA 2015 directs Amtrak to have an independent entity evaluate routes and develop performance improvement plans, but there is too much emphasis on cost-reduction as opposed to increasing the routes' utility and capturing additional economic benefits those routes generate. When evaluating routes, and performance improvement plans, rail's role as a community economic engine enhancing mobility to communities must be considered, especially in the face of air and bus retrenchments.

—**PRRIA Proposes Untenable Food and Beverage Cuts:** The bill calls for the end of food and beverage service losses within five years, effectively ending food and beverage service on trains. However, providing Food and Beverage service is an essential cost of doing business and ending it will drive paying passengers away. People can't be expected to travel up to 48 hours without food or beverage availability.

Overall, PRRIA 2015 contains useful reforms, but sidesteps the most important and perennial question of funding, and sets up an unhelpful and destructive NEC versus national system conflict. Equipment acquisition and other national capital needs are unaddressed, with NEC capital needs only partly addressed through the RRIF program. This threatens the viability of the entire system. The bill relies on loans and minimal capital grants when the need is for continuing large-scale federal investment just as that uncontroversially provided for highways and aviation. PRRIA 2015 focuses on costs and side issues instead of expansion and benefits of a truly national and unfragmented system.

### **About the National Association of Railroad Passengers**

NARP is the only national organization speaking for the users of passenger trains and rail transit. 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 more 28,000 individual members nationwide.