



Delaware Valley Association of Rail Passengers

1601 Walnut St., Suite 1129 Philadelphia, PA 19102 215-RAILWAY www.dvarp.org

House Committee on Transportation Hearing on Maintaining Amtrak Passenger Service in the Harrisburg-Pittsburgh Corridor April 10, 2013

The Delaware Valley Association of Rail Passengers is pleased to learn that Pennsylvania and Amtrak have reached an agreement to keep the *Pennsylvanian* running beyond the end of the federal fiscal year on September 30, 2013, and we hope the legislature will provide the necessary funding.

In recent months we have heard comments made by newspaper editors, commentators, and sometimes government spokesmen to the effect that because of low ridership and slow running west of Harrisburg, the *Pennsylvanian* is not worthy of state funding. It is true that the *Keystone Service* carries roughly 6½ times as many passengers as does the *Pennsylvanian*, but it should be noted that the *Keystones* operate 154 runs per week between Philadelphia and Harrisburg as opposed to 14 for the *Pennsylvanian* between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. With that much denser service it would be surprising if the *Keystones* did not carry more passengers. Pittsburgh is also almost 3½ times further from Philadelphia than is Harrisburg, 353 miles versus 104, which means that passengers are being carried for longer distances. The imbalance in the delivered service when trip lengths and service levels are considered is not near as great as it appears when just passenger counts are considered.

Ridership on the *Pennsylvanian* increased by 10.1% in the six years from FY2005 to FY2011, the years for which Amtrak route statistics were readily available. (See Table 1.) However, these numbers represent total ridership on the route and do include passengers who did not travel west of Harrisburg or even west of Philadelphia. It is not easy to obtain route ridership by segment, but by looking at activity, i.e., boardings and alightings, at stations between Harrisburg and Pittsburgh, which are stations served only by the *Pennsylvanian*, one can obtain an estimate of trends west of Harrisburg, and it can be seen that station activity increased by 33.2% over the same six-year period. Altoona was the busiest station in this intermediate segment with FY2011 activity just short of 25,000 and Johnstown is not far behind at more than 23,000. Note that activity at Johnstown has increased by 54.6% since FY2005.

The 5½-hour running time between Harrisburg and Pittsburgh is necessitated by the mountainous topography and heavy freight traffic carried by the host railroad, Norfolk Southern. This is a problem not easily rectified, at least in the short term, as both capacity increases and route realignments require capital investments.

Amtrak has run a varied service on the route since it started operations on May 1, 1971. (See Table 2 for a chronology of service changes.) For most of its history it has run two daily trains between Harrisburg and Pittsburgh, a day train between New York and Pittsburgh, and an overnight service running to Midwest destinations, although from November 1971 to October 1979 service was increased to three daily trains when the long-haul service was split into separate trains to Chicago and Kansas City. Service only fell back to a single daily train in March 2005 when the through service to Chicago was eliminated.

Harrisburg-Pittsburgh provides the connectivity needed to allow the national system to function efficiently. It connects the two largest cities in Pennsylvania, and connects Pittsburgh to



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the state capital and New York. It handles a considerable number of passengers connecting to the Washington-Chicago *Capitol Ltd.* at Pittsburgh, most of whom are traveling from or to Pennsylvania points east of Pittsburgh. If the link were broken, the seven stations from Lewistown to Greensburg would lose all service, stations that in FY2011 handled 82,700 passengers. And it would represent the first time since 1854 that one would be unable to travel directly by rail between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. With the need to change trains in Washington, rail travel time between these two cities would increase from 7h 23m to 10h 49m.

Let's keep this train running and in the longer run figure out how we can add service and shorten running times in order to meet the travel needs of Pennsylvania residents.

John A. Dawson, Chairman
Intercity & High-Speed Rail Committee

Table 1

Pennsylvanian

Year	Passengers (000s)	Trains per year	Pass. per train
2005	184.5	730	253
2006	180.3	730	247
2007	176.9	730	242
2008	196.1	732	268
2009	195.5	730	268
2010	199.4	730	273
2011	203.2	730	278

Keystone Service

Year	Passengers (000s)	Trains per week	Trains per year	Pass. per train
2005	728.7	124	6,466	113
2006	812.8	124	6,466	126
2007	977.9	163	8,207	119
2008	1167.9	163	8,207	142
2009	1202.1	163	8,207	146
2010	1282.2	163	8,207	156
2011	1326.9	163	8,207	162

Lewistown - Greensburg Station Activity

<u>Code</u>	<u>Station</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>
LEW	Lewistown	7,468	8,932	9,705	10,674	10,118	9,238	8,200
HGD	Huntingdon	4,326	4,678	5,303	5,290	5,187	5,794	5,975
TYR	Tyrone	1,649	2,024	2,369	2,985	3,573	3,322	2,923
ALT	Altoona	21,134	20,920	23,466	24,744	24,725	24,692	24,930
JST	Johnstown	14,990	15,760	17,206	18,924	20,252	22,481	23,173
LAB	Latrobe	2,994	3,427	3,155	4,253	4,224	4,118	4,384
GNB	Greensburg	9,491	10,791	10,206	12,882	12,393	14,000	13,097
	Total	62,052	66,532	71,410	79,752	80,472	83,645	82,682

Table 2

Amtrak Chronology Harrisburg- Pittsburgh

1 st May 1971	Amtrak takes over intercity passenger service running New York/Washington - Chicago <i>Broadway Ltd.</i> and New York/Washington - St. Louis <i>Spirit of St. Louis</i> (New York and Washington sections joined at Harrisburg, trains ran combined between Harrisburg and Pittsburgh, some cars extended from St. Louis to Kansas City); and New York - Pittsburgh <i>Duquesne</i> .
November 1971	New York - Pittsburgh train renamed <i>Keystone</i> ; New York/Washington - Pittsburgh - Kansas City renamed <i>National Ltd.</i> and run as separate train.
June 1972	<i>Keystone</i> eliminated.
November 1975	Washington sections of <i>Broadway Ltd.</i> and <i>National Ltd.</i> eliminated; some through cars switched at Philadelphia.
October 1979	<i>National Ltd.</i> eliminated.
April 1980	Philadelphia - Pittsburgh <i>Pennsylvanian</i> initiated with state support starting at 20% of costs and rising to 50% two years later, constituting a second train west of Harrisburg.
April 1981	Altoona - Pittsburgh <i>Fort Pitt</i> initiated.
April 1983	Altoona - Pittsburgh <i>Fort Pit</i> eliminated.
October 1983	<i>Pennsylvanian</i> extended east to New York.
May 1994	State support for <i>Pennsylvanian</i> ended as train is incorporated into the national system.
September 1995	<i>Broadway Ltd.</i> replaced by <i>Three Rivers</i> .
November 1998	<i>Pennsylvanian</i> converted to Philadelphia - Chicago service.
April 2004	<i>Pennsylvanian</i> converted back to New York - Pittsburgh service.
November 2004	<i>Pennsylvanian</i> eliminated.
March 2005	<i>Three Rivers</i> eliminated; New York - Pittsburgh <i>Pennsylvanian</i> reinstated.