

September 28, 2012

AASHTO Standing Committee on Rail Transportation Holds Annual Meeting

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' Standing Committee on Rail Transportation held its 2012 Annual Meeting in Portland, Maine on Sept. 16-19, focusing on state rail plans, short line railroads and economic development, intermodal connections, rail station development, rail safety, and rail research.

The committee is chaired by Gene Conti, secretary of the North Carolina Department of Transportation, while Bill Bronte, director of the California Department of Transportation Rail Division, serves as vice-chair.

The meeting was hosted by the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority and the Maine Department of Transportation. David Bernhardt, Commissioner of the Maine Department of Transportation, welcomed the attendees and provided a context for understanding passenger and freight rail service in Maine.

Joe Szabo, Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), delivered the keynote address in which he projected demand for both passenger and freight transportation in light of growth in the population and economy.

A team of officials from FRA, led by Associate Administrator Paul Nissenbaum, reviewed the status of High Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail investments through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act' as well as a number of specific issues relating to the partnership between states and the FRA to advance passenger and freight rail.

Joe McHugh, vice president for Government Affairs and Corporate Communications, and Drew Galloway, assistant vice president for Northeast Corridor Infrastructure and Investment Development, provided an overview of Amtrak growth and performance focused on state supported corridors and the Northeast Corridor.

John Gray, senior vice president for Policy and Economics, and Lance Grenzeback, senior vice president of Cambridge Systematics, Inc., led a luncheon discussion of the landmark AASHTO Freight Rail Bottom Line Report on its 10th anniversary.

Committee members were briefed on activities of the AASHTO Rail Resource Center and discussed strategy for reauthorizing the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act in 2013.

The committee meeting was preceded by a meeting of the States for Passenger Rail and followed by a meeting of the Next Generation Equipment Committee. Total attendance for the meeting was 150. The 2013 Annual Meeting will be held in Columbus, Ohio, September 22-25.

Presentations from the meeting will be posted on the Committee's web site, Rail.Transportation.org.

Questions regarding this article may be directed to editor@ashtojournal.org.

