

Amtrak: Ridership up on Keystone line, Northeast Corridor

System down slightly overall for FY 2015

By Roger DuPuis
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Amtrak ridership hit an all-time high on the busy Northeast Corridor, and also was up on the Keystone service to Harrisburg, but was down slightly nationwide for fiscal 2015, the railroad operator announced.

The national passenger rail carrier recorded 30.8 million riders for the year which ended in September, down 100,000 from fiscal 2014, when 30.9 million people were carried.

Ridership on Amtrak's Keystone service, which links Harrisburg with Philadelphia and New York, was up from about 1.33 million in fiscal 2014 to nearly 1.36 million this year, spokesman Mike Tolbert said.

According to Amtrak statistics, 508,685 people used the system's Harrisburg station in 2015, up from 498,995 in 2014.

More than 6.1 million people used Amtrak's stations across Pennsylvania in fiscal 2015, up 1.6 percent from the previous year.

"We have now carried more than 30 million passengers for five straight years, which is a testament to the value we bring to intercity travelers," Amtrak President and CEO Joe Boardman said.

"However, critical investment is needed to ensure future growth of intercity passenger rail," he added.

According to the Pennsylvania State Rail Plan, now in the final stages of a comprehensive update, keeping the commonwealth's freight and passenger rail infrastructure is expected to cost at least \$7 billion over the next 25 years.

Northeast Corridor

Ridership on the Northeast Corridor, Amtrak's electrified trunk line between Boston, New York and Washington, was up 0.5 percent year over year to 11.7 million passengers, the company announced.

And that was in a year in which Amtrak drew headlines for a deadly May crash in Philadelphia, which claimed eight lives and injured more than 200 people.

"This year's financial results show the resiliency of a company that faced a range of challenges and underscored the loyalty of our customers even during a period of low gas prices," Amtrak Board Chairman Tony Coscia said.

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In related news, Amtrak over the weekend implemented crash-prevention technology known as positive train control on the corridor between New York and Philadelphia, the last stretch of the line to receive that upgrade.

Experts have said that speed-control technology could have prevented the May wreck.

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