

Senator Manchin's Actions to Save the New River Train & Railroad Days Festival

- **April 3, 2018:** After Amtrak announced its decision to no longer accept private and charter trains, Senator Manchin called Amtrak CEO Richard Anderson to urge him to allow the New River Train to continue. Mr. Anderson agreed to allow some operators to apply for an exception to the new rule and would review these challenges on a case-by-case basis. The Collis P. Huntington Railroad Historical Society, a 59-year old non-profit organization, operates private railroad cars through Amtrak – including the New River Train from Huntington to Hinton for the annual Railroad Days celebration, which brings in an estimate \$5 million for the region.
- **April 3, 2018:** Staff from Senator Manchin's office met with local elected officials in Hinton regarding the importance of New River Train excursions during Hinton Railroad Days. The celebration brings in around \$5 million annually for the region.
- **April 6, 2018:** Senator Manchin sent a letter to Amtrak CEO Richard Anderson urging him to provide more information to organizations on how they can appeal the newly established policy that would no longer allow Amtrak to accept private and charter trains.
- **April 11, 2018:** During an Appropriations Committee hearing on the Department of Transportation's budget, Senator Manchin questioned Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao on Amtrak's decision to end private and charter trains, securing from her a commitment to work to keep the New River Train running.
- **April 13, 2018:** Senator Manchin requested that Amtrak meet with representatives from the Collis P. Huntington Railroad Historical Society to find a pathway forward to reestablishing service for the New River Train. This led to a meeting at Amtrak's headquarters between Amtrak representatives and Collis P. Huntington's leadership and local officials.
- **April 17, 2018:** Senator Manchin presided over the meeting between Amtrak, management at Collis P. Huntington, and local officials from the region, making clear to Amtrak representatives in attendance the impact this would have on the state's economy and local non-profits.
- **May 2, 2018:** After receiving a commitment from Amtrak's CEO, Senator Manchin announced an agreement between Amtrak and Collis P. Huntington to reestablish service for the New River Train and begin selling tickets for the event in the Fall.
- **June 6, 2018:** Senator Manchin spoke with Amtrak Executive Vice President (EVP) and Chief Commercial Officer Stephen Gardner on several issues related to Amtrak in West Virginia.
- **June 7, 2018:** As a member of the Senate Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee, Senator Manchin authored language in the FY19 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies requiring Amtrak to justify its decisions to increase prices and stop accepting private trains in Huntington, jeopardizing the future of the annual New River Train and harm small non-profits like the Collis P. Huntington Railroad Historical Society. Senator Manchin's language requires Amtrak to increase transparency, improve public relations, and require to determine whether it could improve its policies without jeopardizing organizations like Collis P. Huntington.
- **August 2, 2018:** The Senate passed a "minibus" spending package including funding for the Departments of Interior, Agriculture, Treasury, Transportation, and others, as well as Senator Manchin's language directing Amtrak to report on its private and charter train policies.

- **August 20, 2018:** Senator Manchin led a letter with the rest of the West Virginia delegation urging the House and Senate conferees for the FY19 transportation appropriations bill to include Senator Manchin's language on private and charter trains. This language was not included in the House bill, meaning that it could have been removed when the two bills were reconciled in conference.
- **September 4, 2018:** After learning that Amtrak had introduced a new policy at its Chicago railyard that would have led to the cancellation of the New River Train, which originates there before its journey to West Virginia, Senator Manchin helped resolve the issue by urging Amtrak to accommodate the New River Train.
- **October 26, 2018:** Senator Manchin applauded a successful Hinton Railroad Days Festival, including the operation of the New River Train between Huntington and Hinton each of the weekends during the festival.
- **January 31, 2019:** After learning of Collis P. Huntington's financial difficulties stemming from the increased costs imposed on the operation of the New River Train, Senator Manchin sent a letter to Amtrak CEO Richard Anderson expressing grave concerns that Amtrak's continued policies and restrictions could lead to the cancellation of the New River Train in 2019, which will have a destructive impact on West Virginia's economy.
- **February 6, 2019:** After nearly a year of questions from Senator Manchin on how Amtrak was making its pricing decisions impacting the New River Train, Amtrak's Office of Inspector General released a report to Amtrak management stating unequivocally that "the company has historically not identified most of its costs for operating the private railcar program and services," confirming Senator Manchin's suspicions that it was making arbitrary pricing decisions with little to no basis in sound business practices.
- **February 15, 2019:** Following months of negotiations between the House and the Senate, Congress passed an omnibus spending bill that included language Senator Manchin authored requiring Amtrak to justify its decisions that jeopardize the future of the annual New River Train in its FY20 budget request.
- **February 22, 2019:** In response to Senator Manchin's letter in January, Amtrak confirmed that it would comply with the language he authored requiring it to submit a report with its FY20 budget request to Congress on the effects of its changes on private and charter trains and the metrics used to determine pricing, as well as how those policies could be improved without negatively impacting service.
- **March 19, 2019:** Amtrak complied with Senator Manchin's language, providing a report to Congress with their budget request for FY 2020 on Charter Train and Private Train Policies. This report agreed with the Amtrak Inspector General (OIG) report that it had not properly factored cost data in its policy changes to private trains and charter trains.
- **April 2019:** As a member of the Senate Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee, Senator Manchin helped author more stringent language requiring Amtrak reporting on the impact of its policies, as well as continually update the list for eligible locations for private car moves.
- **May – July 2019:** Over the course of several months, Senator Manchin continued to work with Amtrak and Rail Excursion Management Company (Railexco) to keep the tradition of the New River Train alive. Senator Manchin and his staff stayed engaged with Amtrak, Railexco, and local officials in West Virginia as they worked through a number of issues prior to signing an agreement that would allow the operation of a new train during the Railroad Days Festival in October. On multiple occasions, Senator Manchin impressed upon Amtrak the need to conclude these discussions expeditiously in order to allow enough lead-time for the train to take place.

- **August 2, 2019:** Senator Joe Manchin applauded Railexco for announcing that they would run the new Autumn Colors Express from Huntington, West Virginia to Hinton, West Virginia from October 25-27, 2019, continuing the 50 year tradition of the Railroad Days Festival.
- **September 19, 2019:** The Senate Appropriations Committee passed the FY 2020 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill out of full Committee, which include Senator Manchin's language on private trains and charter trains.
- **October 25-27, 2019:** Railexco will operate the Autumn Colors Express from Friday to Sunday, October 25-27. They have confirmed that they are under contract with Amtrak for the next with an option to extend further, all but ensuring that the train will continue for the foreseeable future. As a result of Senator Manchin's efforts, nearly 3000 people from West Virginia and surrounding states will be able ride the train to the Railroad Days Festival this year and many years to come.