

**FINAL**

# North Carolina Intercity Passenger Rail Call Center Operations Study

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Submitted To:

Rail Division  
North Carolina Department of Transportation

Submitted By:

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## Executive Summary

NCDOT Rail Division continues to investigate opportunities for additional revenue generators and cost reduction measures. The Call Center Operations Study was conducted to equip NCDOT Rail Division management with an understanding of the operations and activities of such environment and to develop revenue and cost saving measures.

The Study examined the existing administration and operations of the service. Currently the North Carolina Department of Public Safety (DPS) at the North Carolina Correctional Institute for Women (NCCIW) in Wake County administers the program. The call center handles incoming calls from 1-800-By-Train and 1-800-VisitNC for NCDOT and the North Carolina Department of Commerce (NC Commerce). North Carolina call center attendants are trained using a script and protocol for calls related to passenger rail travel in North Carolina. The service at NCCIW functions as an informational customer service line. Attendants are not authorized to sell tickets, handle credit card/ personal information, nor make reservations. When a potential customer requests the need to purchase a ticket, the attendant transfers the call directly to Amtrak's booking and reservations department.

Amtrak and its state partners established a single, nationwide standardized methodology for distributing operating revenues and expenses amongst long distance and state-supported routes. The methodology was derived through the provisions of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA) Section 209. The 2014 Amtrak Agreements for the Carolinian and Piedmont were the first to fully implement the operating cost allocation methodology; The Amtrak Performance Tracking (APT) system (Federal Fiscal Year 2014 (FFY2014) Contract Forecast, or estimated cost agreed to be paid, was \$1,616,000 for the Carolinian and \$623,000 for the Piedmont, totaling \$2,239,000). The APT was developed and implemented to replace the Route Profitability System for accounting and allocating costs by Responsibility Centers and combinations of accounts and functions.

Ticket reservations have been changing over the past decade. Traditionally, tickets were purchased through call centers or via station agents. However as of July 2015, Amtrak State Performance Tracking Measures (PTM) reports show that only 20% of all tickets purchased on the Carolinian and Piedmont were through the Amtrak Call center. Ironically, Amtrak charges state-supported routes for reservations and call center service on the number of tickets purchased through these two mechanisms, and those costs have not decreased. On average, 82% of tickets are purchased through interactive channels for all Amtrak state-supported routes and approximately 65% of the Piedmont and Carolinian ticket purchases are completed by interactive channels.

Through the evaluation of call center processes, cost savings and revenue generating initiatives were identified. A summary of those cost savings mechanisms and revenue generators are listed below. Overall, many of those recommendations will need further analysis, coordination with outside parties, and cooperation with Amtrak and other stakeholders.

- Reconcile APT Actual and Contract Forecast Costs since the analysis revealed that NCDOT has been overpaying for call center reservations due to the decline in this ticket purchasing avenue.

- Develop a new metric for cost allocations since there is a decline in the use of the call centers and talk time.
- Avenues should be investigated for developing a call center within North Carolina that can make reservations for Piedmont routes only.
- Create a non-reserved inner-city passenger rail service on the Piedmont (only) between Charlotte and Raleigh, North Carolina utilizing the train set/passenger data.
- Expand the role and script for NC Call Center operators to allow representatives to help customers purchase ticket through self-service means, such as the mobile application.
- Utilize current NCDOT interns within NCDOT Rail Division to handle call center inquiries.
- Develop a BYTRAIN mobile app that can bypass the Amtrak call center.
- Opportunities for branding and corporate sponsors for stations should be investigated.
- Expand the marketing mechanisms used to educate current and potential riders about the interactive channels for ticket purchasing.

The reservation process within North Carolina is strongly influenced by Amtrak. However, there are a few short –term improvements that can be implemented that should have a cost saving effect. Over the long haul, efforts stemming from the PRIIA 209 subcommittees should resolve the issues many of the state supported passenger rail programs have relating to the Cost Methodology Policy. Updating the NCCIW call center script to include attendants providing step-by-step instructions for purchasing tickets on-line or through a smart phone app could potentially reduce the number of calls being transferred to Amtrak by an additional 34%. New revenue streams could be implemented over the short term as well. By promoting ticket purchases and advertisements from a sponsoring company on the landing page for wi-fi on-board, a new revenue stream would be introduced. Creating a North Carolina Rail App for smartphones and market the app along with the existing NCDOT Twitter site allows existing and potential riders an easy method of staying in touch with current operations and ticketing options. It would be beneficial for NCDOT to follow through with all of the cost savings initiatives identified. Through application or further coordination and analysis, will be important for NCDOT Rail Division to enhance their operations of the passenger rail service as well as be more efficient.

## 1 Goals of the Study

The goal of a call center operations study is to equip management with an understanding of the operations and activities of such environment and to develop revenue and cost saving recommendations. This study seeks to evaluate how North Carolina currently manages existing call center services within the State, conducts ticketing and reservation processes, and baggage claim. The outcome of this effort is to determine if there are opportunities to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of call center services while maintaining the optimal level of service and meeting the goals of the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT). The evaluation will also assist NCDOT Rail Division in identifying opportunities to reduce costs and identify revenue generators.

## 2 Current Call Center Administration and Operations

### 2.1 Administration

NCDOT procures call center services from the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) and through an in-state partnership. Amtrak services are contracted within service agreements through biennial negotiations. These services provide customer service, passenger information, and reservations. In-state call center services are for information purposes only as Amtrak's state partners do not have the ability to access and use the booking and ticketing system.

It is important to understand how the current North Carolina Travel Information Center (NCTIC) is administered in order to evaluate the existing level of customer service throughout the reservation process. The service is currently administered by the North Carolina Department of Public Safety (DPS) at the North Carolina Correctional Institute for Women (NCCIW) in Wake County. NCDOT has been partnering with DPS since 1998 when the concept of utilizing inmates to support a call center was introduced. Following the conception, the State installed mobile trailers to house the call center.

### 2.2 North Carolina Call Center Operations

At present, the call center handles incoming calls from 1-800-By-Train and 1-800-VisitNC for NCDOT and the North Carolina Department of Commerce (NC Commerce). The Departments share the incurred expenses of the two modular units at NCCIW. NCDOT Rail Division and NC Commerce evenly split the costs of the lease. NCDOT Rail Division pays a monthly fee of \$1,682, of which NC Commerce reimburses NCDOT Rail Division \$841 per month.

For 1-800-By-Train, call center attendants are trained using a script and protocol for calls related to passenger rail travel in North Carolina. The service at NCCIW functions as an informational customer service line and cannot sell ticket, handle credit card/ personal information, and make reservations.

On May 26, 2015, a tour of the call center facility by NCDOT Rail Division staff was conducted to experience and understand the operations of the call center. Through discussions with call center representatives, the Tourism Call Center Supervisor, and the Visitors Services Program Manager, the following is a synopsis of the staff's observations and findings:

- Hours of operation: 8AM-8PM, Monday through Sunday (in the case of an emergency, operating hours are extended up to a 24hr operation)
- Staffing: There are two daily shifts with each representative working six (6) hours a day, 6 days a week. Representatives can work at the call center up to 12 years before having to rotate out. The current staffing levels are four staff during the first shift and three during the second shift, while three new representatives are currently undergoing training for first shift. The pay is daily (first year - \$1 each week, second year - \$2 a week, third year plus - \$3 per week). Inmates may not have any infractions and are considered higher caliber/skilled inmates compared to the prison population as a whole. The representatives are trained through an apprenticeship program which involves coursework and on-the-job training (600 hours total).
- Operations: The call center has eight stations, six of which can actually handle calls. The Call Center Supervisor has the ability to listen to calls to ensure proper procedures are being followed. Representatives have limited access through the extranet system, such as access to the Amtrak website and local chamber of commerce websites, to provide answers to callers' questions. The representatives can also request access to specific websites, if deemed appropriate. The representatives are provided the ability to divert their call to Amtrak or the North Carolina Visitors Bureau.
- Common questions received are:
  - a. How much are fares? (representatives cannot answer this question due to lack of information regarding Amtrak's Revenue Management System (RMS) and dynamic pricing )
  - b. Does the train go to Asheville?
  - c. What First/Last mile opportunities are there at stations?
  - d. What additional passenger rail travel opportunities are there outside of North Carolina?
- Primary sources of information: NCBYTrain website, accessible websites, Amtrak timetables, brochures, maps, and information provided by NCDOT Rail Division.
- Call Types
  - a. Majority of the calls received at the NCCIW are related to VisitNC versus NCBYTrain, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1: VisitNC versus Amtrak Calls

	VisitNC Calls	Amtrak Calls	Total Calls	% Visit NC	% Amtrak
2014	18,657	6,760	25,417	73%	27%
2015*	9,435	3,729	13,164	72%	28%

\*2015 data is as of July; source is North Carolina Department of Commerce

Of the total calls (2014 through July 2015) relating to 1-800-By-Train the NC Call Center statistics show that 47% of all calls are transferred to Amtrak for ticket reservations. 22% of the calls are transferred to Amtrak for additional passenger rail service inquiries, while the remaining calls are handled by the Call Center attendants.

TABLE 2: Call Classifications

2014/2015 CALL CLASSIFICATION	Totals	% of Calls
Transfer to Amtrak for further Information	1,964	21%
Transfer to Amtrak for purchase of Ticket Reservations	4,361	47%
All Other Calls	2,986	32%
TOTALS	9,311	100%

### 2.3 Amtrak Contact Centers

North Carolina Call Center attendants are trained to assist callers by providing information and answering questions. When a caller is ready to purchase a ticket, the attendant must transfer the call directly to Amtrak's booking and reservations department. For all inquiries beginning through Amtrak's 1-800-USA-Rail, the call is initially handled through an automated system. The Voice Response Unit (VRU), or "AskJulie", processes inbound calls and directs them to the appropriate department. The flow in which calls are processed is shown in the following figure.

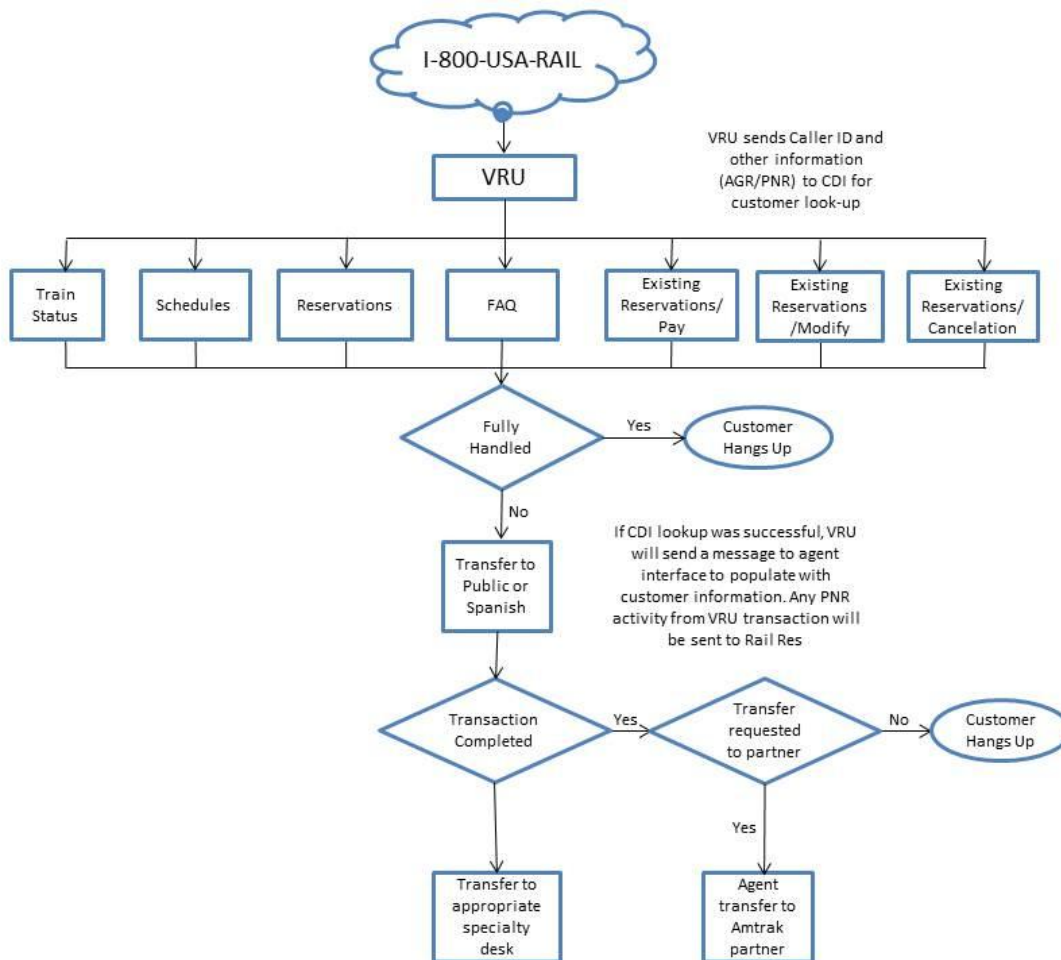


Figure 1: Amtrak Contact Center Process



The automated system directs inbound calls to (1) Train Status, (2) Schedules, (3) Reservations, (4) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), and (5) Existing Reservations. Train Status provides real-time train information and specifics, Schedules give timetable departures and arrivals, Reservations handles ticketing and booking, FAQ provides answers for general questions, and Existing Reservations covers payments, modifications, and cancelations. In addition to general inquiries, the inbound call center provides English and Spanish services, hearing-impaired accessibility, and other specialty services related to Amtrak Guest Rewards, group sales, international support, partner services (e.g. hotels, cars, and vacation packages), baggage, and customer concessions. As an iterative process, the 1-800-USA-Rail system handles and transfers inbound calls until the customer is fully served.

## 2.4 Amtrak Cost Implications

Under the provisions of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA) Section 209, Amtrak and its state partners established a single, nationwide standardized methodology for distributing operating revenues and expenses amongst long distance, Northeast Corridor (NEC), and state-supported routes. The Amtrak Performance Tracking (APT) system was developed and implemented to replace the Route Profitability System (RPS) for accounting and allocating costs by Responsibility Centers (Res Cens) and combinations of accounts and functions. Generally, operating costs are broken down as (1) Third Party Costs, (2) Route Costs, and (3) Support Fees, or Additives. The PRIIA Section 209 Cost Methodology Policy report outlines and defines the cost sharing formula for each operating cost. The following table was derived from the report and summarizes the make-up of each cost category.

Route Costs are operating expenses that are directly attributable to an individual service route. As seen in Table 3, Reservations & Call Center costs are assigned as Route Costs. These costs are defined as:

*Reservation sales call centers for general public and travel agencies, and supporting information systems.*

Table 3: Amtrak Cost Categories

Major Cost Category	Cost Category
Third Party	Host Rail Road Maintenance of Way
	Host Railroad Performance Incentives
	Fuel and Power
Route Costs	Train & Engine (T&E) Crew Labor
	Car & Locomotive Maintenance and Turnaround
	OBS Crew & Provisions
	Route Advertising
	Sales Distribution
	Reservations & Call Centers
	Stations - Route
	Stations - Shared
	Commissions
	Customer Concession
	Connecting Motor Coach
	Regional/Local Police
	Block & Tower Operations
	Terminal Yard Operations
	Terminal MoW
Insurance	
Additives	T&E
	MoE
	OBS
	Police
	Marketing
	General & Administrative

The scope of services includes inbound call handling services, social media and support services, and outbound services. The costs are charged per minute (talk time) as an Amtrak representative assists or makes the reservations for the callers. Normally Amtrak tracks calls by either the train number or name. However, if neither the train name nor train number is provided at the time of the reservation, Amtrak's talk time is allocated based on the trip origin/destination. If an origin/destination pertains to more than one route, then Amtrak allocates talk time to each route based upon ridership. Through the Amtrak Reservation Sales Operations (RSO) Call Monitoring Project, an independent auditor monitors approximately 900 calls per month between the two call centers (Philadelphia, PA and Riverside, CA). The audit tracks estimated talk time per each Amtrak train route (State supported and long distance) in order to allocate RSO costs per states. The independent auditor monitors calls throughout the day and night, weekdays and weekends in order to ensure random samples. Approximately 45% of the calls are handled at the Philadelphia call center, while the remaining 55% of the calls are handled in Riverside. The output for each months monitoring is provided to Amtrak to define the number and percentage of seconds of

talk time by route. Through February 2015 and June 2015, Routes 66 (Carolinian) and Route 67 (Piedmont) averaged 2.68% (2.19% Carolinian and 0.49% Piedmont) of the total audited calls Amtrak monitored throughout the entire national system.

The 2014 Amtrak Agreements for the Carolinian and Piedmont were the first to fully implement the operating cost allocation methodology. For Federal Fiscal Year 2014 (FFY2014), the Contract Forecast, or estimated cost agreed to be paid, was \$1,616,000 for the Carolinian and \$623,000 for the Piedmont, totaling \$2,239,000. While NCDOT pays the Contract Forecast amount for Route Costs, it is worth noting the Amtrak Performance Tracking (APT) Actuals for reconciliation and verification. The actual costs for the Carolinian were \$1,433,310, or 11.3 percent under the Contract Forecast, and \$619,535, or 0.6 percent, for the Piedmont. The APT Actual versus Contract Forecast discrepancy alone accounts for \$186,155 of additional costs to NCDOT in FFY2014. Under the current agreements for fiscal years 2015 and 2016, the Contract Forecast amounts are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Operations Pricing

Operations Pricing – Reservations & Call Centers			
	FFY2015	FFY2016	Percent Change
Carolinian	\$1,685,075	\$1,733,605	3%
Piedmont	\$561,000	\$577,157	
Total	\$2,246,075	\$2,310,762	

## 2.5 Booking and Reservations

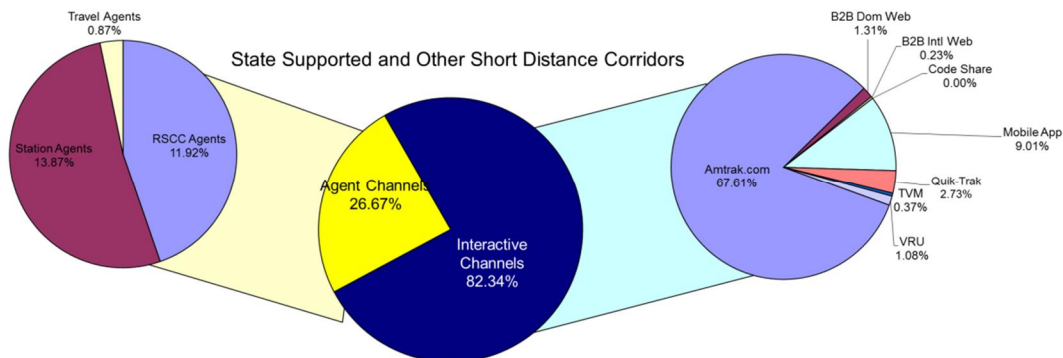
Historically, reservations were completed through Amtrak call centers or at stations, via a station agent. Around 2013, Amtrak completed their deployment of eTicketing and mobile platforms for purchasing a ticket with an Android or Smart Phone. Since then, Amtrak has seen an increase in ticket purchases via the smart phone and a decline in ticket purchases via call centers and at stations. Comparing June 2014 to June 2015, Short and Long Distance Route ticket booking methods increased for Interactive channels, while Amtrak Agent Channels, i.e. Reservations Sales Call Center (RSCC) Agents and Station Agents, declined.

Table 5: Booking Channel

BOOKING CHANNEL	Acela			Long Distance			Short Distance		
	FY 14	FY 15	% Change	FY 14	FY 15	% Change	FY 14	FY 15	% Change
AMTRAK AGENT CHANNEL	6.6%	6.3%	-4.3%	43.2%	42.6%	-7.1%	20.0%	19.3%	-5.4%
RSCC Agents	3.9%	3.7%	-2.3%	36.1%	35.7%	-6.7%	9.6%	9.7%	-0.6%
Station Agents	2.8%	2.5%	-7.1%	7.1%	6.8%	-9.2%	10.4%	9.6%	-9.8%
BUSINESS PARTNER CHANNEL	15.7%	13.5%	-13.0%	2.8%	0.5%	-84.7%	2.4%	2.0%	-16.1%
Travel Agents	15.7%	13.5%	-12.9%	0.9%	0.5%	-50.9%	2.3%	2.0%	-13.0%
Amtrak Vacations	0.0%	0.0%		2.0%	0.0%	-100%	0.1%	0.0%	-100%
INTERACTIVE CHANNEL	77.7%	80.2%	4.0%	53.9%	57.0%	-0.4%	77.7%	78.7%	-0.6%
Amtrak.com	58.7%	57.7%	-0.9%	49.2%	51.5%	-1.1%	63.9%	62.7%	-3.7%
Mobile App	6.1%	7.7%	27.4%	2.2%	2.7%	17.6%	6.1%	8.1%	30.9%
Int'l Web	0.3%	0.3%	-5.2%	0.6%	0.6%	-9.2%	0.4%	0.4%	1.4%
Domestic Web	9.4%	11.9%	27.1%	0.8%	0.9%	13.3%	2.0%	2.7%	35.7%
VRU	0.3%	0.2%	-5.9%	1.1%	1.1%	-5.8%	0.7%	0.6%	-6.0%
Quik-Trak	3.0%	2.4%	-18.8%	0.1%	0.1%	-7.1%	4.5%	3.8%	-16.6%
Code Share	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	1118.6%
TVM	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-36.3%	0.2%	0.1%	-16.0%
All Channels	100.0%	100.0%	0.8%	100.0%	100.0%	-5.7%	100.0%	100.0%	-1.9%

Source: Amtrak sales and distribution channel report, June 2015

More recently, July 2015 Amtrak State Performance Tracking Measures (PTM) Station reports show that only 20% of all tickets purchased on the *Carolinian* and *Piedmont* were through the Amtrak Call center. However, Amtrak costs to state-supported routes for reservations and call center service have not decreased. On average, 82% of tickets are purchased through interactive channels for all Amtrak state-supported routes. Ironically, the ACELA and NEC average 90% ticket sales via interactive channels. Currently, approximately 65% of the *Piedmont* and *Carolinian* ticket purchases are completed by interactive channels (e.g. Amtrak.com, mobile app, Quik-Trak), while the rest of the tickets are purchased through station agents and call center agents (month of June 2015 statistics; *Amtrak sales and distribution channel report, June 2015*).



### 3 Identification of Cost-Saving Initiatives

Through the evaluation of call center processes, cost savings and revenue generating initiatives were identified. The recommended initiatives listed below range from procedural changes to enhancing operations at the existing NC Call Center to wholesale changes with Amtrak. Through the evaluation of the current system and the work that the PRIIA Section 209 Intercity Passenger Rail Committee is conducting, recommendations are presented as options for implementation or tracking.

#### 3.1 Amtrak/North Carolina Operational Cost Initiatives

##### 3.1.1 Reconcile APT Actual and Contract Forecast costs

Significant discrepancies between actual and fixed costs negotiated in annual Amtrak agreements were identified. In FFY2014, the *Carolinian* Contract Forecast for Reservations & Call Centers was \$1,616,000 while APT Actual costs were \$1,433,310. A detailed assessment of monthly invoices found that NCDOT overpaid the actual costs more often than not. NCDOT should closely track monthly costs and compare actual with fixed amounts paid. Record keeping will equip NCDOT with documentation for negotiating future agreements with Amtrak.

##### 3.1.2 Actively participate in revisions to PRIIA Section 209 cost allocation methodology

Through efforts of the PRIIA Section 209 Intercity Passenger Rail Committee, recommendations are being developed to identify other metrics for allocating costs associated with Reservations & Call Centers. Instead of talk time being used as the sole metric, the Committee is examining statistics on booking and ticketing methods for cost allocation. Ongoing representation from NCDOT will aid in the revision process and provide the Department additional data for reconciliation and verification. The PRIIA committee is currently studying talk time and intends to present recommendation by the end of October 2015.

##### 3.1.3 NCDOT takes control of ticket reservations for Piedmont service

Avenues should be investigated for developing a call center within North Carolina that can make reservations for Piedmont routes only. NCDOT Rail Division could begin collecting statistics that identify ridership origin/destinations within North Carolina, as well as route. Conducting an origin/destination survey to determine if customers are traveling the Piedmont on both the northbound and southbound routes or traveling on the *Carolinian* for one trip and the Piedmont on another would assist in determining if North Carolina could operate all ticket reservations. The main concern with this recommendation is that the State would not be able to utilize the existing Call Center due to the restrictions of handling payment methods and access to ticketing and reservations. Other avenues would need to be investigated, such as establishing an independent call center, hiring staff for a new call center, costs of operating a call center, and developing protocol for ticket purchases that require trips on both the Piedmont and *Carolinian*.

##### 3.1.4 Develop a non-reservation service for the *Piedmont* service only

Per PRIIA 209 methodology, state operators can request an independent service for providing some services other than those provided by Amtrak. This was the case for the Capital Corridor Joint Powers Authority (CCJPA) Capital Corridor passenger rail service. They utilized this clause to develop a non-reservation service. North Carolina could do the same with their ability to create a non-reserved inner-city passenger rail service on the *Piedmont* (only) between Charlotte and Raleigh, North Carolina.

One way to determine if this is possible is to evaluate the historical trends of ridership on the *Piedmont*. By analyzing the 2014 *Piedmont* data, there was a total of 44,905 passengers on the 73/74 (AM route). This equates to an average of 123 total daily passengers combined on the 73/74. Breaking this down into the individual routes, the 73 Train averaged 56 daily passengers, while the 74 Train averaged 68 daily passengers. For the afternoon routes (75/76), there were a total of 59,785 passengers. This equates to an average of 164 total daily passengers combined. The 75 Train averaged 81 daily passengers, while the 76 Train averaged 83 daily passengers.

Through discussions with NCDOT Rail Division, the methodology for building their train sets is that in the case that the ridership demands are within 10% of the capacity of the coach cars an extra coach should be added to allow for walk-up passengers. In addition, when developing the train sets, ridership must include the addition of 25 possible passengers for each train. Table 6 defines the thresholds for adding additional coach cars.

Table 6: Adding Coach's for Ridership

# of Coach's	Seat count	Seat Total	Ridership	Add a Coach
2	56	112	75	Yes
2	66	132	75	Yes
3	56	168	125	Yes
3	66	198	150	Yes
4	56	224	175	Yes
4	66	264	215	Yes

Since the westbound 73 Train reverses and heads back eastbound as the 74 Train, the higher average ridership is found on the 74 train with 68 daily passengers. Following the methodology of developing train sets, adding an additional 25 seats would increase the average daily passengers to 93. This would equate to utilizing three coach cars per day for the 73/74 route. In respect to the 75/76 route, 83 daily passengers is the higher average. When adding an additional 25 seats, the route would account for 108 possible passengers per day. This would also require three coach cars per day.

Evaluating the train set data reveals that for most of the year, NCDOT Rail Division could operate the *Piedmont* on a three coach car setup and utilize a non-reservation system. However, there are certain times of the year when ridership exceeds these averages. Those times of the year are mainly found during holiday weekends, higher education breaks, and the state fair. By utilizing the historical data and communicating with the local higher education facilities, NCDOT Rail Division would be able to schedule additional coach cars for anticipated higher passenger volumes, thus reducing possible overflow. Though additional investigations into how to handle group reservations will be required if the *Piedmont* converts to a non-reservation service. With group reservations, the train consist methodology would not be applicable. NCDOT Rail Division would require advance notice on group reservations in order to plan for, and construct the proper number of coach cars to account for the large number of passengers accounting for their origin/destination.

Implementing non-reservation on the *Piedmont* does have implications on the quality of service. With limited number of trains per day, a customer who misses a train would be required to wait an extended amount of time before the next train departure. Current long-haul and short haul passenger rail services

that are non-reservations have a high frequency of daily trains. This is not the case within North Carolina currently; however once the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> frequencies are implemented, an increase in frequency could provide for implementing non-reservation operations. Another implication that should be taken into account is related to special needs. The current reservation process provides advance notice that riders with special need will be utilizing the service, thus notifying station attendants the need to provide assistance. Without advance notice, station attendants would not be prepared, thus increasing the dwell time for a train.

Additional risks involved inhibit revenue management strategies, such as dynamic pricing, tiered pricing, and promotional activities. Unreserved routes can create issues with applying dynamic pricing for holidays and peak departures, thus leading to possible loss of revenue. During the peak holiday seasons, as well as Colleges and University schedules, there are risks involved around leaving stranded passengers at certain peak times, leading to potential loss of riders.

Even though a non-reservation system for the Piedmont could save NCDOT Rail Division from paying Amtrak the use of a call center, there are still questions that would need to be investigated and resolved.

### 3.1.5 Place Service Charge to the Purchase of Amtrak Tickets via Website or App or Phone

A possible revenue generator for North Carolina, and Amtrak, would be to add a service charge for customers purchasing tickets on any method. Service fees are not uncommon on purchases of tickets for other transportation modes or unrelated transactions. The question would be, with further analysis required, is if there are any legal stipulations that would prohibit a service charge, who would receive the revenue, and if revenue is shared what the cost split would be.

## 3.2 North Carolina Call Center Initiatives

### 3.2.1 ByTrain Call Handling Enhancement

As noted, North Carolina established a call number (1-800-By-Train) for rail passengers to inquire about service. The NCCIW has been screening calls over the past decade in order to reduce the number of transfers to the Amtrak Reservations Sales Operations and ultimately reduce Amtrak related costs. One of the early recommendations stemming from this study was for NCDOT to revise the existing script to include the representative's knowledge and ability to inform callers about the ability to purchase tickets online or through the mobile application. This modification to the script adds another resource for serving callers more efficiently. One of the more cost beneficial steps NCDOT initiated was to provide the representative the ability to walk a caller through purchasing a ticket via smart phone or via website. By providing the representatives with the training and protocol to assist customers in purchasing tickets through interactive channels, the overall utilization of Amtrak's contact center could be incrementally reduced. Consequently, a reduction in talk time with Amtrak contact centers would drive down NCDOT's costs to Amtrak.

The revised script is attached as Appendix A. NCDOT Rail Division conducted a presentation to the Call Center on August 28, 2015 to introduce the new script. It is recommended that NCDOT Rail Division keep track of inquiries to determine if there has been a reduction in the number of transfers to Amtrak.

NCDOT and the NCCIW track VisitNC versus NCByTrain calls as well as the number of calls being transferred to Amtrak. However, by including the ability to track time/day of calls the facility handles (% on weekends vs % after 5pm, etc) a better grasp of the daily operations and needs for call center representation could assist in modifying the hours of operations. This type of data would also be beneficial when negotiating with Amtrak on the biennial agreements.

### 3.2.2 Reduce diverting calls and talk time with Amtrak's call centers

Expanding the role and script for NC Call Center operators allows representatives to help customers purchase ticket through self-service means. If a customer prefers to speak to a reservations representative, the operator can then transfer the call to the trip originating station in order for the customer to purchase a ticket through the station attendant. By not transferring the call to the Amtrak attendant, transfers to the Amtrak reservations center are reduced; thus eliminating a service charge per minutes of talk time between the customer and reservations operator. In addition to ensuring the station attendant performs the task in a timely manner, further training of NCDOT station attendants is required. For progress tracking, NCDOT should conduct ongoing analysis on a monthly or yearly basis to determine if the share of Amtrak contact center talk time is being reduced and that utilization of interactive channels is increasing.

### 3.2.3 Consider using Interns to Staff the Call Center

Depending on the success of the revised script for the existing North Carolina Call Center, and PRIIA 209 results, utilizing current NCDOT interns within NCDOT Rail Division to handle call center inquiries may be cost beneficial. Over the past 18 months, the existing Call Center averages 18 calls per day. Further analysis to determine costs of utilizing interns would be recommended to determine if there is a cost savings rather than utilizing the existing Call Center. One concern to consider with using interns would be a reduction in hours of service at the Call Center. The current call center operates between 8AM-8PM, Monday through Sunday. NCDOT Rail interns and general staff work from 8AM-5PM, and no weekends. In addition, in the event of an emergency, there would need to be protocol to establish intern availability to staff the call center. If it is determined that there is a cost savings with using interns, it will be important to weigh that savings against this reduction in hours of operation.

## 3.3 Marketing Initiatives

### 3.3.1 Develop a BYTRAIN mobile App that bypasses Amtrak call center

Similar to the Amtrak app for smart phones, investigate the ability to develop an app dedicated to North Carolina inner-city passenger rail routes. Displaying the easy to read schedule on an app or within NCDOT Rail Division's website would greatly enhance the ability to market the service.

### 3.3.2 Potential reciprocal marketing of local business to generate operating revenues

Opportunities for branding and corporate sponsors for stations should be investigated. As with major sports facilities and some large transit agencies, additional revenue sources could stem from a large corporation sponsoring a station or *Piedmont* route. In addition, if NCDOT has control of the landing page for the wi-fi on-board the *Piedmont* or *Carolinian*, the page could be used as a method to promote ticket purchases and advertisement for a sponsoring company with a link to their website.



### 3.3.3 Expand the marketing mechanisms used to educate current and potential riders about the interactive channels for ticket purchasing

Information could be provided to universities, colleges, major employers, etc. regarding ticket purchases through interactive methods. Besides Millennials, many of the current riders often prefer to purchase items through their interactive devices. By educating current and potential riders about the ease of purchasing tickets with interactive devices, costs associated with Amtrak operator talk time would be reduced. Possible marketing strategies include utilizing media outlets, TV commercials, radio ads, internet pop-ups, social media, and website ads.

One way of communicating this information could be to have North Carolina train hosts distribute information to passengers about booking their trip online with step-by-step instructions. Since the script was recently revised to include directions for purchasing tickets on-line, developing a small handout could be an easy method of delivery. Another revenue generating idea would be to offer a discount to passengers who book online and promote this discount when passengers call the North Carolina Call Center. This could also help reduce the number of transfers to Amtrak.

## 4 Peer Review of Reservations and Ticketing

The reservation and ticketing processes of 27 state supported short distance services were analyzed to understand the current practices of similar operations nationwide. Not only is each route similar in scale, but also in the type of operating agreement established with Amtrak. Appendix B provides a detailed summary of each service.

### 4.1 Peer Review Summary

Overall, the ticketing and reservation process is largely uniform across all analyzed routes. The only differences observed are in seating options and route website functionality.

Reserved seating is offered in Coach Class for the majority of the analyzed routes. However, five of the routes reviewed do not offer reserved seating in Coach Class. The variability in seating options is clearly visible when purchasing tickets as each seat is described as “reserved” or “unreserved”.

Most of the routes do not have a dedicated website, but rather a subpage found on the Amtrak website ([www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com)). However, there are nine routes that have a dedicated website that is equipped with a ticketing interface. Despite these dedicated web addresses, each website redirects the consumer to the Amtrak website at some point during the purchasing process. The results of the peer review analysis are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7: Peer-Review by Reservation Opportunities

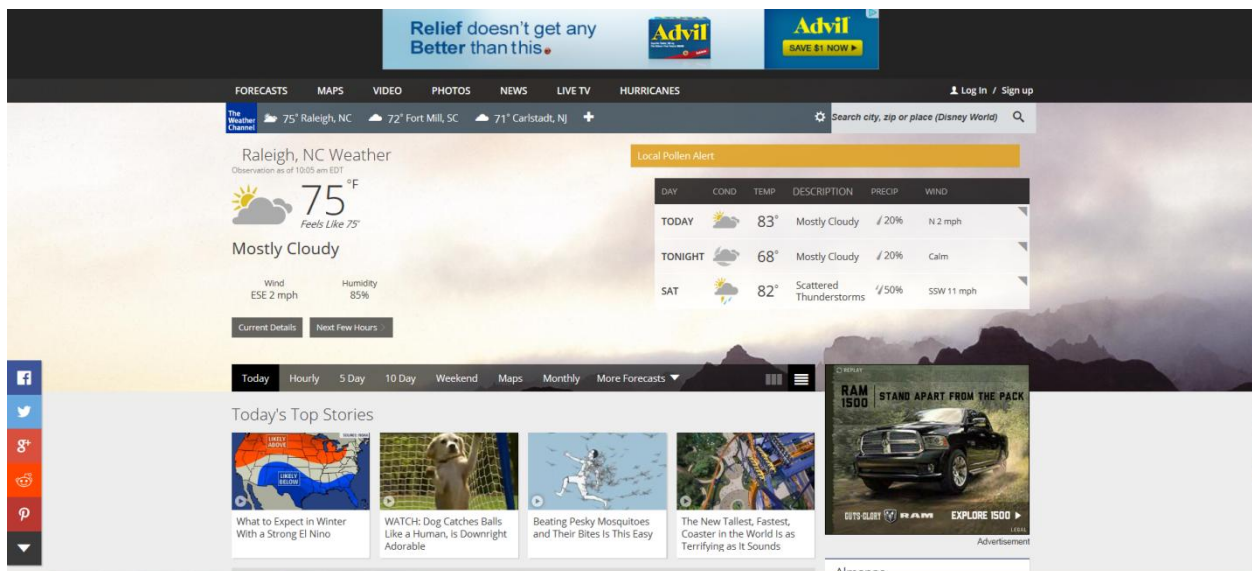
Route	Online	By Phone	Quik Trak Kiosk	In Person	Mobile App	Dedicated Website with Ticketing Interface	Reserved Seating
ADIRONDACK	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
ALBANY-NIAGARA FALLS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
BLUE WATER	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
CAPITOL CORRIDOR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
CAROLINIAN	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
CASCADES	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
CHICAGO-ST LOUIS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
DOWNEASTER	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
EMPIRE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
ETHAN ALLEN	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
HEARTLAND FLYER	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HIAWATHAS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
HOOSIER STATE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
ILLINI	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
ILLINOIS ZEPHYR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
KANSAS CITY-ST LOUIS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
KEYSTONE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
NEW HAVEN-SPRINGFIELD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
PACIFIC SURFLINER	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
PENNSYLVANIAN	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
PERE MARQUETTE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
PIEDMONT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SAN JOAQUIN	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
VERMONT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
WASHINGTON-LYNCHBURG	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
WASHINGTON-NEWPORT NEWS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
WOLVERINE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

## 5 Next Steps & Recommendations

The reservation process within North Carolina is strongly influenced by Amtrak. However, there are a few short-term improvements that can be implemented that should have a cost savings affect. Over the long haul, efforts stemming from the PRIIA 209 subcommittees is hoped to resolve the issues many of the state supported passenger rail programs have relating to the Cost Methodology Policy. Recommendations stemming from their efforts should identify a revised cost sharing formula that will define all costs related to call centers/reservations. The improvements would theoretically reduce the costs for North Carolina since Amtrak identified that approximately 3% of all calls are associated with the two North Carolina passenger rail routes, and that each year the percent of ticket purchases via reservations continue to decline.

In the short term, updating the NCCIW call center script to include attendants providing step-by-step instructions for purchasing tickets on-line or through a smart phone app should reduce the number of calls being transferred to Amtrak by an additional 34%. Given that 71% of current ticket purchases are handled through the mobile app, it is possible that 3,095 of the 4,360 calls being transferred to Amtrak from the NC Call Center could be completed via the mobile app. Following up with NCCIW in three to six months to evaluate the success of the updated script should provide insight on the success of this initiative.

New revenue streams could be implemented over the short term as well. By promoting ticket purchases and advertisements from a sponsoring company on the landing page for wi-fi on-board, a new revenue stream would be introduced. This is similar to the Weather Channel website. As shown in the figure below, Dodge and Advil have advertisements, though they are not dominating the website or intent of the material being displayed on the website.



Another short term solution is to create a North Carolina Rail App for smartphones and market the app along with the existing NCDOT Twitter site to allow existing and potential riders an easy method of staying in touch with current operations and ticketing options.

Over time, small adjustments identified in this report, such as revising the NCCIW script, will not only save costs associated with reservations, but also generate revenue. Major cost savings mechanisms are going to be driven through the PRIIA 209 subcommittees efforts. Identifying and developing a detailed cost allocation methodology for the Amtrak Call Center should provide cost savings to North Carolina due to the lower percentage of ticket purchasing. Lastly, following through with all of the cost savings initiatives identified, through application or further coordination and analysis, will be important for NCDOT Rail Division to enhance their operations of the passenger rail service as well as be more efficient.

## Recommendations

- NCDOT should closely track monthly Amtrak Call Center costs and compare actual with fixed amounts paid. Record keeping will equip NCDOT with documentation for negotiating future agreements with Amtrak.
- Coordinate and resolve PRIIA 209 methodology for booking and ticketing cost allocation that utilizes methods other than talk time. Continue to participate in the sub committees relating to cost allocation methodology.
- Investigate additional avenues for developing a call center within North Carolina that can make reservations for Piedmont routes only.
- North Carolina should further discuss the opportunity to request (through Amtrak independent service) to create a non-reserved inner-city passenger rail service on the Piedmont (only) between Charlotte and Raleigh, North Carolina.
- In 6 months evaluate the success of the updated North Carolina Call Center script to determine if there is a change in % of calls being transferred to Amtrak.
- Further investigate the opportunity to utilize current NCDOT interns within NCDOT Rail Division to handle call center inquiries.
- Investigate the ability to develop an app dedicated to North Carolina inner-city passenger rail routes.
- Investigate opportunities for branding and utilizing corporate sponsors for stations.
- Expand the marketing mechanisms used to educate current and potential riders about the interactive channels for ticket purchasing.

## APPENDIX A

### 5.1 Revised North Carolina Call Center Script

# Amtrak-online

\*DO NOT HAVE TO CREATE AN ACCOUNT TO PURCHASE TICKET(S)

# Ncbytrain.org

## Buy Tickets

- ▶ One-way, Round-trip, or Multi-City
- ▶ FROM-TO: Calendar will appear to select date, time
- ▶ Insert how many adults, seniors, children and/or infants will be traveling
- ▶ Will have a chance to insert Promo code if Applicable

## Check Status

- ▶ May check Departure/Arrival Time
- ▶ Select station by clicking "select station"
- ▶ Select date (Calendar Pop-up)
- ▶ \*Take you to another screen\*
- ▶ Insert train #, date, time, schedule departure/arrival time

# DISCOUNTS

## Seniors (62+)

-15% off lowest fare

- ▶ The senior discount is not valid on the Auto Train.
- ▶ The senior discount is not valid on weekday Acela Express trains.
- ▶ The senior discount does not apply to Business class, First class or sleeping accommodation. These upgrades are permitted upon payment of the full accommodation charges.
- ▶ The senior discount is not valid for travel on certain Amtrak Thruway connecting services.
- ▶ The senior discount may not be combinable with other discount offers; refer to the terms and conditions for each offer.
- ▶ Additional restrictions may apply.

## Children

-Kids 2-12 ride half-price everyday, with paying adult

-Infants under 2 ride F R E E



## DISCOUNTS-AAA

-American Automobile Association (AAA) members and their immediate family (spouses and dependents) are eligible to receive a 10% discount on most adult rail fares for Amtrak travel. Up to two children ages 2 - 12 may accompany each adult member at half the AAA member rail fare. Visit the [AAA web site](#) for information about becoming an AAA member.

- ▶ Discount Limitations
- ▶ The AAA discount is not valid on Saver Fares.
- ▶ The AAA discount is not valid on weekday Acela Express trains.
- ▶ The AAA discount does not apply to Business class, First class or sleeping accommodation. These upgrades are permitted upon payment of the full accommodation charges.
- ▶ The AAA discount is not valid for travel on certain Amtrak Thruway connecting services.
- ▶ The AAA discount is not valid on the Canadian portion of services operated jointly by Amtrak and VIA Rail Canada to Ontario.
- ▶ The AAA discount may not be combinable with other discount offers; refer to the terms and conditions for each offer.

# DISCOUNTS-How to enter AAA Code



To take advantage of this discount:

- Use the Fare Finder at the beginning of your search and select 'AAA Adult' or 'AAA Child' for each passenger as appropriate. Then, enter your AAA membership number on the 'Passenger Information' page of the booking process.
- Or, in your user profile, select 'AAA Adult' in the 'Travel Profile' section, and enter your AAA membership number. AAA will be pre-selected as your preferred passenger discount type, and your AAA membership number will appear, already filled-in, in the appropriate text field.

To correctly enter your number in the booking process or as part of your user profile:

- Enter your three-digit club code into the 'AAA Club Code' box.
- Enter the remaining nine digits of your membership number, excluding any letters. Omit any numbers after the space following the nine digits.
- If your number contains the word "plus" leave out this text. Do not enter any spaces between numbers.

# DISCOUNTS-MILITARY

- ▶ Military Personnel Save 10% and Get Ahead of the Ticket Line
- ▶ With valid active-duty United States Armed Forces identification cards, active-duty US military personnel, their spouses and their dependents are eligible to receive a 10% discount on the lowest available rail fare on most Amtrak trains, including for travel on the Auto Train. Just use the Fare Finder at the beginning of your search and select 'Military' for each passenger as appropriate to receive the discount.
- ▶ Additionally, Amtrak supports and thanks our troops by welcoming the uniformed military personnel to the head of the ticket line.
- ▶ Discount Limitations
- ▶ The military discount is not valid on weekday Acela Express trains.
- ▶ The military discount does not apply to Business class, First class or sleeping accommodation. These upgrades are permitted upon payment of the full accommodation charges.
- ▶ The military discount is not valid for travel on certain Amtrak Thruway connecting services.
- ▶ The military discount is not valid on the Canadian portion of services operated jointly by Amtrak and VIA Rail Canada.
- ▶ The military discount may not be combinable with other discount offers; refer to the terms and conditions for each offer.

# Discounts-NARP

## National Association of Railroad Passengers Members Save 10%

- ▶ National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) members are eligible to receive a 10% discount on the lowest available rail fare on most Amtrak trains. Visit the [NARP web site](#) for information about becoming a member.

## Discount Limitations

- ▶ The NARP discount does not apply to Business class, First class or sleeping accommodation. These upgrades are permitted upon payment of the full accommodation charges.
- ▶ The NARP discount is not valid for travel on certain Amtrak Thruway connecting services.
- ▶ The NARP discount is not valid on the Canadian portion of services operated jointly by Amtrak and VIA Rail Canada.
- ▶ The NARP discount may not be combinable with other discount offers; refer to the terms and conditions for each offer.
- ▶ Membership Card Required
- ▶ You must present your current, valid NARP membership card at the time your tickets are issued.
- ▶ Conductors may ask to see your NARP card during your trip. Please carry your NARP card with you onboard.
- ▶ NARP members with "Family" NARP membership cards must each carry their own card with them.

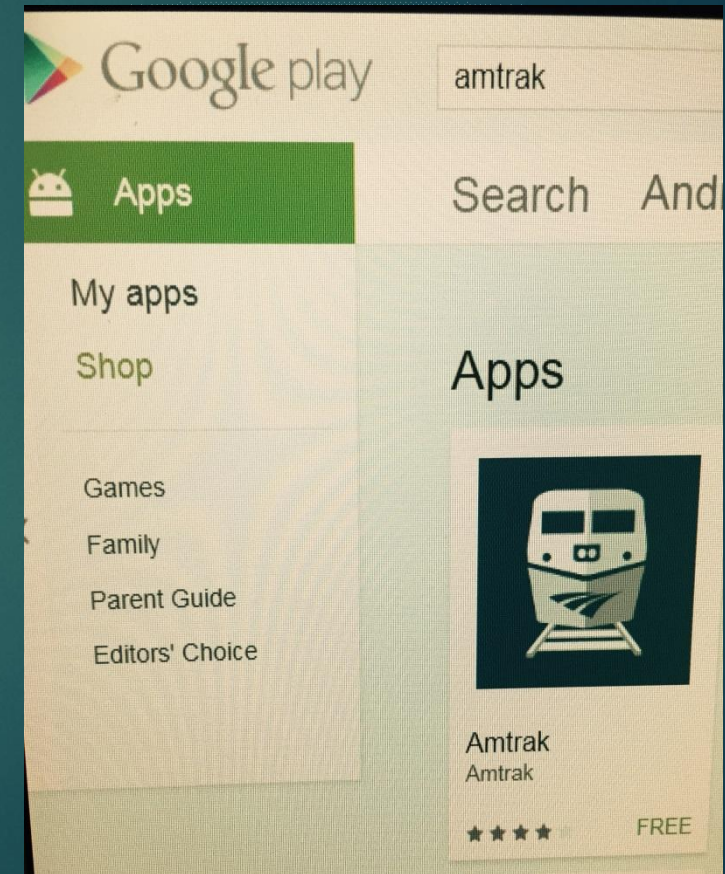
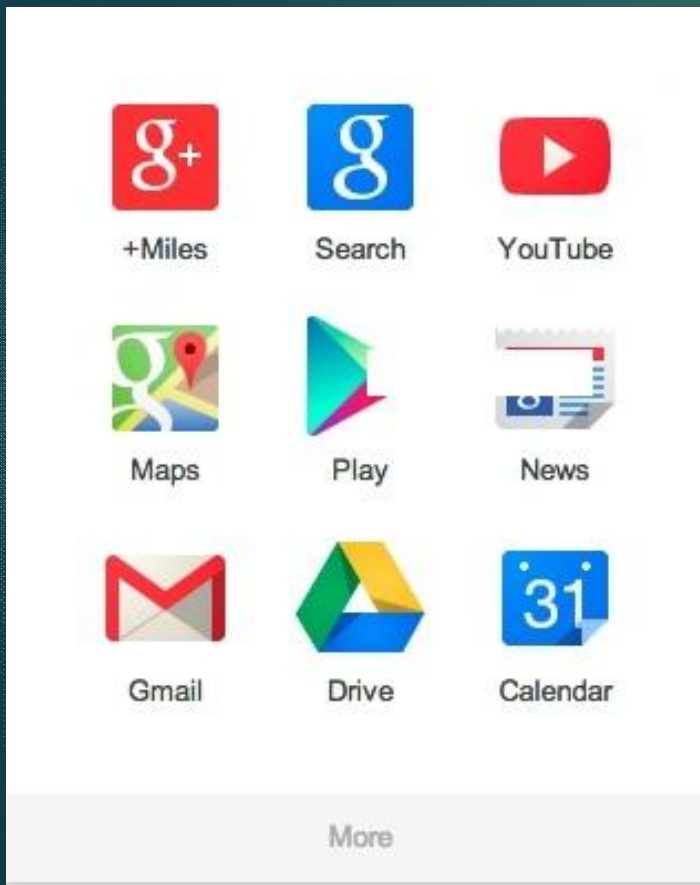
# Discounts-NARP 3-day Advance

- ▶ Three-Day Advance Purchase
- ▶ To use the NARP discount, you must book your tickets (including tickets for travel on unreserved trains) at least three days in advance of travel.
- ▶ If you make any change to your itinerary, you must re-qualify for any membership discount used. This means that, to be eligible to receive an applicable membership discount, any change to your itinerary must be made at least three days in advance of travel.
- ▶ How to Enter Your NARP Membership Discount Number When Booking Online
- ▶ To take advantage of this discount when booking your travel online:
  - ▶ Use the Fare Finder at the beginning of your search and select 'NARP' for each passenger as appropriate. Then, enter your NARP membership number on the 'Passenger Information' page of the booking process.
  - ▶ Or, in your user profile, select 'NARP' in the 'Travel Profile' section, and enter your NARP membership number. NARP will be pre-selected as your preferred passenger discount type, and your NARP membership number will appear, already filled-in, in the appropriate text field.
- ▶ When entering your NARP membership number, omit any spaces and dashes.

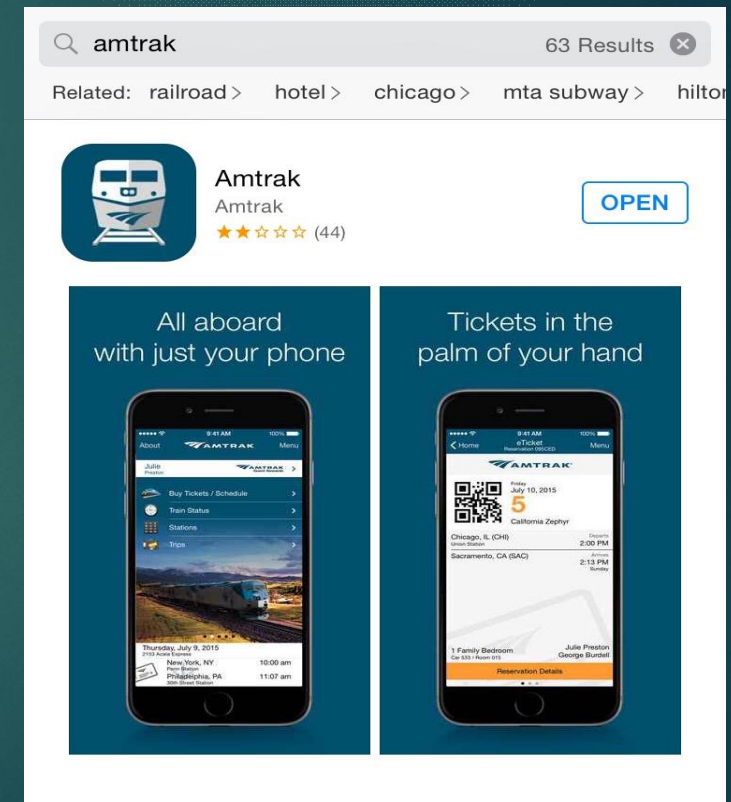
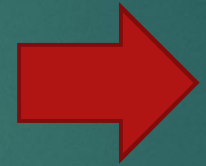
# Amtrak Mobile App



# How To Download Amtrak App Android



# How to Download Amtrak App iPhone





# To see Departure/Arrival Time, you DO NOT HAVE TO LOGIN



- ▶ RGH-(Raleigh, NC)
- ▶ CYN-(Cary, NC)
- ▶ DNC-(Durham, NC)
- ▶ BNC-(Burlington, NC)
- ▶ GRO-(Greensboro, NC)
- ▶ SAL-(Salisbury, NC)
- ▶ KAN-(Kannapolis, NC)
- ▶ CLT-(Charlotte, NC)
- ▶ WLN-(Wilson, NC)

- SSM-(Selma, NC)
- SOP-(Southern Pines, NC)
- HPT-(High Point, NC)
- RMT-(Rocky Mount, NC)
- FAY-(Fayetteville, NC)
- GAS-(Gastonia, NC)
- HAM-(Hamlet, NC)

# Buy Tickets-One way

Sprint LTE 1:23 PM

Home Buy Tickets Search Login

One-Way Round Trip Multi-Ride

From Raleigh, NC (RGH) >

To Greensboro, NC (GRO) >

Depart July 27, 2015 >

Time Anytime >

Adults 1 Children 0 Infants 0

Search



Sprint LTE 1:23 PM

Search Buy Tickets Departures Menu

Raleigh, NC (RGH) Departing Monday 27 July

Greensboro, NC (GRO)

73 Piedmont

Departs 6:45 am Arrives 8:16 am \$14.00 Reserved Coach

75 Piedmont

Departs 11:45 am Arrives 1:16 pm \$14.00 Reserved Coach

79 Carolinian

Departs 4:50 pm Arrives 6:27 pm \$14.00 Reserved Coach



Sprint LTE 1:24 PM

Departures Buy Tickets Seats & Rooms Cancel

Raleigh, NC (RGH) Departing Monday 27 July

Greensboro, NC (GRO)

73 Piedmont Monday, July 27, 2015

Departs 6:45 am Arrives 8:16 am \$14.00 Reserved Coach Seat

1 Reserved Coach Seat Available

Greensboro, NC (GRO)

\$14.00 Estimated Continue



1:24 PM Buy Tickets Ticket Information

Raleigh, NC (RGH) Departing Monday 27 July  
Greensboro, NC (GRO)

PASSENGERS

Adult Primary Passenger Required >

TICKET DELIVERY

Method eTicket - \$0 >

NOTIFICATIONS

Delay Alert via Text Messaging Starting 3hrs prior to sch. departure >  
Mobile phone # is required for primary passenger

Promo Code Optional

\$14.00 Continue

1:26 PM Buy Tickets Passenger Detail

PASSENGER NAME

Title Ms >

First Name Shynese

Last Name Hock

AMTRAK GUEST REWARDS

Member # Optional

PASSENGER TYPE

Discount Adult >

CONTACT INFORMATION

Phone Type Mobile >

Number (919) 600-3350

Extension Optional

Mobile Phone Optional

E-mail brownsugar0191@yahoo.com

Confirm E-Mail brownsugar0191@yahoo.com

1:26 PM Buy Tickets Ticket Information

Raleigh, NC (RGH) Departing Monday 27 July  
Greensboro, NC (GRO)

PASSENGERS

Shynese Hock Adult Primary >

TICKET DELIVERY

Method eTicket - \$0 >

NOTIFICATIONS

Delay Alert via Text Messaging Starting 3hrs prior to sch. departure >  
Alert will be texted to (919) 600-3350

Promo Code Optional

\$14.00 Continue

1:38 PM Buy Tickets Payment

Raleigh, NC (RGH) Departing Monday 27 July  
Greensboro, NC (GRO)

CREDIT CARD INFORMATION

Card Type Amtrak Guest Rewards Mas... >

Name on Card Shynese Hock

Card Number Required

Expiration Date Required >

Security Code Required

Billing Address Required

Address 2 Optional

City Required

State Required >

Zip Code Required

Country United States >

\$14.00 Charge to Card Buy Tickets

# Buy Tickets-Multi-Ride

1

2

3

4

Sprint LTE 2:40 PM

Home Buy Tickets Search Login

One-Way Round Trip Multi-Ride

Between Raleigh, NC (RGH) >

And Greensboro, NC (GRO) >

Starting July 27, 2015 >

What are Multi-Ride tickets?

Search

Sprint LTE 2:41 PM

Search Buy Tickets Multi-Rides Login

Raleigh, NC (RGH) Starting Monday 27 July

Greensboro, NC (GRO)

Ten Ride Ticket Valid Jul 27, 2015 to Jan 22, 2016 ⓘ

The ten-ride North Carolina ticket is valid for ten rides within a 180-day period. \$119.00 >

Multi-Ride Restricted Trains

Sprint 3G 2:50 PM

Multi-Rides Buy Tickets Ticket Information Menu

Raleigh, NC (RGH) Ten Ride Ticket July 27, 2015 to January 22, 2016

Greensboro, NC (GRO)

First Name Shynese

Last Name Hockaday

AMTRAK GUEST REWARDS

Member # Optional

PRIMARY CONTACT INFORMATION

E-mail brownsugar0191@yahoo.com

Confirm E-Mail brownsugar0191@yahoo.com

Phone Type Mobile >

Number (919) 600-3350

ADDITIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

E-mail Optional

\$119.00 Continue

Sprint 3G 2:50 PM

Back Buy Tickets Payment Cancel

Raleigh, NC (RGH) Ten Ride Ticket July 27, 2015 to January 22, 2016

Greensboro, NC (GRO)

CREDIT CARD INFORMATION

Card Type Amtrak Guest Rewards Mas... >

Name on Card Required

Card Number Required

Expiration Date Required >

Security Code Required

Billing Address Required

Address 2 Optional

City Required

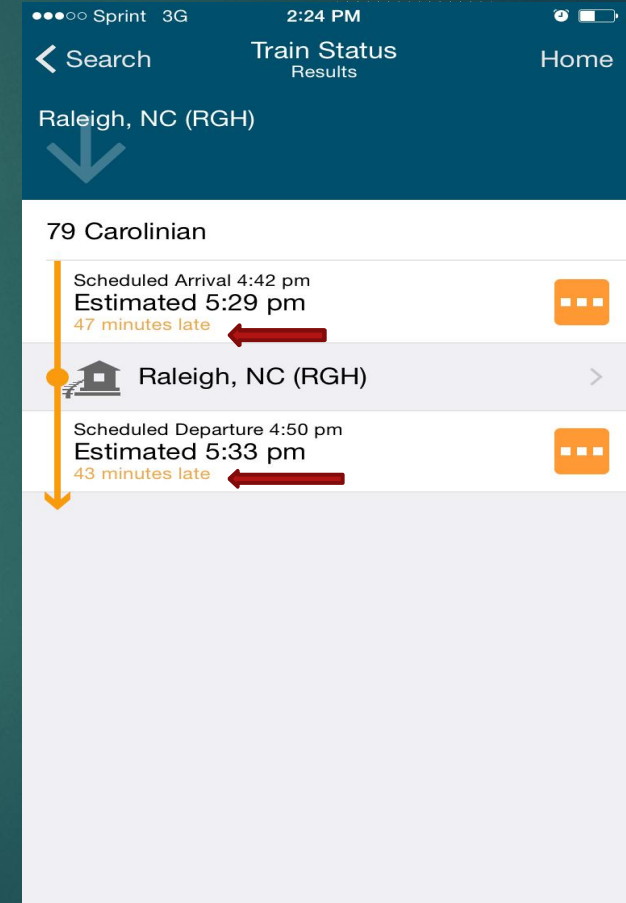
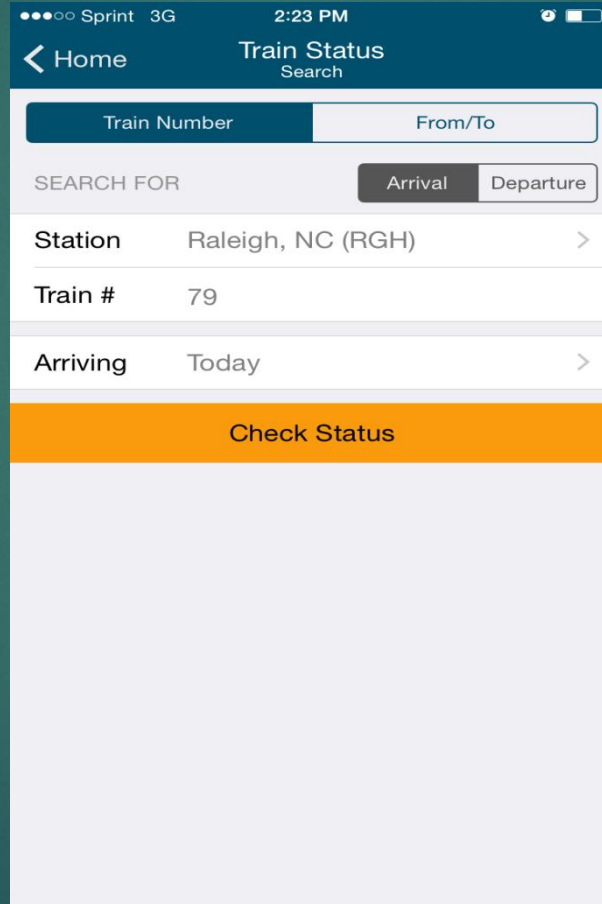
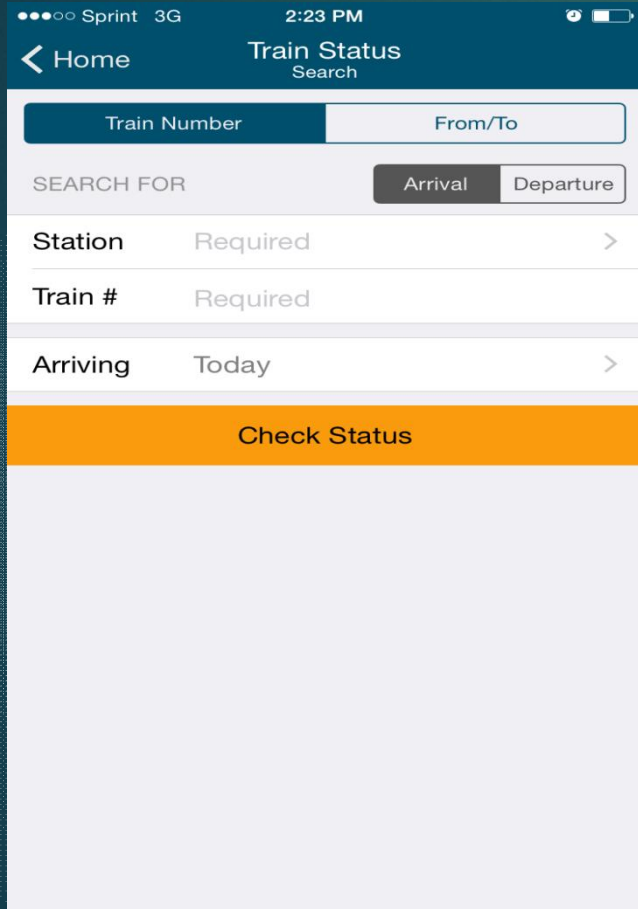
State Required >

Zip Code Required

Country United States >

\$119.00 Charge to Card Buy Tickets

# Train Status



# Stations

Sprint LTE 2:36 PM

Home Stations List Map

Search

My Stations City State/Prov.

A

- Abbotsford, BC (ABT)  
Bus Station
- Aberdeen, MD (ABE)
- Absecon, NJ (ABN)  
NJ Transit Station
- Alamosa, CO (AMC)  
Bus Stop
- Alanson, MI (ALA)  
Bus Stop
- Albany, OR (ALY)
- Albion, MI (ALI)
- Albuquerque, NM (ABQ)
- Aldershot, ON (AST)
- Alderson, WV (ALD)
- Alexandria, VA (ALX)

A  
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Y

## 6 APPENDIX B

### 6.1 Peer Review of Reservations and Ticketing

The reservation and ticketing processes of 27 state supported short distance services were analyzed to understand the current practices of similar operations nationwide. Not only is each route similar in scale, but also in the type of operating agreement established with Amtrak.

#### 6.1.1 Adirondack

The Adirondack is a passenger train operated daily by Amtrak between New York City and Montreal. The route traverses roughly 381 miles through the Hudson Valley serving 19 cities daily. The Adirondack service is managed by the New York State Department of Transportation.

Tickets can be purchased online through the ticketing widget, over the phone by 1-800-USA-RAIL, at quick-trak kiosks, at select stations, and through the smart phone mobile app. Tickets can be received by email, printed at ticket machines, and by mail.

When purchasing the tickets online via the Amtrak website the ticket options vary in price and departure time, but all offered coach seats are “reserved”.

#### 6.1.2 Albany- Niagara Falls

The Albany-Niagara Falls route is the Upstate portion of the larger “Empire Service” route and is a higher speed train service operated by Amtrak in New York. This route provides daily service west of Albany and is served by a total of four trains in each direction daily. The total route from Niagara Falls to New York City is roughly 460 miles long. This service is managed by the New York State Department of Transportation.

Tickets can be purchased online through the ticketing widget, over the phone by 1-800-USA-RAIL, at quick-trak kiosks, at select stations, and through the smart phone mobile app. Tickets can be received by email, printed at ticket machines, and by mail.

When purchasing the tickets online via the Amtrak website the ticket options vary in price and departure time, but all offered coach seats are “reserved”. Business class seats do not display either a “reserved” or “unreserved” description.

#### 6.1.3 Blue Water

The Blue Water is a higher-speed passenger train service operated by Amtrak as part of its Michigan Services. The 319-mile line connects Port Huron, Michigan, and Chicago, Illinois, via East Lansing, Michigan.

Tickets can be purchased online through the ticketing widget, over the phone by 1-800-USA-RAIL, at quick-trak kiosks, at select stations, and through the smart phone mobile app. Tickets can be received by email, printed at ticket machines, and by mail.



When purchasing the tickets online via the Amtrak website the ticket options vary in price and departure time, but all offered coach seats are “reserved”.

#### 6.1.4 Capital Corridor

The Capitol Corridor is passenger rail service operated by Amtrak that spans over seven counties with a population totaling more than 6.7 million. Serving 17 stations along a 168-mile corridor, the Capitol Corridor runs 30 daily trains between Sacramento/Auburn and San Jose/Diridon, California. While the service is operated by Amtrak, the Capitol Corridor is fully funded by the state through Caltrans Division of Rail and Mass Transportation (DRMT). The trains are administered by the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority (CCJPA) and managed by employees of Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART).

Tickets can be purchased online via the Amtrak ticketing widget. While the Capital Corridor’s website ([www.capitalcorridor.org](http://www.capitalcorridor.org)) is equipped with an interface that allows the consumer to key in departure/arrival locations and times, once the entry is submitted the site is redirected to the Amtrak website to enter payment information. Tickets can also be purchased by calling the dedicated Capital Corridor line 1-877-9-RIDECC, at a Quik Trak kiosk at select stations, or on the Amtrak mobile app.

When purchasing tickets online via the Amtrak website reserved seating is only listed for the thruway bus routes, while the rail routes only list unreserved seating options.

#### 6.1.5 Cascades

The Amtrak Cascades is a passenger train route in the Pacific Northwest that is operated by the National Railroad Passenger Corporation and sponsored by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). The service runs along a 467-mile corridor between Eugene, Oregon and Vancouver, British Columbia connecting a total of 18 cities.

There are three daily roundtrips between Portland and Seattle, one daily roundtrip between Seattle and Vancouver, one between Portland and Vancouver, and a daily service between Eugene and Seattle.

Tickets can be purchased online through the Amtrak ticketing widget, over the phone by 1-800-USA-RAIL, at quick-trak kiosks, at select stations, and through the smart phone mobile app. Similar to the Capital Corridor website, there is dedicated Cascades site ([www.amtrakcascades.com](http://www.amtrakcascades.com)) with a ticketing interface, however users are eventually redirected to the Amtrak site for final payment. Tickets can be received by email, printed at ticket machines, and by mail.

When purchasing the tickets online via the Amtrak website the ticket options vary in price and departure time, but all offered coach seats are “reserved”.

Similar to NCDOT, WSDOT and ODOT are charged by Amtrak for talk time per reservation.

#### 6.1.6 Chicago-St. Louis (Lincoln Service)

The Lincoln Service is a 284-mile higher-speed rail service operated by Amtrak that runs between Chicago, Illinois and St. Louis, Missouri. The train is a part of the Illinois Service and is partially funded by the Illinois Department of Transportation. The route provides four round trips daily and serves nine cities.

Tickets can be purchased online through the ticketing widget, over the phone by 1-800-USA-RAIL, at quick-trak kiosks, at select stations, and through the smart phone mobile app. Tickets can be received by email, printed at ticket machines, and by mail.

When purchasing the tickets online via the Amtrak website the ticket options vary in price and departure time, but all offered coach seats are “reserved”. Business class seats do not display either a “reserved” or “unreserved” description.

#### 6.1.7 Downeaster

The Amtrak Downeaster is a passenger route between Massachusetts and Maine that is managed by the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA). The route runs from Boston to Brunswick along a 145-mile rail corridor in 12 cities across three states. The Amtrak Downeaster provides five roundtrips per day with three train sets.

Tickets can be purchased online through the Amtrak ticketing widget, over the phone by 1-800-USA-RAIL, at quick-trak kiosks, at select stations, and through the smart phone mobile app. Similar to the Capital Corridor website, there is dedicated Downeaster site ([www.amtrakdowneaster.com](http://www.amtrakdowneaster.com)) with a ticketing interface, however users are eventually redirected to the Amtrak site for final payment. Tickets can be received by email, printed at ticket machines, and by mail.

When purchasing the tickets online via the Amtrak website the ticket options vary in price and departure time, but all offered coach seats are “reserved”. Business class seats do not display either a “reserved” or “unreserved” description.

Similar to NCDOT, NNEPRA is charged by Amtrak for talk time per reservation.

#### 6.1.8 Empire

The Empire Service is a higher speed train service operated by Amtrak within the state of New York. Trains on the line provide frequent daily service along the 460-mile Empire Corridor between New York City and Niagara Falls, New York via Albany, the state capital. Hourly weekday service is available on the Hudson portion of the line between New York Penn Station and Albany-Rensselaer. The Upstate portion west of Albany extends to Niagara Falls and is served daily by four trains in each direction.

Tickets can be purchased online through the ticketing widget, over the phone by 1-800-USA-RAIL, at quick-trak kiosks, at select stations, and through the smart phone mobile app. Tickets can be received by email, printed at ticket machines, and by mail.

When purchasing the tickets online via the Amtrak website the ticket options vary in price and departure time, but all offered coach seats are “reserved”. Business class seats do not display either a “reserved” or “unreserved” description.

#### 6.1.9 Ethan Allen

The Ethan Allen Express is a 241-mile passenger train service operated by Amtrak between New York City and Rutland, Vermont, via Albany, New York. Operations are subsidized by the state of Vermont. The route runs daily and serves 12 cities.

Tickets can be purchased online through the ticketing widget, over the phone by 1-800-USA-RAIL, at quick-trak kiosks, at select stations, and through the smart phone mobile app. Tickets can be received by email, printed at ticket machines, and by mail.

When purchasing the tickets online via the Amtrak website the ticket options vary in price and departure time, but all offered coach seats are “reserved”. Business class seats do not display either a “reserved” or “unreserved” description.

#### 6.1.10 Heartland Flyer

The Heartland Flyer is a daily passenger train that follows a 206-mile route from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma to Fort Worth, Texas. Amtrak serves as contractor, initially only for the State of Oklahoma, but now also for the State of Texas. The train makes one daily round trip from Oklahoma City to Fort Worth.

Tickets can be purchased online through the Amtrak ticketing widget, over the phone by 1-800-USA-RAIL, at quick-trak kiosks, at select stations, and through the smart phone mobile app. Similar to the Capital Corridor website, there is dedicated Heartland Flyer site ([www.heartlandflyer.com](http://www.heartlandflyer.com)), however users are redirected to the Amtrak site upon clicking ‘make reservations’. Tickets can be received by email, printed at ticket machines, and by mail.

When purchasing the tickets online via the Amtrak website the ticket options vary in price and departure time, but all offered coach seats are “reserved”. Business class seats do not display either a “reserved” or “unreserved” description.

#### 6.1.11 Hiawatha

The Hiawatha is a daily service operated by Amtrak, with seven round trips. The route traverses 86 miles from Milwaukee, Wisconsin to Chicago, Illinois. The service also makes intermediate stops in Glenview, IL, and Sturtevant, WI.

Tickets can be purchased online via the Amtrak ticketing widget. There is a dedicated site for the Hiawatha service ([www.amtrakhiawatha.com](http://www.amtrakhiawatha.com)) that is equipped with an interface that allows the consumer to key in departure/arrival locations and times, however once the entry is submitted the site is redirected to the Amtrak website to make seat selections and enter payment information. Tickets can also be purchased by calling 1-800-USA-RAIL, at a quick-trak kiosk at select stations, in person, or on the Amtrak mobile app.

When purchasing the tickets online via the Amtrak website all ticket options offer “unreserved” seats.

#### 6.1.12 Hoosier State

The Hoosier State is an Amtrak passenger train that provides service on a 196-mile route from Chicago to Indianapolis. The Amtrak route is currently managed by Iowa Pacific Holdings.

Tickets can be purchased online through the ticketing widget, over the phone by 1-800-USA-RAIL, at quick-trak kiosks, at select stations, and through the smart phone mobile app. Tickets can be received by email, printed at ticket machines, and by mail.

When purchasing the tickets online via the Amtrak all offered coach seats are “reserved”.

#### 6.1.13 Illini

The Illini is an Amtrak passenger train service on a 310-mile route between Chicago and Carbondale, Illinois with serving an additional nine cities at intermediate stops. It is part of Amtrak's Illinois Service and is primarily funded by the state of Illinois.

Tickets can be purchased online through the ticketing widget, over the phone by 1-800-USA-RAIL, at quick-trak kiosks, at select stations, and through the smart phone mobile app. Tickets can be received by email, printed at ticket machines, and by mail.

When purchasing the tickets online via the Amtrak all offered coach seats are "reserved".

#### 6.1.14 Illinois Zephyr

The Illinois Zephyr is a 258-mile passenger train operated by Amtrak that runs between Chicago and Quincy, Illinois and serves a total of 12 cities. The train is a part of the Illinois Service rail network and is partially funded by the Illinois Department of Transportation.

Tickets can be purchased online through the ticketing widget, over the phone by 1-800-USA-RAIL, at quick-trak kiosks, at select stations, and through the smart phone mobile app. Tickets can be received by email, printed at ticket machines, and by mail.

When purchasing the tickets online via the Amtrak all offered coach seats are "reserved".

#### 6.1.15 Kansas City- St. Louis (Missouri River Runner)

The Missouri River Runner is a 283-mile passenger train route operated by Amtrak running between Gateway Multimodal Transportation Center in St. Louis and Kansas City Union Station in Kansas City, Missouri. Four trains operate daily (two round trips) on this route. This route also serves eight additional cities through intermediate stops.

Tickets can be purchased online through the ticketing widget, over the phone by 1-800-USA-RAIL, at quick-trak kiosks, at select stations, and through the smart phone mobile app. Tickets can be received by email, printed at ticket machines, and by mail.

When purchasing the tickets online via the Amtrak all offered coach seats are "reserved". Business class seats do not display either a "reserved" or "unreserved" description.

#### 6.1.16 Keystone

Amtrak's 195-mile Keystone Service provides frequent higher speed passenger train service along the Amtrak-owned Keystone Corridor between the Harrisburg Transportation Center in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and 30th Street Station in Philadelphia. A total of 21 cities are served by the Keystone route. On weekdays there are thirteen Keystone trains in each direction.

Tickets can be purchased online through the ticketing widget, over the phone by 1-800-USA-RAIL, at quick-trak kiosks, at select stations, and through the smart phone mobile app. Tickets can be received by email, printed at ticket machines, and by mail.

When purchasing the tickets online via the Amtrak all offered coach seats are "unreserved".

#### 6.1.17 New Haven-Springfield

The New Haven–Springfield Line is a railroad line owned and operated by Amtrak from New Haven, Connecticut, to Springfield, Massachusetts. The 60.5-mile route serves a total of eight cities.

Tickets can be purchased online through the ticketing widget, over the phone by 1-800-USA-RAIL, at quick-trak kiosks, at select stations, and through the smart phone mobile app. Tickets can be received by email, printed at ticket machines, and by mail. It is important to note that tickets for this route are listed under “Shuttle” and not by route name “New Haven-Springfield”.

When purchasing the tickets online via the Amtrak all offered coach seats are “reserved”.

#### 6.1.18 Pacific Surfliner

The Pacific Surfliner is a 350-mile passenger train operated by Amtrak, with funding from the California Department of Transportation as part of the Amtrak California network. The Pacific Surfliner serves the communities on the coast of Southern California between San Diego and San Luis Obispo. The Pacific Surfliner operates 11 daily trains between Los Angeles and San Diego on weekdays, 12 on weekends. A total of 32 cities are served by this route.

Tickets can be purchased online via the Amtrak ticketing widget. There is a dedicated site for Amtrak California, ([www.AmtrakCalifornia.com](http://www.AmtrakCalifornia.com)) that is equipped with an interface that allows the consumer to key in departure/arrival locations and times, however once the entry is submitted the site is redirected to the Amtrak website to make seat selections and enter payment information. Tickets can also be purchased by calling 1-800-USA-RAIL, at a quik-trak kiosk at select stations, in person, or on the Amtrak mobile app.

When purchasing the tickets online via the Amtrak website all ticket options offer “unreserved” seats.

#### 6.1.19 Pennsylvanian

The Pennsylvanian is a 444-mile Amtrak operated passenger train route running between New York and Pittsburgh via Philadelphia. Trains run once daily in each direction. The Pennsylvanian is a once a day replacement of the Keystone service between New York and Pittsburgh, offering Business Class seating as an upgrade to the coach-only seating on Keystone trains. A total of 17 cities are served by the Pennsylvanian route.

Tickets can be purchased online through the ticketing widget, over the phone by 1-800-USA-RAIL, at quick-trak kiosks, at select stations, and through the smart phone mobile app. Tickets can be received by email, printed at ticket machines, and by mail.

When purchasing the tickets online via the Amtrak all offered coach seats are “reserved”.

#### 6.1.20 Pere Marquette

The Pere Marquette is a passenger train operated by Amtrak as part of its Michigan Services on the 176-mile route between Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Chicago, Illinois. It is funded in part by the Michigan Department of Transportation and serves five cities.

Tickets can be purchased online through the ticketing widget, over the phone by 1-800-USA-RAIL, at quick-trak kiosks, at select stations, and through the smart phone mobile app. Tickets can be received by email, printed at ticket machines, and by mail.

When purchasing the tickets online via the Amtrak all offered coach seats are “reserved”.

#### 6.1.21 San Joaquin

The San Joaquin is a passenger train operated by Amtrak, with funding from the California Department of Transportation as part of the Amtrak California network in California's Central Valley. Twelve trains a day run 315 miles between its southern terminus at Bakersfield and Stockton, where the route splits to Oakland (four trains each way per day) or Sacramento (two trains each way per day).

Tickets can be purchased online via the Amtrak ticketing widget. There is a dedicated site for Amtrak California, ([www.AmtrakCalifornia.com](http://www.AmtrakCalifornia.com)) that is equipped with an interface that allows the consumer to key in departure/arrival locations and times, however once the entry is submitted the site is redirected to the Amtrak website to make seat selections and enter payment information. Tickets can also be purchased by calling 1-800-USA-RAIL, at a quik-trak kiosk at select stations, in person, or on the Amtrak mobile app.

When purchasing the tickets online via the Amtrak website all ticket options offer “unreserved” seats.

#### 6.1.22 Vermonter

The Vermonter is a 611-mile passenger train operated by Amtrak between St. Albans, Vermont, New York City, and Washington, D.C. An additional 28 cities are served by this route along intermediate stops. This route operates one daily round trip.

Tickets can be purchased online through the ticketing widget, over the phone by 1-800-USA-RAIL, at quick-trak kiosks, at select stations, and through the smart phone mobile app. Tickets can be received by email, printed at ticket machines, and by mail.

When purchasing the tickets online via the Amtrak all offered coach seats are “reserved”.

#### 6.1.23 Washington-Lynchburg

Amtrak's Washington to Lynchburg service is part of the larger 664-mile Northeast Regional route. This offshoot of the Northeast Regional route serves 7 cities with 18 trains per day in each direction. The route is supported by the Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation.

Tickets can be purchased online through the ticketing widget, over the phone by 1-800-USA-RAIL, at quick-trak kiosks, at select stations, and through the smart phone mobile app. Tickets can be received by email, printed at ticket machines, and by mail.

When purchasing the tickets online via the Amtrak all offered coach seats are “reserved”. Business class seats do not display either a “reserved” or “unreserved” description.

#### 6.1.24 Washington-Newport News

Amtrak's Washington to Newport News service is an offshoot of the larger 664-mile Northeast Regional route. This offshoot of the Northeast Regional route serves 10 cities with 18 trains per day in each direction. The route is supported by the Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation.

Tickets can be purchased online through the ticketing widget, over the phone by 1-800-USA-RAIL, at quick-trak kiosks, at select stations, and through the smart phone mobile app. Tickets can be received by email, printed at ticket machines, and by mail.

When purchasing the tickets online via the Amtrak all offered coach seats are "reserved". Business class seats do not display either a "reserved" or "unreserved" description.

#### 6.1.25 Wolverine

The Wolverine is a higher-speed passenger train service operated by Amtrak as part of its Michigan Services. The 304-mile line provides three daily round-trips along the Pontiac–Detroit–Chicago route. The route serves a total of 17 cities.

Tickets can be purchased online through the ticketing widget, over the phone by 1-800-USA-RAIL, at quick-trak kiosks, at select stations, and through the smart phone mobile app. Tickets can be received by email, printed at ticket machines, and by mail.

When purchasing the tickets online via the Amtrak all offered coach seats are "reserved". Business class seats do not display either a "reserved" or "unreserved" description.