

RICHMOND
Friends of Rail **Bulletin**



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RICHMOND RAIL RIDERSHIP GROWTH REFLECTS NATIONAL AMTRAK SURGING NUMBERS

With two months to go in its fiscal year, Amtrak's Richmond riders have increased by 49 percent at Main Street Station and by 16 percent at Staples Mill Station over the same period in the previous fiscal year.

The Richmond rail rider increase reflects Amtrak records set nationally for the fiscal year to date—Oct. 1, 2007, through July 31, 2008. Total ridership for Amtrak during that period reached 23.7 million, up more than two million from Oct. 1, 2006-July 31, 2007.

In July, Richmond's two stations mirrored Amtrak's highest figures ever. Amtrak carried the most passengers in July in its 37-year history with a 14 percent increase and 2,750,278 million riders. Staples Mill carried 26,447 in July, a record for the Henrico County station. Main Street Station in July carried 2,570 passengers, more than double July 2007, also a record since the station was renovated and re-opened in 2004.

"The growth at Main Street Station is particularly remarkable because last year was expected to create record numbers of riders traveling to Williamsburg for the 400th Jamestown anniversary celebration," said Charles M. (Chip) Louthan, chairman of Richmond Friends of Rail, an advocacy group dedicated to bringing improved rail service

to the Richmond area. "Instead, the record was created this year by double last year's numbers."

From October 2006 through July 2007, a total of 11,463 travelers used Main Street Station. In the same period from last October through July, a total of 17,566 riders, on and off, were Main Street passengers.

Four trains serve Main Street Station to Williamsburg and Newport News and to Norfolk by bus connection. Two trains leave Richmond for the Peninsula and two trains return.

Charles W. McIntyre, station agent at Staples Mill, said the growth in riders is beginning to create parking shortages at the station. "Richmond is going to have to look at more parking," he said.

Louthan said the growth in rail ridership has come with no promotion. While airlines and Richmond International Airport promote Richmond air travel, Amtrak's chronically underfunded rail service does not offer specials, incentives or other comparable advertising that would promote even more riders. North Carolina, Louthan said, owns its own railroad and conducts an ongoing rail marketing program sponsored by the state Rail Division for Amtrak. (www.bytrain.org) McIntyre is convinced that promotion would bring even more riders to Amtrak's Richmond rail service.

In Amtrak's announcement of its record July, Alex Kummant, CEO and president, attributed the rider growth to high fuel prices, congestion, airline issues and environmental awareness. He also said service improvements and on-time performance are drawing more Amtrak riders and revenue.

Amtrak cited stations nationally that experienced record growth--- such as a 37.7 percent increase in July over the same month in 2007 by the Hiawatha Service in Wisconsin and the Midwest Heartland Flyer's growth of 40.2 percent. Main Street

Station's 49 percent increase exceeded any of the record growth percentages reported by Amtrak.

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