

PEW ANALYSIS SHOWS AMTRAK LOST \$32 PER PASSENGER IN 2008

Washington— The average loss per passenger on Amtrak's 44 nationwide routes was more than \$32 in FY2008, according to analysis released today by Pew's Subsidyscope project. This is four times higher than the loss of \$8 per passenger, which was calculated using Amtrak's own figures. Further, 41 of Amtrak's 44 lines lost money, between \$5 and \$462 per passenger depending on the route. Amtrak received \$1.3 billion in direct payments from the federal government in FY2008.

Subsidyscope completed its analysis of Amtrak profits and losses by route using publicly available information. Unlike Amtrak's figures, Subsidyscope includes depreciation and overhead when calculating loss or profit per passenger on each of its rail lines, an accounting practice used in other capital intensive industries.

Amtrak's line with the highest per passenger subsidy—the Sunset Limited, which runs from New Orleans to Los Angeles—carried just 72,000 passengers in FY2008, at a cost to the federal government of \$462 per passenger. The California Zephyr, which runs from Chicago to San Francisco, had the second highest per passenger subsidy of \$192. It carried nearly 353,000 passengers in FY2008.

“The nation's railways are an important mode of transport for many Americans, whether it's for commuting to work or seeing the country,” said Marcus Peacock, director of Subsidyscope. “But we have an obligation to ensure that where taxpayer dollars are at stake, people can see a more realistic picture of financial performance.”

The Northeast Corridor, which runs from Washington, D.C. to Boston, was Amtrak's least subsidized route in FY2008 and carried the highest passenger volume, nearly 10.9 million passengers. The high-speed Acela Express, one of only three Amtrak lines to turn a profit, made an average of \$41 per passenger. In comparison, the heavily utilized Northeast Regional—carrying more than twice the volume of riders as the Acela Express—lost just under \$5 per passenger in FY2008.

This analysis was released as part of Subsidyscope's broader look at all federal spending on subsidy programs in the transportation sector. Subsequent analyses will look at other sectors including energy, healthcare, nonprofits, defense, agriculture and housing.

Please visit subsidyscope.org for access to the transportation data as well as further information on federal subsidies. Subsidyscope is guided by a broad and bipartisan advisory board of budget, fiscal and transparency experts and is assisted by its technology and research partner, the Sunlight Foundation.

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