Amtrak releases criteria for restoring long-distance service

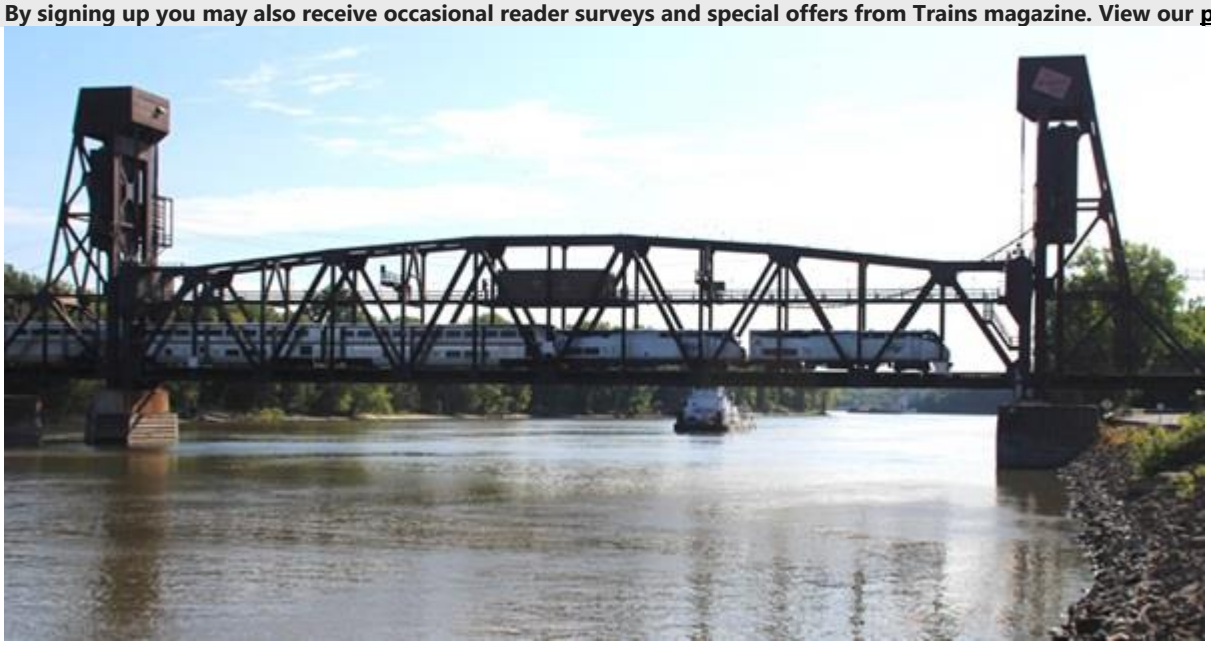
Passenger railroad says three metrics will determine when to restore daily operation after planned Oct. 1 cut to triweekly service

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Amtrak's eastbound *Empire Builder* crosses the Mississippi River at Hastings, Minn., on Aug. 5, 2020. Amtrak has released information on how it will decide to restore service for its long-distance trains after they are cut to triweekly operation in October.

TRAINS: David Lassen

Amtrak has released information on the measurements it will use to determine restoration of long-distance service after the service is cut to triweekly, which is currently planned for Oct. 1. The three metrics to be used are:

— Public health: COVID-19 hospitalizations must be stable or declining as of Feb. 15, 2021.

— Future demand: Advance bookings for June 2021 must be at least 90% of the available seat-miles or room-miles of the figure for June 2020, as of Feb. 15, 2020. Calculations will take into consideration caps on ticket sales to promote social distancing, as well as other COVID-related measures.

— Current performance: Ridership in the first quarter of Amtrak’s 2021 fiscal year, which begins in September, must be at least 90% of projections in Amtrak’s 2021 operating plan.

If all three criteria are met for a given route, service will be restored to daily levels as early as May 2021 and no later than June 30, 2021. In releasing the metrics, Amtrak notes that the plans for reductions and subsequent restoration are dependent on sufficient federal assistance, which it says requires at least $3.5 billion for fiscal 2021.

While the Oct. 1 date for service reduction has been announced, Amtrak has yet to announce specific scheduling plans for long-distance routes. Only *Auto Train* is scheduled to remain in daily operation after that date.

More information on the service restoration plan, including Amtrak's answers to frequently asked questions about the planned reductions, are available here.