

New Federal Officials Could Mean Altered Rail Outlook

A series of changes in top Federal officials could mean that the nation's transportation policy will be altered with definite repercussions in the area of railroad passenger service.

The highest level change is the announced appointment of Philadelphia lawyer William T. Coleman to the post of Secretary of Transportation to succeed Claude Brinegar, who resigned.

No appointment has been made to the post of Federal railroad administrator to fill the post vacated by John Ingram, but former Congressman Richard Shoup of Montana has been mentioned for the post. The congressman was noted in 1974 for his sponsorship of the Shoup-Adams bill, and is known to be sympathetic to rail passenger service. Meanwhile, Asaph Hall continues as acting administrator.

The third major appointment, when it comes, will be the employment of a new chief executive for Amtrak. (See story in the next column).

Other significant personnel changes: Interstate Commerce Commissioner Dan O'Neal, a friend of the railroad passenger, has been elected vice chairman of the Interstate Commerce Commission. Robert J. Corber, a Virginian who practices transportation law in Washington, has been nominated by President Ford for a seat on the commission to replace W. Donald Brewer, who retired in June.

Robert F. Lawson, Penn Central's general manager-passengers, has been named chief engineering officer of Amtrak, responsible for construction, inspection and maintenance of stations, track, radio communications equipment and fueling facilities.

Coleman has a background in transportation confined largely to urban mass transit, although he is a member of the board of directors of Pan American World Airways. He has served as a labor negotiator for the Southeast Pennsylvania Transportation Authority and is reportedly regarded favorably by organized labor.

With a demonstrated interest in rail transportation, Coleman should be an improvement over Brinegar who publicly favored bus transportation over long-haul rail service.

An official of the Association of American Railroads predicted that it would be "quite some time" before America even contemplates 200 m.p.h. trains, as are now being planned for Europe. He said only three per cent of rail travel revenue is due to passengers, and that the future of the railroads is in hauling freight. (See below and article on Page 3.)



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

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Amtrak's new "Michigan Executive," providing improved commuter service into Detroit from the west, went into operation January 20. The new train took over week-day passenger operations from Penn Central, extending service west of the former terminus at Ann Arbor to Chelsea and Jackson. It is the first rail service in Chelsea in 15 years. The train receives a state subsidy.

Reistrup Selected For Amtrak Job; Besson May Be Chairman

A committee of Amtrak directors reportedly has offered the job of president and chief executive officer of the National Railroad Passenger Corporation to Paul H. Reistrup, a Chicago railroad executive.

The board may name one of the original Amtrak incorporators, Frank S. Besson, Jr., a retired four-star army general, as chairman of the board.

The seven-member committee reportedly was unanimous in the decision to recommend to the board that Reistrup be offered the post.

One source said the committee had made its determination "subject to a couple of things we have to find out." Such matters apparently include details such as pension rights and the like.

Reistrup has been considered a favorite since it was made known last summer that Roger Lewis, president, chairman and chief executive, had decided to step down. Lewis, who has been chief executive since Amtrak started operations in mid-1971, has been the target of frequent criticism over Amtrak's failure to modernize and improve passenger service.

Reistrup, 42, is senior vice president for traffic at the Illinois Central Gulf Railroad. He apparently has indicated his willingness to accept the post on the condition that Amtrak's board continue working with Congress to raise the salary level. A move to do so late last session of Congress was unsuccessful.

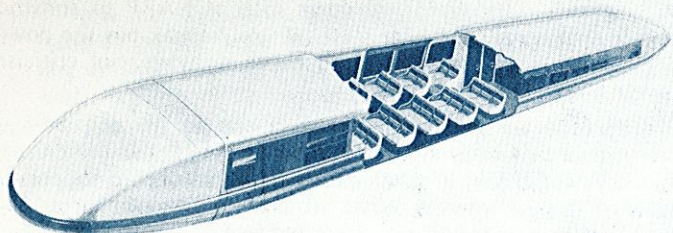
General Besson, who lives in Alexandria, Virginia, and is a consultant to General Research Corporation of Santa Barbara, Cal., after World War II served in the Western Pacific as chief of transportation on General MacArthur's staff. He was responsible for controlling and rehabilitating the entire Japanese transportation system.

Amtrak directors who feel that the railroad's top job should be in the hands of a railroad man have been seeking Reistrup for the top job for several months.

Lewis had been chief executive at General Dynamics Corp., and had been an executive at Pan American World Airways, Inc.

Reistrup won wide publicity in the railroad industry during the middle 1960s because of his innovative moves to spur the flagging passenger business of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, where he was vice president for passenger services.

He experimented with discount fares, overhauled the food service program, tried movies on the train, began an automobile ferry service between Washington and Chicago and had an extensive refurbishing program. Although it failed to reverse the downward trend in business, the program reportedly did not increase B&O's passenger deficit.



Artist's concept of proposed 80 passenger, 300 miles per hour, wheelless magnetic vehicle to be designed for Federal Railroad Administration by Rohr Industries, Chula Vista, Calif. Vehicle's ROMAG electromagnetic system would combine suspension above a guideway with propulsion. System will be tested at China Lake, California, with rocket motors accelerating a small test vehicle to 300 mile speed.

Southern Railway Announces Service Cuts; NARP Protests

NARP has filed a protest with the Interstate Commerce Commission against Southern Railway's announced reduction of service by the "Southern Crescent."

"We understand some of Southern's financial problems," said Orren Beaty, president of NARP, "but now we are in a new era in which railroad passenger service should be expanding, not contracting. This would be a step backward."

Southern announced several changes and discontinuances effective January 31, including cutting the "Crescent" back from daily to thrice-weekly between Atlanta and Birmingham on the Washington-New Orleans run. It would continue daily between Washington and Atlanta.

Other changes: Discontinue the Washington-Lynchburg, Va. daily train and the tri-weekly Salisbury-Ashville train in North Carolina, and eliminate service between Charlotte, N.C. and Atlanta on the "Piedmont," which will continue daily service between Charlotte and Washington.

Further cuts in the Southern Crescent schedule are unlikely this year. In a statement to NARP NEWS several weeks ago, W. Graham Claytor said:

"As I have stated publicly on several occasions, there are no plans to seek to discontinue operation of the Southern Crescent in the foreseeable future. The Southern Crescent is our flagship train and we're proud of it. It's losing about \$3 million a year, but it's worth continuing for the good will and public relations. We are absolutely sure we'll keep it running through 1975."

Continuing a dialogue between NARP members on Southern service, F.C. Standley of Michigan City, Indiana wrote: "The decision of Southern not to join Amtrak was made by Mr. Claytor because, among other reasons if I recall newspaper reports of the era correctly, he wanted to be free to operate passenger service in the excellent tradition of the Southern Railway. In these days of fuel shortage rail passenger business is increasing and is bound to continue to increase.

"Perhaps a compelling reason for Mr. Claytor's desire to discontinue service is not the lack of passengers or potential business but his reluctance to refurbish his present equipment or purchase new equipment."

"To state the situation briefly, Mr. Claytor has made his own bed and now he must be made to lie in it."

Amtrak reportedly spent \$1,500,000 to "prove" that its proposed auto-ferry service from the Midwest to Florida wouldn't work. More than \$500,000 of the total was spent for purchase and modification of 20 automobile rack cars, which are now "parked" at a repair shop in Indiana. Amtrak continues to pay rent for these cars.

NARP AND THE RAILROADS

By Anthony Haswell

The new NARP leadership will be confronted for quite some time with the same kind of tough policy decisions that the former board and management had to wrestle with for the past seven years. A good example is NARP's relationship with the railroad industry.

Shortly after NARP began in 1967, it became obvious that the railroads generally wanted out of passenger service. The change of management attitude at Burlington and Northern Pacific, together with the massive withdrawal by the Post Office of mail from passenger trains, ended any chance that the few remaining "pro-passenger" railroads could turn the tide even if they wanted to.

Under the circumstances there seemed no escape from the necessity of adopting an adversary posture toward the industry, as reflected in NARP's vigorous participation in selected "train-off" cases. We felt that it was essential to convince the railroads that total abandonment of passenger service was not legally or politically feasible. Our reasoning was that once they were so persuaded, they would cooperate, however grudgingly, in a government-aided solution which would ameliorate their passenger-related financial problems short of total discontinuance. The creation of Amtrak appears to have justified the position we took.

Some people criticized NARP in those pre-Amtrak days for being too antagonistic toward the railroads. They thought that NARP should concentrate its energies on helping to correct unfair governmental policies toward railroads, and in persuading rail management to be less negative about passenger service. I sincerely believe that such an approach would have left us with far fewer passenger trains than we have today.

Since the coming of Amtrak, there have been a number of instances where railroads have refused to give Amtrak full cooperation.

At first NARP was directly critical of the railroads, both in Congressional testimony and elsewhere. My instinct now is that this may have been a mistake. First, in at least some cases, the railroad position was a reaction to the professional inexperience and incompetence of Amtrak.

Second, since Amtrak has the legal and financial responsibility for passenger service, it is up to Amtrak to stand up for its interests. If Amtrak fails to do so—as it has in too many instances—it is difficult for outsiders such as NARP to convince people that a railroad is at fault. Where Amtrak has the power and right to force a railroad to mend its ways, our criticism should be directed at Amtrak.

Hopefully we are now closer than ever to the day we have often dreamed about since 1967—when NARP and the railroad industry would join in whole-hearted cooperation in support of goals of mutual interest. After all, NARP is certainly "pro-railroad" in that we desire a truly modern rail system for both passengers and freight. But until that millennium arrives, I believe that NARP must continue to be critical of the industry and of individual companies whenever criticism is clearly appropriate.

It follows, of course, that NARP could be as quick to praise a railroad where praise is warranted as it is to criticize where criticism is warranted.

Amtrak's Norfolk-Cincinnati, Boston-Cleveland-Chicago Trains Will Begin in 1975

The new Boston-Cleveland-Chicago Amtrak service may start as early as September, 1975, according to an Amtrak official.

The service was announced by Amtrak in June, 1974, but was delayed due to involved planning and lack of equipment.

The Amtrak official explained that, by September, Amtrak's busy summer season will be over and cars can be diverted to the new route. Also, some new Amtrak equipment will be coming "on stream" at that time.

Amtrak's new Norfolk-Cincinnati service will begin daily revenue operation on March 25, serving Suffolk, Petersburg, Nottaway County Station (at Crewe, Va.), Farmville, Lynchburg, Bedford, Roanoke, Christiansburg and Narrows-Pearisburg, Va.; Bluefield, Welch and Williamson, W.Va.; a new station between Kenova, W.Va., and Ashland, Ky.; and terminating in Cincinnati.

Through service will be provided to and from Chicago by linking at Ashland, Kentucky, with Amtrak's current Washington-Chicago train, the James Whitcomb Riley.

The new train, designated as a two-year experimental service by the Secretary of Transportation, will include coach and sleeping car accommodations and lunch and hot food facilities.

Amtrak has authorized almost \$2 million for stations, track and facilities on the new route. Fares have not been established.

ICG ORDERED TO REPAIR TRACK, ROADBED

A landmark decision was issued by the National Arbitration Panel on December 31 calling for the Illinois Central Gulf Railroad to perform certain track and roadbed improvements on the route of the Amtrak Panama Limited.

The railroad was ordered to perform the work at its "sole expense" by the end of 1976, with 55 per cent to be accomplished during the 1975 work season.

(The National Arbitration Panel was established by an April 16, 1971, agreement to privately handle and settle questions which might arise between Amtrak and participating railroads. It is composed of three members—one selected by Amtrak, one selected jointly by the railroads, and a chairman chosen by both parties. Most of the panel's decisions are final and not subject to appeal.)

The panel's "final award", issued Dec. 31, ordered ICG to "put into effect immediately" a program of ballasting, surfacing and alignment; repair or replace all defective turnouts, highway grade crossings and railroad crossings on mainline track used by the Panama Limited; control vegetation within ten feet of the Panama Limited track centerline and replace defective ties.

The panel stated that the work must be 55 per cent completed "during the 1975 work season" and ICG must give Amtrak, no later than Feb. 1, 1976, a detailed description of all work to be accomplished in the 1976 season.

NARP first called attention to the track and roadbed situation in April, 1973, and announced a campaign to seek "vast improvements" in track and roadbed.

Amtrak brought the ICG case to the panel in 1973. Recently, the passenger railroad called for legislation to deal with the "national problem" (in a report by Amtrak submitted recently to the Interstate Commerce Commission).

The ICC is investigating the adequacy of the 24,000 miles of track over which Amtrak trains operate to provide quality rail passenger service. Section 801 of the Amtrak Improvement Act of 1973 authorized the ICC to "promulgate and, from time to time, revise such regulations as it considers necessary to provide adequate service, equipment, tracks and other facilities for quality intercity rail passenger service."

Amtrak had been asked to provide the Commission with information on six areas: present track conditions; technological advances in the rail industry; time and expenditures which would be required were rail lines to be restored to their May 1971 level of utility; the effect upgrading track might have on rail passenger patronage; a cost-benefit analysis of providing improved trackage between various locales, and the physical problems inherent in dual freight and passenger usage of some 24,000 miles of track.

An Amtrak official has characterized the continued deterioration of the nation's track and roadbed as "downright alarming."

He said the derailment of the Broadway Limited in December in the hills of Pennsylvania is a "warning". In that accident, approximately 40 of the train's 430 passengers were injured. Fortunately, none were seriously hurt.

Now that I'm on the other side of the desk at the Rock, some of my friends in the industry may be gleefully chuckling up their sleeves, as they picture me caught in the awkward position of standing on my own toes. But I have no intention of backing off from my concern about safety and maintenance. Merely moving from FRA to the active direction of a major railroad in no way alters the fact that maintenance on most railroads, including the Rock, needs beefing up so that there are fewer derailments, fewer personal injuries and so that service to shippers can be substantially improved. Now, it is my job to find resources to help the Rock Island meet the standards I regard as essential for the industry."

—John Ingram, President
Rock Island Railroad

Canadian sources say that Transport Minister Jean Marchand has before him a proposal to overhaul Canada's transcontinental passenger service by doing away with sleeper cars and replacing present service with a series of intercity day trains. Both CP Rail and Canadian National warn that the costs of their passenger service, now subsidized to the tune of about \$120 million a year by the government, could rise to \$200 million a year shortly and they say this can only be offset by the purchase of newer and faster equipment. Passengers traveling cross country would disembark at night and presumably stay in hotels until the next day's train left. Mr. Marchand has criticized both lines in the past for what he described as an attempt to get rid of all passenger service.

Train Goes 255 m.p.h. At Pueblo Test Center

The world's speed record for trains — 255 miles per hour — was set recently at the Pueblo Test Center operated by the U.S. Dept. of Transportation.

The record was set by the experimental LIM (linear induction motor) train, according to Jack Stauffer, director of the center.

The Center is now testing Canada's LRC train (light, rapid and comfortable). The LRC is designed to travel up to 120 miles per hour.

Meanwhile, an official of the Association of American Railroads predicted that it would be "quite some time" before America even contemplates 200 m.p.h. trains, as are now being planned for Europe. He said only three per cent of rail travel revenue is due to passengers, and that the future of the railroads is in hauling freight. So what else is new, AAR?

Meanwhile, Rohr Industries has announced receipt of a \$968,000 contract from the Federal Railroad Administration for a high-speed, magnetically-suspended research vehicle.

The contract calls for Rohr to design a wheelless, tracked, magnetically-levitated vehicle transportation system. The system would use vehicles carrying eighty passengers at 300 miles per hour, capable of being coupled together in a train to increase line capacity.

The concept will be incorporated in a small research vehicle which will be accelerated to 300 miles per hour by rockets to test the magnetic suspension system. A one kilometer test track will be built at the Naval Weapons Center, China Lake, California.

The Rohr design utilizes the ROMAG electromagnetic transportation system which combines suspension, guidance, and propulsion. Electromagnetic force is used to levitate the vehicle a few inches below a set of guide rails. The air gap is maintained during operation by servo controls, providing frictionless motion.

Columbia Records country and folk music superstar Johnny Cash received the 1974 "Golden Spike Award" for his recent ABC-TV Special, "Johnny Cash Ridin' The Rails — The Great American Train Story." The award was presented by George Falcon, publisher of KEY Magazine.

A new policy of reserved seating for evening meals on diners of long-haul trains is being implemented on Amtrak Florida service. It next will be phased into trains between Chicago and the West Coast, followed by the Coast Starlight and Sunset Limited.

ICC May Issue New Rules For Railroad Passenger Trains

The Interstate Commerce Commission has initiated an investigation to determine if it needs to issue additional rules to improve the quality of railroad passenger service. Public hearings will get underway soon.

A spokesman for the National Railroad Passenger Corp. (Amtrak), which runs nearly all of the country's intercity rail passenger service, said it will probably ask the commission to change some of its rules.

Amtrak intends to ask the ICC to require reservations to be paid for and tickets picked up 24 hours before departure time instead of the 30 minutes allowed under present ICC rules. He said this would help reduce the "no-show" problem.

Amtrak also intends to ask the ICC to modify the requirement that reserved seats be available on all trains traveling more than 200 miles. Amtrak wants to be allowed to eliminate reserved seating on all runs under 400 miles.

Aside from Amtrak, only three railroads operate intercity passenger service — Southern Railway, Denver & Rio Grande Western, and the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific.

The ICC announced its existing rules governing rail passenger service quality in December 1973. The regulations, required by Congress, range from requirements to provide passengers with free hotels and meals when they miss connecting trains to providing clean restrooms on trains and in stations. Requirements also were set down for a nationwide toll-free telephone reservation system and for the level of meal service on trains depending on length of trip.

The Commission has, in several instances, waived the rules both for Amtrak and for Southern Railway, among others. Southern received permission not to serve meals on several lightly used passenger trains.

Amtrak received authorization to eliminate reserved seating on a new train in California.

Amtrak has pending two requests: One that it be allowed to discontinue food service between midnight and 6 a.m. (a requirement on long-distance trains), and another that it be allowed to eliminate some lounge cars. A spokesman said the lounge car elimination request stems from a shortage of equipment, and the reason for eliminating all-night food service is lack of demand.

Amtrak offers ski packages at five Vermont resorts including Bolton Valley, Jay Peak, Killington-Pico Peak, Smuggler's Notch and Stowe. The program is described in the new Amtrak Ski Northeast brochure.

Amtrak passenger trains should be operating across Oregon and southern Idaho next summer. The exact date will depend upon how long it takes to re-ballast an 18-mile stretch of track near Boise and for Amtrak to get delivery on new rolling stock it will need for the added route. However, Congress has passed special legislation ordering that the route be served on an experimental basis.

'American Freedom Train' Scheduled to Roll on 1st of April

The American Freedom Train, a privately sponsored, 22-car train to exhibit historic documents, artifacts and curios on a cross-country tour celebrating the national Bicentennial, will roll on April 1.

The red, white and blue train will leave its Virginia siding on that date and head for its first stop, Wilmington, Del. From there it will proceed to Philadelphia, New York, Boston and Cleveland in its tour of the nation. It will visit more than 75 cities during 1975 and 1976.

Planned exhibits for the train's 21-month tour include articles representative of the nation's founding, its industries, sports, entertainment, explorations, and law enforcement.

Among them are 18th century documents written or signed by some of the Founding Fathers, moon rocks, the original Louisiana Purchase Agreement between the U.S. and France, a Polaroid camera, and an FBI exhibit of something it calls "wet-back disguises," which includes footwear used by alien nationals to cross the U.S. border undetected.

Like the red, white and blue Freedom Train that crossed the country in 1947, the bicentennial train will promote old-fashioned patriotism and "demonstrate the qualities that have made this nation great," according to its publicity releases.

Five major U.S. corporations have put up \$1 million each for the \$18 million project. The American Freedom Train Foundation, a nonprofit, tax-exempt group, plans to raise the rest of the money from other corporations, from sales of merchandise on the train and from \$1 to \$1.50 admission tickets.

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