

THE BATTLE FOR GOOD PASSENGER TRAINS ISN'T OVER

IMPROVED PASSENGER TRAIN SERVICE is to be the subject of a conference in Pittsburgh, December 2-4 under joint sponsorship of the Carnegie-Mellon University and the Federal Railroad Administration. Additional information may be obtained from Richard A. Uher, conference chairman, Transportation Research Institute, Baker Hall 109C, Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh.

Secretary of Transportation William Coleman has cancelled plans for high speed passenger trains in the Boston-New York-Washington corridor, on the basis that "they would cost too much."

Northeast Corridor: Bad News From Chessie, Good From Hartke

Plans to remove through freight traffic from the Penn Central New York-Washington mainline have suffered a possibly fatal blow as USRA Chairman Arthur Lewis reported a breakdown in negotiations with Chessie, whose Philadelphia-Washington line would be required for ConRail freight traffic.

FRA studies have clearly indicated that removal of the freight traffic would be the most desirable method for achieving a very high speed operation.

Chessie refuses to lease the line to ConRail or grant trackage rights over it, Lewis confirmed in an interview with Stephen Aug of the *Washington Star*. As for sale of the line, a key Chessie creditor, Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company, is unwilling to agree to a limit on the price of the corridor. In other words, the same protection against a "deficiency judgment" which Chessie is demanding as a condition for its purchase of bankrupt properties would not be afforded to the public in a purchase of Chessie property.

The public loses both ways, and we have a new argument for getting rail rights-of-way into public ownership once and for all!

Meanwhile, an encouraging note was sounded by Sen. Vance Hartke (D-Ind.) chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Surface Transportation, who responded to a heavy barrage of anti-Amtrak publicity by the National Association of Motor Bus Owners (NAMBO) as well as criticism by the Air Transport Association of Amtrak ads which unfavorably contrasted corridor air travel with Amtrak services.

The Indiana Senator commended Amtrak "for its efforts to increase ridership," and said that "it is clear that sound federal policy dictates an increase in the usage of the rail mode in the Northeast corridor, even if this occurs at the expense of the other modes."

Senator Hartke noted that air and highway modes are substantially overcrowded at times and said that federal dollars for improving intercity transportation "are most efficiently spent on improving rail transportation."

NARP has observed for several years the ineffective Washington lobbying efforts by NAMBO and doubts that the current campaign will achieve any notable successes, although it should inform more people that rail passenger service *is* available. One reason is the obvious response to one of the NAMBO ad headlines, which reads: "For what it's costing to keep AMTRAK going, UNCLE SAM COULD BUY A BUS TICKET FOR EVERY AMTRAK PASSENGER for the next two years and three months AND SAVE AMERICA'S TAXPAYERS at least \$140 MILLION." The problem is that most Amtrak passengers would not use those tickets — AMTRAK exists because it provides a higher comfort level than do buses, and therefore is able to entice passengers out of automobiles and airplanes more effectively.

Amtrak's encouraging ridership trends over the past few years

Trouble is ahead for the passenger train, if three documents just released are any indication.

They are: "A Statement of National Transportation Policy" by Secretary of Transportation William T. Coleman, Jr.; Amtrak's "Five Year Financial and Operating Plan Fiscal Year (FY) 1976-FY 1980" dated August, 1975; and "The Criteria and Procedures for Making Route and Services Decisions" submitted by the Amtrak Board to the Congress, the ICC, and the Administration.

Secretary Coleman's document contained no surprises, and emphasized the elimination of public subsidies as well as cross subsidies within the private sector. While the indefinite continuation of some airline subsidies is clearly implied, the future of Amtrak is discussed in disappointingly equivocal terms.

Acknowledging that "additional Federal investment" will be required "to reach a position where (Amtrak has) an equal opportunity to compete", Coleman states: "If rails cannot compete successfully... a basic decision must be made consciously as to whether the national priorities justify long-term Federal subsidy...".

Hopefully, that conscious decision will be made with full consideration of all factors, not just immediate subsidy requirements. When will it be made?

The policy statement refers to "three or four years". Yet Amtrak's true test won't *begin* for at least five years. Only by then, if all goes well, will Penn Central (then ConRail) tracks be in good condition. According to Amtrak's Five-Year Plan, only starting in FY 1980 (the FY ends on September 30) will Amtrak be "in the position to fully exploit a modernized fleet of passenger cars and locomotives."

Even the penny-pinching Amtrak plan foresees a FY '80 operating deficit of \$360 million (\$79 million in 1974 dollars), although it does expect revenues to exceed subsidy, instead of the reverse as in FY '75, and shows revenue passenger miles more than doubling during the five-year period, from 3.85 million to 8.63 million.

The Coleman report notes ominously that a "benefit" of the Amtrak law is that "it provides for the first time a public exposure of the real cost of passenger rail service."

Regarding costs, the Secretary's expressed intention to "encourage the continued development of more efficient labor... practices" in rail freight contrasts with the lack of any reference to labor on the passenger side. Amtrak's apparent decision to locate a new Miami station "out in the sticks" in Opa Locka, largely because of work rules, reinforces our belief that one use-

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in the face of inadequate service quality is testimony to the importance of the rail mode as one component of our passenger transport system.

NARP supporters who really want to "know the enemy" would be amused to acquire from NAMBO (1025 Connecticut Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20036) a leaflet, "The Public's Right to Know — About AMTRAK", whose highlight is a comparison between the average cost of operating one bus and one whole train!

FARES AND SERVICE

INTERCITY: October 26 changes not previously mentioned: The St. Louis-Laredo "Inter-American" is about 55 minutes faster. Southbound, it will arrive Dallas at 6:50 AM, less convenient than the present 7:30, yet still no connection at the border. However, the connection will be made when the U.S. sets the clocks ahead early next year, and it is hoped that enough additional time will be cut from the schedule to permit maintenance of the connection when we change the clocks again next October.

Convenient connections at Fort Worth for Dallas-Houston passengers will be possible with the revised schedules of the "Lone Star" (Chicago-Houston and Chicago-Dallas). Unfortunately, this means the northbound "Star" will leave Houston at 7:30 AM instead of 9:50, and the overall Dallas-Houston time will be more than seven hours.

Parlor car service is restored to one Chicago-St. Louis round-trip, as two Chicago-Milwaukee round-trips are converted to turboliners, with one round-trip providing through Detroit-Milwaukee service. The Chicago-Detroit trains are rescheduled to provide midday departures instead of two within a few hours of each other, although NARP has received complaints that the revisions will shorten the length of stay possible in Chicago on a one-day trip.

The number of Philadelphia-Harrisburg weekday round-trips is increased from eleven to twelve, and New York-Albany (with the October 31 addition of the "Lake Shore Limited") will have seven daily round-trips.

Not only will Washington and Baltimore patrons on the "Broadway" to and from Chicago have more miles to cover — running via Philadelphia — but their fares will rise slightly.

September 14 changes we missed: "Champion" and "Silver Meteor" are on a slower schedule, consolidated between New York and Jacksonville until December. Boston-New York round trips were changed from 11 to 10; Springfield-New Haven from 7 to 8, with the addition of "The Bankers," a coach and parlor car switched to and from Washington trains at New Haven. The southbound "Bankers", intended for New York-bound businessmen, is a bit of a waste, since it leaves Springfield at 6:15 AM only to sit in New Haven between trains for 28 minutes! The number of conventional, lower-fare NY-Washington round trips was reduced from 10 to 9.

The weekend Boston-Harrisburg through service was discontinued, with a *Harrisburg Patriot* reporter complaining that it was a "secret" train because the two most frequently distributed timetables did not show times east of New York and one failed even to acknowledge that the train ran east of New York.

On the Oakland-Bakersfield "San Joaquin", round-trips now cost only \$3 more than one-ways. Weekend and holiday round trip discounts are in effect Washington-Harpers Ferry-Cumberland.

Through December 19, an additional bargain Florida fare is in effect: \$129 for coach round-trip Montreal-Miami, a \$59.50 saving from the regular fare.

Following a letter of protest from 15 Senators, the White House Office of Telecommunications Policy has granted a month's reprieve to the Metroliner public telephone service. It is now assured through the end of November.

Agents of Amtrak and Canadian National can now supply information and make reservations on both systems.

A federal court has ordered Amtrak to pay the full amount for damage by Amtrak to checked baggage, and Amtrak will ask the ICC to set a limit on liability if the judge's ruling stands. Previously Amtrak advertised a \$500 limit.

Corrections from last issue: Quantico, Va., remains in the timetable because of recent ridership increases; Arlington, Texas, and Malvern, Ark., will not be added until trackside facilities are completed.

Auto-train expects overall revenues to increase by approximately 6% as a result of fare increases implemented October 1.

COMMUTER: Milwaukee Road seeks to discontinue passenger service between Walworth, Wisc., and Solon Mills, Ill. The trains will be removed October 30 unless the ICC chooses to investigate the application, designated Finance No. 28002.

New Jersey has granted the Seashore Lines trains a reprieve at least until December 31.

In the New York City area, commuter rail fares rose on September 1, 23% on the Long Island Rail Road and 25% on the Hudson and Harlem lines. On the New Haven line, increases of 25-27% were delayed until September 25 by the need for ICC approval.

Over the protest of Pennsylvania, the ICC allowed Penn Central to implement fare increases up to 25% for interstate trips on commuter trains between points in Pennsylvania and New Jersey as well as New York City. PC said the last such increase was granted in February 1971.

POST OFFICE STATEMENT

Statement of the ownership, management and circulation of "News from National Association of Railroad Passengers," published monthly except November at Washington, D.C., required by the Act of Congress of August 12, 1970; Section 3685, Title 39, U.S.C.

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I hereby request permission to mail the publication named above at the reduced postage rates presently authorized by '39 U.S.C. 3626. (Signed) Orren Beaty, President.

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* by first class mail.

I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.
—Orren Beaty, President

Congressional Comment: Rep. Paul Simon (D-Ill, 24th) — "Our railroads must be turned into a greater national asset, not a greater liability. It is ironic that we spend hundreds of millions to keep up waterways and airports, billions to maintain our highways, and then hold hearings on discontinuing some of the most energy-efficient transportation the nation has, our railroads. . . (We should) demand that railroads invest in themselves. We require this of many utilities. One of the reasons for the rapid rundown of railroad service and properties is that some of them have found it more profitable to put their money into Pepsi Cola stock or a cotton farm or a pantyhose factory or some other investments. . ."

COMMUTER RAIL HURDLES

By Ross Capon

In the May-June issue, I suggested that commuter rail, making maximum use of existing rail facilities, would in many cases enable the provision of suburban rail services sooner and for less cost than exclusive-use extensions of central city subways. This column will suggest some reasons why the U.S. neglects commuter rail: railroad company attitudes; the power of "big money"; our "bigger-and-better" tradition; regional politics.

Railroads often don't want the bother of handling commuter trains, even if they are properly compensated. Los Angeles County Supervisor Baxter Ward is fighting for the right to run a few commuter trains, but Southern Pacific is "unalterably opposed" to such use of its tracks. In replying to local CBS and NBC television editorials supporting SP, Ward noted that "not a single train passed our observation point" from 7 to 9 AM on one of the lines SP says is "not suited to operation of any commute. . .service in addition to our freight services."

Tom Shedd, Modern Railroads editor, wrote in favor of railroad cooperation in the same issue (March) which carried SP's adamant letter. "Despite the inevitable complaints from operating people," wrote Shedd, "adding one or two . . . commuter trains to a line already carrying even fairly heavy traffic is often quite feasible." One might add that, where a genuine need exists, track capacity could be increased for commute service, with the railroad gaining more flexibility for its operations, especially in off-peak hours.

The interests who will benefit from massive rapid transit construction contracts are of course hard at work promoting plans to their own benefit.

Transit authorities often are fascinated with "next-generation perfection" and exclusive control of their own "exclusive-use empires" rather than the provision of vastly improved service levels in the near term.

Regional politics — the need to convince suburbs they are getting their money's worth — may also lead to the planning of a rail network consisting solely of exclusive-use rapid transit, even where service needs and opportunities for reducing capital and operating costs might have suggested a different approach. Transit authorities, rather than educating citizens to the commuter rail possibilities, foster the notion that the "choo-choo" is obsolete and unattractive.

Finally, work rules can be a problem. Normally, operating employees would be on the payroll of the railroad from which the public agency purchases the service. To secure rules changes needed for viability of proposed services, it is necessary to demonstrate to appropriate union officials that the total package is beneficial. This can be tricky if an uncooperative railroad management is in the middle.

As transit construction costs soar out of sight, public officials may be forced to implement more economical alternatives such as commuter rail. Perhaps the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, which provides most transit construction money, will help. Secretary Coleman's proposed policy, according to an UMTA press release, "is designed to ensure that the available Federal resources are used in the most prudent and productive manner" and "stresses the need to consider combinations of transit modes appropriate to the service requirements of specific corridors".

Amtrak ridership in August was 1.56 million nationwide, an increase of 7 percent over the 1.46 million recorded in August of 1974, marking a turn around from several months of lower ridership at the depth of the recession. The Chicago-Detroit service had an increase of 71 percent, as riders flocked to make use of the new Turbo trains now in service. Even the slow-running Broadway (New York/Washington-Chicago) and the National (New York/Washington-Kansas City) had modest increases in use, 5 percent for the Broadway, 9 percent for the National.

SPECIAL SALE — LAPEL PINS

Originally \$3.75 now reduced to \$3.50 each.

Men's Lapel Pins/Tie Tacs are still available from NARP for the "below cost" price of \$3.50. We have a lot of them on our shelves — and they aren't doing any good there! The pins are excellent for membership identification and as a conversation piece at meetings, hearings, ON TRAINS or wherever you go. AND LADIES — these pins may be "Men's" pins, but they work just as well on our clothes. When ordering, just let me know how many pins you want and send a check covering the cost at \$3.50 per pin.

—Linda Sturgill

Open Letter To Pearl Bailey

Dear Miss Bailey: The Southwest Limited people tell me they haven't seen you since the train's name was changed from the Super Chief.

Just because carnations have replaced the roses in the diner, cotton has replaced the linen, and Amtrak dishes have replaced the Super Chief china, don't think it's not a great train.

It has both a first class diner and a coach diner, as well as a snack bar. It still has the dome car and cocktail lounge. The menu in the diner, although not the old Super Chief fare, is excellent, at Amtrak's low prices. The terrific Super Chief crews continue to serve you, although they are now Amtrak employees.

There were three waiters, a steward and two cooks in the first class diner when I rode the train in September, but I understand this will be reduced slightly in the off-season. About half-way through the journey, we had a two-hour delay to repair a broken steam line, but we arrived in Los Angeles precisely on time. This means we were going rather fast, but the ride was comfortable, due to the excellent Sante Fe tracks.

The Southwest Limited is a wonderful passenger train, so, Miss Bailey, won't you please come home?

—Bob Casey

Impressed by 'Adirondack'

Walter Diem, president of the Florida Association of Railroad Passengers, rode some trains during a late summer vacation. He was most impressed by the "Adirondack," Amtrak's Albany-Montreal connection on the Delaware and Hudson. In fact, the Florida Association has urged that this New York State-supported 403(b) service be made a permanent part of Amtrak's system, but with D&H operating the service and supplying the crews.

Diem also praised service on the "Mountaineer" between Petersburg, Va., and Cincinnati. Enthusiastic crews received mention. Only complaints: breakdown in air conditioning on the dome car on the eastbound train and a late train (one hour) westbound.

Public ownership of railroad rights-of-way is continuing to pick up support. The New England plan is for public ownership without control, which would remain with user-paying private railroads. It was developed by official representatives of the Governors of each state, and has been introduced in both Senate and House, with most of the New England senators joining Sen. Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts and Senate Surface Transportation Subcommittee Chairman Vance Hartke as sponsors. Rep. Edward Boland of Massachusetts is the principal House sponsor. S 2459 and HR 10077, respectively.

The Battle Isn't Over

(continued from page one)

ful service DOT could perform would be to pressure Amtrak to work more on the labor front — because inaction will eventually hurt both passengers and workers.

If the Coleman statement was at least predictable, the meek, 5-Year Plan looked more like a product of the Office of Management and Budget than the action plan of the aggressive agency we expect Amtrak to be.

Not only does the Plan assume the annual discontinuance of one route starting in FY '77, but it virtually invites the Ford budget-cutters to prevent further route additions (or restrict additions to short formalities to comply with the letter of the law): "Deletion of route expansion is the only significant controllable area of cost increase. . ."

To assume the deletion of one route every year is to assume either that many mistakes will be made in route selection, or that the annual experimental route requirement will become a nonsensical "revolving door" whereby promising routes are discontinued at the earliest possible time to leave room in a meager budget for the next experimental route.

It is apparent that intense pressure to keep Amtrak's spending down will last at least for the life of the Ford Administration. Where easier to cut the budget than on allocations for services not yet inaugurated? The Plan virtually spells this out "Deletion of route expansion is the only significant controllable area of cost increase. . ."

We hope that the Plan is not Amtrak's last word, because it is discouraging as an indicator of Amtrak's willingness to stand up for its mission in the face of an Administration waffling between hostility and indifference.

The Amtrak Board's "Criteria" document, and the legal requirement for it, grew out of an Administration concern to find an easier way for Amtrak to discontinue trains than via the traditional ICC procedures. The Amtrak Board will revise it in light of comments received from the Secretary and the ICC, after which it will become effective following "60 calendar days of continuous session of the Congress" — probably sometime in March — unless either the Senate or the House adopts a resolution disapproving the proposal.

Predictably, the document is too vague for its significance to be understood until the Amtrak Board actually tries to use it for adding or dropping services. For this reason, Congress may not wish to accept it.

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There must be some discontinuance mechanism, but the sole discretion of Amtrak's directors leaves the system too vulnerable to hatchet jobs by Administration budgeteers. Therefore, the only logical alternative may be a return to the standard ICC procedures to which Amtrak was formerly subjected.

The will, and the power, of all parties will be tested soon. The Plan indicates Amtrak's need for supplemental appropriations of \$21.2 million and \$5.3 million for FY '76 and the Transition Period (July-September, 1976), respectively, and for supplemental authorization and appropriation of \$185 million for FY '77 (ending September 30, 1977).

DOT officials in the past have hinted that Amtrak would be expected to "live within" existing authorizations. Hopefully, this means there will be no fight over the amounts requiring appropriation only, although even that could change in light of the Administration's new-found enthusiasm for massive budget-cutting. But the FY '77 amounts, requiring both authorization and appropriation could be headed for trouble.

Secretary Coleman did emphasize that "policy formulation is a continuing process" and invited comments from all interested parties. (They should be sent to William T. Coleman, Jr., Secretary of Transportation, Washington 20590.)

NARP applauds the response of Senator William H. Taft (R-Ohio), who told the Senate that "rail passenger service must . . . play an increasingly important part in our national transportation system. . . Rail, bus and airplane are not essentially competing modes; they are complementary. . . The policy statement should make this explicit and it does not do so.

"The real target for (all three) is not each other, but the passenger in the private automobiles. . . Each public transportation mode should be working, not to take business from another, but to convince the automobile driver to use public transportation."

Secrets? Amtrak Keeps Secrets!

Amtrak is unwilling to make public the minutes of its Board meetings. Consequently, it is the defendant in a suit wherein *Washington Star* reporter Stephen M. Aug seeks to obtain the minutes under the Freedom of Information Act.

In an amusing memorandum to the court, attorneys for Amtrak, which received more funds from the government than from passenger revenues in Fiscal Year 1975, argued that, "as a for-profit corporation, (Amtrak) must bear the rigors of competition in the marketplace for the revenues needed for its operations."

NARP Assistant Director Ross Capon filed an affidavit in support of Aug's position.

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