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SVRACICH J 004076083181CP01
JOE VRANICH
4500 S 36TH ST
ARLINGTON VA 22206

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ROADS, ROADS . . . RAILS?

Things may look bleak for Amtrak, but you won't get any sympathy from those responsible for building highways. Compared to what they've experienced in the past, times are hard. Let's take a look at what is going on during these hard times for the highway industry. With today's emphasis on budget-balancing and reduced spending, your pro-rail efforts can be more effective—and lead to united fronts with groups fighting highways—if you know of the wasteful highway projects underway as well as those *that policy-makers can stop*. Elected officials are frequently bored when people “cry over spilt milk” (lament how much has gone to highways over the past 30 years) because they can't change history, and some of them helped write that history and are proud of it!

THE PUBLIC SUPPORTS US!

“According to a recent ABC News-Harris survey of 1,202 adults nationwide, Americans are far more selective about where cuts should be made than some of the rhetoric in Washington would indicate. . . .

“By 54-42%, a majority opposes cuts in spending for mass transportation. This latest result marks a rise over previous surveys in support for mass transit, and reflects a growing realization on the part of Americans that mass transportation must be improved to conserve energy. . . .

“By 69-22%, a majority favors cutting federal subsidies to business. The federal rescue of Chrysler . . . was opposed by the public 7-to-1 . . .

“Thus the support of a cutback in federal spending by an overwhelming 84-11% majority is . . . not necessarily a guide to which parts of the federal budget they want cut and which they want kept intact.”

—Louis Harris, in
The Washington Post, June 12

AUTOWORKERS MAY GET CHANCE TO BUILD TRAINS!

Up to 400 workers who lost their jobs making automobile frames for the Budd Company may get jobs in Budd's expanding railway division as the result of federal funds channeled through the City of Philadelphia under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA). Budd phased out its frame division at the Red Lion plant in June.

The tragedy is that so few idle U.S. auto workers have this opportunity. The “Tia Juana Trolley” described on page four was built without Federal funds. Avoiding the “Buy American” restriction was vital for the line to get functional trolley cars on time. They came from West Germany. It is a sad commentary on U.S. industrial capacity that only one domestic company builds rail passenger equipment when it is obvious that so much of that equipment is needed.

Aided by a grant from the Sierra Club's Appalachian Regional Conservation Committee, CONTACT U.S., a nationwide coalition of highway fighters, has compiled a “Cook Book” of highway projects from around the country which have been identified by its members as turkeys—“unnecessary, expensive, overbuilt roads, designed to perpetuate suburban sprawl or to encourage land speculation.” If you would like a copy, join CONTACT by sending \$25 to CONTACT U.S., Marian Agnew, 1740 Dumbarton St., McLean, VA 22101. Individuals may join for \$15 but this will not get you the “Cook Book,” which includes the length, cost, status, and contact people opposing each of more than 60 highway projects.

On June 17, ground-breaking ceremonies were held in Baltimore for the “single largest construction project in the history of the national interstate highway system,” the eight-lane, twin-tube Fort McHenry Tunnel for I-95—the widest underwater highway tunnel in the world.

You thought I-95 was complete through Baltimore? To be sure, the Harbor Tunnel is yards away and the beltway bridge crosses the same river within three miles. But the new tunnel, due to open in 1983, will be slightly more direct. It will also reduce congestion so that fewer people will ride the paralleling high-speed trains in which the federal government is also investing.

The Ft. McHenry Tunnel is estimated to cost \$762 million for 1.7 miles, or over \$448 million per mile. By contrast, the most expensive heavy rail transit estimate we have seen is \$111.1 million per mile for an 18-mile downtown subway in Los Angeles; the San Diego light rail line is costing \$4.8 million per mile. (Heavy rail means normal rapid transit service which does not share tracks with other operations, has all high-platform stations, and is free of grade crossings.)

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Effective Aug. 3, the southbound Chicago-Texas “Inter-American” will depart Chicago at 5:20 PM, permitting same-day connections from the Chicago-NY/Boston “Lake Shore” and from all Michigan points; the Chicago-Detroit “St. Clair” will be extended to Toledo to connect with the “Lake Shore” to/from Cleveland-Boston/NY; and the Chicago-Washington “Cardinal” will stop at Hamilton, OH. Prospects look good for early startup of two additional daily round-trips between Portland and Eugene, OR. It appears that daily Chicago-Seattle “Empire Builder” service will end after the summer.

The Adirondack Railway is offering daily service throughout the summer (weekends thereafter) between Amtrak's Utica, NY, station and Lake Placid. Information and reservations: 315/369-3000.

In early June, "work on the largest dollar volume contract ever let by the Georgia Department of Transportation began in Atlanta . . . when opponents of widening I-85, and related Interstate reconstruction" lost an appeal in court. The \$40.1 million project went ahead because "the judge specifically rejected (opponents') arguments of 'segmentation'—an allegation that (this and three other segments challenged in a suit filed a year ago) should have been regarded as one under the National Environmental Policy Act, but instead had been treated as four to avoid assessment of cumulative impacts." The judge did observe that "the legal issues raised by the suit are unsettled." Quotations are from *Engineering News-Record* (ENR), June 19, page 42.

Some of the excitement over the Northeast Corridor project among Rhode Island public officials comes over the fact that it will fund relocation of the Amtrak tracks off the downtown embankment to a cut, putting the new station closer to the State Capitol, insuring that there could be no direct transfer made between possible future "east bay" commuter or light rail service and other Providence rail passenger service, and increasing the distance between entrances to the rail and intercity bus terminals from 600 to 2,300 feet. Tracks on the embankment adjacent to the historic railroad station would be replaced with part of the "Civic Center interchange" to improve access of I-95 and Route 6 traffic to downtown Providence.

Local officials in the Hartford, CT, area, have just given final blessing, over citizen opposition, to a \$222 million project to widen 20 miles of I-91 north to the Massachusetts state line, paralleling Amtrak's double-track Springfield line, where commuter rail service could go a long way to relieve congestion with minimal cost for right-of-way improvements. Lumped in with the I-91 improvements is a \$50 million, 5-mile piece of a beltway planned in 1972, I-291. These projects now await Federal decisions.

One of the greater tragedies in recent times is I-66, a 9.6-mile, \$225 million freeway between the beltway and downtown Washington, D.C., a city with good mass transit and more on the way. Construction began three years after the first gasoline crisis, primarily to promote development in western Fairfax County, and improve access to industrial development proposed along a planned 13-mile, \$56 million tollroad adjacent to the beltway-Dulles Airport freeway. Citizens believe I-66 is illegal, but the judge who dismissed their case without giving a reason has not yet responded to an appellate court order that he give his reason. I-66 is to open in 1982.

For many years, an outer beltway for Washington, DC, has been the dream of area roadbuilders. The project was defeated in 1977 by firm citizen action, but it is reappearing in segments. The State of Maryland has just completed workshops on the Montgomery County segment (26.5 miles for \$262 million), and the County Council has resolved to seek nominations to form a new citizens' advisory committee. The Virginia Department of Highways and Transportation (VDH&T), meanwhile, is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement on another segment of the defunct Outer Beltway, the Springfield Bypass (32 miles at \$250 million).

This illustrates a basic law of transportation planning in the U.S. Citizens have to struggle very hard to turn on the funding spigots for public transportation, but they have to struggle twice as hard to turn off those spigots when it comes to highways.

There is also some doubt as to whether this is all "transportation" planning. CONTACT U.S. believes major support for highway projects comes from municipalities seeking to be relieved of most of the costs of constructing water mains. Says the "Cook Book" of the Springfield Bypass: "Because the Western Fairfax water supply (at Occoquan) had been destroyed by pollution, access to the Potomac River was planned. Highway construction will relieve local government from the cost of

"The major cities need bus and rail transit to stay alive, but the message—at least to New York City—from both Washington and Albany gets clearer by the hour: Necessity is not the mother of appropriations. More important than necessity is political muscle, including a little noise."

—The New York Times editorial, June 10

APPROPRIATIONS TROUBLE

On June 12, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation approved: an Amtrak FY '81 capital budget of \$183 million (plus \$11 million for labor protection); \$6 million for emerging corridors, all restricted to more marketing studies (\$38 million was authorized without such restrictions); and elimination of capital funds Amtrak requested for improving tracks it doesn't own.

The full appropriations committee, then the full House, should take up the DOT appropriations bill between July 21 and August 1. Please phone or write your representative urging efforts to improve the Amtrak provisions, and contact your senators, who may also be considering DOT appropriations then.

The Duncan capital figure is \$56 million under the President's January budget; \$6 million under his revised March budget.

STATIONS SET FOR ELIMINATION

Amtrak has notified affected legislators that it plans to discontinue the following station stops effective Oct. 30. Please let NARP know if you believe any of these discontinuances are unjustified. Current ridership averages less than 3 passengers per day per train (i.e. 6 passengers where one round-trip is offered):

Lee Hall, VA ("Colonial"); Thurmond, WV ("Cardinal"); Eutaw and Livingston, AL, and Purvis and Poplarville, MS ("Crescent"); Portage and Tomah, WI (Chicago-Minneapolis); Malvern, AR ("Inter-American"); Brigham City, UT, and Mountain Home, ID ("Pioneer").

acquiring the right-of-way for sewer/water pipe and provide the ROW for the water/sewer infrastructure in the highway."

In any event, it's mostly a matter of political clout, not reason. As long as Amtrak and mass transit ridership continues to inch upward, we can take some comfort in the thought that eventually these services will become important enough to survive without so much effort on the part of public advocacy groups.

Help from the President

President Carter deserves praise for his "community conservation guidance" program, originally called the "regional shopping center policy," which "is aimed at denying federal grants and other aids that in the past helped foster suburban sprawl at the expense of central city business districts and neighborhoods." (ENR, June 19, p. 39)

The President has implemented this policy most notably by killing a section of a proposed Dayton, OH, beltway at the request of Dayton's mayor but over the objections of suburban counties and the Ohio DOT. Said the League of Conservation Voters, "This took courage and it may be the first time that any administration has said no to a State Highway Department seeking approval of an interstate plan." Hopefully, the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) will encourage Dayton to dust off the light-rail plans UMTA had scuttled a few years earlier.

In June, Duluth city officials persuaded federal officials to "deny federal funds or take other actions that would help the promoters of a proposed shopping mall 5 miles from downtown." A consultant report for HUD said the project—which the developer hopes to do with all-private funding anyway—"would probably force the closing of a major downtown department store . . . block the development of the planned Harbor Square shopping center downtown . . . Duluth could lose \$130,000 a year in property taxes . . . and \$157,000 in sales taxes by 1982. Federal subsidies that now make up a large percentage of Duluth's transit system deficit could rise by as much as \$1 million . . . and highway funds would be needed." (ENR, June 19, p. 39) Amtrak, with its downtown station, has interests paralleling those of the downtown in general. Whether or not the developer goes ahead with his energy-wasteful plan, the President deserves credit for doing what he could to prevent it.

To get a rebuttal to the Congressional Budget Office's 1979 attack on Amtrak's energy efficiency, with discussion of the Amtrak/local transit relationship, send a check for \$3 to NARP.

HOW WILL YOU VOTE IN NOVEMBER?

"The Presidential Candidates: what they say . . . what they do . . . On Energy and the Environment" includes detailed comments on transportation and is available for \$2 from The League of Conservation Voters, 317 Pennsylvania Ave., SE, Washington, D.C. 20003. LCV consulted NARP during preparation of this report.

Another heroic federal action is the blocking of approval for construction of a Richmond, VA, beltway advocated by the state highway department and opposed by Richmond Mayor Henry L. Marsh, III. Last year, then-DOT Secretary Adams sent a strong letter to Virginia Gov. John Dalton indicating the beltway as then proposed could not be approved. Virginia's highway department recently resubmitted the project, so the ball is again in U.S. DOT's court.

Richmond is a city at the crossroads in transportation planning: The public transit picture could brighten dramatically with the reestablishment of a downtown rail passenger station (Amtrak's "Colonial" runs through the old Main Street C&O Station), and the development of commuter rail and the Washington-Richmond-Williamsburg-Newport News Corridor. Or Richmond could join many other moderate-sized U.S. cities in oblivion by confining Amtrak to its present suburban location, getting it by itself, and relying upon an all-bus local transit system.

Many business interests, including land speculators who pocket much of the wealth created by publicly-funded freeway construction, are strongly opposed to the sensible White House policies discussed above. In a June 11 letter to Secretary Goldschmidt, Carlton C. Robinson, executive vice-president of the Highway Users Federation, claimed the community conservation guidance program is inconsistent with "proposed rules requiring trucks with radioactive materials to avoid heavily populated areas by using the fastest routes around them." In other words, build more beltways to facilitate truck shipments of nuclear waste! Railroads, incidentally, "provide 70% of the transportation for hazardous materials" (including nuclear waste) and "are involved in less than 10% of all accidents involving these materials according to Transportation Safety Board statistics." (The words of James H. Ozanne of the Railway Progress Institute, quoted in the June 9 *Traffic World*)

Help from NARP Members and the General Public

Please let the President and your Senators and Representative know that you support the community conservation guidance program, and that you vehemently oppose any tax increase designed primarily to fund more construction of new highways (see below).

You can also help change transportation priorities by driving less (and by purchasing gasoline, exempt from the Federal gas tax and exempt from all or part of state gas taxes in 16 states). Driving reductions have already wreaked havoc with the funding sources for most road projects: those gas tax revenues.

The continuous decline in driving since May, 1979, is already having an impact. It appears that I-95 with its super-tunnel will be completed through Baltimore, but an elaborate network of other Interstate highways in Baltimore looks dead. According to *The Sun* of June 2, "declining automobile use has led to a shrinking of the number of government dollars—created largely through gasoline taxes—available for road building. In the process, political support for building the roads—even among former highway "boosters" . . . —has dwindled. Today, all that is considered certain in the city's interstate picture is completion of I-95."

On May 15, "Virginia highway officials, hard hit by reduced tax revenue resulting from motorists' decreased gasoline consumption . . . approved cutbacks totaling \$37 million in the state's road-building program. . . (the officials) gave tentative approval to a revised 1979-80 program totaling \$328 million—nearly 10% below the \$365 million figure . . . originally slated for the present year. It also approved a preliminary 1980-81 budget of \$354 million." (*The Washington Post*, May 16) The 1980-81 figure is less than was originally planned for 1979-80, even though a 2¢/gallon increase in the state gasoline tax takes effect July 1, the result of

"a prolonged and bitter struggle" in the state legislature earlier this year.

Virginia is not a state where road plans die easily, but the funding problems can give anti-highway activists added clout, since the roadbuilders will tend to concentrate on those projects with little or no opposition and put controversial new projects on the back burner.

In Arizona, the state DOT figures that "construction and maintenance needs for 38,420 miles of state, county, and city roads and streets are projected at \$25.4 billion over the next 20 years, but revenues are estimated at \$7.8 billion, leaving a \$17.6 billion shortfall." In other words, the existing funding mechanisms are expected to provide only 30.7% of funding needs. (Amtrak revenues covered 38.3% of its costs in FY '78 and 41.5% in FY '79!)

The Arizona road situation may be far more serious than even those numbers suggest. They are quoted from the Jan.-Feb. newsletter of the Arizona DOT's Transportation Planning Division, which claims they were based on "conservative standards" and are "generated by . . . escalating vehicle miles traveled (VMT's). . ." But another article in the same newsletter reports that "traffic continued its downward spiral in January on the state highway system, falling nearly 15% below travel in January, 1979."

"(Texas) roads . . . are deteriorating, the state highway department says, because of low maintenance caused by a shortfall in revenue. It could also involve other factors. One is a lack of priorities for state resources which were generously given to the highway department in 1977 and dedicated for the next 20 years as a first call upon the state's treasury. Another factor would be the increasing truck—and overweight truck—traffic, which is beyond the capacity of the roads. . ."

"Good highways are an important state resource, but the high cost of gasoline will require the examination of a balanced transportation system, including improved rail service for people and freight.

"The Texas Railroad Commission, for example, is supporting a federal study of the feasibility of speedy Amtrak passenger service in the Dallas-San Antonio-Houston triangle, where most Texans live.

"Legislative oversight, unlike 1977, should entail the responsibility of legislators to ask questions about state highway and public transit planning."

—Dallas Times Herald editorial, June 19

"According to statistics compiled by the National Governors' Association, at least 27 states have either increased or are considering increases in gasoline and other road taxes to finance lagging construction. 'In a number of these states, construction has ground to a complete halt,' said association spokesman Joseph McLaughlin." (*The Post*, May 16)

Increasing the Price of Gasoline

The federal highway trust fund, after enjoying over two decades of surpluses, showed a \$100 million deficit for FY 1979 (\$8.2 billion paid out, \$8.1 billion received), and by mid-June already showed a \$400 million deficit in FY 1980 (\$5.5 billion out, \$5.1 billion in). According to *The Washington Post* of June 19, "the present trust fund balance is \$12.1 billion—and obligations due from that balance total \$14.1 billion. The trust fund is literally in the hole."

Things are so bad that, only 12 days after Congress resoundingly killed the President's plan to increase gas prices 10¢/gallon with an oil import fee, Secretary Goldschmidt publicly stated he will recommend to President Carter a 1981 increase in the Federal gasoline tax. (The tax has been 4¢/gallon since 1956; state and local taxes averaged 14.3¢/gallon in May, up from 13.1¢ one year earlier; the tax in some West European countries is over \$2. On June 22, Stuart E. Eizenstat, the President's adviser for domestic affairs, said the President will stand by his March 14 announcement to seek "a specific gasoline tax" of 10¢/gallon, notwithstanding the defeat of the oil import fee. Revenues from this tax would be for general budget purposes, not transportation.)

Tax increases are political hot potatoes, and it is up to you to make a no-strings-attached increase in the Federal gas tax the

Our apologies for dropping ARKANSAS ARP from last month's list of state associations. The group's Director is Bill Pollard, 413 Brahma St., Conway 72032. The new address of CRC President Greg Thompson is 1431 3rd St., #31, Sacramento, CA 95814.

hottest potato of all. This tax is earmarked almost exclusively for construction of new highways—only 6% of total trust fund obligations this year have been for maintenance. The trust fund is not open to mass transit, although states which kill Interstate segments can trade in highway funds for transit money that comes from general revenues. (Several state highway trust funds are now available for transit and, in some cases, railroad purposes.)

Because the interests which support highway construction are so powerful, some gas tax increase earmarked for highways is probably inevitable, but those pushing it may have to make compromises with some of their traditional foes in order to get enough votes.

One possibility would be to open up the trust fund to railroad and mass transit projects and to require that each project be subject to an alternatives analysis—now required only for mass transit!—showing it is most economical and energy-efficient. Because such analysis could easily be twisted, a protective provision should limit highway spending to, say, one-half of the tax revenues. The package should also set the Federal share for rail transit and highway projects at the same level; currently it is 90% for many highways and only 80% for most rail systems.

Thus a logical package could be assembled which would increase the price of gasoline but reduce overall transportation costs in the long run by reducing demand for gasoline, helping to build alternatives to the automobile, and reducing the nation's dependence on uncertain oil supplies whose prices it cannot control.

Other package elements might ban further construction of urban freeways, restore the 73,000 lb. truck weight limit, and increase truck user fees. According to *Modern Railroads*, Sept., 1979, "The General Accounting Office has reported that a tractor trailer does the same amount of damage to a highway as 9600 automobiles . . . Since (1975, when the federal weight limit went up to 80,000 lbs.), deterioration of highways has increased as much as 25%."

A gas tax increase earmarked only for highway construction would be nonsense because it would further reduce demand for the projects it is intended to fund. Since people still need mobil-

HOPES FOR THE HOOSIER STATE

Rep. Adam Benjamin, Jr. (D-IN), from Hobart, whose district includes East Chicago, Gary, and Hammond, is likely to become chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation next year. The present chairman, Robert Duncan (D-OR), lost his primary fight on May 20 to Ron Wyden.

If Birch Bayh (D-IN), chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee, wins reelection in November, we will see the unusual situation of House and Senate chairmen of counterpart committees coming from the same state. Benjamin worked last year to get Amtrak to save the Chicago-Valparaiso commuter trains.

On Apr. 8, responding to the urgings of Sen. Bayh and some of his colleagues, a meeting was convened at Amtrak to discuss restoring the "National Ltd." with state subsidies. The meeting included eight state officials—three from Illinois alone!—plus the deputy mayor of Indianapolis and a staff worker for Rep. Robert A. Young (D-MO). Subsequently, the group requested cost estimates from Amtrak on three possible schedules, and NARP has circulated to the officials a recommendation that the 403(b) "National" operate as a section of the "Broadway" between New York and Pittsburgh. This would minimize subsidy costs, eliminate the need for Pennsylvania to participate, and take advantage of the close fit between the current "Broadway" schedule and the last "National" schedule.

Amtrak plans to inaugurate Chicago-Indianapolis service on Oct. 1 with a 4:30 running time.

ity, they need an attractive, ubiquitous alternative: a good public transport network. Intercity rail and heavy rail transit are making slow progress. But commuter rail (see end of this article) and trolley car service (also known as light rail) are the most badly neglected alternatives: much more attractive than buses and cheaper to construct and operate than heavy rail transit.

The Trolleys Are Coming!

The first new U.S. trolley line in several decades should inspire a widespread revival of trolleys. It will be the 16-mile run between Amtrak's San Diego station and San Ysidro, opposite Tijuana, Mexico, mostly on an old railroad right-of-way where off-peak freight service will continue. The "Tia Juana Trolley" is expected to open in July, 1981, except for the last two blocks to the Amtrak station, which will be delayed up to two years for construction of a convention center.

The 1½-miles of this line on San Diego streets are potentially significant because modern traffic control techniques could make a massive expansion of "street-car" service feasible, and begin to make life without an automobile practical in more suburban areas of big cities. We need to restore lines criss-crossing each other: a true network of service for good mobility and equitable treatment of entire metropolitan areas.

Hope springs from the City of New York's approval of a trolley for Manhattan's 42nd Street which is expected to "achieve an annual operating savings of \$2.5 million over a contending bus option. While capital costs for the light rail line would be higher, this would be partially offset by the life expectancy of (a light rail vehicle), almost triple that of the average city bus." (*Mass Transit*, June) A preliminary study of restoring trolleys to Washington's Georgetown section was so positive that the District of Columbia's DOT will undertake a further study.

So far, new construction of heavy rail and planning for trolleys have been limited to one line and a few stations per city or section of a city. No line at all may result from a continuing tug of war over the proper alignment for the sole extension of the Washington Metro line planned for southern Prince George's County, MD. The "one-line" approach means inadequate service to the majority of the population that does not live near a station. It means much usually untaxed wealth for some lucky landowners. And it means massive and often unwanted impacts on the neighborhoods around the stations. Since few in power think of trolley cars, rapid transit extensions ironically mean massive widening of access roads because not enough patrons can be persuaded to use the feeder buses.

Despite six months' work by "a committee of 24 engineers, architects and other citizen volunteers" (*The Sun*, Feb. 21) on a light rail plan linking Baltimore-Annapolis-New Carrollton (DC Metrorail terminal), action seems unlikely. In April, Maryland DOT said the 65-mile plan, which would cost about the same as the 1.7-mile Ft. McHenry Tunnel, was not "an economical or efficient solution to the transportation problems in this area." For the 25-mile corridor linking Maryland's biggest city with its capital, the state proposes a new Interstate, I-97. "Over time, better bus service will increase transit use so that future fixed rail transit may become feasible." The state might have added: "and freeway-induced sprawl will frustrate future mass transit efforts."

It's up to you, working in your own communities, to see that transportation planning is based on your hopes rather than your state highway department's habits. Public officials sincerely interested in responsible use of tax dollars will take notice when you point out that trolley cars and commuter trains are economical—largely because they make the most efficient possible uses of existing rights-of-way.

(If you would like two columns on inaugurating new commuter rail service—from NARP News of May-June and Oct., 1975—and/or a copy of NARP's letter to a Windsor Locks, CT, Selectman outlining the advantages of rail transit over High Occupancy Vehicle, or HOV, lanes, send a SASE to NARP. For a roundup of light rail plans and projects in the U.S. and Canada, see the June, 1980, issue of Mass Transit, \$2 from 555 National Press Bld., Washington, DC 20045. To subscribe to the monthly newsletter, LRT News, write to the Transportation Research Board, 2101 Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20418.)