



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

Vol. 17, No. 6 June, 1983

417 New Jersey Avenue, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003
202/546-1550

News Hotline (except during business hours), 202/546-1551

OFFICERS: John R. Martin, *President*; John H. Kirkwood, *Vice-President*; George Tyson, *Secretary*; Joseph F. Horning, Jr., *Treasurer*; **STAFF:** Ross Capon, *Executive Director*; Barry Williams, *Assistant Director*; Kay Stortz, *Membership Director*.

Membership dues start at \$15/year (\$7.50 for those under 21 and over 65) of which \$4.00 is for the subscription to NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS NEWS, published monthly except in November, and GETTING THERE.

(No. 5 was mailed 1st Class June 4)

RETURN REQUESTED

ON-BOARD AND STATION CHANGES

After more than 12 years in existence, Amtrak is still groping for a means to assure its passengers of getting friendly, efficient service, particularly on board the far-flung network of long-distance trains on which employees can go for one or two days without supervision. Yet another scheme—the “train manager” system—went into effect June 27. Meanwhile, Amtrak—since the first of the year—has downgraded seven stations to “custodial” status and is reviewing 32 more for possible custodializing at summer’s end.

Diners: In 1981, as Amtrak President W. Graham Claytor, Jr., put it, “somebody who never understood anything about running a passenger train got an amendment” passed which restricted Amtrak’s ability to staff the dining cars. The resulting “modified” dining service was a disaster.

Amtrak gradually has learned how to provide quality meals with limited staff, and passenger reaction to dining-car food (and prices) is mostly positive today. What drove passengers up the wall this spring was the time spent waiting to be served, particularly after their hopes had been raised by an assignment to an appointed hour’s “sitting.” Amtrak’s response was, first, to recall several stewards from furlough so that all dining cars that need a staff of five will have same during the summer travel season.

Then, on June 27, Amtrak implemented the “train manager” system, and deployed specially selected train managers (18) and train chiefs (147). Every long-distance train is to have a chief aboard at all times. The manager will only be aboard for segments of the trip but will receive reports from everybody concerned about every trip and will be responsible for anything that goes wrong.

The managers are management employees; the chiefs are union members. Claytor, in addressing the NARP board, said this was less than ideal, but “we can live with it.”

The goal of the new system is to deliver the advertised quality of service. Chiefs and managers are to help with the work as necessary (tell NARP if they don’t!), and to be as responsive as possible in resolving passenger complaints on the spot.

TRAVELERS’ ADVISORY

Round-trip fares on the LA-Oakland-Sacramento “Spirit of California” were exempt from Amtrak’s June 1 fare increase and thus are cheaper than those on the “Coast Starlight,” (\$74 Spirit vs. \$89 CS Oakland/S.F. or \$97 CS Sacramento), except Sept. 2 and 5. Ask for the AW32 fare. Tell us if agents aren’t forthcoming with this information.

The Decatur-Champaign segment of “Illini” was discontinued after July 10.

Phila. commuter rail resumed July 3 after a 110-day strike. Rail service on the 15-mile Newtown-Fox Chase line was suspended indefinitely after the last rail diesel car failed Jan. 18.

Stations: Claytor told the NARP board that “the problem with the long-distance train with one train on a route is that Amtrak . . . spends too much money on stations and on station personnel.”

(continued on page 4)

AMTRAK INTO TWA COMPUTERS!

TWA and Amtrak announced June 23 they’ve reached an agreement to include Amtrak in TWA’s automated reservation system called PARS. They expect the service to be operating by the end of next January. It means the nearly 3,000 travel agents who have the PARS system will have direct access to Amtrak’s schedules and be able to make reservations and ticket passengers by computer instead of through sometimes lengthy and frustrating telephone calls.

Texas Rail Transit Planning

● A proposal to create a regional mass transit authority for Dallas-Ft. Worth was rejected by voters in 1980 partly because the associated plan included no rail lines.

● All 22 local governments in the Dallas area quickly endorsed a transit plan (including a 1% sales tax) developed this spring which includes 160 route-miles of rail (largely light-rail), projected to cost \$4 billion (\$25 million/mile). Supporters are optimistic about the outcome of the August 13 referendum on the plan. Planners hope to see rail service in operation by 1987 with 69 miles in service by 1995.

● On June 11, Houston voters rejected by 62 to 38% a transit plan (no new tax) that included a single 18.5-mile heavy-rail line costing \$2.1 billion (a hefty \$113.5 million/mile). Only 10% of the voters went to the polls.

Conventional wisdom is that the Houston plan lost “because of a perception that Houston’s existing bus system is not well run and because of continued sniping at rail systems by an assortment of groups” (*The Washington Post*, June 16).

Maybe there’s something else. Maybe some voters decided that a vague, mostly-bus plan wasn’t much better than the all-bus plan Dallas voters rejected in 1980.

Perhaps Houston planners should figure out how to build a rail system for much less than \$100 million/mile so that it could provide direct service to more people. True, Alan Kiepper, general manager of Houston’s Metropolitan Transit Authority, “wants to eventually build a 94-mile rail system.” But he “has yet to decide what routes the trains would run” (*Dallas Times Herald*, June 12), so it’s not surprising that his 94-mile dream had little impact on the voters.

In contrast, those who vote in the Dallas area on Aug. 13 have a specific, 160-mile rail system which, according to a state law enacted May 13, could only be changed after public hearings, a two-thirds vote of the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) Board, (continued on page 4)

Claytor, Gall, Rep. Coughlin Like Amtrak's "Budget Stability"

The overwhelming importance of Amtrak's newly achieved "budget stability" was a common theme in three presentations at the NARP board's Apr. 21-23 Washington meeting—those of Amtrak President W. Graham Claytor, Jr., Rep. Lawrence Coughlin (R-PA), ranking Republican on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, and Amtrak Vice President—Transportation Marketing Robert E. Gall. Of special interest to NARP members, Claytor offered the hope that "at least one" of the new services NARP has been promoting would be operated if studies look promising.

Claytor said budget stability was "the most important thing" about Amtrak—the end of those "on-again/off-again" cycles that lasted "nearly 10 years" wherein "first you had the money you needed, then the next year you were going to have the service cut back 50% and \$300 million taken out of the budget and they were only saved from that by having Congress overrule the administration, then the next year [the administration] was going to try again." Claytor said this problem is over and "can be over permanently if we handle it right."

Claytor said prospects for Amtrak's FY '84 funding were good, largely because Amtrak and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) "had no major differences" on how much different parts of the operation would cost—just different assumptions about what Congress would require in terms of state-subsidized and "sunset commuter" trains.

To maintain Amtrak's support in Congress, Claytor believes he must continue to make clear that he is as dedicated to cutting costs as he is to improving the service. "So, let's take fares. . . . Fares are not set to increase ridership. Fares are set to increase the revenue:cost ratio. If you set the fare too high, you're going to have less revenue per cost. . . . so you can't do that. If you set the fares too low, you're not getting as much revenues as you ought to.

"A lot of people say, 'What we want is to get a lot of people on the train, to hell with the revenues.' That attitude is sure to put Amtrak out of business. I can promise you that, when Congress thinks that's the way we're doing [it], that's when the axes are going to start falling. [Now], I've got them all convinced—and it's the fact as far as I'm concerned—that we are working to provide the most efficient service we can and to get the best cost/revenue relationship. . . . When we start moving away from that is when you're really going to get back into the old fix that we were in before, where you've got a whole lot of people running around trying to put you out of business. We've got almost no serious effort to chop Amtrak up right now."

In other matters, Claytor:

- said Atlantic City service "may very well" operate. "The only real question there is whether the . . . casinos are going to . . . give to train passengers the same monetary incentives they give to charter bus passengers." Initially, Claytor anticipates 5 Philadelphia and 1 New York round-trips daily. "There's still controversy in the Congress about whether this will be authorized. I'm trying very hard to stay out of that one. I said, 'We'll run the train if you guys get this set up and give us the money,' but I'm neither asking for nor opposing the operation."

- said Amtrak is looking at the three services NARP requested (Jan. News). "We're looking again at the cost-effectiveness—can we do it without increasing our losses?—on a train from Newton, Kansas, down to Oklahoma and perhaps Fort Worth. We're looking at the suggestion many of you made about a [St. Louis-Carbondale] train, but of course we're looking too at the possibility of changing the tri-weekly service of the 'Eagle' and 'Sunset' into daily. That presents more of a problem than anything else because I'm not sure we could do it with the equipment we've got. In fact, you couldn't do all three of those in any event overnight because we don't have the equipment. But we will try at least one of those if our studies show that we can do it without increasing our short-term avoidable losses."

- strongly questioned Prof. Ronald P. Sheck's thesis (NARP News, Oct.-Nov. '81, Sep. '82) that major nationwide service

FROM THE HILL, AMTRAK LOOKS GOOD

"The good news to me has to be Amtrak. I couldn't have been prouder of that organization when they came before our subcommittee. When you think back a few years, to what kind of an operation that was, and where it's come, I think that really it's something to be proud of.

"As they testified this year, passenger complaints have dropped from about 25.2 complaints per 10,000 riders in 1979 to 12 complaints per 10,000 riders in 1982. In 1979, only 57% of Amtrak's trains were running on time; in 1982 it was 79.1%. And I must say I ride Amtrak. I just rode it last night to Philadelphia and back and it's a very pleasant change and experience.

"The air-conditioning failures on Amtrak trains dropped from 2,207 in 1978 to 153 in '82. . . . In 1979, Amtrak carried 4.3 passengers one mile for every federal dollar. In 1982, it was 5.3 passengers, and in 1983 it is expected to be 6.7 passengers. . . .

"All that's a pretty remarkable record of growth. [Most importantly,] at least from a federal legislator's standpoint and one who has to wrestle with budgets and . . . appropriations, in 1982, a year of a relatively depressed economy, Amtrak was able to contract, to adjust to the economic circumstances. . . still keep on track and even exceed its expectations in meeting the congressionally mandated goal of covering 50% of its costs through revenues.

"I'm also proud of the fact, when we had the great blizzard this past February . . . when Metro stopped running here, when the planes were grounded, when the highways were completely closed off, and I was stuck on one, Amtrak continued to run—I wish I'd been on Amtrak that day.

"I think there is a minimum of disagreement between the administration and Amtrak as to what they need [for FY '84] and, historically, Congress has appropriated for Amtrak more than the administration has requested. I'd expect that to happen again this year."

—Rep. Lawrence Coughlin (R-PA), Ranking Republican House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, addressing the NARP board Apr. 22

expansions would improve Amtrak's economic performance saying sufficient passenger volume would not materialize.

- emphasized the importance, in his view, of replacing trains with buses at Clearwater and St. Petersburg, saving \$1.6 million/year. (In the wake of the NARP board's 25-13-6 vote against Amtrak's plan, NARP submitted detailed comments to Amtrak on June 3, Amtrak having extended the original comments deadline from May 16 to June 10. For a copy, send a self-addressed stamped envelope and 25¢ to NARP.)

- said he still hopes to start tri-weekly Lorton, VA-Sanford, FL auto-ferry service by late Oct. [To get the news release announcing service start-up, send an s.a.s.e. to NARP. To be early reserving space, phone Amtrak information and ask to be put on the auto-ferry waiting list—they'll call you back when Amtrak starts accepting reservations.]

- plans to limit auto-ferry speed to 70 mph, as did Auto-Train

ST. PETERSBURG PLAN UPDATE

"Although the comment period has been extended until July 16 on Amtrak's proposal to replace train service with dedicated bus service to Clearwater and St. Petersburg, a new twist has been added—continuation of that dedicated bus service on to Bradenton and Sarasota.

"One of the major reasons for the comment extension, I suspect, is the hope residents of the Sarasota-Bradenton area will flood Amtrak with letters of support."

—Rep. Michael Bilirakis (R-FL), in June 16 letter to NARP Member Steven D. Crosmer of Clearwater

Corporation toward the end. This will permit 4 PM departures and 9:30 AM arrivals "and that's all you need. . . . I'm not about to run a 46-car train more than 70 mph, no matter what." He did not blame Auto-Train's economically crippling derailments on their higher speeds, but said those speeds cause more extensive damage when derailments do occur.

- opposes NY DOT's petition to run 90 mph west of Schenectady without supplementary signal systems. "When the first streamliners came in, they went 100, 110 mph all over the middle west and far west . . . and we had four of the biggest train wrecks that anybody's ever seen! . . . The ICC put in a safety rule that says, unless you've got automatic train stop or cab signals, they're not going to have a speed of more than 79 mph. I think it's a good rule We're going to follow it."

- held out no prospect for reduced sleeping-car charges. "I'm not about to buy a bunch of million dollar high-level bedroom cars and then charge peanuts for it. . . . The most expensive way you can move a person is in the sleeping car, so people are going to have to pay for it."

- said "we're going to take over train and engine crews off-Corridor starting later this year with our own contract. We'll do it on a one-place-by-one-place basis. I'm hopeful that we can save money there along the lines of the money we've saved in the [Northeast] Corridor."

Rep. Lawrence Coughlin (R-PA), besides making positive comments about Amtrak generally (see box), expressed skepticism about the Atlantic City project and disappointment about the administration's failure to propose mass transit spending commensurate with what had been promised during the December lobbying for gas tax votes.

He said, "I think there are a host of questions about [the Atlantic City] line . . . whether \$30 million is enough . . . whether [trains could meet] the competition with casino-subsidized buses that provide more or less door-to-door service, how much will a ticket cost."

Regarding Philadelphia's long commuter-rail strike, he said SEPTA is "dealing with the proposition of trying to operate a railroad within the confines of a transit system and looking at

paying people \$40,000/year to operate a train vs. \$26,000/year to operate an elevated train, and that makes a very difficult situation indeed. And I guess I feel strongly that we have to hang in there . . . to get the kind of agreement that is necessary to be able to operate that system as a transit system."

Coughlin outlined \$27.9 billion worth of rail transit projects "in addition to the projects already under construction": \$9.5 billion of projects in preliminary engineering; \$6.1 billion undergoing alternatives analysis; and \$12.3 billion in the planning stage. In the FY '84 budget, there will be about \$500 million for these projects. He concluded, "I think there's no way you're going to be able to fund these projects at a 75% federal/25% local level."

When he was asked why it remains possible for states to get higher federal shares on many highway projects—"why [do the feds] bribe communities to do one kind of activity rather than another?"—he replied: "Because of the political realities of the situation. You have limited numbers of areas around the U.S. who need rail funds. You have practically a universal demand for highway funds. You also have historically the fact that highways have generally been built through government, not through bond issues of local municipalities, whereas transit facilities have historically been through bond issues of local municipalities and they are more local than highways are. Most of the federal money going to highways goes either to Interstates or primary highways or not a transit service that is local."

When his questioner noted the high percentage (73% of the costs, says the Congressional Budget Office) remaining of Interstate segments that are really local in nature (i.e., commuter freeways), Coughlin pointed out that, under Interstate transfer, communities have the right to trade in such highway projects and substitute transit projects at the same funding ratio. (*Mr. Gall's comments will be reported in a future issue.*) ■

CORRECTION to train-crew chart (Mar. News): NY turbos up to five cars require train crews of two people (not counting engineers); they sometimes exceed five cars and then require three people.

Legislative Update

The DOT FY '84 appropriations bill with \$720 million for Amtrak was approved by the House Appropriations Committee and on the House floor on June 15 and 22, respectively. (The committee assumes that an additional \$25 million, previously earmarked for Cincinnati-Indianapolis track improvements, will be carried forward into FY '84 and used for other Amtrak projects.)

The Committee reduced the share of "non-federal" funds required for Atlantic City improvements to 40% (from the subcommittee's 50%), and somewhat relaxed the subcommittee's revenue:cost ratio requirement. The subcommittee required (not mentioned in May News) revenues cover the service's fully allocated operating costs; the full committee required that revenues cover 80% in the first year—100% thereafter—of short-term avoidable costs. Under the legislation, compliance with the capital cost ratio requirement would be certified by the Secretary, and the Amtrak board would certify compliance with the operating subsidy requirement.

Without roll call votes, the House rejected an amendment offered by Rep. Christopher H. Smith (R-NJ) to delete all Atlantic City funds from the bill, and another by Rep. Lawrence Coughlin (R-PA) to restore the subcommittee's 50% non-federal funding requirement.

In spite of this, the project remains in doubt because New Jersey had planned to use federal Interstate transfer funds for much of the "non-Amtrak" share of capital funding, a move which would be barred if the bill's use of the term "non-federal" is retained.

Regarding mass transit, the House rejected Rep. Bobbi Fiedler's amendment to delete Los Angeles subway funding from the bill. In the wake of the Houston vote (see separate article), all new rail "starts" got more money, since the committee redistributed all but \$5.5 million of the \$110 million originally intended for Hous-

ton. The Los Angeles subway share increased from \$110 million to \$127.5 million and St. Louis was added to the rail city list with \$2 million for preliminary engineering.

Committee report language of interest to NARP members:

- Direction to Amtrak to "seek the Committee's approval" before discontinuing operations at North Philadelphia station.
- Urges Amtrak "to approve funding for [Mobile-New Orleans service] under the appropriate section of law."
- Urges Amtrak "to maintain the existing rail service between . . . Tampa-Clearwater-St. Petersburg."
- Directs "Amtrak to discontinue [auto-ferry service] if [it] generates an operating loss for any fiscal year beginning in FY '84, or if the [Amtrak board] determines that projected revenues for any subsequent fiscal year will not meet projected expenses."
- "The Committee intends that Amtrak be allowed the flexibility to derive up to \$30 million for the [West Side connection] funds from its FY '84 appropriation to the extent possible. . . . If Amtrak cannot derive the full amount required for the West Side project in FY '84, the Committee directs Amtrak to reprogram such sums as necessary" from funds reserved from Washington Union Station. "The Committee will consider restoration of any Union Station funds used for the West Side project in future bills."

Amtrak President W. Graham Claytor, Jr., told his board on June 15 that the West Side (Albany-to-Penn Station) project must go forward now, while 10th Avenue is already torn up for Long Island Railroad tunnel work, and that projected savings are greater than originally thought, now totalling \$7.7 million/year for a project whose total cost is \$56 million. ■

To protest converting Phila. trolley routes 6/50/60 to bus, mail comments before Aug. 4 to Secretary of SEPTA, 21st Fl., 130 S. 9th St., Phila. 19107. Public hearing 10:30 AM, Aug. 4 (same address). Service frequency changes are not proposed—but wait until SEPTA sees the reduced ridership bus conversions ALWAYS produce!

On-Board and Station Changes *(continued from page 1)*

He said it makes no sense to have agents in small, one-train-daily stations "with the electronic capability we have. . . . We want those stations to be custodial only. We can get a local retired policeman to open the station before the train, turn the lights on if it's at night, and close the station after the train."

Having station labor expense equal 25% or less of local revenue has been an Amtrak goal for several years. Amtrak says that the "system percent of Amtrak-manned stations meeting this goal rose to 84 in March, the best ratio in FY83 and a marked improvement from last year. The All Aboard America Fare promotion is primarily responsible for the increase." (*Amtrak News*—employees' newsletter—May).

Some NARP members have questioned the apparent reliance

RIISING TO THE OCCASION AT MARSHALL, TEXAS

Last year, when college students descended on Amtrak's unstaffed Marshall, TX, station, about 30 footlockers were left on the platform because there was no room in the passenger cars and no personnel to put them in the baggage car. People accompanying passengers to the station were simply told to take the bags to Longview, where they would be placed on the next train, a few days later!

This year, the public got better service. Amtrak authorized a ticket agent from a neighboring station to work the northbound "Eagle" at Marshall on May 6 (Wiley College students) and 13 (East Texas Baptist College). On May 6, the agent loaded 66 footlockers in the baggage car. Had he not been there, according to the conductor, bags would once again have been left on the platform.

on station revenues as the sole criterion for destaffing decisions; they note that this might obscure the need for personnel at a station which boards a high proportion of passengers who have purchased tickets elsewhere. Amtrak officials have been at pains to assure people that other factors are considered. In a March letter to NARP Director M.D. Monaghan, Group VP—Passenger Services & Communications M.L. Clark Tyler said he directed the Passenger Services Dept. [Eugene N. Eden, VP] to consider the numbers of trains and passengers and the amount of baggage and express handled at each station.

We also understand that Amtrak is considering: station sales as a percent of total station revenues (i.e., a well-patronized station where the agent sells only a small percentage of the tickets would be a candidate for destaffing); labor and benefit costs as a percent of station sales; and ridership on and off at the station. It remains to be seen whether any stations failing the criterion *Amtrak News* mentioned will be saved by the other factors.

For management, the key question is: will destaffing stations help Amtrak financially? Some Amtrak officials believe there's no significant correlation between ridership at a station and the

Galesburg Needs Checked Baggage!

NARP is pushing for restoration of checked baggage and package express service at Galesburg, IL, an Amtrak-oriented city of 35,000. The service was discontinued June 14 when Amtrak downgraded its Santa Fe (N. Broad St.) station to "caretaker" status.

Galesburg's other Amtrak station—Burlington Northern (S. Seminary St.)—has had no baggage/express service for some years because a union agreement with BN permits trains to run without a baggage man if baggage handling is restricted to division points, which Galesburg is not for the "California Zephyr."

NARP is urging Amtrak, BN, and the United Transportation Union to modify this agreement to permit resumption of baggage/express service at the staffed BN station which, at the moment, is a trailer. (The old building was razed in May; a modern replacement will open this fall.)

If the agreement is modified, "Southwest Ltd." passengers would get "day-later" service (i.e. most bags would ride the "Zephyr" Galesburg-Chicago and transfer to/from the "Southwest" in Chicago. "Zephyr" passengers who had "day-later" service until June, would enjoy regular service).

FREE! Send an s.a.s.e. to NARP if you'd like a copy of Amtrak's June 13 schedule changes, the excellent statewide timetable published by Caltrans (both the June 1 and the original Oct. 31, '82 editions are available), and/or "How to Keep Metro Fares Down, A Fair Way to Meet Local Government Expenses," a new flier from the League for Urban Land Conservation, Washington, DC. Send \$1 for handling if you'd like SNCF's 16-page color, glossy booklet, "The TGV Paris-Sud-Est," limited supply.

presence of a ticket agent. Amtrak can cite no studies of the effect of previous unstaffing of stations on ridership, and believes that the experience at those stations since destaffing is of such short duration and influenced by so many variables that no solid conclusions could be drawn to serve as a guide for future decisions.

The first 32 candidates for such decisions—which Amtrak emphasizes have not yet been made—are by route (*=more than one pair of trains/day): "Broadway/Capitol"—Canton & Lima, OH; "CA Zephyr"—Ottumwa, IA, and Hastings, NE; "Cardinal"—Prince, WV (for Beckley) and Tri-State, KY (for Ashland); "City of New Orleans"—Effingham, IL*, Hammond, LA, and McComb, MS; "Crescent"—Lynchburg, VA; "Eagle"—Texarkana, AR, and Longview and Temple, TX; "Empire Builder"—Cut Bank and Shelby, MT, and Edmonds, WA; Empire Builder—Niagara Falls, NY*; "Lake Shore"—Elyria, OH and Erie, PA; "Montrealer"—Montpelier Jct., St. Albans, and Waterbury, VT; "Silver Meteor & Star"—Deland (for Daytona Beach)*, Kissimmee (for Disney World/EPCOT)*, and Sanford*, FL, Hamlet, and Southern Pines, NC, and Camden, SC; and "Southwest Ltd."—Winslow, AZ, Dodge City and Hutchinson, KS, and Lamy, NM (for Santa Fe). If you know anything about these stations which is relevant to the destaffing decisions but which may not show up on Amtrak's statistical forms, please tell the NARP office.

Two factors which may not be apparent to Amtrak at first glance—but which Amtrak is hearing about as the above list gets around—are the generally intense and emotional local reactions to these proposals, and the specific community relations work many ticket agents do for Amtrak. These factors, Amtrak's inability to predict the impact of closures, and the relatively modest cost of staffing the stations all argue for a go-slow approach, picking only a handful of obviously justified candidates for destaffing this year, and studying carefully the results at stations already de-staffed (Jan. 1—Emporia, KS, Kewanee, IL; Jan. 17—Poplar Bluff, MO; May 1—Sandpoint, ID, Libby, MT; July 1—Slidell, LA [had been open only 7-9:30 AM Mon.-Sat.], Gastonia, NC. Seven Wyoming stations were destaffed May 21, but Amtrak plans to reroute service off the line as soon as the Rio Grande reopens).

Texas Rail Transit *(continued from page 1)*

and, for any added rail alignment, approval of the city council where it is proposed.

Meanwhile, damage has been done to the cause of rail transit in Houston. Rep. Jack Fields (R-TX) said "he is dropping his plans to get federal money" for the rail project and "said the defeat of the bond issue shows that there is no public commitment to a rapid rail transit system in the Houston area" (*Dallas Times Herald*, June 14). And County Judge John Lindsay has announced plans to call Houston area voters back to the polls for a toll-road bond referendum of at least \$1 billion by September.

Perhaps the efforts of Houston transit planners to develop a rail plan that will deserve and get voters' support should include riding the San Diego trolley and studying the planning process in Dallas.

Meanwhile, we trust that all NARP members and their friends who live in the Dallas area will work hard to assure success in the Aug. 13 referendum. Optimistic polls published in the Houston papers a few days before the election may have encouraged rail supporters to stay home. For all NARP members, NARP Director M.D. Monaghan of Garland, TX, emphasizes that the defeated 1980 Dallas-Ft. Worth proposal and Houston both "had no definite service plan and the public had no assurance as to how the money would be spent. It is important that all cities attempting transit should have clear cut proposals."