

News from the
**National Association of
Railroad Passengers**

Vol. 26 No. 7  July, 1992

RETURN REQUESTED

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The Return of the Passenger Train and Jobs

(The following is printed in memory of its author, our long-time board member, Samuel E. Stokes, Jr. He died July 18. (More on Sam next issue.)

- I. How many railroad and related jobs would be provided if the nation's railroad beds were dramatically improved?
 - a) How many steel companies could produce welded rail for major and secondary lines?
 - b) How many steel companies could produce rail for the relaying of abandoned lines and for relaying double track where congestion is worst?
 - c) How many forest industries could make new ties?
 - d) How many quarries could produce new ballast?
 - e) How many wire companies could make fencing for the populous areas?
 - f) How many signal companies could make new equipment?
- II. How many highway jobs would be provided if:
 - a) Overpasses and underpasses replaced most grade crossings?
 - b) Other grade crossings were protected by automatic cross-bars?
 - c) Present overpasses were raised so piggyback freight, auto-trains and dome cars could pass everywhere?
 - d) Drive-on, drive-off docks for auto-train service were built near all major cities?
 - e) Beautification projects were undertaken at the ugliest sites?
- III. How many construction companies would have work if we rebuilt all our dilapidated or non-existent railroad stations as transportation centers for trains, buses and airport limousines?
- IV. How many industries could make new passenger cars, new engines, new auto-train cars, new track work equipment?

Can the leaders of this nation be fair in their transportation thinking and funding allocations?

House Slashes Amtrak FY '92 Capital Funds

The House approved a FY '93 DOT appropriations bill cutting Amtrak capital investment 58%—to \$74 million from this year's \$175 mill.—and zeroing out Northeast Corridor (NEC) improvements which got \$205 mill. for FY '92. This July 9 action endorsed Amtrak/NEC levels approved by the Appropriations Subcomm. on Transp. June 11 (June News) and the full committee July 1.

However, the House did exceed committee-approved levels for other programs, voting 213-190 for a David R. Obey (D-WI) amendment to transfer \$2.59 billion in contract authority (only \$400 mill. to be spent in FY '93) from foreign aid and other to-be-identified programs to transportation trust funds—highways (\$2.25 bill.), transit (\$257 mill.), airports (\$50 mill.)—and to the Coast Guard (\$38 mill.).

Obey's high highways-to-transit ratio (8.75-to-1) reflects his district—mostly rural (Superior and Wausau are the largest cities) and without Amtrak—and his desire to add as much budget authority as possible which, under budget rules, led him to emphasize programs with a low *first-year* spend-out rate. Highways and transit new starts spend less than 20% the first year; the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) says Amtrak capital exceeds 60% but Amtrak, after analyzing the years 1980-90, claims 35% is the right number. To avoid getting burned again in this arcane game, Amtrak is trying to convince CBO and the appropriations committees that 35% is indeed valid.

Republican leaders opposed Obey's amendment as a budget-buster and the House vote was far short of the two-thirds margin needed to override a veto, but Pres. Bush might not veto such a "jobs" package if the economy and his campaign continue to sputter.

The House and its committees *did* fund Amtrak's FY '93 request for operations. The committee report's criticisms of Amtrak stem partly from a decision to "rationalize" the low capital number rather than admit its inadequacy and partly to warn Amtrak to better communicate its changing capital needs to the committee.

The counterpart Senate subcommittee, chaired by Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ), is expected to mark up its bill July 29. ■

Amtrak Releases New Routes Study

"While the routes evaluated would serve a clear social purpose, in that they would provide transportation alternatives to, in many cases, areas with limited and declining choices, they nonetheless would require operating subsidies as well as major investments in capital for equipment and for track and facility improvements. [Twin Cities-Des Moines-Kansas City and Omaha-Kansas City might require no operating subsidy even in the first year of operation. Ed.]

"Implementation of the routes evaluated in this report would represent a major expansion of Amtrak's system, reaching new metropolitan areas with over 11 million residents currently without Amtrak service. Amtrak cannot, however, given its scarcity of capital . . . and the operating subsidies initially required, presently consider implementing such a route expansion on its own."

—Amtrak's "Evaluation of Service to Areas Presently Not Served," released July 6.

Amtrak gave its "Evaluation of Service to Areas Not Presently Served" to the two Congressional Commerce Committees on July 6, in accordance with the 1990 Amtrak Reauthorization Act (July '90 News, p. 2).

Amtrak also is studying how to better serve places now served only at bad hours and how to provide faster, more frequent service to its corridors outside the Northeast.

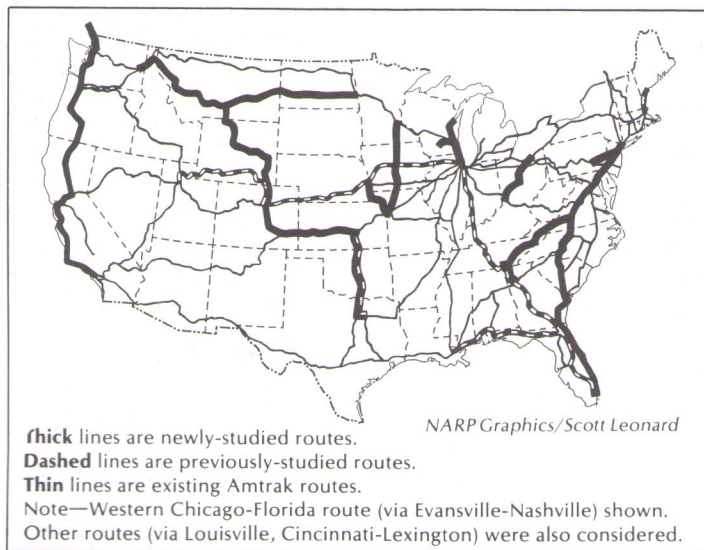
Amtrak Pres. W. Graham Clayton, Jr. says all such improvements depend on creation of an intercity passenger rail trust fund, such as in HR 4414 (Mar. News). [The latest HR 4414 co-sponsor is Rep. John Miller (R-WA). Please share with NARP copies of letters you receive from legislators on HR 4414.]

Routes Covered in Report

NOTE—Routes were studied in isolation but some operating or capital costs could be shared—i.e., the first two services below would benefit from Seattle-Vancouver track work; "North Coast Limited" and Seattle-Denver train could be combined west of Laurel, MT, etc. Years in parentheses are when passenger trains last ran. The report includes only those track and station costs on hand from previous Amtrak studies. Amtrak did no new studies of such costs for this report.

- **Vancouver-Los Angeles** (Vancouver-Everett, 1981): This is a second "Coast Starlight" (plus Vancouver extension) running 12 hours apart from the existing train.

- **Vancouver-Portland**: One round-trip studied—leaves Vancouver 8:30a; Portland 1:15p—vs. three tentatively pro-



posed in March by Amtrak and the State of Washington (Apr. News, p.1).

- **"North Coast Limited"** across southern Montana/North Dakota (1979) adds the most route miles per unit of rolling stock: "only three locomotives and seven Superliner coaches" could restore the 1,245-mile Fargo-Bismarck-Billings-Helena-Spokane segment—assuming the "Limited" combines with "Empire Builder" Chicago-Fargo and some passengers must change cars at Spokane (at very unattractive hours west-bound). (The only sleepers would be Chicago-Billings-Seattle and Chicago-Havre-Portland; there would be no Chicago-Billings-Portland coach.)

- **Seattle/Portland-Denver** (Laurel-Cheyenne, 1967) service would combine with "Empire Builder" between Seattle/Portland and Spokane and would run as a new Spokane-Denver train via Missoula, Helena, Laurel (junction 15 mi. west of Billings), Casper and Cheyenne, taking two nights and requiring a 12-hour daytime layover in Denver to connect with points south (see Denver-Dallas below) and east. (Denver day trips would be possible from Wyoming points—important to people with medical appointments, as with "Empire Builder" west of Minneapolis.)

- **Denver-Oklahoma-Dallas** (Denver-La Junta, 1971; Newton-Ft. Worth, 1979); This much-requested train would connect with all "Zephyr" trains to/from the West Coast at Denver and with the San Antonio (not Houston) "Texas Eagle" at Ft. Worth. The service would share tracks with "Southwest Chief" La Junta-Newton and run on old "Texas Chief" tracks south through Oklahoma City to Texas.

- **Twin Cities-Kansas City** (1969) would connect with "Southwest Chief" (also perhaps "Texas Chief") at Kansas City, "California Zephyr" at new stop in Chariton, IA, (where the two rail routes are on two different levels) and "Empire Builder" from west of Twin Cities. Des Moines, Mason City and Albert Lea would also be served.

- **Kansas City-Omaha** (1971) would be an extension of the St. Louis-Kansas City "Mules" which Amtrak already had discussed with Missouri and Nebraska. It would give Missouri points direct rail access to the "Zephyr" at Omaha. One more train set, a track connection at Falls City, NE and a diamond near Plattsmouth, NE would be needed. Financially, this train would compare favorably with existing short-distance services.

- **Chicago-Green Bay** (1971): This and the Madison route (seq.) were covered in greater detail in a 403(b) report delivered to the State of Wisconsin on July 14. Two round-trips via Milwaukee and the Fox Valley (Fond du Lac, Oshkosh, Neenah, Appleton) were examined, along with an extra Chicago-Milwaukee round trip. Track problems may be resolved by Wisconsin Central's pending trackage acquisitions. The trains would leave the "Empire Builder" route at Duplainville, 19 mi. west of Milwaukee.

- **Chicago-Milwaukee-Madison** (mid-1950's; direct via Janesville—1971): As with Green Bay, two daily round-trips were considered—in fact, the same ones. Two big issues: bad tracks west of Watertown (last ballasted in 1939!); Madison station location. Also like Green Bay, Amtrak claims one train set (with food car) is needed, but in theory more than two Madison round trips are possible with existing Chicago-Milwaukee equipment.

- **"Queen of the Valley"** (Early 1960s): This New York-Plainfield-Allentown-Harrisburg run uses what is now Conrail's well-maintained freight mainline. The one round trip examined (6a east; 4:30p west) requires little capital and compares well financially to existing short-distance services. The 4-1/2-hour running-time assumes dual-mode (overhead-collection electric/diesel) locomotives to reach New York

FINANCIAL DATA FROM REPORT

SERVICE	STAP/L/PM	LTAP/L	Eqpt.
New York-Charlotte-Florida, FEC (Note 2)	0.9 - 0.0	(10.6)-(20.3)	169.0
(New York)-Cleveland-Cincinnati (Note 2)	0.6	(2.4)	33.2
Vancouver-Seattle-Los Angeles	0.4 -(1.6)	(8.2)-(12.8)	101.9
New York-Allentown-Harrisburg	(2.2)-(5.0)	(0.9)-(1.1)	5.5
(St. Louis)-Kansas City-Omaha (Notes 1,2)	(2.8)-(4.1)	0.0 -(1.0)	7.5
(Chicago)-Billings-Seattle (Note 2)	(3.3)-(4.2)	(12.6)-(15.4)	19.4
Denver-Oklahoma City-Dallas	(3.7)-(11.1)	(8.3)-(11.5)	54.9
Chicago-Milwaukee-Madison (Note 1)	(4.9)-(14.0)	(0.6)-(1.5)	6.0
Twin Cities-Des Moines-Kansas City (Note 1)	(6.5)-(14.8)	0.9 -(0.8)	14.9
Vancouver-Seattle-Portland	(6.7)-(10.0)	(2.6)-(3.0)	15.9
New York-Knoxville-Atlanta	(8.0)-(14.2)	(7.9)-(9.6)	60.0
Chicago-Milwaukee-Green Bay (Note 1)	(10.1)-(21.9)	(1.7)-(2.7)	6.0
(Seattle)-Casper-Denver	(24.3)-(40.6)	(22.6)-(24.4)	78.5

STAP/L/PM = Short-term avoidable profit (loss) per passenger mile (in cents) excludes heavy overhauls of rolling stock and the long-term portions of general administrative expenses and insurance but is useful as a measure of efficiency.

LTAP/L = Annual long-term avoidable profit (loss) (in millions of dollars), what Amtrak considers the true incremental operating cost impact on the system.

Eqpt. = Incremental equipment cost (\$ millions)

Note 1. STAP/L/PM reflects no connecting revenue. LTAP/L includes revenue derived from connecting trains.

Note 2. STAP/L/PM is for entire restructured route. LTAP/L is the change in subsidy requirement resulting from the service change studied.

- Jacksonville-New Orleans—May '91;
 - "Pioneer" and "Desert Wind" via Wyoming, central Iowa—Mar. '91, June '91;
 - "Texas Chief"—Feb. '84, Mar. '92;
 - Chicago-Florida—Dec. '90;
 - Boston-Portland—June, July & Dec. '91, June '92.
- (To get a copy of the 121-page report, write Amtrak Public Affairs, 60 Massachusetts Ave, NE, Washington, DC 20002). ■

AMTRAK: SURVIVING A TOUGH YEAR

Thanks to the ongoing recession, the air fare wars, the June strike/lockout and the Food and Drug Admin. consent agreement, Amtrak expects a FY '92 cash deficit of about \$37 million vs. \$29 mill. last year. "Cash deficit" means operating costs not covered by the federal operating grant or commercial revenues; this year's deficit is likely to be covered by borrowing from major banks with which Amtrak has long had lines of credit; now-depleted cash reserves covered last year.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Amtrak banned smoking July 1 on its new "Capitols" (San Jose-Sacramento Trains 721 through 726).

To facilitate FDA-required work (see back page), from July 27 to at least Sept. 13, there will be no Club Service on Trains 106-7, 116-7, 126, 129, 141-2, 177-8, 190, 193, 203 and 220; no Custom Class on the "Adirondack"; and only non-refrigerated food east of New Haven on Trains 471, 474 and 477. (Since Amtrak forbids smoking on trains with just three cars, 203 and 220 will be all-no-smoking.) 202 and 223 were restored July 27 after three weeks' absence.

Overnight Inland Route Train 466 has no food service east of New Haven and will be replaced in Oct. with a second daylight train due to low ridership.

Penn Station. In 1991, \$14 million was appropriated toward developing this type of locomotive, but none have been built and the project is currently dormant.

● **Cincinnati-Columbus-Cleveland "Lake Shore"** (1971): A branch of the Boston/New York-Chicago "Lake Shore," increasing its size on the Albany-Cleveland trunk from two to three locomotives, from five to six baggage/mail cars and from 11 to 14 passenger cars.

● **New York-Tennessee-Atlanta** (Roanoke 1979, Bristol and Chattanooga 1971, Knoxville 1970): A 24-hour, overnight train via Washington-Lynchburg-Roanoke-Bristol-Knoxville-Chattanooga (southbound 8:30p-8:45p, north 10:20a-10:48a).

● **"Silver" Service** (Charlotte-Columbia, mid-1960s; Florida East Coast—FEC—1968): A third New York-Florida train, this one via Charlotte and Columbia. The assumed schedule—for New York-Miami, 6:15p-10:30p south; 8a-12:15p north—requires a \$4 million connection at Columbia to avoid a back-up move (Jan. News, p. 4). It would use the "Meteor's" present route pattern in Florida. The Miami section of the "Meteor" would run via Daytona Beach (FEC); the "Star" Florida pattern would not change.

The report assumes moving "Star" off its present Raleigh-Columbia route to the "Meteor's" coastal route, apparently reflecting a belief that sooner or later CSX will downgrade the former line. However, with some schedule adjustments, the new third train could also be added *without* changing Carolina routings of existing trains.

The report summarizes these **previously issued Amtrak studies**—dates refer to NARP News issues:

Campaign Issues Paper on Light Rail

"Light Rail Transit: Cost-effective, Environmentally-sound Mobility for U.S. Cities" is sixth in the series of papers issued by NARP's Campaign for New Transportation Priorities and is available for \$5 to NARP members, \$6 non-members, and \$4 each for quantity orders of four or more CNTP papers (any combination—send NARP a s.a.s.e. for list).

The new 8-pager shows projected and actual construction costs and ridership of new and upgraded U.S. LRT systems and discusses the economic, environmental and social benefits of building new systems and improving existing ones. Co-authored by NARP's Harriet Parcells and Ross Capon, the paper provides solid facts to refute critics of LRT costs and ridership.

CNTP's fifth paper, "Intercity Passenger Transportation: Neglect of Rail and Intermodal Facilities,"—in addition to free distribution to Capitol Hill and the media—has so far been requested by 50 other groups and individuals, including: Hoosier Environmental Council; Regional Plan Assn. (New York City); a Washington, DC law firm and many Sierra Club members. The paper was discussed in Amtrak's *Newsbreak* for (employees) and Sierra Club newsletters.

CNTP paper #2, "Transportation and Tax Policy," has been updated to include recent developments on the free-parking-vs-transit-benefit issue.

FDA Forces Amtrak To Shape Up

"We had no dining car service—car on train but not serving! For breakfast, a catered meal of one Egg-McMuffin, cold at that, as a meal! The taste was gross! At noon they catered a 2-pc. chicken dinner (from a local store). By the time we got that in sleeping car compartment that was also cold! I do feel that Chief On Board Services should have made explanation, especially to First Class, as to why no dining car service!"

—NARP Member Robert Dorr of Wisconsin, in June 19 letter to Amtrak after a Chicago-Denver round-trip.

Until June, Amtrak responded to Food and Drug Administration (FDA) complaints on a piecemeal basis, for example, simply fumigating a mice-ridden car but not eliminating mice-friendly railyard environments or speeding removal of garbage from trains at their destinations.

The "straw that broke the camel's back" was a Customs report to FDA about evidence of rodents on the "Montrealer." After a series of inspections nationwide, FDA decided Amtrak needed to make systematic changes. Thus the FDA cited Amtrak with a consent agreement the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia approved June 15 (not June 12 as June News reported).

The good news: Amtrak is finally dealing effectively with some problems the company was overdue in addressing properly. The FDA told NARP that, "once we engaged Amtrak [first meeting: May 21. Ed.] we found their people to be cooperative and responsive. We think the consent agreement is a good one and in the public interest. We are convinced Amtrak intends to follow through on it." Amtrak says morale of on-board employees is already improving as a result of tightened maintenance practices and more reliable food-cooling equipment.

The bad news: Amtrak's strict self-policing of its compliance has played havoc with on-time performance and meant more standees on unreserved trains and substandard food service.

The Consent Agreement . . .

. . . is "United States of America, Plaintiff, v. Amtrak, W. Graham Claytor Jr., Dennis F. Sullivan, and Eugene N. Eden, individuals, Defendants. Civil No. 92 1373, Consent Decree of Permanent Injunction." The individuals are Amtrak's President/Chairman, Executive Vice President/Chief Operating Officer and Vice President—Passenger Services, respectively, the people Amtrak felt were best positioned to fix the problems.

Attached to the consent agreement is the "interim program" whose immediate strict implementation caused the big service problems. Amtrak also was required to develop a more detailed, long-term "sanitation and food service program" to be implemented upon approval by FDA and the court. On July 15, the FDA told Amtrak its detailed program was "a good effort to comply with the consent decree" and was "generally acceptable" but asked some questions about areas FDA felt were unclear.

The agreement gives FDA the authority to take strong measures where Amtrak fails to, hence Amtrak's strict self-policing activities.

Amtrak Goes to Work

Starting in June, Amtrak began "a massive attempt to deal with cumulative problems." From June 1 to July 2, the company:

- fumigated 607 cars outside of scheduled maintenance—in many cases, delaying trains or shorting their consists;
 - removed 138 food service cars from service;
 - delayed 68 trains for rodent problems; and
 - shopped 64 cars with inoperative public toilets or sinks.
- Amtrak says "early service problems will be short-lived."

The consent agreement, however, presents a permanent challenge. To better protect the public health, Amtrak will no longer dispatch a single-level coach with a nonfunctional public toilet or a Superliner car with more than one nonfunctional public toilet. Also, Amtrak will not dispatch a car with any evidence of rodents—a longstanding policy now enforced rigorously. (Incidentally, Amtrak says it has only mice; no rats or insects.)

Amtrak has ended use of dry ice when a refrigeration unit fails en route; Amtrak will use "catered" meals instead. Dry ice does not permit uniform compliance with regulation temperatures; the consent agreement requires freezers to be zero or below—refrigerators 33° to 40° F—and requires destruction of food that "exceeds 45° F for any undetermined period or for a known period that exceeds four hours."

To insure that scheduled maintenance corrects as many problems as possible, Amtrak has reduced the preventive-maintenance cycle from 120 to 60 days for food service cars and from 180 to 150 days for coaches (sleepers and dorms remain at 120 days). This change permanently reduces the number of cars available for service.

Amtrak must hire more coach-cleaners and, for the first time, give them sanitation training.

Amtrak is removing weeds and badly-placed stacks of ties which harbor rodents in railyards. Having learned mice can survive traditional fumigation methods in which the fumigant is pumped into a sealed car, Amtrak is testing a more expensive method in which the entire car is placed in a "tent" into which the fumigant is pumped.

The Management Diagram Grows More Complex

A new organizational structure has been established to oversee compliance—from a special board committee to sanitation committees and quality inspection teams at each facility. An Executive Oversight Committee chaired by Sullivan and General Counsel Stephen C. Rogers meets weekly and includes Eden, Vice President-Transportation Robert C. VanderClute and Asst. Vice Pres.-Personnel Neil D. Mann.

The detailed program was developed by a Sanitation Task Force chaired by Charles W. Bothwell, Senior Director-Passenger Services; Robert M. Burk, Chief Mechanical Officer; and Jeffrey H. Moon, Asst. General Counsel. Amtrak used two outside firms, Service Master and Copesan, to review procedures and help with development of the program.

How Did Amtrak Get Into This Mess?

Amtrak never gave FDA-type concerns as high a priority as self-sufficiency or Harriman-Award-related rail safety issues.

In fairness, Amtrak was working on some aspects of the problem before the FDA opened fire, having replaced almost all outmoded dishwashers and over half the obsolete refrigerators and freezers. Amtrak admits it was not as effective on the mice front.

The Pricetag

Amtrak says FDA-related work will cost at least \$8 million over two years in capital investments and will increase operating costs \$7 million a year—not including the higher cost of "tenting" cars and the revenues lost due to FDA-related adverse impacts on service. ■