



## Senate Committee Funds Amtrak

Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ), Ranking Member of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, gets the lion's share of credit for that Subcommittee's approval of a fiscal 1999 Amtrak appropriation of \$555 million. This came late July 8, after Chairman Richard Shelby's (R-AL) "mark" had included zero for Amtrak for weeks. On July 14, the full committee, chaired by Ted Stevens (R-AK), approved the \$555 million and added the flexible definition of capital Amtrak has long sought. The committee also earmarked \$5 million of high speed rail funds for capital improvements related to Amtrak's planned daily Las Vegas-Los Angeles train.

**CHAIRMAN WOLF APPROVES FULL FUNDING—see back page**

Lautenberg kept getting the Subcommittee's mark-up meeting postponed as he looked for ways to solve the problem. To show strong, bipartisan support for his efforts, eight other senators joined him at

an afternoon Capitol Hill news conference July 8 to announce and applaud his success: Biden (D-DE), Chafee (R-RI), Jeffords (R-VT), Kerry (D-MA), Mikulski (D-MD), Roth (R-DE), Sarbanes (D-MD) and Santorum (R-PA).

The day before, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-MS) told reporters, "I personally would like to see Amtrak funded" in the DOT appropriations bill. Biden—even after Amtrak funding seemed assured—expressed his anger at how hard it is to fund Amtrak even when (or because!) highway spending is rising dramatically: "I am glad, but I am not grateful."

(continued on page 3)

### NARP HONORS CLAIBORNE PELL



—Fourtin Powell

NARP belatedly presented its George Falcon Golden Spike Award to former Sen. Claiborne Pell (D-RI), at the May 31 reopening of the restored Kingston station. In photo above, Pell—author of the 1966 book *Megalopolis Unbound* and "father" of the Metroliners—and his wife are at left. NARP Dir. Wayne Davis, who presented the award, is in foreground. Facing camera, from right: Gov. Lincoln C. Almond (R) and Sens. Jack Reed (D) and John Chafee (R).

### 1999 TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Compared with Previous Years  
Appropriations (\$ millions)

NOTES:

A) Does not include \$199 million for capital that appropriators directed be stricken if Amtrak got capital funds in the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997. But for that language, the \$594 million shown would have been \$793 million, and the Administration's 1999 request would have been a 22% cut.

B) Includes "mandatory payments" (federal railroad retirement and unemployment insurance costs beyond Amtrak's demands on system), about \$150 million a year. The 1996 operating figure includes \$100 million towards "transition costs"—mostly related to employee buy-outs and setting up the business units—largely incurred in 1994 and 1995.

C) Amtrak's request is for either \$621 million or "adequate" operating and capital support.

D) Some general capital could go to Northeast Corridor.

E) In 1996, \$20 million of Amtrak capital was divertable to Farley project. The Senate did not fund it for 1999 because it received other funding in TEA-21.

F) In Taxpayer Relief Act, not subject to appropriation.

G) Includes \$5.25 million a year in TEA-21 for highway-rail grade crossing work in high speed corridors.

(Clinton 1999 highway+transit numbers are "pre-TEA-21".)

#### Administration

	1995 Enacted	1996 Enacted	1997 Enacted	1998 Enacted	1999 Amtrak Plan	1999 Clinton Request	1999 Senate bill	Change, Senate vs. 1998
Federal Highway	19,879	19,805	21,713	23,481	—	23,115	27,019	+ 15%
Federal Aviation	8,392	8,216	8,561	9,111	—	9,751	9,856	+ 8%
Federal Transit	4,614	4,051	4,382	4,844	—	4,776	5,365	+ 11%
Federal Railroad	1,162	874	1,050	732 (A)	—	751	702	- 4%
* Amtrak + N.E. Corr.	994	750	843	594 (A)	621	621	555	- 7%

\*Also in Federal Railroad Administration total.

#### Intercity Passenger Rail Categories

Amtrak:	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999 Amtrak Plan	1999 Clinton Request	1999 Senate bill	Change, Senate vs. 1998
Operations (B)	542	405	365	344	(C)	0	0	-100%
Capital	230	230	223	0 (A)	(C)	410 (D)	355	n.a.
Northeast Corr.	222	115	255	238	(C)	200 (D)	200	- 16%
Penn Sta./Farley	0	(E)	0	12	0	12	(E)	-100%
High Speed Rail	23	24	25	20	—	13	30 (G)	+ 50%
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>1,017</b>	<b>774</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>614 (A)</b>	<b>621</b>	<b>634</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>- 5%</b>
"TRA money" (F)	—	—	—	1,092	1,092	1,092	1,092	—
<b>RAIL TOTAL</b>	<b>1,017</b>	<b>774</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>1,706</b>	<b>1,713</b>	<b>1,726</b>	<b>1,677</b>	<b>- 2%</b>



## THANK YOU, GOVERNORS!

Twenty-three governors on May 1 wrote to the chairmen and ranking members of the House and Senate committees considering TEA-21 to urge inclusion of Senate-passed language giving states the flexibility to spend some of their federal transportation funds on intercity passenger rail.

The governors' letter showed broad support for flexibility, which nonetheless died in the House-Senate conference committee (*May News*). Here are the governors who signed:

Conn.	John G. Rowland (R)	Nev.	Bob Miller (D)
Colo.	Roy Romer (D)	N.H.	Jeanne Shaheen (D)
Del.	Tom Carper (D)	N.C.	James B. Hunt, Jr. (D)
Fla.	Lawton Chiles (D)	Ohio	George Voinovich (R)
Ga.	Zell Miller (D)	Ore.	John A. Kitzhaber (D)
Ind.	Frank O'Bannon (D)	R.I.	Lincoln Almond (R)
Ky.	Paul E. Patton (D)	Va.	James S. Gilmore (R)
Me.	Angus S. King, Jr. (I)	Vt.	Howard Dean (D)
Md.	Parris N. Glendening (D)	Wash.	Gary Locke (D)
Mich.	John Engler (R)	W.Va.	Cecil Underwood (R)
Mo.	Mel Carnahan (D)	Wis.	Tommy Thompson (R)
Neb.	Ben Nelson (D)		

## THANK YOU, SENATORS!

Fifty-three Senators urged Senate Transportation Appropriations Chairman Richard Shelby (R-AL) to adopt Amtrak's full funding request (\$621 million and the "transit definition" for capital, *Apr. News*) for fiscal 1999. A letter authored by Senators Roth and Kerry was delivered June 12 with signatures of 52 Senators, listed here. (See note at bottom re #53.)

Alaska	Murkowski (R)	
Cal.	Feinstein (D)	Boxer (D)
Conn.	Dodd (D)	Lieberman (D)
Del.	Biden (D)	Roth (R)
Ga.	Cleland (D)	
Hawaii	Inouye (D)	Akaka (D)
Ill.	Moseley-Braun (D)	Durbin (D)
Ind.	Lugar (R)	
Ky.	Ford (D)	
La.	Breaux (D)	Landrieu (D)
Me.	Collins (R)	Snowe (R)
Md.	Mikulski (D)	Sarbanes (D)
Mass.	Kennedy (D)	Kerry (D)
Mich.	Levin (D)	
Minn.	Wellstone (D)	
Mont.	Burns (R)	Baucus (D)
Neb.	Kerrey (D)	
Nev.	Reid (D)	Bryan (D)
N.J.	Lautenberg (D)	Torricelli (D)
N.Mex.	Bingaman (D)	
N.Y.	Moynihan (D)	D'Amato (R)
N.Dak.	Conrad (D)	Dorgan (D)
Ohio	DeWine (R)	Glenn (D)
Ore.	Wyden (D)	
Pa.	Specter (R)	Santorum (R)
R.I.	Chafee (R)	Reed (D)
S.C.	Hollings (D)	
Tex.	Hutchison (R)	
Vt.	Jeffords (R)	Leahy (D)
Va.	Robb (D)	
Wash.	Murray (D)	
W.Va.	Rockefeller (D)	(see note below)
Wis.	Feingold (D)	Kohl (D)

NOTE—Byrd (D-WV) sent a similar, separate letter.

## Midwest Corridor Updates

### AMTRAK AND MISSOURI REACH AGREEMENT

Amtrak and Missouri DOT in June signed an agreement on the Kansas City-St. Louis service through fiscal 1999. The state will pay \$4.7 million for the twice-daily service, whose October-June ridership was up 18% from a year earlier. Amtrak pays financial penalties if departures from either end are frequently over 30 minutes late. A similar contract with Illinois last year has produced no Amtrak penalties so far.

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### FUNDS FOR A FASTER ST. LOUIS SERVICE

The Illinois DOT has signed a \$3.75 million agreement with the Gateway Western Railroad to build a new track along the Mississippi River in East St. Louis, which is expected to cut 20 minutes from Amtrak's St. Louis-Chicago schedules. Passenger trains then would use the MacArthur Bridge instead of the Merchants Bridge across the river, and avoid freight-train congestion. Of the funding \$3 million came from federal sources; the rest from the state.

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### TRAINS TO COLUMBUS, OHIO, BY END OF '99?

A preliminary report by the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) recommends that the state provide about \$32 million in capital start-up funds and \$3.3 million in annual operating grants for a Columbus-Cleveland passenger rail service. ODOT wants to begin two daily round trips within 18 months and will discuss it with Amtrak, the host railroad, on-line communities, and other state agencies.

Strong support for the service emerged in public hearings held in connection with ODOT's planned \$535 million, ten-year project to rebuild and enlarge I-71 between the two cities. ODOT also notes that expanding I-71 beyond the planned third lane in each direction may be "cost prohibitive."

This would be the first Columbus-Cleveland service since Amtrak's creation in 1971, and the first passenger rail service of any kind in Columbus since the elimination of Amtrak's New York-Kansas City *National Limited* in 1979.

The Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers (OARP)—and NARP—want more frequencies and extension of the route southwest to Dayton and Cincinnati. OARP's regular hotline (614/470-0334; normally updated Fridays) has information on I-71 and how to submit public comments to ODOT, due July 31 [e-mail: <71recon@odot.dot.ohio.gov>]. ■

### RAIL TRAVEL BOOK REISSUED

*All Aboard! The Complete North American Train Travel Guide*, first published in 1995, has a revised second edition, now with coverage of Mexico (besides the US and Canada). The 400-page book by NARP member/travel writer Jim Loomis offers history, travel tips, route descriptions, and other useful information. There are several black-and-white illustrations, maps, and car floor-plans. The book is available in bookstores (\$15.95 in US; \$22.95 in Canada) or by contacting Prima Publishing; 3875 Atherton Rd.; Rocklin, CA 95765; 800/632-8676; <www.primapub.com>.



# About That GAO Report

"Intercity Passenger Rail: Financial Performance of Amtrak's Routes," issued in May by the General Accounting Office, was mandated by the Fiscal 1998 appropriations law. The report is a flawed view of one point in time (Fiscal 1997). It reflects none of the positive things we expect in the future, either in terms of obvious improvements to train operations (as discussed below) or of many other ways Amtrak can improve its business practices, such as with the more sophisticated reservations system now in planning.

Amtrak will benefit from planned investments by various parties, on which we report. For example, Chicago-St. Louis (page 2); Richmond-Washington top speeds are expected to rise from 70 to 80 mph later this year; CSX will upgrade Albany-Buffalo tracks to FRA Class Five, good for 90 mph passenger operations when "someone" adds cab signals.

Affected trains will benefit from such work as well as from the express initiative (now that it can advance).

The report overemphasizes loss per passenger—not a good measure of economic efficiency, but useful for inspiring attacks on Amtrak; anyway, \$47—the GAO's number—is wrong. It is the sum of all Amtrak routes' fully allocated losses (\$949.5 million) divided by 20.1 million (1997 intercity ridership less special-train passengers). Amtrak's actual loss—which also reflects profitable, contract work—was 20% lower (\$761.9 million), implying a \$37.95 loss per passenger. Also, both \$949.5 million and \$761.9 million include non-cash expenses, primarily \$242 million worth of depreciation.

A loss-per-passenger focus implies that federal Amtrak grants "buy" only intercity passenger service. Not true!

- **Amtrak's mail-and-express business** makes highways somewhat safer, less congested and cheaper to maintain because most of this would be trucked if Amtrak did not exist. (Absent Amtrak, some mail would fly where existing air capacity is tight, so more flights likely would result.)

- **An Amtrak shutdown** would increase pressure to invest in air facilities (now or in the future) wherever Amtrak is or could become air competitive.

- **Amtrak's existence has facilitated start-up of commuter rail operations** where none previously existed.

- **Many Amtrak terminals help anchor development**, supporting local transit and land-use planning goals that improve the quality of life.

- **Amtrak is a net contributor to Railroad Retirement.** Without Amtrak, remaining railroads (both commuter and freight) and their employees likely would have to pay more.

- **Northeast commuter agencies** have made significant capital contributions in recent years, but still pay to use

Amtrak's track on an avoidable cost basis. With no Amtrak, these states' commuter rail services would cost much more.

**Loss per passenger** mainly reflects average trip length, not economic efficiency. In 1997, 72% of Amtrak passengers rode trains with a below-average loss-per-passenger. Furthermore, many of those who were on long trips used relatively efficient trains.

**Operating ratio** (costs divided by revenues) is a good efficiency measure. Among Amtrak's 40 routes, the *Southwest Chief* had the 11th-best operating ratio, but ranked #38 on a loss-per-passenger basis. Similarly, though the *Chief* (helped by mail revenues) had an operating ratio 21% better than the *Coast Starlight's*, the *Chief's* loss per passenger was 96% higher because average trip length on the *Starlight* is so short.

**Loss per route:** GAO relegated this crucial point to a footnote: "These financial performance data do not represent the cash impact on Amtrak's bottom line of operating each particular route..." Fully allocated losses include costs that would not disappear if these routes were discontinued.

The report does not show the impact of cutting any route or routes. This can only be assessed by a detailed analysis of revenues (connecting passengers) and costs shared by routes to be dropped and those to be kept. ■

A single copy of the report (GAO/RCED-98-151) can be ordered free from U.S. General Accounting Office, P.O. Box 37050, Washington, DC 20013, 202/512-6000. The report is on-line at <www.gao.gov>.

## Senate Amtrak Funding

(from page 1)

TEA-21's guaranteed huge increases for highway and transit—without changing overall budgetary limits set last year—make it harder for Congress to fund all other federal programs.

Except for a highway safety program generally understood to have inadequate guaranteed funding, Shelby did not fund TEA-21-covered programs above TEA-21-guaranteed levels. Transit likely will be limited to the 74% increase TEA-21 guarantees (see June *News*, which erred by calling this \$36.2 billion a year; \$36.2 billion is the six-year total of guaranteed transit funding during the period TEA-21 covers, 1998-2003). The 74% compares two six-year periods: actual ISTEA funding 1992-97 and guaranteed TEA-21 funding. Year-to-year increases are much more modest (i.e., based on the Senate appropriations bill, the 1998-to-'99 increase will be 11%).

Shelby did not hide behind TEA-21. He called Amtrak "a waste of money" (*Wall Street Journal*, July 9). He also inserted language requiring Amtrak to tell each customer the railroad's "fully allocated per passenger loss" and "to verify its calculation with the GAO" (story at left). Of course, there is no proposal to require similar disclosures to highway or aviation users or on milk cartons or cigarette packs.

Shelby also inserted language requiring the Amtrak Reform Council to "identify routes that are candidates for closure or realignment, and report to the Congress annually...on these recommendations." This arguably would end the ARC's value as independent auditor, giving it instead a vested interest in the outcome of management decisions it promoted.

Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) is likely to offer a floor amendment to remove Shelby's subsidy disclosure requirement. An amendment to kill the Amtrak Reform Council language also is possible. ■

**AMTRAK PROGRESS—For each category, Column A compares Fiscal 1997 with Fiscal 1996 and Column B compares the first eight months (October-May) of Fiscal 1998 with the same period in Fiscal 1997.**

	Col. A	Col. B
Total revenues:	+ 7.6%	+ 4.2%
Total expenses:	- 4.6%	- 4.7%
"Core" (intercity) passenger-miles:	+ 2.3%	+ 5.3%
"Core" (intercity) ridership:	+ 2.7%	+ 6.3%



## TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

**Amtrak Service Problems:** Extraordinary delays have become routine on *Sunset Limited* and *Texas Eagle*. Contrary to Union Pacific's publicity, the "meltdown" appears to have moved west, not disappeared.

**New Train:** Amtrak restored tri-weekly Chicago-Indianapolis *Hoosier State* service July 19, at the same times as the tri-weekly *Cardinal*, but on different days, so this segment now has daily-except-Monday southbound service, daily-except-Tuesday northbound. The new train uses a reserved Superliner coach (no food service). It also shuttles equipment to and from Amtrak's Beech Grove, IN maintenance shops, eliminating one source of *Cardinal* delays—an issue on which NARP pressed Amtrak strongly. The old *Hoosier State* ended in September 1995 due to budget cuts.

**New Station:** Amtrak's *San Diegans 776* and *779* began serving Guadalupe, CA (25 miles south of San Luis Obispo and near Santa Maria), July 19.

**New Buses:** Four Amtrak Thruway services began June 24. In North Carolina, buses connect

Wilmington, Wallace and Goldsboro to northbound *Silver Meteor* and southbound *Silver Star* at Rocky Mount; from northbound *Star* and southbound *Meteor* at Rocky Mount; and from northbound *Palm* at Wilson.

Connecting from the westbound *California Zephyr* is a bus from Denver International Airport to Denver Union Station, Silverthorne, Vail and Eagle, CO. Eastbound is the same, except the bus starts in Glenwood Springs (connecting from the *Zephyr* from the west).

A Green Bay and Manitowoc (WI) bus departs Chicago Union Station 11:30 am (arriving back 4:30 pm).

A Duluth (MN) bus connects with the *Empire Builder* to and from the west at St. Paul-Minneapolis.

The service from New York Penn Station to LaGuardia and Kennedy Airports was dropped June 19. The Ellensburg-Wenatchee (WA) bus ended June 18.

**Transit:** Washington Metro will open the final segment of its Red Line, from Wheaton to Glenmont (MD), July 25. Of the currently planned system, only two Green Line segments remain unopened—U St.-Fort Totten (1999) and Anacostia-Branch Ave. (2001).

## WOLF SUBCOMMITTEE: FULL FUNDING

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation chaired by Frank R. Wolf (R-VA) approved a fiscal 1999 transportation spending bill with \$609 million for Amtrak on July 16. Amtrak calls this full funding, since the dropped \$12 million was for the Penn Station-Farley project in Manhattan, which got funded separately (TEA-21; May News). Rep. Sonny Callahan (R-AL) considered—but did not—offer an amendment cutting Wolf's Amtrak funding level. An Amtrak statement thanked Wolf and the subcommittee for "keeping faith with the Congressional agreement" to provide the funding needed for Amtrak to reach self-sufficiency by 2002. Four critical steps remain: House full committee, action on both floors and the House-Senate conference committee. The latter's work could extend into late September.

## AMTRAK BOARD IN PLACE "UNDER THE WIRE"

Just before adjourning for the Independence Day recess June 25, the Senate confirmed the nominations of three members of the new Amtrak Reform Board (May News): ex-Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis, Mayor John Robert Smith of Meridian, MS, and Wisconsin Governor Tommy G. Thompson. With Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater (who needed no confirmation), there was a quorum of four by June 30, as required to preserve Amtrak funding authorization (Oct. '97 News). The new board's first substantive meeting will be July 29.

Remaining to be confirmed are previous board members Sylvia de Leon and Amy M. Rosen, and ex-Virginia governor Linwood Holton.



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