

News from the

National Association of Railroad Passengers

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5

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Conferees Approve "TEA-21"; Clinton to Sign

Passenger Rail—Flexibility, No; Earmarked Money, Yes

The House and Senate passed the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (formerly ISTEPA or BESTEPA) on May 22. President Clinton said before the votes he would sign it.

Unfortunately, over the May 16 weekend, Senate conferees agreed to drop Senate language that would have allowed states to spend some of their TEA-21 funds on intercity passenger rail capital items. The House offered a six-state rail passenger flexibility "demonstration" but never as part of an overall package acceptable to the Senate.

However, TEA-21 reportedly has over \$300 million of "high-priority" projects helpful to intercity passenger rail. This is guaranteed Highway Trust Fund money ("contract authority"); no appropriation required. A partial list: converting Farley Building (next to New York City's Penn Station) to an Amtrak terminal—\$40 million contribution; Providence airport Amtrak

station with air-rail "people mover"—\$25 million; Portland-Eugene grade crossings—\$15 million; Detroit-Lansing capital—\$10 million; second and third tracks over Quantico Creek (Richmond-Washington)—\$9.5 million; Atlanta multimodal terminal—\$8.1 million. Also: (a) contract authority for \$5.25 million a year of other grade crossing work in high-speed corridors, and (b) six more eligible corridors: Harrisburg-Philadelphia; Buffalo-Albany-New York; "Gulf Coast." The DOT secretary must define "Gulf Coast" and name the other three.

The bill has the Senate's Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act ("TIFIA") for projects that generate a revenue stream. The bill says certain Amtrak projects would be eligible. The State of Florida could get a loan of up to one-third (about \$2 billion) of the value of the Florida Overland eXpress high-speed rail project. The Farley project noted above also is cited as a possible use of TIFIA.

The bill provides for State Infrastructure Banks and a \$3.5 billion rail loan guarantee program. Both *should* help intercity passenger rail, except that \$1 billion of the loan guarantees must go to non-class-one (i.e., smaller) freight railroads.

Nothing in TEA-21 makes up for the failure to give states "the rail choice" generally, but much in the bill suggests Congress knows the public wants more and faster trains. (*Some details above may be incomplete. More info next issue.*) ■

WHITE HOUSE MOVES ON NEW AMTRAK BOARD

Here are President Clinton's nominations for the new Amtrak Reform Board (incumbents *italicized*):

- *Sylvia de Leon* (D) "of Corpus Christi, TX, and Washington, DC," a Senior Partner at the law firm of Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld, L.L.P.

- Michael Dukakis (D) of Brookline, MA, a professor at Northeastern University and UCLA. He was governor of Massachusetts 1974-78 and 1982-90. He was the Democratic Presidential candidate in 1988.

- Linwood Holton (R) of McLean, VA, Virginia's governor from 1970 to 1974. He chaired the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority 1986-92 and was President of the Center of Innovative Technology 1988-94.

- *Amy M. Rosen* (D) of Montclair, NJ, Vice Chair of the New Jersey Transit Board of Directors, and Managing Partner, Public Private Initiatives. She was a Lockheed Martin IMS Senior Vice President 1988-97.

- *Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater* (the only nominee not requiring Senate confirmation).

- Mayor John Robert Smith (R) of Meridian, MS (Apr. News, back page). He is on the Transportation and Communications Committees of both the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National League of Cities.

- Tommy G. Thompson (R), Governor of Wisconsin. An Amtrak board member 1990-94, he was first elected governor in 1986.

SENATE BUDGET—FULL FUNDING FOR AMTRAK

By unanimous consent, the Senate on April 2 approved an amendment to its fiscal 1999-2003 budget resolution calling for full funding for Amtrak, as authorized by the Amtrak Reform and Accountability Act of 1997 (Oct., Dec. '97 News).

The budget resolution is a non-binding blueprint that appropriators use to decide how much to fund various programs. The resolution's Amtrak language means the budget assumes funding the \$5 billion authorized in the Amtrak reauthorization bill.

However, the money still must be appropriated (Apr. News), a *big* challenge. The Senate subcommittee markup was scheduled for June 2.

Senate sponsors of the April 2 amendment were Lautenberg (D-NJ), Lott (R-MS), Roth (R-DE), Biden (D-DE); co-sponsors were Jeffords (R-VT), Moynihan (D-NY), Torricelli (D-NJ), Lieberman (D-CT), Moseley-Braun (D-IL), Kerry (D-MA), Chafee (R-RI), Sarbanes (D-MD), Durbin (D-IL), Baucus (D-MT), Dodd (D-CT), Leahy (D-VT), Mikulski (D-MD), Hutchison (R-TX).

Amtrak Intercity President Bullock Addresses NARP

Amtrak's Intercity Business Unit cut employee injuries 30% from fiscal 1996 to 1997. In the first half of fiscal 1998 (October-March), employee and passenger injuries were reduced another 30% and 20% respectively, from the year before.

Since Amtrak Intercity was formed in 1995, on-time performance has improved nearly 15%; the best month being February, 1998, when trains were 82% on-time. The Missouri trains regularly are 90% on-time. Even the *Empire Builder* had a great winter, running 92% on-time. Amtrak Intercity in the last two years has had great success addressing train performance issues with BNSF and Conrail, but not with CSX and Union Pacific. Total minutes of delay to the customer declined as follows: mechanical reasons -10%; holding trains for late connections -34%; customer service delays -16%; and "third party causes" (mostly bad weather) -21%. At the same time, delays caused by host railroads rose 3%.

This was some of the mostly good news shared by Amtrak

Intercity President Lee Bullock in his April 25 NARP board presentation. He also addressed the NARP board in 1992, as a Los Angeles-based superintendent. He has headed Amtrak Intercity since Mark Cane left in October, 1996. Bullock initially was "Acting President," but the "Acting" was dropped in December, 1997 (Mar. News), as one of Tom Downs' last recommendations to the Amtrak board.

Service Consistency:

The unit's entire "on-train population," over 3,000 employees, has gone through the first phase of customer skills training over the last 18 months. Amtrak Intercity now is starting a program to train supervisors and managers how to lead people, rather than manage them. "You cannot scare people into providing good service. They must believe management has a vision for good service, while managers hold them accountable."

Smoking on long-distance trains: Amtrak is the only common carrier handling both smokers and non-smokers. There is a lower-level, enclosed smoking room in a coach on each Superliner train (except, for now, *Coast Starlight* and Portland-Spokane), but smoking in the single-level trains' lounges remains a problem. If a June test of an enclosed smoking lounge in a single-level lounge is successful, employees and other passengers would enjoy smoke-free air in the rest of the lounge.

New Service: Amtrak brought states together for the study of improved Midwest corridor services (Oct. '96 News lead story; Feb. News, p. 2) and Bullock hopes this will lead to important investments and service improvements, a "road map for the future." Bullock said, "Any new [long-distance] service will depend on rebuilding old cars," such as the Santa Fe bi-level cars. He said a fifth weekly *Texas Eagle* frequency was "out there somewhere on the horizon." He also noted, "if the business case is there, we may add limited sleeping car service to the *Three Rivers*" (New York-Pittsburgh-Chicago). He was optimistic about extending the *Pennsylvanian* to Chicago, but Conrail vetoed this in May. (*The plan was to make it a Philadelphia-Cleveland-Chicago train leaving both endpoints very early in the morning and arriving very late, but also giving the Cleveland-Pittsburgh segment its first midday service since Amtrak was created.*)

Asked why making other tri-weekly trains daily is harder than restoring daily service to *California Zephyr* and *Empire Builder*, Bullock said Amtrak simply switched resources from the discontinued *Desert Wind* and *Pioneer* to the *Zephyr* and *Builder*. Also, there was no host-railroad opposition.

Rebuilding Superliner I cars: Earlier that day, Acting CEO George Warrington told the NARP Board that Bullock made a strong case for using Taxpayer Relief Act money on much



—John A. Ross

Lee Bullock

THE DR. GARY BURCH MEMORIAL AWARD



—Ankers Photographers

Patrick Corcoran (above, left), of Wonder Lake, IL, a commuter-train locomotive engineer on the Union Pacific (former Chicago and North Western) received the Dr. Gary Burch Memorial Award at NARP's annual Washington reception, at Union Station, April 23. With him are (from left) NARP President John R. Martin, Bette Burch and Michael Burch (the wife and son of Dr. Burch).

The annual Award goes to the individual judged to have done the most to enhance rail passenger safety. The award honors the memory of Dr. Burch, who died in a 1991 passenger train derailment in South Carolina. The Burch family has sponsored the award since its establishment in 1994.

The Award selection committee noted Corcoran's varied safety efforts, including 11 years teaching a local Operation Lifesaver grade crossing safety program, working with the Illinois State Board of Education to re-train school bus drivers on crossing safety and to create a safety curriculum for them, teaching safe methods of evacuating passenger trains to local police and fire departments, speaking to local schools about safety, and helping to educate newly hired locomotive engineers about specific safety rules involving stopped passenger trains. Corcoran has been an engineer for 22 years.

(continued on next page)

Bullock Addresses NARP (from previous page)

needed new interior surfaces (fabric, walls, etc.) in older Superliner I's (with the newer Superliner II color scheme). Bullock's case was bolstered by a call from entertainer and frequent customer Whoopi Goldberg, arriving from California in a tired-looking sleeping car. In Chicago, she showed Bullock the problems. She "was professional, classy, tough. She rubbed my nose in every shortcoming that car had."

Bullock said when the Superliner I work is done, customers "won't notice any appreciable difference" with newer cars.

Locomotive Reliability: Bullock said delays from problems with the new General Electric locomotives have declined dramatically. He credits former Amtrak CEO Tom Downs for "prodding" General Electric Chairman Jack Welch.

Mountain to Climb: Amtrak Intercity expects a \$180 million loss this year (including inter-SBU costs but not depreciation). Bullock is gratified that revenue per car-day has risen from \$967 when the business unit was formed to \$1,173 in fiscal 1997, and \$1,213 in the January-March 1998 quarter, a 25% increase over fiscal 1997. Last year's food-service loss was \$74 million. Initiatives aimed at cutting food losses are expected to save \$3.5 million to \$4 million this year.

Marketing: Bullock is proud of Amtrak Intercity's grass roots marketing program—radio and print ads in smaller cities. He wishes coaches sold as well as sleeper rooms but sees the coach load factor as "our biggest opportunity." Targeted efforts boosted coach revenues on the Atlanta-New Orleans segment 56% and *City of New Orleans* revenues rose 200% between Jackson and New Orleans.

Mail: Bullock sees Amtrak's mail revenues doubling in three

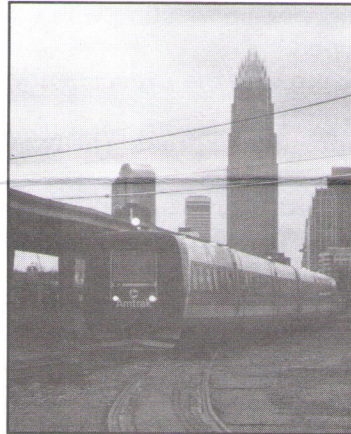
AMTRAK TO OKLAHOMA NEXT YEAR?

Amtrak service may return to Oklahoma in 1999, after a nearly 20-year absence. Sen. Don Nickles (R), state DOT secretary Neil McCaleb and Amtrak Acting President George Warrington met in mid-May and agreed it could be done, funded partly by money Oklahoma (as a "non-Amtrak" state) got from the Taxpayer Relief Act (Oct. '97 News). Amtrak and the state will study which route to serve.

to five years. Gross revenues in fiscal 1997 were \$66 million.

Express: "We should have done a better job of planning this. We have completed a route-by-route survey. We know what our capacity is and we are doing a facilities survey. The business is starting to grow—gross revenues around \$500,000 a month. My goal is to reach profitability by [September 30]. At the next plateau—\$3 million a month, estimated by the end of fiscal 1999—the business begins to help the bottom line. By early 2000, with \$6 million a month in business, the express business would be improving Amtrak's bottom line as much as the mail business does today." ■

FLEXLINER TOURS NORTH CAROLINA

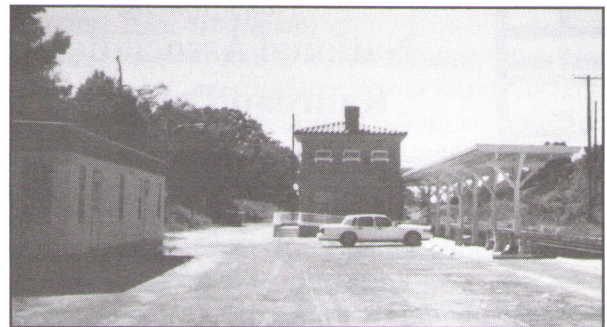


During the week starting January 30, the ADtranz Flexliner made a tour of 23 communities in North Carolina, its last stop on a two-year visit to North America. At left, it is shown at the Charlotte Amtrak station; below at a stop at nearby Mooresville. Amtrak, ADtranz, North Carolina DOT, Norfolk Southern, and several communities all worked to make the tour a success and show the self-propelled diesel car technology to thousands.



—Michael L. Shermetta (both)

SEBRING NO LONGER FLORIDA'S WORST STATION



—Charles A. Dunn (both)

Rededication of the Sebring, FL, station was April 24, restored by Florida DOT with ISTEAF funds. Amtrak has moved in from a trailer (above, at left). The station was built in a Spanish style popular in the mid-1920's, when the old Seaboard Air Line built its way south toward Miami during one of Florida's great boom times.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

More on May 17 Amtrak Timetable—Three changes for the *Texas Eagle*, all worked on by NARP: through-cars to the *Sunset Limited*, a third coach, and connections with the *Empire Builder* all are restored (*Eagle-to-Builder* connection was broken in late 1996).

Thruways—The Palatka-Gainesville (FL) bus was extended to Ocala, but now connects only with the *Silver Star* to and from the north.

An additional Miami-Key West bus connects from the *Silver Palm*. A new Tampa-Orlando bus connects with the *Palm* to/from the north. The Fort Myers-Naples-Fort Lauderdale service connecting with the *Silver Star* has been dropped.

The Mobile bus connecting with the *Crescent* now runs only Atlanta-Montgomery.

Four daily, state-supported, express Thruway buses (Philadelphia 30th St. Station-Coopersburg-Allentown-Bethlehem) started May 18, operated by Trans-Bridge Lines. Bieber Tourways' (Apr. News) "buy-tickets-on-board" buses also continue.

The Rutland-Burlington (VT) bus connection ended April 5 [caution—it's in the May 17 National timetable].

A new route runs from Emeryville (CA) to San Francisco International Airport and Millbrae. New stops are on the Indio line (Beaumont) and Las Vegas line (Primm). All Yosemite service now runs from Merced.

Transit—Tri-Rail extended its service two miles south to the new Miami Airport Station (one-half mile east of the airport, connected by a shuttle bus) on April 27. Amtrak passengers can reach this station by transferring at Hollywood to Tri-Rail (954/728-8445, or 800/TRI-RAIL in Florida).

NARP SUPPORTS NEW CROSSING PENALTIES

NARP and Amtrak filed statements supporting new penalties proposed by the Federal Highway Administration for grade-crossing regulation or law violations (Apr. News). Convicted drivers would be disqualified and fined \$10,000; employers knowingly letting a driver make such violations would be fined \$10,000.

On May 1, NARP wrote, "Our only complaints are that it does not go far enough, and that it is long overdue. Ten thousand dollars seems a rather small penalty for carelessness with such deadly potential, but this apparently is all the law allows. We urge consideration of a fine-enforced requirement of due diligence on the part of employers to ensure that drivers are properly licensed at all times and vehicles are in proper operating condition."

On May 5, a garbage truck drove in front of Amtrak's *Texas Eagle* at Hutto, TX. The driver died; both locomotives and seven cars derailed; five crew and five passengers had minor injuries. Amtrak equipment damage exceeded 80% of the damage Amtrak incurred in grade-crossing accidents in all of 1997!

LEIF ERIK LANGE NEW NARP VICE PRESIDENT



The NARP Board on April 25 elected Leif Erik Lange, a Sacramento attorney, to be vice president of NARP. He holds an A.B. in Economics (UC Berkeley, 1979) and a J.D. (UC Davis, 1982). He worked for the Caltrans Rail Program 1980-83 and for the Assembly Transportation Committee of the California legislature (1985-95). He worked on starting the state's feeder bus system, increasing *San Joaquin* speed limits and legislation allowing use of state transportation funds on passenger rail.

INTERNET CHANGES AT NARP

- NARP's new e-mail address is <narp@narprail.org>.
- The new web site is at <www.narprail.org>.



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