



News from the

National Association of Railroad Passengers

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—Ross B. Capon

LATE TRAINS AT PITTSBURGH—Amtrak's Chicago-New York *Three Rivers*, left, was five hours late (most delays on CSX) October 12. This forced the Philadelphia-Chicago *Pennsylvanian* to pull into the dead-end track (right); the *Pennsylvanian* will lose time backing out.

NARP's 'Late Trains' Complaint

NARP filed a complaint with the Surface Transportation Board's Office of Compliance and Enforcement, outlining dismal Amtrak on-time performance on many Norfolk Southern and CSX lines. NARP sought immediate action to get those railroads "to meet their contractual obligations to Amtrak." The "informal complaint" was filed December 9.

The collapse of on-time performance (and freight service reliability) is generally attributed to the acquisition of Conrail by NS and CSX, but has not been confined to former Conrail lines. Amtrak also has had major, persistent problems on the CSX Washington-Cumberland segment of the *Capitol Lim-*

Governors For Full Amtrak Funding

A majority of governors on November 17 wrote President Clinton urging him to put the authorized \$989 million for Amtrak (Oct. '99 *News*, p. 3) in his 2001 budget. Amtrak says the \$521 million "glidepath" level should just permit fiscal 2003 operational self-sufficiency (see box below), but wouldn't buy long-term sustainability or service expansion.

NARP sent the President a "pro-989" letter. Other "989" supporters include: League of Cities, Congressional Black Caucus and AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Department.

The governors included 13 Democrats, 11 Republicans, one Reform Party member, one Independent (below). ■

The 26 governors writing the President were from:

Ala.	Ga.	Md.	Mo.	N.C.	S.C.	Wash.
Cal.	Ill.	Mass.	Nev.	Okla.	Vt.	W.Va.
Conn.	Ia.	Mich.	N.H.	Ore.	Va.	Wis.
Del.	Me.	Minn.	N.Y.	R.I.		

ited route, and on the CSX Washington-Richmond line.

In recent weeks, the worst performance has been on the CSX Chicago-Pittsburgh line, which Amtrak's *Three Rivers* uses between Pine Jct. (Gary), IN, and New Castle, PA. NARP noted seven trips of Amtrak's westbound *Three Rivers* between November 15 and December 3 which left Hammond (in northwestern Indiana) between 2:55 and 4:06 late, with most delays on CSX track. An eighth trip reached Chicago five-and-one-half hours late—the day before Thanksgiving. The eastbound record was not much better, and the train due

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OPERATIONAL SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND THE ARC

The 1997 Amtrak Reform and Accountability Act requires Amtrak to be "operationally self-sufficient" by fiscal 2003—and created an oversight body, the Amtrak Reform Council (ARC), to monitor Amtrak's progress. In October 1999, the ARC considered a motion by Council Member Paul M. Weyrich to ask Congress to postpone that deadline a year, due to high-speed train-set delays. Amtrak says the train-sets are key to improving Amtrak's bottom line. The motion was discussed, then tabled so members could consider it further.

At the Dallas ARC meeting November 8, Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) spoke eloquently about the importance of long-distance trains to smaller communities. Answering a question from Weyrich, she indicated support for the one-year postponement.

Achieving operational self-sufficiency will not end Amtrak's need for federal grants. The law exempts

Amtrak's "mandatory payments" ["excess" Railroad Retirement payments] from the definition. Amtrak estimates these will total \$200 million in 2003.

Also, Amtrak still will need capital, which *should* continue to include so-called "progressive overhauls" of rolling stock. This may require a change in the law, since "General Accepted Accounting Principles" (GAAP) treat such overhauls as operating expenses. However, these overhauls effectively replace "heavy overhauls," which GAAP considers capital investments since they extend rolling-stock life. Amtrak expects to spend \$80 million on progressive overhauls in 2003.

Thus, the "basic" appropriation for 2003 would be \$280 million (mandatory payments; progressive overhauls) plus whatever can be worked as pure capital.

The ARC, meanwhile, expects to release its first annual report early in 2000.

Wheels of Progress

Here is our annual list of major rail passenger improvements planned to enter service and the dates of planned openings (if available). Dates and projects subject to change. *NARP News* regularly reports actual start-up dates.

2000

- **Mid-Jan.**—Amtrak begins limited, all-electric, Northeast Direct (soon to be Acela Regional) through-service between Washington and Boston, using new electrification infrastructure between New Haven and Boston (two daily round trips).
- **Jan.**—New Northeast Corridor station at Route 128, MA.
- **Feb. 13**—Amtrak West Capitol Corridor changes to include a 7th Sacramento-Oakland round-trip (mid-afternoon northbound, evening southbound), a 4th Oakland-San Jose round-trip (by extension of existing trains 723 and 724). Existing Colfax round-trip will be cut back to Auburn due to low ridership at Colfax and new means to turn a train at Auburn.
- **Mar.**—New Jersey Transit (NJT) Hudson-Bergen light rail (first segment), 34th St. (Bayonne)-Exchange Place (Jersey City); branch West Side Ave. (Jersey City)-Exchange Place.



—Scott Leonard

Light rail vehicles ready for service at New Jersey Transit's Community Shops in Jersey City (see Mar. 2000).

- **Apr.**—Completion of renovations at the ex-Santa Fe Amtrak station in downtown Oklahoma City.
- **Spring**—Amtrak West restructures the *San Diegan* services, to be called *Pacific Surfliners*, using eight sets of new bi-level equipment ordered in 1998 at a cost of \$100 million.
- **Spring**—Amtrak West opens new *Pacific Surfliner* stop at Surf, CA—and new Merced station for *San Joaquins*.
- **Spring**—Regular 90-mph Amtrak service on the Chicago-Detroit line in southwest Michigan, using experimental positive train control signal system (Sept. '96 *News*).
- **Spring**—Kenosha Transit downtown streetcar circulator line, on 54th/56th Sts. from the Metra commuter rail station almost a mile to the lakefront Harborpark development.
- **Spring**—San Francisco Muni extension of F/Market streetcar line from Embarcadero to Fisherman's Wharf.
- **Spring**—Jacksonville Skyway extension San Marco Riverplace-Kings Ave. (0.4 mi.), completing 2.5-mile system.
- **June**—First Acela high-speed train set put into regular Amtrak service. Remaining sets (of total of 20) phased in over following several months.

- **July**—Denver RTD light rail extension from I-25/Broadway to Mineral Ave. (Littleton), 8.7 mi.
- **Mid**—Metro-North commuter rail extension Dover Plains-Wassaic, NY (about 6 mi.).
- **Mid**—Los Angeles Metro Red Line extension from Hollywood & Vine to North Hollywood (6.3 mi.).
- **Mid**—NJT City Subway (light rail) extension Franklin Ave. (Newark)-Bloomfield Ave. (Bloomfield), 1/2 mi.
- **Summer**—New stations open at Martinez, CA (next to old one)—and Bakersfield, next to downtown convention center, served by Amtrak West *San Joaquins* and local transit.
- **Sept.**—Los Angeles-Las Vegas Talgo train. Some capital from Amtrak. Operations: Nevada's federal CMAQ funds.
- **Sept.**—Trinity Railway Express extends some Dallas-South Irving commuter trains west to Richland Hills.
- **Sept.**—Sounder, Tacoma-Seattle commuter rail (40 mi.), three round-trips daily. But approval of ballot Initiative 695 (cutting state vehicle taxes) threatens balanced-transportation programs like Sounder that benefited from the revenues.
- **Fall**—Amtrak's Sacramento *San Joaquin* rerouted to ex-Southern Pacific route north of Stockton; begins serving Lodi.
- **Nov.**—Boston-Portland Amtrak service, four daily round-trips, funded by State of Maine. This has been delayed many times, and is now moving forward after a favorable Surface Transportation Board ruling over rail weight.
- **Dec. 16**—Atlanta MARTA North extension Dunwoody-North Springs (4.7 mi.).
- **Dec.**—Regular 110-mph Amtrak service on the Chicago-Detroit line in southwest Michigan, after new positive train control system has been tested at 90 mph most of the year and is approved for regular use by the FRA.
- **Dec.**—New Jersey Transit (NJT) Hudson-Bergen light rail extension, Exchange Place-Newport/Pavonia (Jersey City).
- **Late**—Amtrak space at Kansas City Union Station opens (main restoration project was completed Nov. '99).
- **Late**—New Albany-Rensselaer station built by Capital District Transportation Authority. Directly south of the current, 20-year-old building, the \$43-million station will have four times the floor space and feature high-level platforms, retail space, meeting space, a new street and sidewalk bridge over the entire track area, and a new parking garage with 1300 spaces.
- **Sometime**—Vermont Agency of Transportation commuter rail, Burlington-Charlotte, 12 mi.

2001

- **Mar.**—Portland (OR) Streetcar line (2.5 mi.), running generally north-south on 10th & 11th Ave., from 5th Ave./Mill St. to 23rd Ave./Northrup St.; crossing Tri-Met's east-west MAX light rail line—but about 6 blocks from Union Station at the closest; using five streetcars ordered from Skoda in the Czech Republic. Part of operations to be funded by Tri-Met.
- **Mar.**—Trinity Railway Express commuter rail extension, Richland Hills west to Fort Worth, allowing weekday rush-hour service to Dallas. Trains will use platforms at future site of intermodal terminal at 9th & Jones (Sept. '99 *News*).
- **Mar.**—Washington Metro Green Line Anacostia (D.C.)-Branch Ave. (Prince George's Co., MD), completes currently designated system.
- **Mar.**—NJT Hudson-Bergen light rail extension, Newport/

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Pavonia (Jersey City)-Hoboken rail terminal.

- **Early**—Amtrak moves to intermodal terminal in downtown South Bend, IN (just east of old Union Station), vacating isolated, unattractive site once shared with the South Shore.
- **Spring**—Tampa-Ybor City streetcar circulator line (serving convention center, Florida Aquarium, other attractions).
- **Apr.**—NJT Montclair Connection, allowing direct access to Manhattan from Boonton Line commuter rail stations.
- **May**—Trinity Railway Express trains extended 9th & Jones to restored Texas & Pacific building, Lancaster Ave., Fort Worth. Parts of 9th & Jones building open mid-year.



—Ross B. Capon

New Albany-Rensselaer station towers over the current site (in October 1999). The current canopy is visible on the left, the Boston line curves around the right side of the new station, and the New York line stretches away on the right (see Late 2000).

- **Mid**—MetroLink light rail extension East St. Louis, IL-Bellefonte Area College (17.4 mi.).

- **Summer**—MBTA opens new Green/Orange line "Super Station" at North Station, Boston. Green Line west to Lechmere closes for six-nine months while the elevated structure is replaced by a tunnel.

- **Oct.**—Dallas

DART Blue Line light rail branch Mockingbird-White Rock.

- **Fall**—Portland Airport MAX light rail line, 5.5 miles from Gateway Transit Center to the airport. Line to be built by partnership of Port of Portland, Tri-Met transit agency, City of Portland, Portland Development Commission, Bechtel (no federal funds), with development of land around stations.

- **Fall**—Completion of Seattle King St. Station renovations (by then used by Amtrak and Sounder). Amtrak passengers use an on-site temporary facility most of the time until then.

- **Fall**—Sounder commuter rail extensions, Seattle-Everett (33 mi.) and Tacoma-Lakewood (9 mi.).

- **Dec.**—MARC Brunswick Line commuter rail branch, Point-of-Rocks to Frederick, MD (13.5 mi.).

- **Dec.**—BART extension Colma-Millbrae (connecting with Caltrain), with spur to San Francisco International Airport.

- **Late**—Nashville-Lebanon (TN) commuter rail line (31 mi.), first of five planned for area.

- **Late**—Warwick (RI) Northeast Corridor station. A bus shuttle will connect with T. F. Green Airport until a 0.3-mile people mover is built. The station will serve Amtrak and later MBTA commuter-rail extension from downtown Providence.

- **Late**—NJT Newark Airport station on Northeast Corridor, with monorail shuttle to airport terminals (Oct News, p. 3).

- **Late**—Salt Lake City TRAX light rail spur Delta Center (downtown) east to University of Utah (2.5 mi.).

- **Late**—Phase I of the Richmond (VA) Main St. Station intermodal terminal project is complete. Amtrak Acela Regional trains to and from Newport News begin calling there (they pass by now without stopping), in addition to Richmond Staples Mill. A city-state agreement in Dec. '99 resolved title issues that were the main source of delays.

- **Late**—St. Louis intermodal station, immediately adjacent to current Amtrak site ("temporary" since 1978!).

- **Late**—Denver RTD light rail Central Platte Valley spur to Broncos Stadium, Pepsi Center arena, Six Flags Elitch Gardens, and Union Station (1.7 mi.).

- **Late**—All upgraded Acela Regional equipment in service.

- **Sometime**—Vermont Agency of Transportation commuter rail extension, Burlington-Essex Jct., 8 mi. Terminus is large IBM location 0.5 mi. east of current Amtrak station (largest employer in state, over 6000 employees).

- **Sometime**—Amtrak service between Jacksonville and West Palm Beach (FL) over the Florida East Coast line. This is the first passenger rail service to places like St. Augustine, Daytona Beach, Cocoa, Melbourne and Fort Pierce since 1968 (and first through-service from the Northeast since 1963). Amtrak remains committed to this service though talks with FEC have taken much longer than anticipated.

- **Sometime**—Twice daily Cleveland-Columbus Amtrak service, sponsored by the State of Ohio as a transportation alternative to a massive I-71 reconstruction project.

- **Sometime**—New York City Transit B-Q subway extension ("63rd St. tunnel connection") from 21st St./Queensbridge to Queens Blvd. trunk line (0.3 mi.).

HUTCHISON AN ORIGINAL S. 1900 CO-SPONSOR

The Lautenberg-Jeffords High Speed Rail Investment Act (S.1900) had 22 original co-sponsors (i.e., co-sponsors when introduced November 10). Our December lead story omitted one of them, Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX). She also got the funding share for non-corridor investment increased to 10%, from 5%.

We identified six "initial co-sponsors"—those who signed up before the bill's October 28 ceremonial unveiling—but 22 is the more significant number. Before Congress adjourned, eight more signed on—Dodd (D-CT), Feinstein (D-CA), Reed (D-RI), Wellstone (D-MN), Reid (D-NV), Feingold (D-WI), Murray (D-WA), Smith (R-OR). There is significant bipartisan support for this bill, which could mean \$10 billion for Amtrak.

AMTRAK INTERCITY LEADERSHIP CHANGE

Ed Walker became president of Amtrak's Chicago-based Intercity Business Unit, December 1. This critical position makes Walker responsible for all Amtrak long-distance trains (except *Coast Starlight*) and Midwest corridors. He has been with Amtrak 22 years; since 1993 as General Manager, Mid-Atlantic Division. Lee Bullock, the former Intercity president, is now Vice President—Freight Railroad Affairs.

More on this and other, recent Amtrak personnel changes next month.

IMPORTANT HOTLINE CHANGE

The NARP hotline—formerly a toll telephone call—has been converted to an on-line service on the NARP web site at <www.narprail.org/hot.htm>.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

New route December 17!—Amtrak extended the Chicago-Indianapolis *Hoosier State* overnight to Jeffersonville, IN (as a section of the *Cardinal* on days the *Hoosier State* didn't run). The *Kentucky Cardinal* arrives Jeffersonville (across the river from Louisville, KY) 8:40 am and departs 10:25 pm, with Superliner sleeper, Hi-Level coach, and mail cars (with future possibility for express cars).

Westbound International to run earlier—Amtrak's westbound Toronto-Chicago *International* will run 80 minutes earlier Mondays through Saturdays, effective January 17. This means a Toronto departure of 6:30 am, but no change to the much later Sunday departure (11:40 am). While the new Toronto time certainly is less attractive, the earlier Chicago arrival should mean guaranteed connections to Amtrak trains to Milwaukee and Memphis/New Orleans.

Westbound Capitol Ltd. at Washington—At NARP's request, Amtrak is trying to reduce the long, station-to-passenger-cars trek caused by having all mail and express cars on the rear and using an upper level track. A test using a lower-level track began December 19.

Empire Corridor—Trains 283 and 284 are reserved for all travel west of Albany; the October 31 timetable does not show this correctly.

Thruways—A new bus began December 6 connecting at Kansas City with Amtrak's *Southwest Chief* and *Ann Rutledge* to/from the east, serving Bartlesville and Tulsa, OK...Another began December 8 connecting at Dallas with Amtrak's *Texas Eagle* to/from the east, serving Abilene, Big Spring, and Odessa, TX...The westbound *Southwest Chief* now connects at Raton with a Pueblo-Colorado Springs-Denver bus.

Transit—SEPTA extended its Mon.-Sat. R5 line commuter service 2.9 miles from Downingtown to Thorndale, November 21.

The first Transit Express (TRAX) light rail line, 15 miles from downtown Salt Lake City to Sandy, UT, opened December 4.

The Tasman West extension of the Santa Clara light rail system opened December 17, from Old Ironsides (Great America) to Mountain View (Caltrain), 7.6 miles.

The Fort Worth "T" now serves the Amtrak station (including "Downtown Free Zone" buses); call 817/215-8600 for T Customer Service.

STB Statement

(from page 1)

in Philadelphia at 4:53 pm the day before Thanksgiving arrived around 2 am Thanksgiving Day; still later in New York.

During the same period, Norfolk Southern operations across Pennsylvania appeared to be on the mend, but NARP cautioned that "operations since the Conrail Acquisition have shown other instances of apparent service recovery followed by renewed service breakdowns."

The Board order allowing the Conrail Acquisition requires quarterly passenger-train on-time performance reports. The first one, submitted October 12 by Amtrak on behalf of Amtrak, CSX and NS, showed substantial worsening on all NS-controlled routes and two CSX-controlled routes, from the year

ending May 31, 1999, to the first "post-acquisition" quarter, June 1-August 31, 1999.

The worst showings were the westbound *Capitol Limited*, whose Pittsburgh-Chicago (NS) performance worsened by 74% (from 76% on-time to 20%) and eastbound *Pennsylvanian*, whose Harrisburg-Chicago (NS) performance worsened 77% (from 52% to 12% on-time). These reports exclude most Amtrak-caused delays and do not distinguish between a train that is 15 minutes late and one that is five hours late.

The reports also exclude "non-Conrail" lines. Due to the many problems on those lines, NARP asked the Board to order the railroads' future quarterly reports to include *all* Amtrak trains on NS and CSX lines. ■

NARP's letter available with s.a.s.e., or at <www.narprail.org/stb2.htm>.



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