



## Corridors Are Developing!

Corridor development is important, and is already happening, if too slowly. That was a central message in a statement NARP filed for the record of the Senate Commerce Committee's October 2 Amtrak hearing. Some of the testimony made it sound like current law (other than funding levels) is an impediment to corridor development, or that corridor development is not happening.

NARP said "much of the corridor development that has taken place thus far is the result of efforts by our members—with our support—to secure and maintain the requisite state funding. Today, states are playing a more active role than ever before. Federal policy should be designed to encourage states to continue those efforts. Shifting virtually all costs to the states would risk losing ground

already gained."

NARP said corridor progress "has been achieved within the context of existing law and organizational structures. It is easy to wish that a different structure could produce better results...but any change must be evaluated carefully. The Bush Administration's proposal to eliminate Amtrak's 'right of access' to freight railroad tracks for new [service] could make it difficult for states that already are 'fiscally challenged' to add new service. The managing director of the Capitol Corridor (California) has said that his track charges might triple without the right of access law."

### Long Distance Trains Support Long Trips!

NARP also presented a table showing

that the average trip length on long-distance trains far exceeds any definition of a high-speed corridor, showing that these trains serve important markets that corridors would not serve.

The average trip lengths that NARP cited (2003 data, see box below) ranged from 510 miles for the Washington-Chicago *Capitol Limited* to 1,140 miles for the Chicago-Los Angeles *Southwest Chief*. The figures understate actual trip lengths because so many long-distance passengers connect to other routes. □

The full statement is available at <[www.narprail.org](http://www.narprail.org)> or by sending an s.a.s.e. to NARP.

## Empire Builder's Economic Benefits to Montana

Figures in a state-funded study indicate that Amtrak's *Empire Builder* has total economic benefits to Montana of nearly \$14 million (see box, p. 4).

The report was unveiled at a Helena news conference on August 5. *Analysis of the Benefits of The Amtrak Empire Builder to Montana* was prepared by R. L. Banks and Associates, Inc. (a Washington, D.C.-based rail consultancy) for the Montana Departments of Transportation, Commerce and Agriculture.

The report says the *Empire Builder* provides tangible economic benefits to the state, as well as basic transportation for thousands of Montana residents each year. Mayors of the on-line towns—asked by the consultants what the impact would be if the *Empire Builder* were discontinued—consistently said "devastating."

The study says arguments to eliminate long-distance trains "lose cogency when the relatively sparse funding support...is considered. One of the strongest arguments justifying retention of the *Empire Builder* is the relatively isolated and rural

character of Montana and adjoining states. Scheduled air services to small towns either don't exist at all or, where it is provided with federal subsidy...it is so dispersed geographically as to be of only marginal utility to most citizens."

Specifically, the *Empire Builder*:

- Provides essential transportation "for which there is no reasonable alternative,"
- Pumps ("conservatively") \$5.3-5.7 million a year into the Montana economy,
- Provides Montanans access to Amtrak Express shipment services, and
- "Is a part of everyday life to many Montanans who live in rural isolation along the line and who depend upon it to get to medical appointments, send their children to college, travel to Havre for a day's shopping, visit out-of-state, etc."

Elaborating on the economic benefits, the report states, "Direct spending in Montana by Amtrak and those who ride...results in additional spending, or re-spending, of those dollars, resulting in a

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### TRIP/ROUTE LENGTHS FOR CERTAIN LONG DISTANCE TRAINS

	Route length (mi.)	Avg. trip length (mi.)	Trip/ route length
<i>California Zephyr</i>	2,438	870	36%
<i>Capitol Limited</i>	764	510	67%
<i>Crescent</i>	1,377	585	42%
<i>Empire Builder*</i>	2,206	825	37%
<i>Silver Meteor</i>	1,389	698	50%
<i>Southwest Chief</i>	2,256	1,140	51%
<i>Three Rivers</i>	908	561	62%

\**Empire Builder* mileage shown is for Seattle section. Chicago-Portland mileage is 2,257.

### PRELIMINARY 2004 FIGURE

Preliminary reports have a House-Senate agreement on \$1.225 billion for Amtrak for fiscal 2004. That's above the Bush-House shutdown figure (\$900 million), above the 2003 figure (\$1.043 billion)—but below the Senate figure (\$1.346 billion, Sept. News) and Amtrak's request (\$1.812 billion).

Repayment of the 2002 DOT loan appears to be deferred another year. A shutdown crisis at the new figure seems unlikely, but the exact impact is not yet known.

# Senate Holds Amtrak Board Hearing

*“Every one of you have said you want to make Amtrak work. My motto has been ‘national or nothing.’ I believe David Gunn is trying to keep our national system intact. My concern is if we don’t save it, we will lose it for good.”*

—Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R.-Tex.), at November 6 hearing

All three nominees for the Amtrak Board supported a national rail passenger system and said the U.S. could afford it. This came at a November 6 hearing of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation. The nominees were:

- Robert L. Crandall, former Chairman and CEO of AMR Corporation and American Airlines;
- Louis S. Thompson, former Railways Advisor at The World Bank, and Federal

Railroad Administration official; and

- Floyd Hall, a leader of turnaround and growth companies, including K-Mart (1995-2001).

They all said that U.S. rail passenger service would never be profitable, but that Congress and the Administration should agree on Amtrak’s mission and then provide adequate funding. It is up to the board and management to see that funds are used efficiently.

Crandall said, “A sound U.S. transportation policy is an important task. Trains and planes are more complementary than competitive. If New York-Washington trains ran consistently at 125 mph or more, that investment would yield other benefits. You wouldn’t have to further develop LaGuardia and Reagan National Airports; you’ll save some money on airports and allow planes to be used more



—David Johnson

**Amtrak Board nominee Louis S. Thompson (left) after the November 6 Senate hearing, with NARP Executive Director Ross B. Capon.**

efficiently...Unhappily, for whatever reason, our country doesn’t seem to engage in that kind of transportation planning.”

Thompson said it was “too early to decide what ‘reform’ might mean—the answer may depend on” what the “mission” decision is.

Asked about “privatization,” Thompson said, “I believe that we need to make Amtrak stronger and more effective. I don’t think privatizing Amtrak would do that. Could you make the role of the private sector more effective in providing the service? I think so.”

In speaking later with NARP, Thompson elaborated, “We need to be looking at a lot of ways of making rail passenger services more efficient and less expensive, or better quality. Possible involvement of the private sector, in ways that all can agree with, is something we should look at.”

Asked what funding Amtrak needed, Thompson—the only nominee who had met with Amtrak President David L. Gunn—said it was a case of “pay me now or pay me later. Amtrak might be able to scrape by at \$1.0 billion but this would defer essential capital investments and just create a bigger problem later.”

Earlier, Ernest Hollings (D.-S.C.), ranking committee member, emphasized the importance of the Senate-passed Amtrak funding level, \$1.346 billion plus deferral of the \$100 million DOT loan, and said, “We’re lucky to have David Gunn.”

Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D.-N.J.) asked if Crandall expected an adversarial relationship with Amtrak labor. Crandall said, “There won’t be an adversarial relationship unless [the unions] choose one. I increased employment at American Airlines by 60,000; most of those were union jobs. I think if you ask American’s union leaders if I was successful at American, they would say yes.”

## Amtrak Renews Focus on Service Delivery

Amtrak is taking a more systematic approach to on-board service delivery. David V. Nogar, Amtrak’s Senior Director, National Service Delivery, described this in addressing the NARP Board on October 18 in New Orleans.

Nogar has worked on the railroad for 29 years, most recently as General Manager of NortheastDirect service (1995-99) and Amtrak’s General Manager of the Caltrain commuter service (1999-2001).

The first, major step is making clear to employees what is expected of them. Nogar played a major role in developing Amtrak’s new “Service Standards Manual.”

This comprehensive book, which will be continually updated, covers all aspects of service delivery, including such areas as food service hours, serving customers with physical and other challenges, and standards for grooming and uniforms. It is modeled (in language and structure) on rulebooks familiar to train operations employees.

Nogar acknowledged that publication “is only the first step” in the rebirth of Amtrak’s on board services, particularly in light of Amtrak’s recent history.

“When I returned to the East Coast in 2002, there was a lot of uncertainty about Amtrak’s future direction, along with a number of employee downsizings,” Nogar

said. “One of my first assignments was to prepare a shutdown plan for our stations in the event we did not get our requested \$200 million supplemental appropriation. All of this uncertainty made it difficult to keep our employees focused on providing quality customer service to our passengers.”

Amtrak, however, appears to have made a good start at reversing this trend. Nogar credits Gunn’s reinstatement of a traditional railroad management structure, and the fact that he is a straightforward executive who has restored much of Amtrak’s credibility on Capitol Hill.

Nogar said service delivery standards had varied from one product line or train to another. The new manual eliminates those inconsistencies. Equally important is the work of frontline supervisors, who will be responsible for systematic, measurable compliance checks on the new service standards, and consistent redirection of employees as required.

These efforts will include conductors and other on-board staff. Checks will be similar to the long-established, rigorous checks of train and engine crews on operating rules and practices (including inspection of the manuals they must carry).

Also, conductor training will add an emphasis on service delivery, particularly

*(continued on page 4)*

## Richmond Opening Imminent

The return of passenger-rail service to Richmond Main Street Station—planned for well over ten years (Aug. '92 *News*) and under construction for three years—will take place December 18. Though at that point only a few Amtrak trains that now serve the Staples Mill Road Station will also serve Main Street, the opening serves as a foundation for later development as a regional transportation hub.

Main Street opened in 1901 as a union station of the Chesapeake and Ohio and the Seaboard Air Line. The French Renaissance-revival building included a 110-foot clock tower and a set of through-tracks for each company on either side of the building. An iron, clear-arch-span train shed (behind building in photo) was the only one of its kind in the South and housed stub-end tracks (now removed).

Traffic strained the design of the building, and there was talk of a modern replacement in the 1940's, but the government-fostered shift of traffic away from trains made such plans unnecessary.

Seaboard moved to Broad Street Station in 1959, but the C&O used Main Street until Amtrak's 1971 start-up. Amtrak's Florida trains used Broad Street and the ex-C&O Newport News-Charlottesville-west train used Main Street until Staples Mill opened in 1975. In 1976, the latter train was replaced by extensions of Northeast Corridor trains to Newport News, trains that have passed Main Street without stopping since it closed.

The station sat vacant a number of years and partially burned in 1983. It was restored as a shopping mall in 1985, closed again in 1987, then housed state offices after 1990.

About that time, there was a growing realization, including among state and local officials, that while Staples Mill was reasonably convenient for a good portion of area residents using Amtrak, it was inconvenient for arriving passengers not being met by friends or relatives. As interest grew in Washington-Richmond corridor service—federal high-speed planning designation came in 1992—a consensus developed that Staples Mill was too remote from Richmond's government and business core to serve such a market.

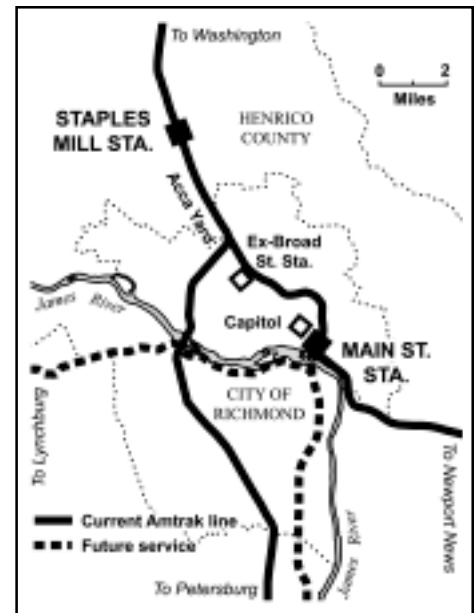
Planning involving Main Street took off, capped by purchase by the city and a groundbreaking in 2000. Richmond's transportation planner, Viktoria Badger, has led the effort throughout.

The first phase of the project will involve service by Amtrak's Newport News trains that already pass without stopping. Currently, these are trains 75/77 and 76 (connecting with the *Federal* and other trains at Washington), Friday-only 78, and Northeast Corridor trains 95/99, 94/194, and Friday-only 83.

At the second phase, Amtrak trains now terminating at Staples Mill would be extended to Main Street. Certain capacity and speed issues between the two stations, as well as train storage space, would have to be addressed by then, but it could happen by 2005 or 2006.

The third phase, to be done in 2007 or 2008, involves building improvements to make it a multimodal terminal, including rebuilding the track shed (as a public space; not for trains) and a parking deck. The total cost is estimated last year at \$51.6 million, much coming from federal enhancement and state sources. Service at Staples Mill will be retained.

A later phase, which requires major repairs to the ex-Seaboard line, extending 11 miles south of Main Street to a point joining the current Amtrak route at Centralia, would allow the Carolinas and Florida trains calling at Staples Mill to



—Scott Leonard

serve Main Street as well. This also will allow access to downtown Richmond by the proposed Washington-Charlotte high-speed service (June '00 *News*).

Another proposed service that would use Main Street Station is the Trans-Dominion Express (Jan. '96 *News*), which would approach Richmond from the west (from Lynchburg) on a line that is impractical to connect directly to the Staples Mill Road Station.

n



—David Johnson

Some Amtrak trains—including one arriving from Newport News on the viaduct at right—will begin calling at Richmond Main Street Station in December.

Though in I-95's shadow (left), the station is just a few blocks from Virginia's Capitol building and in the heart of a redeveloping area of downtown Richmond.

## Montana

(from page 2)

'multiplier effect' in Montana's economy... Every non-resident dollar spent in the state generates 32 cents in personal income for Montana residents."

Applying the above criteria, the report says out-of-state riders generate:

- "\$2.45 million personal income for Montana residents,"
- "142 Montana jobs,"

- "\$642,000 in state and local tax revenue."

Telling a story repeated at Amtrak division points nationwide, the report says, "The economy of Havre is augmented by Amtrak's one-hour refueling stop there, allowing passengers to visit retail establishments in downtown Havre. Amtrak purchases food from Box Car restaurant in Havre, and it is estimated by the owner of Box Cars that up to 12 of his food preparation and service personnel would

be laid off if the *Empire Builder* were discontinued, representing an estimated \$108,000 in wages."

A reading of the report, however, offers no hope for efforts to shift long-distance train costs to states. Multi-state agreements on train schedules and cost allocations still are unlikely. n

To order a copy, write to Montana DOT; Rail Program Manager; Rail, Transit and Planning Division; 2701 Prospect Avenue, PO Box 201001, Helena, MT 59620-1001. It is also at <[www.mdt.state.mt.us/tranplan/docs/empire\\_builder.pdf](http://www.mdt.state.mt.us/tranplan/docs/empire_builder.pdf)>.

### TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

**Sleeping cars**—Amtrak temporarily suspended sleeping-car service on the Boston-Washington *Federal* during November, to ensure Viewliner availability on other trains.

**Stations**—A new platform and temporary station opened October 6 at Kannapolis, N.C., a few blocks south of the old station. A permanent station should open in fall 2004.

The renovated ex-Southern Pacific station in Stockton, Cal., opened October 24. It serves Altamont Commuter Express and Amtrak *San Joaquins* (Sacramento line).

The renovated High Point, N.C., station will be rededicated November 21.

**Thruways**—*Vermont* lost its Montreal bus connection October 27. Vermont Transit, the bus operator who took the financial risk, made the decision because the new schedule required a 4:05 am Montreal departure. The decision was too late to be shown

in Amtrak's printed timetables.

**Fares**—In response to a letter from NARP Director and Keystone Association of Railroad Passengers officer Larry Joyce, Amtrak on October 15 reduced most Philadelphia-Harrisburg fares. In past years, here as elsewhere, Amtrak raised fares for shorter trips by dollar rather than percentage increments, resulting in higher relative increases in short-distance markets, which dampened demand.

**Transit**—New Jersey Transit opens an extension of its Hudson-Bergen light-rail line on November 15, south from 34th St. to 22nd St. in Bayonne.

PATH opens its temporary World Trade Center station in Manhattan on November 23.

That should relieve some congestion on New Jersey Transit's commuter services, leading to a December 15 start of full, weekday services at the new Secaucus Junction station (dedicated to Sen. Frank Lautenberg, D., see Sept. *News*).

### LOSS TO MONTANA ECONOMY if there were no *Empire Builder*

\$ 1.605 mill.	Non-resident spending in state
3.900 mill.	Direct Amtrak spending in state (avg.)
7.600 mill.	Transportation benefits to state
0.515 mill.	Personal income to state residents
0.135 mill.	State and local tax revenue
<b>\$13.755 mill.</b>	<b>Annual lost benefits</b>

—Montana study

## Manual

(from page 2)

since conductors now have on-board service supervision responsibilities that until recently rested with train chiefs.

Nogar said there will be more diligence around food service hours. NARP board members gave him examples of problems they had experienced. He promised to follow up with the relevant divisions and employees. n



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