



Pressure Intensifies to Cut Spending

Fiscal 2005: "Tight", Fiscal 2006: "Ice Cold"

Fiscal 2005 and 2006 are shaping up as difficult years for discretionary programs (fiscal year 2005 begins October 1, 2004). Fiscal 2005 funding available to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation/Treasury is 11.8% below the enacted 2004 level. And a May 19 memo from President Bush's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) instructs many federal agencies to plan for reduced spending in 2006.

On June 2, the House Appropriations Committee released its 2005 302(b) allocations (limits by subcommittee), saying overall funding is "even more austere than the President's already lean budget request—about \$1.6 billion less than the administration's FY05 request of \$823 billion." Defense is up 7.1%, but most programs are flat or get a small increase. In fact, *CQ Weekly* reported a Senate aide saying their Transportation/Treasury limit also would be "hundreds of millions of dollars" below 2004.

Transportation/Treasury, however, falls to \$25.4 billion, from \$28.4 billion in 2004. These figures exclude trust funds—most highway and some aviation and transit spending.

Amtrak's 2005 request is \$1.798 billion, much the same as its \$1.8 billion 2004 request, and \$581 million above the \$1.217 billion enacted for 2004. Cuts for 2005 would be tougher because Amtrak's 2005 request already incorporates the higher productivity rates that Amtrak President David L. Gunn has found Amtrak can sustain. Also, Amtrak will have used up the benefits of inherited inventory and the \$150 million cash that Amtrak carried into 2004 (Feb. *NARP News* lead story).

The OMB memo, "Planning Guidance for the FY 2006 Budget"—first reported by the *Washington Post* May 27—tells agencies "if you propose to increase funding above [the Bush 2005 request] for any account, it must be offset within your agency by proposing to decrease funding below that level in other accounts."

The memo reportedly indicates cuts of \$1.5 billion for the Department of Education; \$900 million for Veterans Affairs; \$600 million for National Institutes of Health, \$177 million for Head Start, and \$122 million for the Women, Infants, and Children nutrition program. Transportation is not mentioned, but these cuts

imply that Amtrak and DOT advocates should be worried.

OMB Director Josh Bolten insisted the memo "in no way reflects the policy judgments that will be made over the next eight months." But these cuts, said the *Post*, also "surfaced in February as part of an internal White House budget office computer printout" whose significance White House officials likewise had discounted. And the May 28 *New York Times* said OMB's new memo "explicitly instructs agencies to adhere to the limits laid down in those projections."

Senator Bob Graham (D.-Fla.) said, "This is the beginning of the end of the hide-the-ball strategy of this Administration, it is the purest statement of the Administration's policies."

Contacts with your Representative and two Senators are more important than ever, and should focus on fiscal 2005 funding. Legislators need to hear support for preservation of the existing system and David Gunn's efforts to bring Amtrak to a state-of-good-repair. The 2006 budget process is still in its infancy. Its development, of course, will be heavily influenced by the November elections. ■

Amtrak's Tomlinson Wins Burch Award

Amtrak safety liaison Steve Tomlinson of Forksville, Pa., won the 11th annual Dr. Gary Burch Memorial Safety Award. The award, sponsored by the Burch family, goes to the individual judged to have done the most to enhance passenger-rail safety. It honors the memory of a victim of a 1991 passenger-train derailment in South Carolina.

Tomlinson is the full-time safety liaison for all Amtrak maintenance-of-way (track) supervisors. He is Chairman of Transportation Communications Union (TCU) Lodge 5092, and a member of TCU's supervisors' division, the ARASA Division. (The acronym is for the

American Railway and Airline Supervisors Association, a separate union that merged in the 1980's into what is now the TCU.)

He works to ensure that Amtrak track maintenance employees and supervisors understand and comply with rules designed for workplace safety and for safe installation and operation of critical track elements. He also trains field managers and supervisors in these vital areas.

The Burch Family was particularly impressed with Tomlinson's initiative in proposing and developing a management and

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At the NARP Washington reception, April 22, are (from left) Bette Burch, Burch Safety Award winner Steve Tomlinson, and Michael Burch.

Amtrak Chief Mechanical Officer Addresses NARP Board

Jonathan Klein, Amtrak's Chief Mechanical Officer, kicked off NARP's spring board meeting on April 22 in Washington, D.C., with an enlightening and frank discussion. Instead of speaking to the group at the meeting's hotel, Klein invited the group to Washington Union Station, where he spoke inside a newly refurbished Amfleet I club-dinette car.

Klein said that Amtrak now has over 16 different Amfleet cafe car and premium class car configurations. Under Amtrak's five year plan to return the railroad to a state of good repair, only three designs will remain: Club (seats), club-dinette (seats at one end, tables at the other), and full dinette. All of the Club seats will be 2-1, that is, wide "First-Class" style. Klein said the larger variety of cars being phased out is too costly—and difficult—to maintain.

A new innovation for Amtrak found in the club cars is leather-covered seats, as on many airplanes (see photo). These are more comfortable, easier to clean and much more durable than cloth products.

Klein discussed the state of Amtrak's mechanical department. The department's budget exceeds \$600 million per year, \$320 million of that for labor and \$204 million for materials. About 5,100

are employed now, and this will drop below 5,000 by the end of September. Klein noted Amtrak "has over 6,000 sleeping births; it's quite a hotel to maintain!" The entire fleet has 5,400 bathrooms of which over 1,500 are more than 25 years old.

The mechanical department itself is newly reincarnated because, according to Klein, "about two months before Mr. Gunn took over, the department was

maintenance.

One of Klein's first steps was to reassemble the backshop (heavy maintenance/repair) department. Production rose from virtually nothing in fiscal 2002 to about 460 light overhauls, 47 medium/heavy overhauls and ten complete remanufactures in 2003. As a result, 21 wrecked cars returned to service. This productivity involved recalling only about 100 laid-off employees. "People who used to change filters are now rebuilding these cars," Klein said. Overall department headcount has been reduced by 360 (or 11%), yet overtime also has decreased by 25% (or 45 full-time equivalents).

Amtrak's Bear, Del., shops are refurbishing as cab cars (with cabling for push-pull operations) eight Capitoliners (original Penn Central Metroliners). These cars, along with 22 P40 locomotives "carefully mothballed" when Amtrak reduced its express

freight operations, can facilitate new state-supported push-pull corridor services at minimal capital cost. ■



—Donald M. Stewart, Jr.

The First-Class section of a refurbished Amfleet I cafe car, complete with leather seats.

formally abolished; it became part of train operations." When Gunn arrived, Klein said, "equipment maintenance did not even exist in the accounting system." Not surprisingly, in-service failures rose 43% under the supposedly "streamlined" program. The main cause of this was the virtual disappearance of preventive

NARP Addresses RSI, Texas Eagle Promotional Group

NARP Executive Director Ross B. Capon, in an April 15 presentation to the Railway Supply Institute's Annual Spring Legislative Conference, outlined ways passenger trains help the rail freight industry. He noted Amtrak's participation on Train Speed Improvement Teams of two major railroads. The Amtrak team member analyzed thousands of miles of track for no-cost speed improvement opportunities, whose implementation has speeded operations over thousands of miles of freight rail lines. Also noted: track capacity publicly funded for passenger trains benefits freight movements many hours of the week; passenger operations have stimulated major grade-crossing improvements.

NARP Transportation Associate David R. Johnson spoke to the Texas Eagle Marketing and Performance Organization (TEMPO) on May 15 in Austin, Tex., regarding his experiences as a group tour operator and the current state of legislative affairs in Washington. Johnson was also presented with a plaque from the Texas Eagle Revenue Management team for his support and the support of his former employer, America By Rail of East Lansing, Mich., in bringing \$100,000 a year of group revenue movements to the *Texas Eagle*.

One Gas Tax Idea

Energy economist Philip Verleger says Congress should "enact a stiff tax of \$2 per gallon, to take effect in January 2009, with further increases of another dollar in each of the following three years. To cushion the blow, the Treasury would borrow against the expected tax revenue to buy back the public's gas guzzlers... at their 2004 value.

"[He] estimates that this program could reduce U.S. oil consumption by almost 2 million barrels per day in the...first year and as much as 10 million barrels per day by 2020...[reducing our]...vulnerability to turmoil in the Middle East [and increasing] employment in the auto industry as all those gas guzzlers are replaced."

—David Ignatius, *Washington Post*, June 1 column

supervisor's training program. This program helps field managers and supervisors enhance basic management skills, including knowledge of rail safety standards. Amtrak's February 20 nomination letter said, "To date, over 200 employees have received training" through this program.

Tomlinson has worked for Amtrak for over 30 years, starting as a trackman. Amtrak President David L. Gunn wrote, "It is our belief that Mr. Tomlinson has made unique contributions to the safety of railroad passengers."

As a further demonstration of his commitment to the safety message, he devoted a portion of the \$1,000 cash award to purchasing "safety thank-you giveaways" that he gives to workers whose safety consciousness is evident. ■



At the NARP Washington reception, April 22, are (from left) Transportation Communications Union National Legislative Director Bob Davis, Burch Safety Award winner Steve Tomlinson, NARP Executive Director Ross B. Capon, TCU Vice President Danny Biggs, and TCU Assistant National Legislative Director Tony Padilla.

For the latest news, visit our weekly Hotline at <www.narprail.org>.

Making Sense out of TEA-21 Renewal

"We need to bring all of the transportation system together to go forward to find the resources we need to renew TEA-21," said Kevin McCarty, Senior Director for Federal Policy at the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP). McCarty spoke April 24 to the NARP Board of Directors. In introducing McCarty, NARP's Ross B. Capon noted that STPP "is the organization that played a key role in the movement towards sanity of the Federal highway/transit reauthorization in the 90's and to this day."

McCarty congratulated NARP for presenting an award to Senator Carper (May *NARP News*). "Some days I wish that people could just sit down and spend time with Senator Carper and have him inject them with the right kind of views on transportation policies," said McCarty. He also thanked NARP and its staff for its efforts, saying, "your support of the STPP coalition over the years is very, very important...because you spend so much time on this issue, you've been a great support to our efforts and made our coalition more effective."

The efforts of rail, transit, environmental, and other advocates have similar issues and a common goal. McCarty emphasized this similarity and noted that "some feel that there is only one form of public transportation [the automobile]...A balanced transportation system provides for choices for all users." ■

McCarty lamented the budget wrangling and partisan politics that have delayed reauthorization of TEA-21. He expressed concern about lack of solid rail provisions. McCarty faults state DOT's for "spending all their time talking about flexibility" yet reacting as if the flexibility to spend TEA-21 funds on rail is tantamount to forcing states to "do things they do not want to do."

McCarty also discussed hopes for transportation policy that rose and fell after the 9/11 attacks. "Many of us thought...we could get something going because for the first time ever, the aviation bill, the surface transportation bill, and the Amtrak reauthorization were [due to be renewed] the same year. What a great opportunity to look at the cross-links, look at the connections, how do we make this make more sense?"

Instead, "there was a momentary burst of industrial policy, everyone concluded that we had to save the aviation industry, at great cost...[for an] industry that has not turned a net profit in its existence, which is incredible. They certainly talk a lot of talk about that on the passenger rail side, that it is an obscene form of subsidy."

Despite recent setbacks, McCarty told the board he feels that, "the basic direction of the country is affirming all of what you do [to work for balanced transportation choices]." ■

Hill Staffers Address NARP Board

Joseph Guzzo, legislative assistant to Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R.-Tex.), and Stephen Gardner—who just moved from Sen. Tom Carper's (D.-Del.) office to the Senate Commerce Committee minority staff—participated in a panel discussion at the NARP Board meeting on April 23. The moderator was Tim Gillespie, a legislative consultant specializing in rail (and former Amtrak Government Affairs Vice President). The three helped bring rail to the table in the surface transportation reauthorization. Notable quotes:

"The shortlines are in dire need of infrastructure improvement, or they are going to fail. The Class I's are unable to cover their cost of capital, but have higher priorities than coming to Congress and asking for help on their infrastructure. Over the next 15 to 20 years, there will be a 70% increase in all kinds of freight. We know it won't fit on the highways and it can't fit on rail unless we expand that capacity."

—Tim Gillespie

"[Senator Carper's passion on the subject] comes from his frustration as Governor of not being able to use his federal funds flexibly to make investments in rail that would help the state of Delaware. The bill that we put forth [ARRIVE-21] was designed to address that issue first and foremost and then also I think it signifies sort of a new era of involvement and awareness and cooperation between federal entities, state entities, and the railroads and joint planning so that rail becomes a larger part of the picture"

—Stephen Gardner

"Most of the approaches that Senators Hutchison, Carper, and Hollings took...about 90% are similar. Unfortunately, the traditional Republican/Democrat issues played in to keep us from getting to that final hurdle. Even if we did, the way the highway bill ran in the Senate...we thought were going to have a good six, seven week debate, but the darn thing went through in two weeks and three votes and one week of that we were trapped in the basement with a ricin [poison] scare without access to our computers."

—Joseph Guzzo

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Transit—Service on Pittsburgh PAT's 5.2-mile Overbrook line resumed on June 3. It was closed in 1993 for thorough rebuilding of track, wires, and stops. By fall, that work plus new cars, route changes, and an expanded control system will lead to more capacity and faster service on the entire T system.

Caltrain began ten weekday Baby Bullet express trips on June 7, cutting the San Jose-San Francisco travel time on those trains from 96 minutes to 57. Weekend service was suspended nearly two years to accommodate track work to make the service possible, but resumed June 5.

Sacramento's RTD opened a light rail extension, Mather Field-Sunrise (2.8 mi.), June 11.

Silver Service—Amtrak's *Silver Star* and *Silver Meteor* will return to their normal operating patterns on July 7, eleven days later than planned (March, April Advisories).

Zephyr detour—The *California Zephyr* detour between Denver and

Salt Lake City via Union Pacific's Overland Route across Wyoming began with June 7 departures from Chicago and Emeryville. It will continue on alternating weeks until July 29.

Union Pacific Meltdown—Recent on-time performance of Amtrak trains on Union Pacific owned tracks has deteriorated. Especially hard hit has been the *Sunset Limited*, which experienced an on-time performance of **zero** for the month of April. Travelers on the *Sunset Limited* should be prepared for multi-hour delays.

Cardinal track ownership—CSX announced the lease of 200 miles of railroad in Virginia. The Buckingham Branch Railroad will assume operation of central and western Virginia rail routes, primarily the 128-mile *Cardinal* segment (Orange-Clifton Forge via Gordonsville, Charlottesville and Staunton). Both railroads say that the *Cardinal's* operation will not be affected by this transaction. However, the already deteriorated track infrastructure gives cause for concern. Pending Surface Transportation Board approval, the lease will take effect on Dec. 20.

Boy Scouts Update Railroad Merit Badge Manual

The Boy Scouts of America in late 2003 updated the manual for their Railroading merit badge—the first such update in about 50 years. The 64-page booklet serves as a study guide, outlining the requirements for earning the merit badge and providing background information to support meeting those requirements.

The information includes a historical overview of railroading, basic technical information, an outline of possible careers, and a review of the hobby elements of railroading.

The Railroading merit badge has had something of a comeback, indicating that many young people share an interest in railroading. Over 1,500 badges were awarded at Boy Scout National Jamboree in Virginia in 1997, and over 2,200 more at the same event in 2001.

There are about 120 topic areas for merit badges, many of which serve to help a Scout advance through the various Scouting ranks. A Scout's work must be guided and reviewed by a merit badge counselor who has an interest or expertise in the given subject. See <<http://www.scouting.org>> for a local council that can provide more information on that.

The Railroading merit badge pamphlet (item No. 33292A) is available for \$3.15 from the Boy Scouts of America National Distribution Center by calling 800/323-0732. ■

Rail Nomination Update

The Senate on May 21 confirmed Deborah Hersman to the National Transportation Safety Board and Frank Mulvey to the Surface Transportation Board. They were highly regarded Democratic staffers for rail subcommittees of the

Senate Commerce and House Transportation and Infrastructure Committees, respectively.

Enrique J. Sosa, Amtrak board nominee, appeared before Senate Commerce on June 2. There are four board candidates awaiting confirmation (Dec. '03 *NARP News*). ■



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