

News from the
**National Association of
Railroad Passengers**

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Amtrak Funds Cut in House

Service Cuts Loom

The 1994 Amtrak figures approved by the House Appropriations Committee June 22 (July News) did not make it to floor debate intact. Debate on HR 2750 (formerly HR 2490), the Department of Transportation appropriations bill, was postponed several times after late June, mostly because of a continuing disagreement between Transportation Appropriations Chairman Bob Carr (D-MI) and Public Works and Transportation Chairman Norman Mineta (D-CA) over highway demonstration projects in HR 2750 not authorized by Public Works.

HR 2490 came within minutes of floor debate on July 22, but was withdrawn because of the dispute and sent back to Carr's subcommittee. There, on July 26, the bill was changed to accommodate an amendment proposed by W. J. Tauzin (D-LA) to cut Amtrak operating funding by \$20 million and transfer it to the Coast Guard. This was approved by the full Appropriations Committee July 27. All other Amtrak figures from the first mark-up on June 22 remained (see FRIENDS box, next page).

The Amtrak funding levels in HR 2750 present several very serious problems:

- Operating funding—HR 2750 provides \$331 million for 1994 (after \$20 million transferred to the Coast Guard). That is the same as originally appropriated for 1993, but which proved inadequate. Earlier this year, Amtrak was so short of cash that it faced laying off 450 maintenance workers at Beech Grove, IN and Wilmington and Bear, DE—on top of the 258 already laid off in October 1992 at Beech Grove.

The supplemental signed July 2 by President Clinton (PL 103-50) included \$20 million in Amtrak operating and \$25 million in Amtrak capital funds, raising Amtrak's **total** 1993 operating appropriation to \$351 million—the same amount as in HR 2490 before the July 26 cut. With the operating and capital fund infusion, the 450 lay-offs were prevented, for the moment, but the 258 were not re-hired.

Amtrak and NARP have asked for the full, authorized operating amount of \$381 million for 1994, the amount Amtrak

HIGH-TECH LINE-UP



—Amtrak photo

An Amtrak AMD-103 diesel locomotive, the X2000 and the ICE all came together at Washington Union Station on July 23. For news on the last two trains, see page 4.

says is needed to maintain the status quo. Anything less will trigger further lay-offs and train service cuts.

There is some sentiment in the House that if the \$331 million becomes law, there will be an opportunity to make it up in a supplemental, as was done for 1993. However, Amtrak **cannot** budget using such a risky strategy. Amtrak's operating shortfall would become apparent very soon after the fiscal year begins Oct. 1, months before a likely supplemental in April or May 1994. If Amtrak waits, and there **isn't** one in the spring, Amtrak then has to cut twice as deep—concentrating the effect of the operating funding cut into the last few months of the fiscal year.

As it is, Amtrak has limited choices as to which services to cut. It is highly unlikely that cutting several long-distance trains to tri-weekly and cutting some short distance trains will contribute enough savings to make the exercise worthwhile. Many short-distance trains cover short-term avoidable costs (or come very close), and many long-distance trains have lucrative mail contracts that depend on daily schedules.

(Continued on page 2)

Service Cuts *continued from page 1*

- New 403 (b) operating funds—\$10 million is authorized for 1994, but none provided in HR 2750. Given the tight operating funding situation (see above), Amtrak cannot start new partially state-funded 403 (b) services in 1994 if no funds are provided by Congress. That places a cloud over several such services anticipated to begin in 1994.

- Capital funding—Of the \$100 million (down from \$190 million total appropriated for 1993 and from the \$250 million authorized for 1994) in HR 2750, almost all would go to mandated toilet modifications, station modifications (to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act) and the huge backlog in equipment heavy overhauls. This level is not enough to meet the backlog or provide for badly needed new equipment orders.

Low capital grants in one year lead to higher operating grant requests in later years, because Amtrak is not able to replace outdated facilities or equipment (leading to higher maintenance costs), or expand capacity (earning more revenue).

- Northeast Corridor—HR 2750 provides \$130 million, down from Amtrak's request of \$250 million. Much of that difference results from not providing funds for high-speed train sets—report language says such funding is "premature." Amtrak says it would like to award a contract during 1994, in order to have two test train sets in 1996 and complete the order in 1998. Otherwise, the whole process will be delayed, and there will be no high-speed trains to run on the electrified line to Boston (to be mostly completed in 1997).

HR 2750 provides nothing for the Clinton Administration high speed corridor program (May News, p. 4; June, p. 3). The program is not yet authorized by law. The House version (HR 1919) was approved by the Energy and Commerce Committee July 27; the Senate version (S. 839) is still in committee.

If HR 2570 is approved by the House early the week of Aug. 3, the Senate appropriations bill may move in committee before the summer recess begins (Aug. 7), but Senate floor action is not expected until after recess (Sept. 7). There is still time to **write** your Senator and make the case for full-funding of Amtrak. Better still, if possible, try to see your Senator when he/she is in your state for the August recess. ■

Amtrak's House Friends

Upon learning in late June of the threat rail passengers and workers faced from the Tauzin amendment, Rep. Lucien



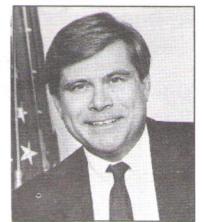
Rep. Blackwell

E. Blackwell (D-PA) took the lead in the opposition effort. He distributed two "Dear Colleague" letters urging other House Members to oppose the amendment. The second letter, dated July 20, stated that "a vote for the Tauzin Amendment will insure that Amtrak will face another funding shortfall next year and again place hundreds of Amtrak employees at risk of furlough as well as threaten a reduction in service to many communities across the country."

Also signing that letter were Michael N. Castle (R-DE), John W. Oliver (D-MA), Sherwood L. Boehlert (R-NY), Austin J. Murphy (D-PA), Robert A. Borski (D-PA), Herb Klein (D-NJ), Bobby L. Rush (D-IL), James E. Clyburn (D-SC), Ed Pastor (D-AZ), Thomas J. Ridge (R-PA), William F. Clinger (R-PA), Pat Williams (D-MT), William L. Clay (D-MO), Alcee L. Hastings (D-FL), Jose E. Serrano (D-NY), Eva M. Clayton (D-NC), Philip R. Sharp (D-IN), Spencer T. Bachus, III (R-AL), Carrie P. Meek (D-FL), Andrew Jacobs, Jr. (D-IN), Curt Weldon (R-PA), Julian Dixon (D-CA), Barney Frank (D-MA).

Opposition to the Tauzin amendment was growing as HR 2490 nearly went to the floor July 22, but was thwarted by incorporation of the amendment into HR 2750 July 26.

Lynn Schenk (D-CA) and Richard H. Lehman (D-CA) led the successful effort to neutralize HR 2490's anti-Thruway bus language, which prohibited Amtrak from using "directly or indirectly" federal funds for the operation of the feeder bus system. Report language also complained of



Rep. Lehman

Thruway buses competing with private industry—which cannot be true because Thruways are operated under contract by private bus companies.

The original bill's language on Thruway buses was modified in the July 26 subcommittee session. The Thruway program raises enough revenue to reduce Amtrak's annual operating subsidy need by \$8 million. ■

CORRECTION—CMAQ stands for "Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality" improvement program (ISTEA sec. 1008). We incorrectly used the word "management" in June and July News, and in original Jan. '92 summary of the bill.

The April newsletter account of the March 31 defeat (61-38) in the Senate of the Danforth amendment [to cut \$188 million in Amtrak funding from the Clinton economic stimulus package] should have reported that seven Republicans voted for Amtrak: Chafee (RI), Coats (IN), Lugar (IN), Cohen (ME), Kassebaum (KS), Roth (DE) and Specter (PA); three Democrats voted against: Heflin (AL), Shelby (AL) and Boren (OK); and Bond (R-MO) did not vote. All other Democrats voted for; Republicans against.

AMTRAK FUNDING IN HOUSE BILL

(\$ millions)

	1993 Appropriated*	1994 Amtrak Request**	1994 HR 2750
Amtrak:			
Operating	351.0	381.0	331.0
New 403 (b)	0.0	10.0	0.0
Capital	190.0	250.0	100.0
Amtrak total:	541.0	641.0	431.0
Northeast Corridor:	208.1	250.0	130.0

*Includes funds from supplemental signed July 2—\$20 million for operating, \$25 million for capital, \$4 million to Northeast Corridor for Boston rail link preliminary design.

**Same as authorized level.

Ohio's Molitoris Named By Clinton to Lead FRA

Jolene Molitoris, a familiar figure in railroad and high-speed advocacy circles, was named by President Clinton April 12 as his choice for Federal Railroad Administrator. In a statement at that time, Clinton praised Molitoris as a "seasoned executive with direct experience" in rail.

The first woman ever named to this post, Molitoris' rail-related experience goes back over 15 years. She served in the Ohio Rail Transportation Authority 1977-83 (the last two years as Executive Director), as Deputy Director of the Ohio DOT 1983-91, and as an officer of the High Speed Rail/Maglev Association 1990-93. In both Ohio positions, she worked on various freight and passenger rail matters.



Jolene Molitoris

Molitoris is a member of the Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers and of the Women's Transportation Seminar. She received a bachelors degree from Catholic University in Washington in 1963, and a masters degree from the former Western Reserve University in Cleveland in 1964. She grew up in Warren, OH and taught school in the Columbus area 1964-67.

On June 13 the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation held a confirmation hearing for Molitoris. She was introduced by Rep. Sherrod Brown (D-OH), who described her as "a visionary and a pragmatist." Chairman J. James Exon (D-NE) of the Surface Transportation Subcommittee, in noting that Amtrak says its continuing capital shortfall must be addressed, asked Molitoris, "How should Amtrak balance its commitment for long-distance service with its apparent wish to get to high speed rail?" She replied, "Both can be successful for Amtrak. No operation can be successful without maintaining its capital plant. The opportunity of high speed rail for Amtrak is the opportunity to make a profit..."

Exon also asked about the relative merits of incremental improvements leading to high speed rail and maglev: "Some say it has to be one or the other, others say both have an appropriate place. What is most likely?" Molitoris: "I certainly support the Administration bill [HR 1919/S. 839]. It provides a broad range of flexibility to accommodate the various corridors. Secretary Pena looks forward to a strong response from the states to this initiative. Many people think the FRA will decide what will be done, but we will be just a partner. High speed rail has been a grass roots movement from the state and local levels. We can make short term and long term decisions based on a spectrum of options."

NARP has written Senate Commerce Chairman Ernest F. Hollings (D-SC) to support Molitoris' nomination. ■

OKLAHOMA, OK!

On June 11, Gov. David Walters (D) signed HB 1078, dedicating 4-5% of state gas tax money going into the State Transportation Fund to passenger rail capital items. Connecting Oklahoma City and Tulsa to the Amtrak system is stipulated, but it is unclear whether both would have to be done simultaneously, or if the long-discussed Kansas-Oklahoma City-Texas route could proceed first. Oklahoma DOT may ask that a pending Missouri 403(b) study for St. Louis-Springfield service include an option for extension into Oklahoma. The bill was supported by the Oklahoma Rail Passenger Assn.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Amtrak...

...abruptly terminated Thruway bus service to San Francisco's Transbay Terminal and vacated the ticket office there June 18 after a shooting incident and is seeking a replacement. A new ticket office opened July 12 at the Ferry Building (foot of Market St. at Embarcadero), Suite 130. Buses to/from Oakland serve the Ferry Building, and continue to serve the CalTrain station at 4th & Townsend.

Flooding during July forced reroutes, delays, or annulments on: Chicago-Omaha-Denver, Chicago-Kansas City-Albuquerque, Chicago-St. Louis-Little Rock, Kansas City-St. Louis-Carbondale, Quincy-West Quincy. Many trains were still affected at press time—check with Amtrak before travelling these routes.

A new Amtrak station at Commerce, CA, between Los Angeles and Fullerton on the San Diego line, opened July 28.

The Air-Rail Travel Plan has been expanded to include north-south travel within three of the four zones between east-west travel is now allowed: East Coast, Midwest and West Coast.

Route guide brochures have been introduced on "Cardinal," "Capitol Ltd.," "Broadway Ltd." and "Gulf Breeze." A post-Florida-extension revision of the "Sunset" guide is in the works.

Transit

Despite area flooding, St. Louis Metrolink light rail service began July 31; 5th & Missouri (East St. Louis)-downtown-North Hanley (16.5 mi.). A 1.5-mi. extension to Lambert Airport will open in the winter. There is a stop at old Union Station—but not the current Amtrak-trailer site (however, a later stop at Jefferson Ave. is planned in connection with a planned multi-model passenger terminal near the Metrolink shops).

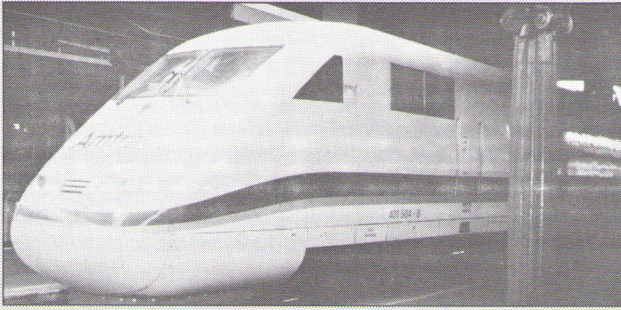
Smoking Correction

On western bi-level trains (including "Sunset" to Miami), as of May 2, smoking *is* allowed:

- in Superliner and former Santa Fe Hi-Level coaches in designated area (one coach per train), either lower level or last set of rows upstairs,
- in lower level of Hi-Level lounge cars (used only on some trains),
- in designated lower level area of Superliner snack coaches on Chicago-Houston "Texas Eagle" only,
- in transition dorm rest rooms,
- in sleeping car rooms, except on "Coast Starlight."

The biggest change in the west, May 2, was banning smoking in Superliner lounges, a formerly steady source of complaints. However, the focus of complaints has now turned to the coaches—many non-smoking passengers who are seated in the smoking coach resent being placed near smokers whenever the designated smoking area is in the upper level (i.e., whenever non-smoking handicapped passengers are in the lower level seating area). Amtrak is monitoring the large numbers of letters it is getting on this issue.

ICE AND X2000 NEWS



—NARP photo by Scott Leonard

The X2000 returns to New York-Washington revenue service as weekday Metroliners, trains 106 and 117 Aug. 5-Sept. 24. Also, Saturday Metroliners 206 and 221 on Aug. 14, 28; Sept. 11. The X2000's national tour ended July 22; it toured Ontario and Quebec July 27-31.

The ICE's (shown above at Washington, soon after its June 30 arrival in the U.S.) national tour daytime public events include: Philadelphia, Aug. 8, 11-5; Albany, Aug. 12, 5:30-7:30; Toledo, Aug. 14, 9-12; Dearborn, MI, Aug. 15, 3-7; Milwaukee, Aug. 18, 11-5; Chicago, Aug. 19, 11-5; Sacramento, Aug. 26, 11-3; Los Angeles, Aug. 29, 10-4; San Diego, Aug. 30 (tentative); Orlando, Sept. 6, 10-4; Raleigh, Sept. 10, 10-2 (tentative); Richmond, Sept. 11, 12-4. The ICE will also pass through or have non-public events at Pittsburgh, New York, Kansas City, San Antonio, New Orleans, Jacksonville, Washington, Boston.

In late July the ICE ran on various test and VIP runs out of Washington, including a 162-mph run through New Jersey on July 24.

The ICE will run in New York-Washington revenue service as weekday Metroliners, trains 112 and 223 Oct. 5-29 and trains 112 and 123 Nov. 1-Dec. 17 (except Nov. 25). Also, Saturday Metroliners 206 and 221 on Oct. 23; Nov. 6, 20; Dec. 11 (everything in this column is subject to change).

Rail Fund Concept Gets First Hearing

On June 22, the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Select Revenue Measures held a hearing on a wide range of tax proposals including one by Mel Reynolds (D-IL), to place one cent of the diesel fuel tax paid by all railroads into an "InterCity Rail Passenger Capital Improvement Trust Fund," through 1998. Since 1990, railroads have paid 2.5 cents in fuel tax, all of which now goes to deficit reduction.

Reynolds' proposal would generate \$30 million a year (of the total \$80 million paid by railroads at 2.5 cents per gallon). The Joint Committee on Taxation said the proposal is "revenue neutral," presumably because Amtrak's capital dollars from general funds would be reduced by the amount coming from the new fund. NARP Executive Director Ross Capon testified in favor of the concept, with the backing of Friends of the Earth, Sierra Club, Delaware Valley Citizens Council for Clean Air and several state passenger rail groups. Edwin L. Harper, president of the Association of American Railroads, testified against it, saying freight railroads did not want to resume their historic cross-subsidization of passenger services.

Capon said the Reynolds proposal "makes sense," but that "we recognize the railroad industry's unhappiness with this approach." Citing NARP's preference for a penny of the gasoline tax for Amtrak (as in 1992's HR 4414, Mar. '92 *News*), and ultimately a unified transportation trust fund, he added, "A possible compromise with the freight railroads would be to restrict funds they pay to infrastructure improvements with some freight as well as passenger benefits.

"The most important thing now is to get the proposed trust fund established," Capon concluded. "We can work later on ways to get more money into it." ■

NARP Responds to Anti-Transit Story

The lead story of the June 29 *Wall Street Journal* was similar in tone to an "op-ed" column it ran June 5, 1990. Both pieces relied on a widely criticized 1989 Urban Mass Transit Admin. (now Federal Transit Admin.) report by Don H. Pickrell of DOT's Volpe Center in Cambridge, MA. That report criticized selected rail transit projects for cost overruns and ridership levels falling short of projections.

As Jesse Simon, of the Southern California Rapid Transit District, told a Transportation Research Board (TRB) meeting on Jan. 14, 1991: "The main problem is that Pickrell used information only from projects' draft documents. However, ridership and cost estimates become more detailed and conservative with each round of drafts. The federal government should only look at figures from the time the final decision to proceed was made; that is, from the final report."

Simon also said Pickrell showed major, post-draft changes in project design as "cost overruns." Ridership was distorted by claiming failure if a projection was not met years before planners expected, and by not taking into account construction delays that push ridership trends into the future. Some projects, like the successful San Diego light rail, were omitted altogether. [Pickrell and supporters were at that TRB meeting, claiming that Simon had completely misinterpreted the report, and that early draft projections were fair game because they influence local planners' decisions to proceed with further study.]

The *Journal* published NARP's response to the first piece on July 5, 1990. Our response to the more recent piece was sent July 6, 1993. We asked why the *Journal* failed to quote pro-transit academics (like Vukan Vuchic of the University of Pennsylvania), while quoting Pickrell and noted transit enemy Jose Gomez-Ibanez of Harvard. We said that created the illusion that only those whose livelihood depend on transit (as quoted in the *Journal*) think rail transit is good.

The later NARP letter also criticized the *Journal* for ignoring rail transit success stories, for implying that only transit users benefit from transit services (when actually everyone benefits from transit's energy-saving and pollution-reducing qualities). The *Journal* highlights and misrepresents Census Bureau figures showing transit's share of commuting decreasing from 1980 to 1990, without examining actual ridership trends in actual use.

[Copies of both NARP responses available for \$1 and s.a.s.e.] ■

SPOTTED IN PRINT...Amtrak Exec. V.P. William S. Norman, NARP Dir. James Dingus of Cleveland, and NARP Asst. Dir. Scott Leonard were quoted in an Aug. *Essence* article on rail travel...NARP was mentioned in another travel article in Aug. *Popular Mechanics*, which also mentioned VIA Rail and several historic operations.
