



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

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OFFICERS: John R. Martin, *President*; John Kirkwood, *V. President*; Andrea Banks, *Secretary*; Joseph Horning, Jr., *Treasurer*; Ross Capon, *Executive Dir.*; Barry Williams, *Assistant Dir.*; Holly Anne Richardson, *Membership Dir.*

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RETURN REQUESTED

White House's Kill-Amtrak Option



—Amtrak photo

Workhorses of the Amtrak system: 3,000 horsepower F40 diesel locomotives. To overcome a diesel shortage, the Amtrak Board of Directors voted Oct. 24 to spend \$13.4 million for ten new F40s, to be built by General Motors' Electro-Motive Division. As part of the deal, Amtrak trades in ten retired SDP40s to the builder, to be used as a source of component parts. The new locomotives should be delivered by next summer.

The Nov. 27 *Washington Post* reported that "Reagan's advisers are planning to show him this week a list of the extraordinary domestic spending cuts that would be required to cut the deficit in half over three years without raising taxes, cutting Social Security or seriously disturbing his defense buildup. He has put all three of these major alternatives off limits."

The article names 8 domestic programs and each would have to be *eliminated*, i.e., "stop Amtrak subsidies." The other programs named: Community Development Block Grants, Urban Development Action Grants, the Jobs Corps, federal sewer grants, subsidies for rural electrification, filling of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, and "abolish the Export-Import Bank."

One can assume that the story is a trial balloon and that the Administration will push hard to kill any of the above programs whose supporters are slow to speak out. **Please write now with**

AMTRAK FUNDING ALREADY DECLINING!

The Reagan Administration is once again considering shutting down Amtrak, despite its exemplary efforts to reduce its reliance on federal grants, which declined 23.7% from FY 1981 to FY 1985 (by an even greater percentage using constant dollars). (Revenues-to-costs ratio below.)

FY 81	FY 82	FY 83	FY 84	FY 85
\$896	\$735	\$700	\$716	\$684 (millions)
48%	53%	54%	56%	[58% est.]

your opinion about ending Amtrak subsidies. Write to The President, The White House, Washington, DC 20500, with copies to your U.S. legislators: The Hon. _____, U.S. Senate, Wash., DC 20510; The Hon. _____, U.S. House of Representatives, Wash., DC 20515. The White House "Comment Desk" receives phone calls during business hours, 202/456-7639; the Capitol switchboard to reach your legislators is 202/224-3121.

FY '85 Funding

The new fight in Washington is over funding after FY '85, which ends Sep. 30, 1985. FY '85 funding is secure. Amtrak and all of DOT are covered in H.J. Res. 648, the huge continuing appropriations bill which was finally approved on the Hill Oct. 11 and signed by the President Oct. 12, becoming Public Law 98-473.

Amtrak gets \$684 million (vs. Senate's \$700 million and House's \$680 million), and the Northeast Corridor Improvement Project gets \$27.8 million (vs. Senate's \$10 million and House's \$100 million).

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Miami-Tampa "Silver Palm" will continue running through next June. Florida DOT, which helps fund this 403(b) train, has agreed to release funds already voted by the Legislature, while it decides whether to challenge a court order obtained by the Fla. Coalition of Railroad Passengers requiring the train to continue on the grounds that it is in compliance with state cost-recovery criterion. FDOT had contended the train has failed to attain 60% cost-recovery as required by state law.

New Orleans-Mobile 403(b) "Gulf Coast Ltd." will run through Jan. 6; operation beyond that date depends on funding from sponsoring states.

Several Amtrak schedules were shortened on Oct. 28: southbound "Crescent" by 30 minutes, "Colonials" by 17-25 min., Albany-Niagara Falls trains by 10-20 min., "Southwest Chiefs" by 10-15 min. NY-Florida scheds. lengthened a bit. Holdrege, NE, lost its station ticket agent Nov. 30.

CORRECTION: "Mail Express" does not normally carry passengers south of NY (Sep. News)—it's at the crew's discretion. Amtrak does not indicate train south of NY in public timetable and strongly discourages travelers from using it. Passengers should use "Montrealer," which leaves

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LA-San Diego Bullet Train Dead

NARP Supports State ARP's Call To Upgrade Existing Service

"Making best use of existing resources" is a cliché among many rail passenger advocates. Hopes for doing just that in southern California are growing in the wake of American High Speed Rail Corporation (AHSRC)'s Nov. 13 announcement that it had given up efforts to build a new railroad between Los Angeles and San Diego.

Two days later, the NARP-affiliated Train Riders Association of California (TRAC) issued a news release proposing the improvement of the existing Santa Fe-owned line used by Amtrak.

The Nov. 14 *Los Angeles Times* (Morning Final) reported AHSRC's demise as the lead story. The first three paragraphs follow: "The promoter of the controversial Los Angeles-to-San Diego bullet train Tuesday announced the end to a 3-year effort to build the \$3.1 billion project, saying the company has run out of cash and time.

"[AHSRC] of Los Angeles acknowledged collapse of an ambitious campaign to raise \$50 million in private capital needed for engineering and other studies that government regulatory agencies wanted before deciding whether to approve construction.

"At a hastily called news conference, company president Lawrence D. Gilson said there were 'just not enough people prepared to take what was very clearly a high-risk investment. . . . We got a fair market test and at this time, at this place, we simply could not raise the capital.'"

The full text of the Nov. 15 TRAC release follows: "Responding to the collapse of the Los Angeles-San Diego bullet train project, the Train Riders' Association of California today proposed an upgrading of state-supported Amtrak service in Southern California. 'With parallel freeways near capacity, and the cost of new urban freeway at \$100 million per mile, it makes good sense for the state to expand its role in providing cost-effective train service,' said TRAC Director Leif Lange.

"Lange continued, 'The bullet train would have cost over \$3 billion. For only \$50 million, the existing Los Angeles-San Diego rail line can be upgraded to provide hourly service.' Lange explained that the following improvements can also be made as part of the \$50 million investment:

- With minor trackwork, L.A.-San Diego travel time can be cut to 2 hours, 20 minutes with six intermediate stops. Top speed would remain 90 miles per hour.

- Express bus feeder services can be added linking West Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego County points with train stations.

- Trains can be extended north from downtown Los Angeles to the San Fernando Valley, Ventura County and Santa Barbara, adding a market of two million people to the service area. 'Santa Barbara service is vitally necessary to relieve severe congestion on

RAPID TRANSIT EXTENSIONS

In mid-Dec., three of the nation's newest heavy rail transit systems will open new route segments.

On Dec. 15, Atlanta's MARTA will extend its North-South Line in both directions, for a total of 9 miles and 5 stations. Service will be extended northward from Arts Center to Brookhaven, and southward from West End to Lakewood. Total system miles in service will be 25 (of 53).

On the same date, Washington's WMATA will extend its Red Line northward 7 miles and 4 stations from Grosvenor to Shady Grove terminus. Among the new stations is Rockville, MD—Metrorail's fourth station to interface with Amtrak (others are Union Station, New Carrollton, Alexandria). Total system miles in service will be 60.5 (of 101).

On Dec. 17, Miami's Metrorail will extend service northward 5 miles and 5 stations from Overtown to Earlington Heights. The remaining 5 miles to Hialeah, originally scheduled to open in Dec., won't open until next spring. Total system miles in service will be 16 (of 21).

the Ventura Freeway at all hours,' stated Lange.

"Lange concluded, 'In the months ahead, TRAC plans to work closely with the Administration and Legislature to secure improved train service for Southern California. The collapse of the bullet train makes it more necessary than ever that the state provide alternatives to the auto for intercity travel in this congested region.'"

When AHSRC was first getting under way, NARP's Ross Capon suggested to Gilson that investing \$2 billion (the figure then quoted by AHSRC) in a brand new railroad might not be as efficient as spending a fraction of that to achieve major improvement in the existing Amtrak service. Gilson didn't argue the point but simply observed that he could not raise private funds for an Amtrak project.

The irony in his reply is the implication that political consideration lured private investors away from what may be the most cost-effective option. While some say federal funds would distort the selection process, clearly the absence of federal funds doesn't guarantee an infallible process. What's more, Amtrak's experience running trains in the U.S. and its improving, revenues-to-costs ratio may lead high-speed promoters to rethink their distance from Amtrak and other sources of federal funds.

On the other hand, it's not clear that even "the most cost-effective option" could generate profits capable of attracting private capital. Hence the central concern of many rail passenger advocates about the entire high-speed-rail-without-federal-funds movement: is it a hopeless cause, given the U.S. competitive environment for passenger transportation? When the chips are down, will private investors anywhere in the U.S. be willing to support high-speed rail that competes with cheap gasoline, the highway trust fund, federal highway programs that pay up to 90% of project costs, strong federal support for aviation, and inadequate local transit connections? And, in conformance with the Florida state law (*NARP News*, Oct.-Nov.), will private investors do preliminary work for almost 5 years before they even secure the franchise?

Supporters of other high-speed projects are quick to underline what they see as key differences between AHSRC's defunct plans and their own projects. In Pennsylvania, for example, we are told

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Amtrak Thankful for Thanksgiving '84

Reduced fares the Tuesday before and Monday after Thanksgiving, and extra Metroliners on the peak days (Nov. 21 and 25; AM of 22) helped Amtrak seat a lot more passengers in the mostly-unreserved Northeast Corridor, and may begin to counter the widespread impression that the NEC is worse than I-95 during holiday peaks.

This Thanksgiving performance was achieved while running more trains with less equipment than a year ago—the completion of NJT's Morris & Essex reelectrification (see separate article) meant no cars from NJT, which had provided about 40 cars before and after Thanksgiving '83, although SEPTA this year provided 30 cars Sunday only. There were 6 fewer Amtrak cars, but Amtrak's bad order ratio was almost down to zero, and they used available equipment intensively.

Two eastbound "Crescent" and one "Broadway" trainsets ran as extra sections from New York to Boston, and the extra Metroliners were possible because equipment was turned around in one hour—no equipment was added to the Metroliner fleet.

Amtrak ran some borrowed steam-heated Metro-North trains between NY and Albany, preventing standee problems on the fixed-consist Turboliners.

Look for similar practices on future holidays.

No standee problems were reported on the "San Diegans" and only limited problems on the Chicago corridors. Total standees on the system this Thanksgiving were 5,725, versus 8,497 last year. ■

Iowa's New Senator Comes To D.C. by Train!

Five-term Rep. Tom Harkin (D-IA) was elected to the Senate Nov. 6, to take the seat of Roger Jepsen (R). Four days later, Harkin and his daughter embarked on an 1100-mile trip from Osceola, IA, to Washington, DC, aboard Amtrak's "California Zephyr" and "Capitol Limited." We asked the senator-elect for comments about the trip, and his reply follows:

"Except for riding the subway in Washington, DC, and short excursions on the Metroliner, I had not ridden on a long-distance passenger train for over 20 years. I had always told my daughter Amy, who is 8 years old, how enjoyable that experience was in the past . . . and promised to take her sometime on an overnight train.

"So after a long and strenuous campaign and winning the U.S. Senate seat from Iowa, I decided to relax on my way back to Washington and take Amy on the train.

"We caught Amtrak at Osceola, Iowa, and it was right on time at 10:00 am that Saturday morning, November 10. The ride into Chicago was wonderful, the cars were brand new and comfortable, and eating lunch and watching the countryside roll by was indeed a pleasant and relaxing experience.

"The train was right on time into Chicago . . . and after 1½ hour wait, we again left right on time from there. We had a bedroom compartment with two bunks, and again this trip was really enjoyable. Amy and I went to the club car and played a couple of games of cards, had dinner, and then went back to the club car to finish a couple more games. We adjourned early. Amy took the top berth and I took the lower berth. As she climbed into the bed, I could hear her saying, 'Oh, this is so exciting!' Both of us slept soundly through the night . . . and after a good breakfast and reading a couple of stories, we pulled into Washington, DC, again right on time Sunday noon.

"To sum it up, as someone once said, it is really the only 'civilized' way to travel. I thoroughly enjoyed it and look forward to riding Amtrak again, this time with the whole family.

"I guess the only thing that I detected that was not as I remembered from the past . . . gone is the china and the silver and the great meals . . . the food was not all that bad, and at least a step above airline food."

BRIDGES OUT IN PHILA., BOSTON

Commuter rail service was severed Nov. 16 by lost bridges in Philadelphia and Boston. In Philadelphia, SEPTA had to condemn a deteriorated, 73-year-old bridge leading to the new Center City Tunnel, thus cutting in half the newly-unified rail system. SEPTA is racing to open a replacement bridge by Dec. 19. Meanwhile, commuters are being diverted onto a city transit line (Broad St. Subway).

Boston's MBTA lost its second bridge this year to fire—this one between Salem and Beverly. Affected are Rockport and Ipswich trains. A new bridge is at least a year away; passengers are using buses. (MBTA's Charles River bridge burned Jan. 20; a replacement span may open in April.)

HOW TO BECOME A NARP REGIONAL DIRECTOR

This was explained in the last News. To recapitulate, here is the relevant portion of the by-laws change approved by the NARP Board in Oct.: "In the 4th calendar quarter of each year, the Executive Director will announce in the NARP News that nominations, including self-nominations, for Regional Directors are open and the closing date [Dec. 26, ed.] for the nominations. The announcement shall also state that there can be no nominations from the floor at the regional meeting. Any person wishing to be a candidate for Regional Director is to send his name, address, telephone number and a resume of not more than 100 words to the NARP office in Washington, DC; this material must be received before the announced closing date."



—photo by Barry Williams

At the insistence of the city, Amtrak's new Galesburg, IL, station employs a traditional design—a departure from the corporation's standard contemporary style. Station cost under \$300,000 and is stunning, with period furnishings including ceiling fans, incandescent lamps—and original wooden pews salvaged from the predecessor station. Lets see more like this! Funding came from Illinois DOT, city, and Amtrak; Burlington Northern RR donated the land; a local bank helped with landscaping.

BUFFALO LIGHT RAIL OPENS

Buffalo became the ninth U.S. city with an operating light rail transit system Oct. 9, when Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority opened the first installment of its 6.4-mile rail line, which, when completed in 1986, will link downtown with the State Univ. of NY-Buffalo on the north side.

Now in service is the downtown transit mall, a 1.2-mile, 6-station segment built on the surface in the middle of Main Street. The remainder of the line will be in subway, which explains why the project's cost—\$535 million or \$83.6 million per mile—is comparable to heavy rail projects. By comparison, San Diego's "true" light rail line to San Ysidro cost only \$7.5 million per mile.

The closest NFTA trolley station to Amtrak (Exchange St.) is Auditorium Station, about 2 blocks. At present, fares are free and service is limited to 10 AM-2 PM, Mo.-Fr.

N.E. Commuter Rail Improvements

Since Labor Day, three important commuter rail improvement projects have been completed in the Northeast.

● On Sep. 15, New Jersey Transit completed a 4-year, \$460 million, 69-mile reelectrification of its ex-Erie-Lackawanna commuter lines from Hoboken to Morristown, to Gladstone, and to Montclair. This project upgraded the overhead electric power supply system from 3,000-volt-DC to a modern 25,000-volt-AC current, making possible the replacement of aging Thomas Edison-era rolling stock with new Arrow III equipment. NJT reports "a significant increase in ridership" and "glowing passenger reactions" as a result of the new equipment and related improvements. UMTA supplied 80% of the funding; the rest came from New Jersey transportation bonds, and from the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

● On Nov. 2, New York's Metro-North Railroad completed a 1½-year, \$82 million project to convert the 29-mile N. White Plains-Brewster segment of its Harlem Line from diesel to third-rail electric operation. The N. White Plains-Grand Central Terminal segment had been third-rail for years. Thus, Brewster-Manhattan passengers no longer have to change trains at N. White Plains, saving up to 15 minutes. Funding came from UMTA and New York DOT.

● On Nov. 10, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority officially unified Philadelphia's two separate commuter railroads (Pennsy and Reading) when it began operating trains between the two via the new 1.7-mile, \$330 million Center City Tunnel, which took 5½ years to build (Oct.-Nov. News). UMTA paid 80%, Pennsylvania DOT 10%, City of Philadelphia 10%. Unfortunately, the newly-unified system was cut in two less than a week later by a bridge failure just north of downtown—see separate article.

Bullet Train Dead *(continued from page 2)*

that a mandate from the state legislature supports the high-speed efforts, that all technology options remain open in contrast to AHSRC's early commitment to Japanese trains, that AHSRC's entire line would have run through urbanized areas stimulating more citizen opposition than Pennsylvania's mostly-through-the-woods line, that AHSRC received an exemption from some environmental work and was generally secretive about plans while Pennsylvania has a full-time staff person who keeps on-line communities informed, and that AHSRC's short (130 miles with 7 stops) run amid sprawling development meant far greater vulnerability to auto competition than between Philadelphia, Harrisburg, and Pittsburgh (291 miles via Interstate).

But it's unclear whether such considerations are fundamental in explaining AHSRC's failure. This much is clear: AHSRC was founded by Amtrak officials who had looked over the entire country and concluded that the San Diego line represented the best hope of success, and that hope has disappeared. Sure, the line's shortness made it vulnerable to auto competition. But the length of the Pennsylvania line means construction costs would be far higher. On average, the Pennsylvania Turnpike is far less congested than California's I-5. And the intercity rail riding habit is virtually nonexistent in Pittsburgh.

Remember, high speed rail was developed with public money in France and Japan to alleviate rail congestion in corridors already heavily dependent on rail service. If private capital couldn't do the job alone there, and if the strongly rail-oriented Northeast Corridor has yet to turn a profit as the private sector defines profit, how can we believe that private money can do the job elsewhere in the U.S., where the competitive environment is far less favorable for rail? Is it even sensible to build a high-speed line partly with public money where no significant rail passenger service currently exists?

With California out of the ballgame, and Florida looking at a groundbreaking no sooner than late 1991, one hopes that more people will follow TRAC's lead and examine corridors nationwide with a view to implementing gradual improvements that will benefit present generations for sure, rather than our grandchildren maybe. ■

TEXAS HIGH-SPEED CORRECTION

The recently formed Texas Railroad Company, affiliated with the Texas Railroad Transportation Company (NARP News, Oct.-Nov. '83 and '84), has an agreement with Siemens, the German electrical manufacturer, under which Siemens will supply trainsets and lead a consortium of companies to develop the Texas highspeed project, including financing.

Kill Amtrak Option *(continued from page 1)*

Fortunately, the agreement "provides that the 40% local share required for the West Side Connection [linking Albany service to NY's Penn Station, ed.] project may be derived from 'non-Amtrak' funds [instead of the previous 'non-Federal' requirement, ed.]." But, if the total project cost exceeds \$50 million, the above-\$50 million portion of the local share must be non-Federal money. Observers are optimistic that the West Side Project will be fully funded now that the state has the right to use other Federal funds to meet the local match requirement.

The conference report earmarks up to \$4 million of the Amtrak money "to alleviate operating problems at Amtrak's Northeast Corridor bridge over the Bush River" south of Aberdeen, MD. Currently, track must be ripped up every time the bridge is raised, and track must be relaid when the bridge is lowered, creating schedule delays and operating costs Amtrak endures to benefit boaters. The bridge is only operated on weekends and the conference report states "it is further intended that the current bridge opening schedule not be expanded after completion of the automation project."

The NECIP funds are earmarked as follows: \$17.8 million, con-

crete ties; \$5.9 million, Phila.-Morrisville, PA, reverse signalling; \$2.4 million Union and Warren St. bridges (Trenton, NJ); and \$1.7 million, New York tunnel electrical and mechanical work.

On the mass transit side, NARP members will be glad to know that \$10 million in engineering money was included for St. Louis light rail, keeping alive hopes that St. Louis will get a well-located, accessible Amtrak station; and \$3 million was approved for the San Diego (East Line) light rail project (See June NARP News).

Gulf Coast Limited

The Senate's report (98-561, printed July 17) accompanying its DOT appropriations bill (S. 2852) expressed pleasure at the inauguration of Mobile-New Orleans service, and stated: "The Committee urges Amtrak to study this route closely and, in conjunction with local and State officials, make every reasonable effort to keep the service operating after the closing of the World's Fair.

"Amtrak is directed to study the feasibility of expanding the present routes of the Gulf Coast Limited as a 403(b) route. This study shall include an assessment of expanding the current route from Mobile, north and east to Birmingham via Montgomery and from New Orleans north and west to Slidell, Baton Rouge, Alexandria, Shreveport, and possibly into Texas. The results of this study shall be submitted to the Committee on Appropriations no later than March 31, 1985."

The required inspections have already occurred. Indications are that a Birmingham-Montgomery-Mobile link would be relatively simple to inaugurate, from the standpoint of railroad operations, but the same could not be said of Atlanta-Montgomery or New Orleans-Baton Rouge-Shreveport-Marshall. ■

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY *(continued from page 1)*

NY 30 min. later and beats mail train to Washington.

Says Amtrak about its two Northeast Corridor mail runs: "These trains carry one high-density coach and passengers and have no food service. There are only limited station services available at the time these trains operate. [They] should not be recommended for the inexperienced rail traveler."

Amtrak fares rose an average of 2% on Dec. 1.

American Airlines' Sabre computer reservation system was linked with Amtrak's Arrow system Nov. 15.

Effective Jan. 27 with the new Amtrak menu, china returns to dining cars of the New York-New Orleans "Crescent" and the Los Angeles-Seattle "Coast Starlight," for a 6- to 8-month trial period. Superliner china to be used.

On Saturdays and Sundays from Jan. 5 through Mar. 31, 1985, the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad's traditional Denver-Winter Park ski train will operate, leaving Denver 7:30 AM and departing on the return from Winter Park at 4 PM. Running times: 2½ hrs. west, 2¼ east. \$13 round-trip, no diner, no alcohol allowed on-board. Tickets go on sale at Denver Union Station every Monday for the coming weekend, and the trains usually sell out. D&RGW accepts advance reservations for groups of 80 or more (\$12.50/person). One-way mileage is 57 miles; Winter Park is just west of the Moffat Tunnel.

Prospects look good for stopping Amtrak's daily, year-round "California Zephyr" at nearby Fraser. Earlier negotiations with the city and Amtrak to stop the "Zephyr" at Winter Park were unsuccessful because the railroad contends that operating problems make such a plan unfeasible. However, Fraser station is just as close to most of the resorts. Currently, a free shuttle links Amtrak's Granby station and the lodge at Winter Park.

PHOTO COPIER DONATED TO NARP

We would like to thank NARP Member and ex-director John Czyzewski of Vienna, VA, for his generous donation to the NARP office of a high-quality photo copier. His gift made it unnecessary for us to purchase a needed replacement machine.

Thanks, John!