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RETURN REQUESTED

Full Flexibility . . .

New Clean Air Act Threatens New Roads!

"The Clean Air Act will cause money to go from highways to transit."

—Sec. of Transportation Samuel K. Skinner, at Feb. 21 House Appropriations subcomm. hearing

"It will be hard for us to approve any major new highway capacity unless we can show it will improve air quality."

—Ron Kirby, Director of Transportation Planning Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

Alert citizens and local officials can use the new clean air law to stop many new urban area highway projects that did not receive final approval before Nov. 15, 1990—and even some that were approved, but under faulty procedures.

Though almost completely neglected by the general news media, the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 that became P.L. 101-516 on Nov. 15 included important provisions that should help reduce auto use. In fact, the transportation planning provisions were the only provisions to come out of the House-Senate conference *stronger* than they were before. [Evidently, the news media suffers from the same division of labor that afflicts Congress: "environmental"—not transportation—reporters cover clean air and did not appreciate the dramatic nature of the provisions we covered.]

Of the four "auto-use-reduction" issues we cited (May News, p. 2), there were three victories and one defeat.

- The new law includes a *strengthened* version of S. 1630's requirements that large employers (100 employees or more) in severe "non-attainment" areas increase employees per vehicle 25% above the area baseline. Conferees eliminated S. 1630's "escape hatch" under which an employer could have escaped the 25% requirement if the employer was spending as much on transit/ride-sharing as on parking.

- "Conformity" provisions in the new law are also strong—even though the House Public Works Committee insisted on retaining H.R. 3030's provision requiring the Environmental Protection Agency to get concurrence from the Secretary

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. . . for Use of Federal Highway Funds Gains Support

Would This Include Amtrak?

"Why should there be an artificial constraint on my state's ability to use highway funds for transit? . . . Why shouldn't New Jersey be able to spend all its trust fund money on transit if it wants?" —Chairman Robert A. Roe (D-NJ) of the House Committee on Public Works and Transportation at Feb. 20 hearing

"I think [states] should have broad authority—the question is how broad. You have to have credibility with the users. I'm not sure the users are ready to give the states free rein . . . Mr. Chairman, as a matter of concept, you and I don't disagree. It's a matter of what is politically acceptable. Congress will determine that."

—Sec. of Transportation Samuel K. Skinner in response to Chairman Roe

Several legislators share our misgivings about the one-way nature of funding flexibility in the administration's highway/transit reauthorization proposal—all transit money theoretically could be used for roads but only *some* highway money could go to transit.

Interest also is growing in extending flexibility to include intercity rail passenger investments. One idea is to allow governors to use federal highway money for transit, Amtrak, and other clean transportation purposes in any area violating federal ozone or carbon monoxide standards or which is congested and has a congestion management program.

This may be a more realistic near-term hope for Amtrak supporters than the oft-discussed earmarking of a penny for Amtrak.

But will any governors support the idea? Do they want the power to make real transportation decisions? Their silence helped kill a more narrowly-drawn provision in the Senate-passed Clean Air Act last year (separate story).

The Transit Penalty: Legislators have also expressed con-

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Amtrak Releases Iowa Report

"Amtrak has gained the impression that a main interest of the communities [in central Iowa and northern Illinois] is to link them to Chicago If this is the case, there may be faster and less costly ways to restore rail passenger service along the C&NW (Chicago & North Western) route than by creating a new transcontinental service."

—Amtrak's congressionally-mandated study released Jan. 12 (see July '90 News, page 3 box).

After studying a major restructuring of the "California Zephyr/Desert Wind/Pioneer," Amtrak recommended study of a 403b (partially-state-funded) all-coach train between Chicago, northern Illinois and central Iowa, which Amtrak said would have rolling stock costs of only \$14-15 million rather than the \$127-159 mill. a new transcontinental service would require.

But, said Amtrak, "Rerouting the 'Desert Wind' and 'Pioneer' through northern Illinois, central Iowa and southern Wyoming would provide Amtrak with the opportunity of significantly expanding capacity on one of its most popular routes. (It would provide a faster route to Southern California and the Pacific Northwest for those passengers desiring a shorter trip, as well as provide much better arrival and departure times for Seattle, Tacoma and Portland, while maintaining the scenic route through Colorado for 'California Zephyr' passengers. Additionally, it would considerably ease the operational difficulties caused by the present combined operation, and improve on-time performance."

This expanded service would require funds Amtrak doesn't have: the above-cited rolling stock, facilities and right-of-way work the report does not price and a first-year operating subsidy increase of \$14.2 mill. in spite of increased passenger and mail revenues the new equipment would generate—"financial results can, and usually do improve with experience, finetuning of operating costs and aggressive marketing efforts."

The study assumes: Chicago-Bay Area "California Zephyr" is a separate train on its existing route and approximate schedule; Chicago-Los Angeles "Desert Wind" and Chicago-Seattle "Pioneer" run combined Chicago-Clinton-Cedar Rapids-Ames-Omaha-Lincoln-Denver-Laramie-Ogden with the faster run across Wyoming allowing later departures and earlier arrivals in Chicago and the major Western markets. Also, "Pioneer" would have Seattle-Salt Lake City through cars operating as a separate train south of Ogden.

The study assumes "Wind/Pioneer" ("W/P") would use C&NW's Chicago-Omaha tracks and Amtrak's current Burlington Northern Omaha-McCook-Denver route but left open the possibility that, based on future study, "Zephyr" or "W/P" might use UP's Denver-Grand Island-Omaha line.

(Amtrak's 32-page report, "Rerouting the Pioneer and the Desert Wind through Central Iowa and Wyoming," is available from Amtrak Public Affairs, 60 Massachusetts Ave., NE, Washington, DC 20002. The report predates Amtrak's decision to reroute "Pioneer" through Wyoming this June—see separate story. The new train-miles added in June will reduce the number and cost of additional train-miles needed to run "Desert Wind/Pioneer" on the C&NW to Chicago. But new equipment needs for such an extension mean a Chicago-based short-distance train still could be started more cheaply and much sooner. One good sign: in Feb., Iowa DOT asked Amtrak to study the latter.) ■

NARP'S Pressure Helped

Amtrak Returns to Wyoming

In June, Wyoming will get its first regular Amtrak service since early 1983, leaving only Oklahoma to regain lost Amtrak service and only Maine and South Dakota to get on Amtrak's map for the first time.

"Pioneer" will run Ogden-Denver via Wyoming instead of Salt Lake City and the Colorado Rockies. This will enlarge Amtrak's route structure by 540 miles, adding 576 miles Ogden-Denver and dropping 36 miles Ogden-Salt Lake City. (Dedicated Ogden-Salt Lake City buses over the latter segment will serve the Seattle-Idaho-Salt Lake City markets and link Wyoming with Salt Lake City and points west on both the "Zephyr" and "Desert Wind" routes.)

Because the run across Wyoming is faster, the train will depart Seattle at 8 AM instead of the current 5 AM (5:20 starting Apr. 7).

Amtrak also expects service to be more reliable. "Pioneer" may carry 3 coaches instead of 2, enabling it to serve people in Idaho and eastern Oregon who were driven off by unreliable

NEW ROCKIES AMTRAK SERVICE

Effective mid-June, 1991



Amtrak Stations shown, plus 1983 Wyoming route stops. Highest elevation shown for both routes.

NARP Graphics/Scott Leonard

service in recent years.

Howls of outrage greeted Amtrak's plan to bypass Boise in order to speed up "Pioneer" by 40 minutes, permit slightly better departure times from Seattle (6a instead of 5:20a) and Tacoma, and avoid possible future problems with a portion of the Boise line which freight trains do not use.

Under Amtrak's plan, a dedicated bus would have linked Boise to the train at Nampa; the Boise station would have remained open with checked baggage service.

Amtrak management believed this would not have been a significant service change. This was evident in Pres. W. Graham Claytor Jr.'s answer to an Amtrak board member's question during the open portion of the board's Jan. 23 meeting and in the fact that the board apparently had not previously been told about the plan.

NARP and Idaho public officials saw the plan very differently—and it was thanks to NARP that the officials saw it in time. Reps. Larry LaRocco and Richard Stallings issued a news release Jan. 15 after NARP shared with the delegation our Jan. 10 letter to Claytor protesting the plan.

NARP promptly alerted the congressional delegation to

Claytor's Jan. 23 comments. The next day, *The Idaho Statesman* reported, "Dismayed Idaho officials are planning to challenge Amtrak's decision to drop train service to Boise."

Seeing that the Boise move would cause more trouble than anticipated, Amtrak reviewed the Wyoming option again and found the economics had improved because "California Zephyr" has become such a big train. A major factor: a \$3+ million gain in mail revenue because, operating without "Pioneer's" cars west of Denver, "Zephyr" for the first time will be able to handle mail in the summer as well as the rest of the year.

One disadvantage: reduced capacity across the scenic Colorado Rockies, where each train will have 4 coaches instead of 6; 2 sleepers instead of 3. ■

Clean Air Act (continued from page 1)

of Transportation before issuing regulations that would determine how transportation plans are reviewed for their air-quality impact.

First, private citizens can sue DOT if it delays the rulemaking process—which must be completed by Oct. 26, 1991.

Second, so long as a state lacks an air quality implementation plan for ozone non-attainment areas, the state must adopt a regional transportation plan giving 3% annual reduc-

tion in mobile-source "ozone-precursor" emissions in such areas. (This gives states an incentive to approve an air quality plan quickly. States with approved plans have more flexibility: they must achieve a 3% annual reduction in overall ozone-precursor emissions—mobile and stationary.) This provision also requires percentage reductions in carbon monoxide emissions, but these reductions vary depending on the severity of pollution in an area.

Third, the new law requires transportation plans to be reviewed for conformity with clean air plans every three years. This could be a pro-rail tool since it would force a state whose projections proved faulty to resort to more effective transit alternatives. (The old law required no review of a transportation plan once found to conform.)

Fourth, the federal funding sanctions which can be imposed on noncomplying states are limited to restrictions on highway funding and to imposition of a tough 2-1 "offset" regarding new industries—pollution from a new industry must be offset by reductions elsewhere equalling twice the amount of pollution from the new industry. (But defeat of funding flexibility makes sanctions less likely.)

● The stronger House provision was adopted regarding the federal government's obligation to impose an effective air quality implementation plan when a state fails to do so. If a state fails to submit a plan that fully complies with the act by 1993, EPA is required to complete a federal plan by 1995.

The only total defeat was of the provision giving governors the power to transfer money from highways to "clean" transportation projects that help a nonattainment area meet ozone or carbon monoxide standards (April News, lead story). Only one governor—James J. Florio (D-NJ)—said anything nice about this provision. Presumably most governors—including many who make pro-transit statements—preferred not to gain this new problem-solving power because they would have been intensely lobbied by pro- and anti-highway forces. It's easier to say "the feds earmarked this money for roads."

Indeed, thanks to hard work by the highway lobby including your state DOT, the new clean air act's biggest weakness is its failure to address the need to increase transit and Amtrak funding. Funding sanctions would be more realistic politically and more effective in producing cleaner air if they involved switching money from highways to transit rather than simply shutting off the flow of federal dollars to a region.

What You Can Do

● **Help your employer work to comply with the 25% requirement, encouraging maximum attention on mass transit (as opposed to carpools) which will also benefit the general public. Encourage your employer to work toward the goal even if the company is too small to be covered by the law.**

● **The new law opens up a new opportunity for citizen activism at the local level—influencing and overseeing the process of developing the transportation measures required for your state's new air quality implementation plan. Your metropolitan planning organization ("MPO")—which is composed of local elected officials—will play a key role. To find out who controls your MPO, call your state highway department or air quality agency, the regional U.S. Environmental Protection Agency office, or the state office of the U.S. Department of Transportation.**

(For more info, send us \$2 plus s.a.s.e. for a paper by Robert E. Yuhnke of the Environmental Defense Fund.) ■

CLEAN AIR: BUSES, TRUCKS, TRAINS

We're still seeing new costs of the massive substitution of diesel buses for all forms of electric transit earlier in this century. Most obvious was the big decline in transit ridership which the shift encouraged—even where new air-conditioned buses replaced old non-AC trolleys.

Another cost: today, thanks to diesel buses and their ugly exhausts, many people think of transit as part of the clean air *problem*, not the solution.

A bigger cost: the new clean air law sets tougher standards for transit buses than for heavy trucks. Also, buses have a faster compliance schedule than trucks. And buses—unlike trucks—are subject to testing and the threat of conversion to alternative fuels. (Send NARP an s.a.s.e. for more bus/truck clean air details. In this law, *intercity* buses are essentially trucks.)

Priorities seem wrong, given the clean air impact of cost increases resulting from Clean Air compliance: bus-riders diverted to cars mean more pollution; freight diverted to trains means less pollution.

A Better Idea? Consultant Brian E. Sullivan, a veteran Canadian transit manager, suggests converting high-volume bus routes to electric trackless trolleybus or light rail—quieter and cleaner than alternative-fuel buses and, because overhead wires and rails give routes better "identity," superior at attracting riders. He sees no need to keep pushing costly and questionable technological developments on the relatively few diesel buses that would remain.

Los Angeles is studying converting some diesel bus routes to trolleybus—service in 1994 if all goes well!

Railroads: The Environmental Protection Administrator must promulgate emissions regulations for new locomotives *within 5 years*. The law *immediately* exempted new locomotives from state regs. The ability of states to continue regulating existing and rebuilt locomotives is unclear.

PRO-TRANSIT LEGISLATORS ON FLEXIBILITY

● Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ) at Mar. 5 Environment & Public Works Committee hearing with Sec. Skinner: "Perhaps some gasoline tax revenues ought to be used for intercity rail. Would relieve congestion on not only the highway system but the aviation system as well." At Mar. 6 Appropriations subcomm. hearing: "I hope one day we will have a highway-generated trust fund for railroads to get serious about energy efficiency and clean air."

● Sen. Alfonse M. D'Amato (R-NY) at Feb. 28 Appropriations subcommittee hearing with Sec. Skinner: "At a time when we're trying to encourage environmentally sound transportation, your program is biased toward construction of roads. Flexibility should be something that goes both ways."

● Rep. Robert A. Borski (D-PA) at Feb. 20 Public Works and Transportation Committee hearing with Sec. Skinner: "The road-to-transit ratio in your bill is over 6-to-1. How do you justify this?" (Skinner's reply: "We believe the program is balanced.")

● Rep. William O. Lipinski (D-IL), Feb. 20 hearing: "This mass transit issue has to be addressed by everyone. [Your reauthorization proposal] has gone over as a bomb. Your position . . . is totally unacceptable to the mass transit community. In order to accomplish anything, we're going to have to have a long dialogue."

● Rep. Peter A. DeFazio (D-OR), Feb. 20 hearing: "I see a bias against conservation in your proposal. I am very disturbed about using fuel consumption as the basis for distributing highway funds."

Full Flexibility (continued from page 1)

cern about the "transit penalty"—the fact that, under the administration bill, a state loses money by shifting funds from roads (federal share 60-90%) to transit (federal share 50-60%)—as in this Feb. 21 exchange in the House Appropriations subcommittee:

Rep. William H. Gray III (D-PA): "Transit may lose at the state level. Would you mind if we made the level the same for both highways and transits, say 85 and 85 or 30 and 30? That would be equal ground."

Sec. Skinner: "The highway users would have strong opinions on that. The Clean Air Act will cause money to go from highways to transit. I'm not sure 85/85 is politically acceptable; we look to Congress for advice."

Gray: "My advice is to level it."

What You Can Do

Urge your U.S. legislators and your governor to endorse and work for inclusion of full flexibility—extended even to intercity rail—in the highway/transit reauthorization Congress expects to pass this year. Urge a "no-penalty" provision assuring that funding shifted from roads to transit or Amtrak will be matched with just as many federal dollars as for roads. ■

New Superliner Sleepers

Amtrak plans 2 types, with board approval possible Mar. 27. Most would have the usual 12 economy rooms/5 deluxe/1 family/1 handicapped but Auto Train's would have the usual downstairs (4 econ/1/1) but 10 deluxe up. All would have downstairs showers for economy passengers; full retention toilets.



The new look planned for the last 32 of the 52 locomotives Amtrak ordered from General Electric (Dec. News, p. 4): 22 4000 HP diesels and 10 3200 HP Empire Corridor "Dual-mode" locomotives capable of getting power from the on-board diesel-powered alternator or from a third rail. Two of the 4000 HP units will be used on long-distance trains that now need three 3000 HP F40 diesels. Also, the new locomotives will be lighter and more fuel efficient.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Highlights of Amtrak's April 7 Timetable

Major shift in Florida-New York service features restoration of "Silver Star"-to-"Capitol Ltd." connection and of through Chicago-Miami coach. Northbound "Star" runs a few hours earlier; "Meteor" instead of "Star" serves the Wildwood line; "Meteor" splits in Jacksonville, "Star" in Auburndale; "Star's" Slumbercoach (economy sleeper) serves Tampa, not Miami.

New northbound "Star" schedule permits same-day connections to Albany, Boston and Springfield and connection with westbound "Cardinal" via Amtrak's Richmond-Charlottesville bus.

"Capitol" adds stops at Elyria, OH, and Elkhart, IN; no longer serves McKeesport, PA.

Thanks to increased support from North Carolina, "Carolinian" and "Palmetto" become separate trains (instead of combining New York-Rocky Mount) to improve reliability and reduce running-times. They leave New York at 6:20a and 7:20a, respectively. Northbound, "Palmetto" leaves Jacksonville an hour later, at 7 AM; "Carolinian" leaves Charlotte 20 minutes earlier—8:05a—but reaches New York 1:11 earlier—9:59p.

Major Empire Corridor changes include less-than-ideal schedules forced by the new single-track line on Manhattan; improved schedules due to double-tracking should be implemented no later than April 1992. "Lake Shore Ltd.'s" slumbercoach runs Boston-Chicago instead of New York-Chicago; New York slumbercoach passengers change cars in Albany (or use "Broadway" or "Cardinal").

Other News

The Amtrak depot in Fort Wayne, linked to trains by Thruway buses to Garrett/Waterloo, is a storefront in the small Clinton Corners Shopping Center, a few miles northeast of downtown. Limited (M-F 6:15a-5:25p) city bus service on Route 9 of the Public Transit Corp. (219/432-4546).

A Mexicoach bus now links the San Diego Trolley directly with downtown Tijuana, saving Tijuana visitors a long walk or taxi ride across the border at San Ysidro. \$1 each way for the 2-mile ride.

Saturday service on Miami's Tri-Rail commuter line began Dec. 8 . . . SEPTA's Claymont, DE station (R2-Northeast Corridor line) opened Oct. 29.