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(This has news through Aug. 16. No. 7 was mailed Aug. 2.)

RETURN REQUESTED

Finish the Electrification!

COMPARING THE BILLS

(Millions of \$)

1991 PROGRAM	HOUSE	SENATE	1990
Amtrak:			
Operating	343.1	340.0	521.1
Capital	138.9	130.0	83.6
Special FRA Account*	150.0	150.0	0.0
Amtrak Total	632.0	620.0	604.7
NECIP	16.0	165.0	24.4

*Certain Railroad Unemployment and Retirement payments, mandated by law, which exceed Amtrak's costs to those systems (see July News).

—Senate & House Appropriations Committee Reports

Sen. Lautenberg Calls For New England Project

"The Committee believes that electrification of the un-electrified portion of the Northeast corridor between New Haven and Boston, as originally contemplated by the Northeast Corridor Improvement Project, is essential if travel time between Boston and New York is to be reduced to under 3 hours."

—Senate Appropriations Committee Report on H.R. 5229, the 1991 DOT Appropriations Bill, July 27, 1990.

The Senate version of the 1991 DOT Appropriations Bill includes enough money to get the badly needed New Haven-Boston electrification project off the ground. Senate Appropriations transportation subcommittee chairman Frank R. Lautenberg's (D-NJ) proposal would make Boston-New York rail travel air-competitive and reduce the likelihood Boston would need a costly, federally-funded second airport.

The \$125 mill. includes \$25 mill. in design work, \$25 mill. for interlocking and catenary reconfiguration work at Shell (New Rochelle, NY) and \$56.2 mill. toward mainline electrification and signal work.

The differences in the House and Senate DOT bills (see chart) will have to be worked out in conference after summer recess ends Sept. 5. The House bill has better Amtrak operating and capital figures than the Senate bill, but the big difference is in NECIP funding. The House only allows \$16 mill., all for dual-propulsion locomotives to eliminate the New Haven locomotive change and speed up some Boston-New York trips. On-going projects, like extension of Centralized Electric Traffic Control, were to get no federal funding. The Senate bill, besides providing for Boston electrification, restores current NECIP projects and drops the dual-propulsion locomotives.

Electrification would greatly reduce New York-Boston trip times, making Amtrak more competitive with airlines. At Boston's crowded Logan Airport, 30% of outbound passengers are headed for New York. New York-Boston is the 2nd largest air market in the U.S. (see box). If a large share of those passengers felt the train were an attractive alternative,

Alamo City Progress

The Southern Pacific (S.P.) station in San Antonio, which serves Amtrak's "Texas Eagle" and "Sunset Limited", now has a new owner which plans extensive renovation work to the historic building and its grounds.

VIA Metropolitan Transit bought the property (including freight house and sidings) from S.P. in June for \$3.5 mill. The station is on the north end of a 57-acre, VIA-owned site where a new sports dome will be built and leased to the city. Also on the property will be a Transit Plaza, which will bring together several city bus lines, downtown shuttle buses and buses for special events at the dome.

The station, which VIA has renamed Sunset Depot, will be restored inside and out as much as possible to its original 1902 appearance for about \$3 mill. The crumbling pink stucco will be restored and the north rose window, which disappeared in the 1940's, will be replaced. Improvements will be made to the station grounds and platform areas. Amtrak and the "Texan" dinner train will remain as tenants and one or two restaurants will be added.

Plans to renovate the station have been kicked around for

(continued on page 4)

the need to build an expensive second Boston airport would be alleviated. Rail can be air competitive in such markets. Already, Amtrak carries 36% of all air and rail passengers combined New York-Washington (and many more to intermediate points), where fastest trip times are under 3 hrs.

Because no federal funding seemed to be on the horizon, the Coalition of Northeast Governors (CONEG) had favored electrification as a long-term solution, with short-term use of dual-propulsion locomotives and tilt rolling stock. CONEG felt the present New York-Boston trip time of 4 hrs., 30 min. could be cut to 3 hrs. or 3 hrs., 15 min. with dual-propulsion locomotives. Additional time savings would result from track realignments.

On the other hand, Amtrak feels that simply by electrifying the line, a New York-Boston trip could be cut to 2 hrs., 59 min. (with conventional equipment). That would also allow for through Washington-Boston service without locomotive changes. Track realignment work would bring New York-Boston trip times far enough below 3 hrs. to really make the train air-competitive. Capacity at Logan Airport would be freed up for longer-distance air travel. Use of tilt trains would save additional time.

WE STILL NEED THAT PENNY!

Conventional political wisdom is now saying that an increased gas tax is dead because of the Iraqi crisis and the jump in gas prices. That is why it is still important to tell your legislators the gas tax is still needed for important infrastructure improvements.

If a penny of that gas tax increase were to go to Amtrak (see July News), it would be less vulnerable to devastating Gramm-Rudman cuts and could easily carry out infrastructure projects like Boston electrification, provide the rolling stock, and repeat the process on other corridors in the U.S., like the following (approx. 300 miles or less): Dallas-Houston (6th largest air market), Chicago-Detroit (11th), Chicago-St. Louis (21st), Dallas-San Antonio (28th—Dallas-Austin is 41st), Los Angeles-San Diego, Eugene-Portland-Seattle, Detroit-Cleveland-Pittsburgh, Washington-Richmond-Norfolk, etc.

That would make rail travel in high-density corridors more attractive than the current preference for petroleum-dependent air and highway modes.

Using technology newer than the existing Pennsylvania Railroad-era electrification, Amtrak estimates the New Haven-Boston project could be done for \$600 mill.—far less than the \$5 bill. a new Boston airport could cost. Of that amount, \$225 mill. would be for the electrification itself, the rest for track realignments and Centralized Electric Traffic Control. F-40 diesel locomotives now serving New Haven-Boston are badly needed elsewhere in the U.S.

CONEG now supports federal funds for electrification. The Federal Railroad Administration came out in favor of electrification over dual-mode propulsion earlier this spring.

The \$125 mill. proposed by Sen. Lautenberg would not

“SADDAM HUSSEIN A RAIL FAN?”

“(Iraq’s) President Hussein caused motor carrier operating costs to rise at a much faster rate than those of competing railroads. Fuel accounts for just under 7% of operating costs for railroads . . . For (trucks) fuel accounts for 20% to 23% of their costs.”

—Larry Kaufman, *Journal of Commerce*, Aug. 20, 1990

Nation’s Largest Air Markets

Domestic outbound plus inbound, 4th quarter 1989.

1. Los Angeles-New York
2. Boston-New York
3. Newark-Washington
4. Chicago-New York
5. Miami-New York
6. Dallas-Houston
7. Los Angeles-San Francisco
8. Newark-San Francisco
9. Honolulu-Kahului (Maui), HI
10. Newark-Orlando

—U.S. DOT

cover the entire project, but would get it well on its way. Planning could take 3 years, and construction 18-24 months. However, there is no guarantee that the \$125 mill. will make it through conference, nor that Amtrak will not be subjected to Gramm-Rudman sequestration cuts this fall. The Administration has estimated that, in the absence of a budget agreement, Gramm-Rudman cuts could be as high as 38.4%! That would **totally wipe out** Amtrak. Also, with the Iraqi situation, funding for domestic programs like Amtrak could be put in jeopardy by demands to increase military funding. It is ironic that funds might be taken away from projects like rail electrification that would reduce our dependence on the very foreign petroleum supplies the military seeks to defend. ■

NARP SUPPORTS OLD COLONY’S RETURN

In conjunction with June public hearings on the draft environmental impact statement for restoration of commuter rail to Boston’s “South Shore” suburbs, NARP wrote strongly supporting the project.

Responding to criticism leveled at the project by others, NARP stated: “We reject ‘spending per new transit rider’ as a measure of this or any other rail project’s worth. That is a measure constantly trotted out by those who oppose rail service. Indeed, ‘per-rider’ measures can always be used to make commuter railroads look bad because such measures ignore the high passenger-miles-per-passenger that commuter rail handles.

“‘Spending per new transit rider’ ignores the provision of improved service to existing transit users. It is sometimes used to oppose providing rail to inner-city residents in heavy, transit-dependent corridors where rail could do a better job than the bus. (‘Those folks have to ride whatever we give them so why give them anything better?’)

“For the Old Colony, this measure ignores the benefit of enabling suburban residents to board the train near their home rather than driving to the Red Line. This means both greater convenience for the user and greater environmental benefits for society as users would travel further on mass transit than they do today” and in many cases reduced auto ownership per household would extend the transit use beyond daily work trips.

Send NARP an s.a.s.e. for a copy of the 2-page letter.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

After Oct. 1, Amtrak's northwest Ohio stop for the "Broadway" will be Fostoria, which was chosen over Tiffin and North Baltimore. City will contribute over \$65,000 for station renovation and new parking and platforms. Amtrak will use ex-B&O station on Main St., 1 block off U.S. 23.

When the "Capitol" is also rerouted Oct. 1, a connecting Amtrak Toledo-Michigan Thruway bus is planned, serving Detroit, Dearborn, Ann Arbor, Lansing. The Atlanta-Macon-Savannah Thruway bus set to begin Apr. 1 is still on hold due to difficulties with City of Atlanta in getting permit to park bus at Peachtree Sta.

Amtrak began accepting the Discover Card Apr. 1 for all Amtrak services. Cards already accepted by Amtrak are Air Travel Card, American Express, Carte Blanche, Diners Club, Japan Credit Bureau, MasterCard and Visa.

The weekend-only "Cape Codder"/"Clamdigger" service to Hyannis, MA is operating June 29-Sept. 3. Off-corridor stops are Taunton, Wareham, Buzzards Bay, Sandwich, West Barnstable. This is Amtrak's only seasonal train.

Trancisco Tours will begin luxury rail service between San Jose, Reno, and 5 intermediate stops Nov. 23. The "Trancisco 49er" will initially make 2 trips a week. Trips will be sold as minivacations including Reno lodging and casino bonuses. The "Trancisco 49er" will be operated by Amtrak as a separate train with its own locomotive, coaches, diner and entertainment car. A 3-day, 2-night trip will be about \$250 per person. For information call 800/765-4937 (415/677-9040 in CA).

Bayside extension of San Diego's East light rail line opened June 30. Los Angeles Blue light rail line opened July 14. Blue Line operates between temporary terminals—12th & Flower/Pico in Los Angeles and Anaheim St. & Long Beach Blvd. in Long Beach.



Vision Pamphlet Available

"A New Transportation Vision", the pamphlet released by the Campaign for New Transportation Priorities (see May News), is now available at the following rates:

- 1 copy Free, s.a.s.e.* for 25¢
- 2-5 copies Free, s.a.s.e. for 45¢
- 6-50 copies 20¢ each
- 51-200 copies 15¢ each + \$1 shipping
- 200+ copies 10¢ each + \$2 shipping

Checks may be made out to NARP.

*self-addressed, stamped envelope.

GETTING THE MESSAGE TO MILLIONS

Hats off to the writers of NBC-TV's long-running *Family Ties*. In one of the show's final episodes (#173, first aired Apr. 16, 1989), Jennifer had this exchange with her high school counselor, Mr. Hilgenburg:

H: Let's talk about your social life. Do you like boys?

J: Yes. Especially boys who don't burn fossil fuels.

H: Pardon me?

J: Drive. Cars burn fossil fuels. I like boys who don't drive because they don't pollute. Car emissions are leaving a layer of carbon dioxide above the earth that will eventually trap the heat and cook us.

(Reprinted from *Family Ties* courtesy of Paramount Pictures Corp. All rights reserved. Our thanks to NARP Member Michael Gross, one of the show's stars, for helping us get the copy and permission to reproduce.)



—NARP
Photos by
Scott
Leonard

Amtrak's New Conference Cab Car

The newly converted conference room-cab car was released from Amtrak's Wilmington shop Aug. 3. The conference room (see photo), on the cab end, seats 8 around a table and has a telephone and VCR. It will be sold for a \$150 surcharge. Behind the room is an area of semi-enclosed booths seating 12 (some booths for 2 and some for 4) to be sold as revenue club seats, on a first come basis. There is also a snack counter area (with enclosed phone booth) and club coach section seating 18 (2-1 seating). The car is a former Metroliner snack bar. The cab end is painted reflectorized white, rather than in the yellow and black stripes seen on cab cars in areas with grade crossings. The car will be put into revenue service in Sept. on the New York-Washington "Congressional"; and when it gets FRA approval for higher speeds, will join the Metroliner fleet in Oct. Other cars will be converted to begin providing push-pull service on Metroliners.



—VIA Metropolitan Transit

1909 view of Southern Pacific station in San Antonio. Tracks are at left, Hoefgen St. at right. From postcard provided to VIA by S.P. employee Doug Dupree.

SAN ANTONIO *(continued from page 1)*

years. In 1981, owner S.P., tenant Amtrak and the City of San Antonio agreed on a renovation plan. S.P. and Amtrak's share of the project—the interior work—was completed in 1983 at a cost of \$1 million. However, the city share—the exterior and grounds—was never begun, despite repeated requests from NARP.

Renovation is expected to be completed by March 1993—also the expected completion date of the dome.

Return of the "Aztec Eagle"?

On June 16, representatives of Amtrak, National Railways of Mexico (F.N.de M.), S.P., Union Pacific Railroad (U.P.), Texas Mexican Railway and VIA all signed a letter of intent to work toward a goal of direct San Antonio-Laredo-Monterrey-Mexico City passenger rail service.

Those parties hope the service, to be run by F.N.de M., could start mid-1991. The service would use the S.P. station in San Antonio (same as Amtrak), use a short S.P. track segment in the city, U.P. tracks to Laredo and F.N.de M. tracks into Mexico. The parties will meet again to iron out operational issues, the biggest of which will be the border crossing and customs.

Missouri Pacific's "Texas Eagle" ran from St. Louis to Laredo until 1970, and at one time carried a through sleeper for F.N.de M.'s "Aztec Eagle" to Mexico City. San Antonio and Laredo were linked by Amtrak's "Inter-American" 1973-1981 (but without good connections into Mexico).

Alamo Light Rail?

To complement its restoration of the S.P. station, and to provide efficient and attractive access to and from downtown historic sites, VIA is considering a downtown historic streetcar line, terminating at the station. (For a time in the 1980's, historic streetcars also operated north of the station over the Texas Transportation Co., an electrified industrial short line).

VIA is also looking at light rail to provide access to a theme park being planned on the northwest edge of San Antonio. Opryland's Fiesta Texas would be near the University of Texas San Antonio campus and S.P.'s former Kerrville Branch. The S.P. right-of-way could be a useful light rail route connecting to the S.P. station, downtown tourist attractions and the central business district. ■

YOU CAN HELP

VIA is looking for historic information relating to the station. Sandra Huhn, the VIA official in charge of the project, said, "The best historic items are always to be found tucked away in bottom drawers in people's homes." NARP Assistant Director Scott Leonard will forward any historic photos or information located by NARP members. VIA pledges to copy any historic photographs submitted and return them.

Private Car Owners Support Amtrak

The American Association of Private Railroad Car Owners (AAPRCO) last year published an attractive pamphlet in support of Amtrak funding. The pamphlet is targeted to private car passengers. In addition to giving pertinent statistical information about Amtrak, it reads in part:

"Welcome aboard our private railroad car. The owners of this and other private cars have formed an organization of Private Railroad Car Owners. The chances are you are currently riding at the end of an Amtrak train. We have worked diligently to develop a positive and productive relationship with Amtrak. As private car owners, we support a balanced transportation system in this country—and a continued, growing, rail passenger . . .

"The operation of Private Railroad Cars on the Amtrak network, either as part of a regular scheduled train or in special train service contributed nearly two million dollars in gross revenue to Amtrak's operations last year. Private railcar operation on Amtrak represents a growing profit center for Amtrak. It also affords the public with an attractive alternative method to enjoy a unique travel experience that is educational, entertaining, and convenient. Private railroad car owners are interested in maintaining a strong viable National Passenger Railroad system. We believe that Amtrak's existence depends upon your continued patronage; either as a passenger on scheduled Amtrak service or in private cars operating on the Amtrak network . . .

"Please do your part to spread the word about the importance of a balanced transportation system which includes both private railroads and Amtrak. It is fiscal sobriety and an investment in our nation's transportation future."

To learn more about AAPRCO, including how to ride a member's car, write AAPRCO, 224 Orr Dr., Somerville, NJ 08876. ■

LIGHT RAIL VIDEO

"Light Rail Transit: A Proven Alternative" is a new, 15-minute video outlining the benefits of light rail, using examples drawn from 11 North American operating systems. Interviews with citizens, businessmen and civic leaders illustrate the ways light rail has been successfully integrated into communities. The video, intended for general audiences, is a good promotional tool for light rail.

Production costs were underwritten by 15 manufacturers and engineering firms, so copies are available at cost (\$10 each or \$35 for 5) by writing Transit Gloria Mundi; 36 E. 27th St.; Baltimore, MD 21218; or by calling 301/235-3599.