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John R. Martin, Pres.; Eugene Skoropowski, Vice Pres.; Robert Glover, Sec.; Joseph Horning, Jr., Treas.; Ross Capon, Exec. Dir.; Scott Leonard, Asst. Dir.; Jane Colgrove, Membership Dir.; Harriet Parcels, Transp. Assoc.

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# NARP Pushes Service Expansion

## TRANSPORTATION IN THE STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

**"We've prepared a detailed series of proposals, that include . . . a blueprint for a new national highway system, a critical investment in our transportation infrastructure; . . . a comprehensive national energy strategy that calls for energy conservation and efficiency, increased development and greater use of alternative fuels."**

—President George Bush, Jan. 29

## TRANSPORTATION IN THE DEMOCRATIC RESPONSE

**"If we can build a high-speed Patriot missile, can't we build a high-speed train? I believe we can . . . We need a new energy program which encourages conservation, promotes the use of alternative fuels and reduces our dependence on imported oil . . . We must combat pollution before it makes much of the Earth unfit for life."**

—Senate Majority Leader George J. Mitchell (D-ME)

## CORRECTION:

### RAILROAD, NOT INTERMODAL, FUND

During last fall's budget negotiations, House Energy and Commerce Committee staff developed language earmarking railroad federal fuel tax payments for railroad purposes, partly to have an alternative ready if others tried to direct railroad payments to the Highway Trust Fund. (Outside lobbyists developed the intermodal trust fund concept quoted on p. 2 of Dec. News.)

We correctly reported rail labor's objection to use of railroad fuel taxes for small freight railroads.

The big freight railroads, however, objected because they did not want to lose the philosophical "high ground" in future fights against bigger, heavier trucks. The Association of American Railroads wants it absolutely clear that their members do not get subsidies and do make contributions to deficit reduction just as real as highway users' contributions. AAR fears truckers would portray the earmarking of railroad tax payments for any rail purposes—even passenger and small freight railroads—as "the railroads getting something back."

## Urges "Pennsylvanian" Extension, 2nd NY-Charlotte Train, Metroliner Pricing Innovations, Adequate Empire Corridor Capacity

Prospects for some key new services look good, but other Amtrak policies raise questions. Here are the highlights of recent extensive correspondence between NARP President John R. Martin and Amtrak President W. Graham Claytor Jr.

### Extend "Pennsylvanian" to Cleveland

Amtrak supporters long have awaited extension of the daylight New York-Pittsburgh train to Cleveland. In a Dec. 20 reply to Martin, Claytor confirmed that "extending the Pennsylvanian to Cleveland will greatly add to the destination possibilities from Cleveland and should prove to be incrementally profitable for Amtrak." In other words, no state subsidy should be needed.

"Pennsylvanian" would give Cleveland its first direct Amtrak link with New Jersey and with Philadelphia, Harrisburg, and other Eastern Pennsylvania points.)

The ideal Pittsburgh-Cleveland route would be via Youngstown—a route that would require track improvements—rather than the route "Capitol Ltd." began using in Nov. (Sep. News).

But Martin's Nov. 29 letter to Claytor urged that "service to major markets" not be delayed "because the ideal intermediate points cannot be served immediately" and encouraged Claytor "to accompany announcement of the extension with a statement of willingness to reroute via Youngstown after needed track connections and improvements are in place."

Claytor's Dec. 20 reply indicated general agreement, qualified by the observation that "I would not want to initiate service on the Alliance ["Capitol"] route, only to reroute shortly thereafter." He indicated talks with Conrail on a specific route would begin after Amtrak had assessed "the likelihood of state or local funding of track connections for the Youngstown routing."

Joseph L. Daversa, director of Pennsylvania DOT's Bureau

of Public Transportation, in a Dec. 19 reply to Martin, said: "We, too, believe that such an extension would benefit both Western Pennsylvania citizens and the economics of the service for Amtrak. Our primary concerns are that the integrity of the service east of Pittsburgh and the high quality of on board services and cleanliness be maintained. To that end, we have had numerous discussions with Amtrak and will continue to do so. The Department does not have the resources at this time to effect track improvements . . . that might be desirable for this extension."

### Extend 2nd "Carolinian" to New York

North Carolina plans to start a 2nd Raleigh-Charlotte service in 1992 and for this has acquired some used equipment. NARP believes this service could be extended to New York with at least as much success as the existing New York-Charlotte "Carolinian" has shown.

The service could use existing Washington-New York trains. It would give North Carolina its first convenient overnight New York service under Amtrak and would neatly complement existing "Carolinian" and "Crescent" services. Connections to New England and upstate New York—more attractive with the Empire Corridor serving Penn Station—would be far more convenient than for the existing "Carolinian" schedule.

#1	Cresc.	#2			#1	#2	Cresc.
6:20a	2:25p	(9:20p)	↓	dpt. New York	9:59p	(7:30a)	2:08p
10:40a	6:50p	(1:20a)		dpt. Washington ar.	5:50p	(3:10a)	9:20a
12:50p		(3:35a)		Richmond	3:50p	(1:10a)	
4:29p		7:25a		Raleigh	11:50a	11:50a	
8:24p	2:50a	11:20a	↓	ar. Charlotte	8:05a	4:40p	12:59a

#1 = Existing "Carolinian," Apr. 7, '91 schedule, running as separate train instead of combining with "Palmetto" between New York and Rocky Mount. The Jan. 28 USA Today incorrectly said "Carolinian" will not stop (should have said "switch") in Rocky Mount effective Apr. 7.

#2 = Rough estimate of times for train that might start next year.

Cresc. = Apr. 7 "Crescent" schedule.

According to Amtrak's Dec. 28 reply to Martin's Dec. 5 letter promoting this concept, Amtrak's Passenger Marketing Department "agrees that your suggestion is an excellent one and would provide a valuable service . . . The 2 stumbling blocks are equipment availability and operating subsidy. At a minimum, your proposal would require one extra set of cars and locomotives which are not available at the present time. In addition, the equipment required for the second Raleigh-Charlotte train can be satisfied with high density coaches. An overnight schedule, such as you propose, would require additional overnight-type equipment . . .

"Given the excellent nature of the concept, however, I will ask our Corporate Planning Department to make an estimate of the incremental impact of your proposal. It is conceivable that if North Carolina were able to fund the additional equipment required, we could start in an all coach configuration. When Superliners are delivered to Auto Train, this could free up sleepers for your proposed train."

### Improve Metroliner Ridership

The Amtrak Board devoted a good part of the open portion of its Nov. 28 meeting to puzzling over why Amtrak had not acquired a bigger portion of the New York-Washington market, especially since the \$79 Metroliner fare is so much lower than the regular air shuttle fare (\$142 as of Jan. 7).

Amtrak Board Member (& NARP Member) Paul M. Weyrich noted that management believes Metroliner fare cuts would just draw passengers off the conventional trains. But, said Weyrich, fellow Amtrak Board Member Darrell Trent says, "No one knows the trains are there. They just complain

### AMTRAK SERVICE QUALITY

NARP Pres. John R. Martin and the NARP staff met Oct. 24 with Claytor and several top Amtrak executives. With locomotive failures rising, Amtrak on Oct. 1 instituted improved periodic maintenance procedures—every 60 days instead of different 45- and 90-day programs. More significantly, on Jan. 23, the Amtrak Board approved leasing up to 15 refurbished freight locomotives to be used as 2nd and 3rd units on Western long-distance trains until the new locomotives (Dec. News, p.4) are delivered.

Amtrak said it hopes to have virtually all cars up-to-date on overhauls (heavy maintenance) by Sep. 1991. "Amfleet II" cars are already up-to-date; if all goes well this year, the only catch up work that would remain in FY '92 will be some Heritage and Amfleet I cars and 3 transition/dormitory cars.

Morale of Amtrak's on-board-service (OBS) workers should improve with the Jan. 2 signing of a new contract with pay-raises and other benefits, including single-room away-from-home lodging and transportation to/from it. Work-rule reforms include greater flexibility for who does what on the trains ("Work not traditionally associated with [OBS employees] may be required of employees qualified to perform such work . . . [this is] to promote a concept of teamwork on board the trains that will provide quality service to passengers."); management's right to appoint new employees to the key positions of sleeping-car attendant, lead dining-, club- and bar-car service attendant, and chef (rather than simply accepting seniority-based bidding); and—on an experimental basis for at least 2-1/2 years—the right to hire part-time employees so lounge and diner staffs can be augmented on "peak-load" segments.

From a letter attached to the agreement: "The parties recognize that everyone in this process—customers, employees, and supervisors—deserve respect, honesty and the best service every time."

about high air fares!"

In a Jan. 10 letter, Martin noted 3 factors not mentioned in the board's discussion: "First, much air travel uses very attractive corporate discounts. Amtrak offers no corporate discounts" except for government employees. (The General Services Admin. again refused to give Amtrak the New York-Washington contract for travel by federal employees—the 1991 award went to the Trump Shuttle, who will charge \$59. Amtrak bid \$48.)

Martin said an AT&T travel coordinator indicated most AT&T employees fly "because of the corporate rates—'we would be happy to hear from Amtrak.' . . .

"Second, regular air fares are lower on weekends than during the week. Some weekend air fares are lower than Metroliner fares!! Even the one-way weekend fares are only \$13 more (\$92 vs. your \$79)!! Perhaps your weekend fares should likewise be lower.

	Trump	Pan Am
Weekday one-way	\$142	\$142
Saturday one-way	\$ 92	\$ 92
Sunday one-way	\$ 92 until 3p	\$ 92 (8:30a-2:30p)
Weekend round-trip	\$119 (14-day adv.)	—
	\$153 (2-day adv.)	

[Above from January 7, 1991 phone calls.]

"Third, airlines have frequent flier programs. Perhaps it is time to review Amtrak's position on that issue. One can second-guess whether airlines should have begun these pro-

grams, but the programs are here to stay and appear to be effective in allowing carriers to maintain or increase market share. I know from personal experience that frequent flier programs are a magnet to a particular airline. Amtrak might benefit from offering a frequent flier program if this is possible now on reasonable terms."

Martin also noted that Amtrak suffered from having a smaller advertising budget than the airlines and admitted this was unlikely to change.

Martin concluded, "Metroliner ridership has been declining from year-earlier levels for 11 of the last 12 months for which data is available (i.e., December 1989 through November 1990 with June 1990 the one exception). Rising yields, flat revenues, and declining ridership do not justify the public investment in Amtrak and NECIP. Clearly, moving greater numbers of people—increasing market share—must be one of Amtrak's objectives . . . ."

"The airlines still have 2/3 of the New York-Washington air-plus-rail market notwithstanding your increased service levels. There are obvious steps Amtrak can take to increase Metroliner ridership." Copies of Martin's letter were sent to participants in the Board's discussion—Paul M. Weyrich and Deputy Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao—as well as to Federal Railroad Administrator Gil Carmichael who normally attends the meetings.

We will report Amtrak's response when we get it. Meanwhile, the same fear of terrorism which has depressed discretionary travel also has diverted much business travel from air to Amtrak.

#### **Empire Corridor**

In a Jan. 17 letter, Martin argued against a rumored plan to require reservations for all Amtrak trips in the New York-Albany-Buffalo corridor when operations shift to New York's Pennsylvania Station Apr. 7. Martin recommended "confining reservations to anticipated 'problem' trains . . . ."

"We think the train-specific approach would meet Amtrak's legitimate concerns about overcrowding and respect the concerns of our members, the public and the state that 'reserving' the entire corridor would drive away or seriously

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#### **LATE FLASH! Amtrak has decided to "reserve only trains which travel to points west and north of Schenectady."**

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inconvenience people.

"Washington-Richmond is Amtrak's only multiple-frequency, all-reserved corridor." Its passengers "are used to reservations . . . . We believe the public can understand imposition of reservations on [Empire] trains where standees have been a problem and we would be happy to defend Amtrak on that score even though it inevitably means reservations on many trips where standees may not be a problem. We see no need to go beyond that at this time, even though there may be a few passengers who get confused by the combination of reserved and unreserved trains. Amtrak might reduce some of this confusion by publishing your timetable with reserved trains shaded as is now done for Metroliners (but, inexplicably, not for New England Expresses).

"The ability of Amtrak passengers to change plans at the last minute is an important advantage over flying and also helps trains compete with the automobile. Even Metroliner passengers can switch to unreserved trains serving the same stations. Amtrak should not give up this advantage except where absolutely necessary . . . ."

Martin also has questioned Amtrak management about

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#### **LATE FLASH! Bush's FY '92 budget has \$480 mill. for Amtrak, down 23.2% from the FY '91 approp., nothing for corridor improvements, and a 2.1% increase for transit along with flexibility to transfer some road money to transit, all transit money to roads. Details next issue.**

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plans to reduce Empire Corridor train capacities at key times in response to operational problems associated with Pennsylvania Station. Martin emphasized the importance of maintaining at least existing capacity in light of the big state investment in the Empire Connection and the expectation that the connection would increase passenger demand.

#### **"The California Zephyr" and Boise**

In letters and phone conversations, Martin has communicated with Amtrak management since last summer when NARP learned of Amtrak's plan to have "Pioneer" depart Seattle at 5 AM to give the Denver & Rio Grande Western an extra hour even though the railroad had increased Amtrak speed limits in August.

Martin's Sep. 6 letter explained why "we are nothing short of astonished that Amtrak would elect to add an hour to the schedule of Train 6, particularly in light of the consequences that such a schedule change has on" the Seattle departure time.

Martin urged postponing the schedule change and speeding up the study of rerouting "Pioneer" via the faster Wyoming route so the Seattle departure time need never be earlier than last summer's 6 AM.

In an Oct. 1 follow-up letter, Martin traced the history—from Mar., 1986—of NARP protests and Amtrak explanations of too-early Seattle departures and statements of hope that things would improve. Said Martin, "We are now compelled to protest [the 6 AM] decision publicly" [NARP news release, "Amtrak Trains Become 'Earlier-Birds'," on Oct. 30].

Claytor's Oct. 2 letter said "the decision to add time to the Zephyr was based on the results of an intensive riding program by our Transportation Dept. staff . . . . We concluded that the virtual impossibility of achieving incentive payments [extra money Amtrak pays operating railroads for a specified high on-time percentage] undermined the railroad's motivation to attempt it . . . ."

"Based on this study, we informed the D&RGW that we were prepared to add approximately one hour eastbound and 20 minutes westbound . . . The railroad thereupon agreed to raise the speed limits . . . in order to maximize its chances of achieving incentive payments. It is important to understand that they were under no legal requirement to do this and had, in fact, refused several previous requests for such action."

In a Jan. 10 letter, Martin protested Amtrak's plans to achieve a later Seattle departure time primarily by bypassing Boise starting Apr. 7: "This is the wrong way to go! Boise is a state capital and your highest-ridership station in Idaho. The people of southern Idaho support Amtrak. Moreover, Morrison-Knudsen just bought the Boise station and intends to improve it."

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#### **LATE FLASH! Amtrak has decided "Pioneer" will continue to stop in Boise in the April 7 timetable.**

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#### **Oklahoma**

We believe Amtrak still intends to inaugurate Oklahoma service by the time all 179 planned new Superliners are received. ■

## Fiscal Year 1991 Appropriations Wrapup

The Department of Transportation FY '91 appropriations law (P.L. 101-516, enacted Nov. 5), while falling far short of what is needed to change transportation priorities, nevertheless represented significant progress over the previous year's appropriation. The law includes:

- \$179 million for the Northeast Corridor Improvement Project (vs. \$24 mill. in '90), including the Senate's \$125 mill. for New York-Boston electrification, \$40 mill. for on-going projects, and the House's \$14 mill. for "dual-propulsion locomotives" (conference report language).

- Amtrak capital grant is \$132 mill.—up 58% from 1990's \$83.5 mill. Adding in an estimated \$275 mill. outside financing and \$37 mill. in Amtrak "revenue enhancement" programs, the Amtrak capital program—primarily for acquiring new cars and locomotives—would total about \$444 mill., up 120% from FY '90's \$201 mill.

- Amtrak operating funding is \$343.1 mill.—low because \$150 mill. is now in a new account (see next bullet). (Comparing "apples and apples," the '91 operating level effectively is \$493.1 mill., 5.4% below the '90 appropriation of \$521.1 mill. and 10.3% below Amtrak's actual '90 operating deficit of \$549.8 mill.—Amtrak having made up the difference from cash reserves.)

- \$150 mill. for "mandatory passenger rail payments" which Amtrak formerly paid back to the federal government. Federal Railroad Administration is to pay \$133 mill. to the railroad retirement trust fund and \$17 mill. to the "railroad unemployment insurance" account—payments "which otherwise would be paid by Amtrak to support the unemployment and retirement costs of non-Amtrak (ed.: freight railroad) employees" (Senate report language). This shift means that Amtrak's 1991 cost recovery should be about 80% (down from 84% estimated before the recession hit), vs. 1990's 72%.

- \$11 mill. in interstate transfer money from the Senate bill for double-tracking Amtrak's Empire Connection leading into New York Penn Station. This was the culmination of heroic efforts by Sen. Alfonse M. D'Amato (R-NY), who understood the importance of avoiding unnecessary delays to high-speed passenger trains just outside the continent's busiest passenger-train station and was willing to take the necessary action.

- Local Rail Freight Assistance gets \$10 mill., up 43% from 1990's \$7 mill.

- Maglev/high speed rail research gets \$10 mill. in FRA money, up from 1990's \$500,000; \$2 mill. in Corps of Engineers money, up from 1990's \$1 mill.

- Total funding for the Urban Mass Transportation Admin. is \$3.270 billion, up 7% from 1990's \$3.048 bill. UMTA Section 3 discretionary grants are \$1.4 billion, up 23% from 1990. Bus programs were cut, but new starts/extensions got an increase, including \$20 mill. earmarked for New Jersey's Hudson waterfront project. Local communities and citizens, including New Jersey ARP, are fighting to get the state to make this light rail instead of busway. UMTA Sec. 9 and 18 formula operating grants are \$1.6 bill., a 1.2% cut.

### Studies

Conferees deleted House language requiring FRA to study Amtrak service to Wyoming, apparently in retaliation for Rep. Craig Thomas's (R-WY) vote against the House bill, but Wyoming is getting studied anyway (details next issue). ■

### TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Wartime service changes on Amtrak—parcel rooms in all Amtrak stations have been closed; checked baggage is accepted only for transport on the same train as owner. Amtrak would not disclose other security-related precautions it is taking.

Amtrak began taking reservations Jan. 3 for new Air-Rail Travel Plan with United Airlines. The Plan is classified as an Amtrak tour; if you call Amtrak's 800 number, ask for the tour desk. Plan includes air fare on United (direct—no stopovers) and rail fare (3 stopovers allowed). First class accommodations are extra, as usual. Two major types of trip: one allows one-way by air and return by rail (or vice-versa), allowed East Coast-West Coast, East Coast-Mountain States (incl. Texas), Midwest-Florida, Midwest (incl. Memphis, New Orleans)-West Coast. Other type of trip is 2 regional tour options. The first is to fly from East Coast to Minneapolis, Omaha, Kansas City, Dallas or Houston, travel about by rail and return by air from any of the 5 cities; second option is to fly from West Coast to Chicago or New Orleans, travel about by rail and return by air from either city.

Wallingford, CT Amtrak station was de-staffed Jan. 25. Toledo-Detroit Custom class service ended Jan. 30 on the "Lake Cities."

Amtrak Seattle-Everett-Vancouver, BC interline buses shown in Oct. timetable connecting to Portland trains and "Empire Builder" are now Thruway connections. Amtrak Kalamazoo-Grand Rapids Thruway bus ended when the contracting carrier, Indiana Highways, dropped its Michigan routes. Amtrak is looking for a replacement.

Twice-weekly private San Jose-Oakland-Richmond-Martinez-Sacramento-Reno service, the "Trancisco 49er," began Dec. 7 (415/677-9040 or 800/765-4937).

American-European Express (AEE) luxury trains no longer run behind "Capitol" and "Broadway" (Sep. '89 News); AEE lost too much money. On Dec. 21, AEE began a new route keyed to—and jointly promoted with—The Greenbrier, CSX's luxury hotel at White Sulphur Springs, WV. AEE hopes to benefit from Greenbrier's lack of good air service. AEE runs own trains Chicago-Washington, on rear of Amtrak trains Washington-New York. Other AEE stations: Indianapolis, White Sulphur Springs, Baltimore, Wilmington, and Philadelphia. Travel sold between all stations except locally Wash.-NY. Sporadic winter service; regular operation starts Mar. 1: dpt. New York Sun./Thurs.; dpt. Chicago Tues./Fri. AEE, like Amtrak's "Cardinal," departs NY mornings, Chicago late afternoons. Half the AEE trips are on "non-Cardinal" days, so—for those who can afford it—"Cardinal"-route service expands from tri- to quad-weekly at AEE-served stations. AEE passengers can get discounts on certain American Airlines tickets purchased in conjunction with AEE tickets. AEE reservations: 800/677-4233 or through your travel agent.

Great Canadian Railtour Co. Ltd. (formerly Mountain Vistas Railtour Services) ran daylight service over the Rockies on former VIA "Canadian" route in 1990. Weekly service runs Vancouver-Kamloops (overnight stopover and train-split)-Jasper or Banff-Calgary and return. 1991 season begins May 26 (800/665-7245).