



Amtrak Routes Post Double-Digit Increases

July and August have been strong months for Amtrak ridership. Fifteen routes in July, and eight routes in August, enjoyed double-digit ridership percentage increases from the same months in 2004. Overall, ridership rose on 25 routes in July; 26 in August. (The above route counts do not include the Northeast Corridor due to the anomalies of the *Acela Express* service disruption.)

The few declines (nine routes in July, eight in August) were due to capacity reductions or extraordinary on-time performance problems.

Eight routes had double-digit increases over the entire October-July period. Total system ridership was flat (+0.69%) because of the temporary *Acela* problems.

Rising gas prices have played a role, although the biggest gas price increases

came in September. In some cases, improved train schedules and regional marketing efforts helped.

The Boston-Portland *Downeaster* enjoyed a 20% ridership increase in August. (July was up about 25% after adjusting for closure, a year ago, due to the Democratic convention.) Faster schedules, new station stops and aggressive promotional programs attracted riders.

Chicago-Bay Area *California Zephyr* ridership was up 13% and 5% in July and August; the Chicago-Seattle/Portland *Empire Builder* rose 10% and 6%.

The Washington-Chicago *Capitol Limited* saw a 12% in July, 15% in August increase, due partly to picking up passengers from the discontinued *Three Rivers*.

The surviving New York-Florida trains were up: The *Silver Star* rose 7% and 20%;

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Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV, left) greets NARP Executive Director Ross B. Capon at the American Passenger Rail Coalition's (APRC) Washington Reception on July 19. APRC presented its Rail Leadership Award to Byrd and Rep. Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY). APRC Board Member William Warner (of IBM) is in the background. APRC is a national association of railroad equipment suppliers and rail businesses.

Amtrak and Hurricane Katrina

"We have clear tracks and an empty train ready to help get residents safely out of the city," said Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta. "Amtrak gives us yet another way to help move people so we can get the job done as quickly, comfortably and reliably as possible."

—DOT News Release, Sept. 2

On Saturday morning, August 27, the National Hurricane Center predicted that Katrina, then a Category 3 storm, could hit New Orleans as a Category 4, overwhelming the city's levees. That day, Amtrak was notified that the city's flood gates would close Sunday morning, preventing further Amtrak movements in and out of the city.

Thus, the last regularly scheduled departure was Saturday afternoon's heavily-filled, Chicago-bound *City of New Orleans*. (On some past occasions when flood gates closed, Amtrak has bussed passengers between New Orleans and Slidell or Hammond.)

At 8:30 Saturday evening, a special Amtrak train departed for high ground in McComb, MS, with everything that could move (seven locomotives and 20 cars), including equipment that arrived earlier that day from Chicago. (The *Crescent*

from New York that day terminated at Birmingham.) One locomotive stayed in New Orleans to provide power to the station. Although Amtrak notified the mayor's emergency preparedness chief that the train

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—Matthew Marderosian

Two Amtrak evacuation trains were staged in Lafayette, LA to evacuate victims of Hurricane Katrina. Amtrak provided two sets of equipment to get residents of New Orleans to safer areas after Katrina struck; Amtrak was only called on to make one trip.

NARP Website Gets a New Look

On July 18, NARP's website, <<http://www.narprail.org>>, got an exciting, new look. NARP, working with 2 Tech Chicks Networks, of Shaker Heights, OH, completely overhauled the site. Our new home on the internet improves navigation, offers a members-only section, and has the ability to receive RSS and Atom news feeds.

A red-shaded "Take Action Now" button, at the top right of the homepage, provides clear, concise information on what's going on in Washington. It allows you to use that knowledge to contact your elected officials.

Several features of the old website have been retained, including NARP's weekly news hotline, an archive of Congressional testimony given by NARP, links to other rail advocacy groups, and news releases. We continue to update our "Amtrak Fact Check" document, which answers misleading statements made about Amtrak.

Perhaps the most exciting new feature is the members-only section, where you can find voting charts for Members of Con-

Katrina

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could carry evacuees, the only passengers were about 350 Amtrak employees.

Impact of the Storm

Katrina landed east of New Orleans on Monday, August 29, at 6:10 AM. Death, misery and destruction were widespread in the New Orleans area, and along the Gulf Coast. Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour (R-MS) said that "between the coast and the railroad, for an area of about 50 miles, there's nothing standing."

Amtrak initially did not run south of Memphis (later Jackson) or west of Atlanta; see Travelers' Advisory for current service.

Fortunately, two years ago, Norfolk Southern converted its 5.6-mile Lake Ponchartrain wooden trestle to a concrete deck. The rails were blown off the deck, but the first post-Katrina train rolled across it September 13.

The 100 mile CSX Mobile-New Orleans line, with some long bridges, was severely damaged. CSX estimates storm recovery costs at \$250 million.

A runaway barge struck BNSF's Bayou Boeuf drawbridge (18 miles west of Schriever, LA), but the bridge reopened September 1.

Amtrak's Evacuation Train

Amtrak worked all week on the logistical and bureaucratic hurdles of running

gress and Adobe PDF files of each issue of *NARP News*. We upload the newsletter when it goes to the printer, so you can read it much sooner than before!

We are also changing how we send E-mail to members. Soon, we will rely exclusively on the new website, which has built in E-mail communications. This software will greatly reduce bounce backs due to "spam" flagging.

You need to register for an account on our new website to gain access to the members-only section and to continue to receive e-mails from NARP.

As always, NARP promises not to share or sell your e-mail address to any third party.

Go to <<http://www.narprail.org>> today, check out the new site, and register for access to the members-only section! ■

2006 Appropriations

The biggest remaining question in the 2006 Amtrak funding process was the fate of "killer" language that could prevent Amtrak from operating food service and possibly sleeping cars starting six months after enactment (August *News*). Also critical was the difference between the House-passed \$1.176 billion and the \$1.45 billion approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee. At mid-September, it seemed likely that many programs would be funded through a continuing resolution for the first weeks of fiscal 2006, as in many recent years.

evacuation trains. After the BNSF bridge reopened, trains could run New Orleans (Avondale Yard, near Huey Long Bridge) to Lafayette, LA, 145 miles. FEMA asked Amtrak to prepare such a shuttle service.

A September 3 evacuation train carried 97 passengers. The *Lafayette Advertiser* reported, "The trip from New Orleans went smoothly, said Amtrak engineer Gilbert Isaacs..." Of the evacuees, he said, "They are the most decent people I've ever had on board. They picked up the trash and kept the cars clean."

Houston Metro Transit buses took the passengers from Lafayette to various Texas destinations. Federal authorities

NARP Board Elections

Here is your chance to become a new leader in rail advocacy! Elections for the NARP Board of Directors will be held early in 2006.

NARP President George Chilson encourages candidates "with experience on other non-profit boards, who love grass roots politics, are skilled at teaching, persuading, organizing, writing and public speaking and have enthusiasm and energy. Our board is geographically balanced, but we are seeking to make it more representative of the traveling public in terms of gender and ethnicity."

To run for a two-year term as one of NARP's 70 regional directors, send us a 75-word statement of candidacy, plus your name, address, phone number(s), and e-mail address. You must have been a NARP member in good standing for at least a year. First-time candidates must submit letters of recommendation from three other NARP members who live in the same NARP region.

Send to "NARP Candidate," 900 2nd St., NE, #308, Washington, DC 20002 (not to the P.O. box on our reply envelopes!), postmarked by Dec. 31, 2005—or hand-carried, faxed, or e-mailed by January 4, 2006. Ballots with the statements will go to each NARP member in the region.

Elections will be held at regional membership meetings based on ballots received by mail and brought to the meetings. Future board meetings include Washington, D.C., April 27-29, 2006 (and April 2007); Austin, TX, Oct. 20-21, 2006; Charlotte, NC, Oct., 2007.

suspended operations because Texas was no longer accepting evacuees. The effort did bring Secretary Mineta's first positive comment about Amtrak in a long time (beginning of article). News accounts cited Amtrak as an example of an unused resource in this tragedy.

Amtrak's New Orleans terminal was isolated but not flooded. It is in temporary use by the Louisiana Dept. of Corrections to hold prisoners. Amtrak is working closely with that agency and does not believe the department's presence will hinder service restoration. ■

Orren Beaty, Jr.

1920-2005

Orren Beaty, who led NARP through a crucial transition from 1975 to 1979, died January 19, 2005 at a nursing facility for Alzheimer's patients in Las Cruces, NM. His distinguished career included serving as a political aide to Stewart Udall both on Capitol Hill, where Udall was an Arizona congressman, and later at the Interior Department, when Udall was President Johnson's Interior Secretary and Beaty was his principal aide. Beaty received the Interior Department's Distinguished Service Award.

In 1967, President Johnson appointed Beaty federal co-chair of the Four Corners Regional Commission "within the Commerce Department to work with the governors of the four southwestern states [AZ/CO/NM/UT] to help promote economic development."

"He was associate editor for *Congressional Quarterly*; ran unsuccessfully in 1970 for the U.S. House in a district in northern Arizona...and was director of congressional liaison for Amtrak."

Earlier, "he was managing editor of the *Sun-News* in Las Cruces and a reporter, political writer and columnist for the *Arizona Republic*...



"From 1976 until retirement in 1988, Beaty was assistant general manager of Western Fuels Association Inc., a coal supplier to rural cooperatives and municipal utilities.

He was "a native of Clayton, NM, and a 1940 graduate of New Mexico State University. He did...work in government studies at the University of Houston. He was an Army Air Forces veteran of World War II, serving as a radar navigator instructor for the B-29 bomber. He was an Air Force veteran of the Korean War" (Jan. 25 *Washington Post* obituary).

Orren served NARP as president/executive director. He hired me to be assistant director, starting in January, 1975.

A year later, when NARP's finances looked bleak, he became a volunteer president and I was appointed executive director.

Orren was as a wonderful human being, with a great sense of humor. Some of his admirers still work on Capitol Hill. He was the perfect boss under whom to begin a Washington career. I only wish that we could have worked out of the same office together for more than a year!

—Ross B. Capon

NARP Intern Matt Melzer Joins Staff

Matt Melzer, a Los Angeles native and a senior at University of California-Santa Cruz, joined NARP as a full-time intern on June 20 (just in time to help us with the heavy lifting on Capitol Hill). He will be with NARP through mid-December

He expects to get his B.A. in Community Studies next June; the internship is part of the requirement for his degree. He is a member of the Santa Cruz Metro Transit District Advisory Committee, a RailPAC board member since 1999, NARP member since 1998, and an FCC radio broadcaster certified by KZSC-FM Santa Cruz (where he also has practiced his journalism skills). He has also volunteered for California Operation Lifesaver.

Matt jumped right into the fray upon his arrival—which came a few days before the successful House floor action on Amtrak on June 29. Since then, Matt has helped in many areas, including writing our weekly internet news hotline, sending Letters to the Editors of several newspapers, and building up our reporter and Capitol Hill E-mail distribution lists.

Ridership

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Silver Meteor 29% and 11%. The *Palmetto*, which was changed last November from a New York-Tampa-Miami train to a shorter New York-Savannah run was down 47% in July and 26% in August.

Ridership on the Ft. Worth-Oklahoma City *Heartland Flyer*, which is funded by the State of Oklahoma, rose 24% and 9%. BNSF track projects helped to reduce running time.

Both Vermont-state supported routes substantially improved. The Washington-St. Albans *Vermont* benefitted from a restored Montreal Thruway Bus connection. The New York-Rutland *Ethan Allen Express* ridership rose 11% and 7%.

The Chicago-Port Huron, MI *Blue Water* saw 14% more riders in July, 15% in August, as the revised schedule, introduced in April 2004, continues to prove suc-

cessful. The Chicago-Detroit-Pontiac *Wolverines* rose 10% and 6%, respectively. The Chicago-Grand Rapids *Pere Marquette* ridership was up 12% in July. Although August was down 5% from the record set in 2004, this was still the route's second strongest August.

The Chicago-Milwaukee *Hiawathas*, partly funded by Illinois and Wisconsin, jumped 11% and 23%, due to opening of the Milwaukee International Airport station and subsequent marketing, including cross-marketing with Midwest Airlines.

Trains supported by Illinois also posted large gains, with Chicago-St. Louis trains up 17% and 2%, Chicago-Carbondale *Illini* up 12% and 11%, and the Chicago-Quincy *Illinois Zephyr* up 9% and 6%.

However, because of the big impact of the Acela withdrawal, Amtrak's total ridership has been flat—down 0.2%, from 2,246,389 passengers in July 2004, to 2,241,162 passengers in July 2005; but up 0.8% in August.

The Los Angeles-Chicago *Southwest Chief* lost 3% of its riders in July, 1% in August, due to reduced capacity.

The worst ridership declines were on the Los Angeles-Orlando *Sunset Limited* (22% and 2%) and the Los Angeles-Seattle *Coast Starlight* (12% and 3%), which have both been plagued by delays due to Union Pacific Railroad dispatching and congestion woes. Also, due to the chicken-and-egg effect—very late trains reduces demand—both trains have seen capacity reductions. ■

Rail Travel Tips

Tip #12—For a smoother, quieter ride, sit near the center of a passenger rail car or—when possible—reserve sleeping car accommodations in the middle.

If you're traveling in coach, either chose a seat or, if seat assignments are given, request to be seated as close to the center as possible. This will avoid the possibly irritating sounds and smells of the lavatory (on Amfleets) or end-door, and will situate you away from the noise of the trucks.

If you're traveling in a roomette, try to reserve rooms 2-6 (Superliner), or 3-6 (Viewliner).

George Armeit

Former NARP Director George Armeit, 64, passed away July 21. He was a NARP board member from Region 2 from 1986 to 2002. He was active in the Empire State Passenger Association, for which he was a regional coordinator for many years. NARP Director Richard Kulla noted, "Transportation was surely a major part of George's life and fiber. Whenever I spoke with George...on the phone, his dedication to Rail was always very evident. He will truly be missed."

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Hurricane Katrina service modifications—Until further notice, *Sunset Limited* operates Los Angeles-San Antonio, *City of New Orleans* Chicago-Hammond (LA), and *Crescent* New York-Meridian (MS). *City of New Orleans* carries lounge but no diner; sleeping-car passengers get boxed meals similar to what is done on the Portland section of the *Empire Builder*.

System Fare Increase—most fares were scheduled to increase 3-7% on September 20 to accommodate ever-rising fuel prices. However, dramatic increases were planned for Northeast Corridor monthly tickets. Example: New York-Philadelphia would rise \$375 from \$633 to \$1,008. NARP strongly protested this one-step "sledgehammer" approach to fare increases, and urged Amtrak to review its fare targets because monthlies are cheaper to sell and handle than other tickets. Amtrak announced September 15 that the fare increase has been postponed pending "(conclusion of) additional briefings with public officials and other interested groups."

Full Acela service returns—September 12, 19, and October 2 schedule changes are planned. On the latter date, all *Acela Express* service frequencies that operated prior to brake problems will be operating again for the first time since April 14.

Thruway bus connection cut-backs, changes—Rocky Mount-Willmington, NC no longer runs. Denver-Raton service connecting to/from *Southwest Chief* still runs, but TMN&O (Greyhound subsidiary) adjusted schedules. Verify schedules with Amtrak prior to travel.

Downeaster fare promotions—Several discounts are valid for travel over the next few months on the *Downeaster* in recognition of the one millionth passenger to use the service (Mrs. Ethel Hubert of Exeter, NH on September 9). Go to <<http://www.thedowneaster.com>> for more information (and to see the video of Mrs. Hubert's historic trip!)

Starlight to Builder Connection—Acknowledging major on time performance issues on Union Pacific's line between Sacramento and Portland, the direct connection from the northbound *Coast Starlight* to the eastbound *Empire Builder* was replaced effective August 13 with a dedicated motorcoach from Klamath Falls, OR to Pasco, WA. The bus departs Klamath Falls upon the arrival of the train. The bus makes a receive-only stop at Chemult and arrives into Pasco at 8:15 PM. Passengers will get bottled water. A meal stop for passengers to purchase food will be made. Checked baggage will be handled.



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