



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

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Senate Considers \$130 Million

The Senate Appropriations Committee on June 14 approved a bill that would give Amtrak the full \$130 million authorized for FY '78 capital improvements. The Committee also approved \$500 million for operations. (The House, on June 8, approved \$85 million and \$488.5 million, while Administration requests were for \$105 million and \$500 million.)

Initiative for the positive action came from the Committee's Transportation Subcommittee, chaired by Birch Bayh (D-IN); Clifford Case (NJ) is the ranking Republican. Further support came from Subcommittee Member Warren Magnuson (D-WA), who is also chairman of the full authorizing committee.

After the full Senate acts, a joint House/Senate conference committee, consisting of key members of the committees involved, will resolve the differences.

There is reason to hope that the final numbers will be closer to the higher Senate figures, since the original cut proposed by House Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman John McFall (D-CA) was opposed by other members of his subcommittee (April News). Secy. Adams has already demonstrated Administration

support for at least the \$105 million and \$500 million figures by sending his Deputy Secretary to appear before Bayh's subcommittee to argue against the cuts proposed by the House.

According to its original itemization of its '78 capital plan, Amtrak said that the \$130 million figure would permit the start of procurement of Eastern long-haul passenger cars. Because of last minute adjustments in capital priorities, however, this apparently will not be the case.

According to a revised plan sent by Amtrak's President Reistrup to Sen. Bayh on May 27, the last \$25 million is needed instead for maintenance facility upgrading at Beech Grove, Indiana (\$8.1 million); Metroliner overhauls (\$10.8 million); replacing the missing 12 miles east of Albany to speed up Boston-Chicago service (\$4.1 million); and converting more of the older sleeping cars from steam to electric heating (\$2 million).

Acquisition of single-level cars for the Eastern long-haul routes evidently will have to wait for next year's authorization and appropriation.

Energy and Transportation

Transportation Secretary Brock Adams, who has often talked about the need for sensible, long-range national transportation policy, is now reportedly at work on a program that will take the President's recently expressed energy concerns and translate them into tangible transportation programs and policies.

Adams' concern centers around two areas: first, the President's plan to increase the nation's reliance on coal and the related problem of how to move it and, second, the need to encourage people to shift their travel habits from the private automobile toward more energy efficient alternatives.

Both issues point toward an increasingly important future for the nation's railroad industry and for the nation's passenger trains, intercity and commuter.

Adams earlier had suggested that the proposed tax on gasoline might be reinvested in alternate modes of transportation, instead of simply being returned to the consumer in the form of rebates. Despite widespread Congressional support for such a proposal, White House spokespersons have since emphasized that this particular idea has *not* been incorporated into the President's plan. Partly as a result, Congress is expected to accept the action of its House Ways and Means Committee which killed the gasoline tax.

Much concern has been expressed across the nation at the absence of public transportation provisions from the President's energy package. An April 19 editorial in the Memphis, TN,

Commercial Appeal, entered in the May 4 Congressional Record by Rep. Harold Ford (D-TN), asked: "If President Carter wants us to use our automobiles less for getting to our daily needs, what is the alternative?"

In a recent "open letter" to the President, Rep. Robert Edgar (D-PA) referred to President Carter's "failure to mention transit in (his) energy address to the Congress" and told Mr. Carter: "Current federal transit programs are not coming close to

Our change in mailing procedures, mentioned in the March News, has been accomplished satisfactorily. The new process is more efficient and will reduce our costs. We apologize, however, for one unfortunate by-product of the transition: a large number of "February" members received renewal notices although they had already paid us.

meeting the needs of (Philadelphia's) transit system, and several others, for restoration and reconstruction — much less for the construction of new transit lines that would increase ridership and save energy."

During confirmation hearings for John Sullivan, newly appointed Federal Railroad Administrator, Russell Long (D-LA),

(continued on page 2)

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Getting To The Parks

On June 8, NARP's Ross Capon testified before the Subcommittee on Parks and Recreation of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources (formerly Interior) in support of S. 975, the National Parks Access Act. This bill, introduced by Sen. Harrison Williams (D-NJ), would enable the National Park Service to assume responsibility where appropriate for public transit to its facilities instead of only *within* them.

A major problem in national parks, even where internal public transit is established, is the presence of automobiles. Ever-larger parking lots threaten the beauty of the parks, and it would be much better if people could be encouraged to leave their cars at a community away from the park.

Capon discussed the parks which have or could have rail service, and noted that direct rail service already exists at Mt. McKinley (Alaska RR), Glacier and Harpers Ferry (Amtrak), and Indiana Dunes (South Shore Line). Special efforts to encourage rail usage at these parks could provide information which might later be used in restoring direct rail service to other parks: Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, and perhaps even Yosemite. He suggested that Amtrak and the Park Service work out a program to "eliminate or drastically reduce the number of would-be rail (visitors to Glacier Park) who must be turned down (because of sold-out trains)."

NARP Director Al Runte, of Goleta, CA, who is particularly knowledgeable about the parks and their transportation, assisted in preparation of the testimony.

Indications are that the Subcommittee Chairman, James Abourezk (D-SD), is favorably impressed with the bill, and he is working with the Interior Department on possible revisions to increase the bill's chances for enactment.

ENERGY (continued)

chairman of the Senate Finance Committee (and of the Commerce Subcommittee on Surface Transportation), asked Secy. Adams what the Administration was going to do about the nation's public transportation needs. Long said that he didn't oppose the idea of increased taxes on fuel, but he wanted to see resulting tax revenues reinvested in the development of an energy-efficient transportation system.

Senate Majority Leader Robert Byrd (D-WV) told the President that the proposed tax on gas-guzzling cars should not take the form of a rebate, but should be spent to improve mass transit, roads and railroad beds.

Perhaps the most severely critical statement concerning Carter's energy proposals was the lengthy feature article of Barry Commoner in the May 29 *Washington Post*. The article refers to "one of the plan's most puzzling features — that support for mass transit and the railroads is wholly absent from the plan, although they are four to 10 times more fuel efficient than autos, planes and

trucks — far more effective ways to conserve energy than most of the plan's measures." Commoner sees this as consistent with what he feels is the plan's bias toward corporate and away from consumer interests.

Others have taken a more lenient view, seeing Carter's relative silence on the public transportation issue as an attempt to play down the threat posed by the energy situation to powerful automobile and highway interests. They maintain that the President's message supplies the argument for public transit effectively enough, even if it does not explicitly draw out and dwell upon that inevitable conclusion.

In various appearances before Congressional Committees, Secy. Adams has assured members of Congress that the President has not ignored energy-related transportation needs, and that appropriate programs will be incorporated into the President's plan. Adams said that he hopes to have DOT's energy-transportation program completed this summer and that it will probably go before Congress sometime next winter.

To help insure that Adams' efforts don't meet the same cold White House reception that befell his gasoline-tax-revenues-for-public-transit suggestion, NARP members are urged to write to President Carter reminding him not to neglect transportation in his fight for a national energy policy.

If people are not to be discouraged from using their automobiles, then the importance of making public transit attractive is that much greater. With no sticks, the carrots must be extra bright!

A full-fledged Canadian counterpart to NARP is now in operation, and even has a government grant to help it fight government policies! Any NARP member who would like to receive its quarterly bulletin plus other special mailings (including briefs) should send \$2 plus the mailing label from a NARP News to Transport 2000, Box 300, Terminal A, Ottawa, Ont. K1N 8V3, Canada. (This offer not good for residents of Canada.)

More Success in the West

Starting on June 7, rail passenger service returned to Southern Idaho as Amtrak inaugurated its "Pioneer", running daily between Seattle-Portland and Odgen-Salt Lake City and stopping at these Oregon points: Hood River, The Dalles, Hinkle, Pendleton, LaGrande, Baker, and Ontario. Idaho stations are: Nampa, Boise, Mountain Home, Shoshone, and Pocatello. Brigham City, Utah, is also served.

Enthusiastic reports came from both Amtrak President Paul Reistrup and NARP Director James M.S. Ullman of Meriden, CT, who were on the special inaugural run on June 4, 5, and 6, during which visitors were allowed to walk through the train at each station.

Reistrup said that the size of the crowds which greeted the train exceeded his wildest dreams, and noted that in one town the number of visitors equalled 110% of the population! Ullman told us that the condition of the Union Pacific roadbed matched the attitude of the UP's employees on the run — excellent in both cases.

Reistrup is pleased with initial ridership reports which show the train already handling more than 100 passengers daily.

Sen. Frank Church (D-ID) and many hard-working NARP members in the Northwest, including Robert Rynerson of the NARP Board, are to be thanked for their efforts in making the "Pioneer" a reality.

"Amtrak's trains are winning a steadily increasing share of the passengers who travel by air or rail between Washington and New York, a Federal Aviation Administration study shows.

"During the past seven years, Amtrak's portion of the 3 million passenger market has increased from 27% to 41%."

—The Washington Post, May 6

Fares Hike Causes Concern

Amtrak's June 1 fare increases are disturbing because they discriminate against shorter-distance trips. To an average 3% fare increase, Amtrak added a flat "surcharge" of 25¢ for fares \$3.50 to \$6.75; 50¢ for fares \$7 to \$14; and \$1 for fares \$15 and above.

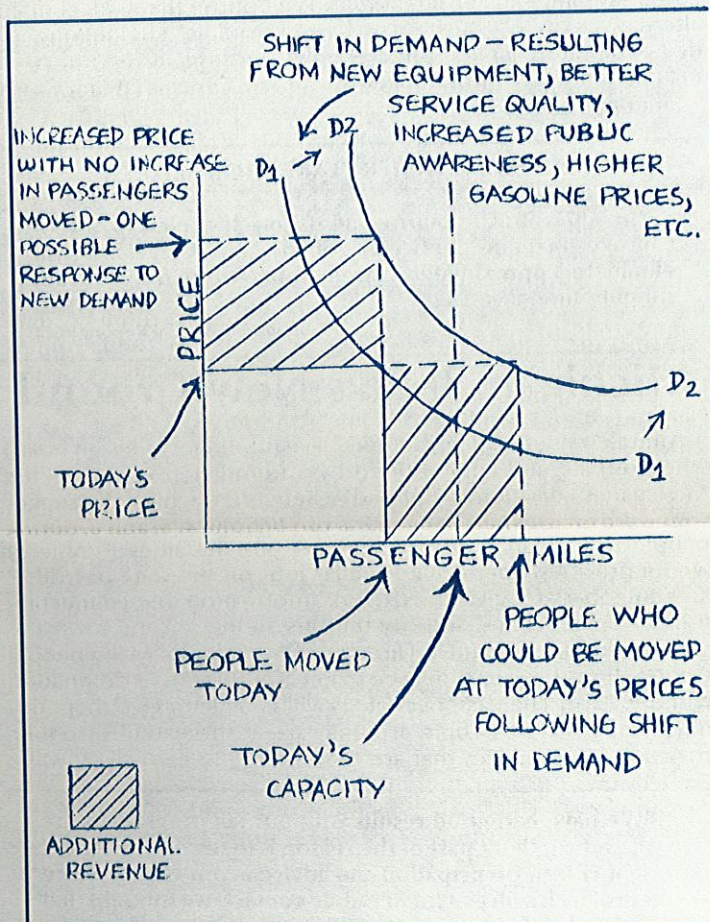
For example, the cost of a one-way coach ticket between New York and Miami would have gone up 3.8% without the surcharge, but actually rose 5% with it. By contrast, a shorter, "corridor-type" ride between Miami and Orlando would have increased 3% without the surcharge but went up 9% with it.

Perhaps the most troubling increase is the one which hit Los Angeles-San Diego. With the surcharge, a ticket between these two cities now costs \$8.75, a 9.4% increase over the fare prior to June 1. Taking into consideration the increase that went into effect on this fast growing market last February, L.A.-San Diego fares have gone up 16.6% in only six months!

The State of California specifically asked Amtrak to hold off on the L.A.-San Diego segment. The State did not want Amtrak to change these fares right now, when a train has just been added and when the market is still growing.

In commenting upon the State's request, Amtrak President Paul Reistrup and Marketing Vice President Al Michaud both told the Amtrak Board that with new equipment and better service the increase was warranted.

Section 403(b) of the Amtrak law requires Amtrak to have State approval before instituting changes that will significantly affect the marketing of State-supported trains. (Two of the five daily L.A.-San Diego round-trips are paid for partly by California.)



A DEMAND CURVE SHOWS HOW THE DEMAND FOR A PARTICULAR COMMODITY — IN THIS CASE, TRAIN TICKETS — CHANGES AS PRICES CHANGE. AS PRICE GOES DOWN, TICKET SALES INCREASE; AS PRICE GOES UP, TICKET SALES GO DOWN.

The June 1 increase and surcharge apparently have been engineered by Amtrak's Marketing Department to hit the growing short-haul markets for "quick and easy" revenue. Someone at Amtrak seems to think that short-haul markets are not fare sensitive.

Past experiments have shown the contrary: Amtrak has in its hands the power to set coach growth rates almost wherever it wants them — simply by raising and lowering fares.

In December, 1971, Amtrak experimented to test the price-sensitivity of corridor markets by lowering the New York-Boston fare from \$12.65 to \$9.90. Ridership jumped 60%.

It is especially disturbing to see these short haul fares go so high so quickly, cutting into Amtrak's growth and preventing the full realization of its carrying potential — just when service quality is rising and when capacity should be increasing.

NARP's Ross Capon voiced some of the above concerns in a May 21 memo to the Amtrak Board of Directors. At the May 26 Board meeting, Director Charles Luna took exception to the surcharge, but subsequent Board discussion focused only on what to call the increase and how to explain it, and passed over the issue of the actual fares set.

In a May 27 letter, NARP told Mr. Reistrup and the Board: "To be sure, service quality has improved, attracting more people. But to drive up fares in the proposed manner while the off-peak trains are running with empty seats is incomprehensible to us. You have a great opportunity to serve vastly larger numbers of people, yet your fare plan suggests you are content to serve a relatively constant number paying higher fares."

As recently as last December, a weekend round-trip ticket between Washington, D.C. and New York (after 6 pm on Friday and Sunday) cost \$26. Now, six months later, the same weekend round-trip costs \$40!

In light of rising costs, some fare increases are no doubt necessary. Caution, however, is needed. Higher fares may bring in more revenue from individual travelers. But they also result in fewer individuals willing to pay.

NARP, incidentally, has not yet seen any indication of what fares will be on the new bilevel trains. But, for the record, we take strong exception to the idea that "new equipment" justifies a wholly new, increased level of fares.

Amtrak passengers for six years have paid for decent service and often received less than that. The Corporation has sent out six years of apologies citing aged, rundown equipment as the primary cause of its customers' many miserable experiences. Now, with new equipment on the scene, passengers are finally beginning to get what they have been paying for all along.

COMMUTER RAIL AT MANASSAS

A happy by-product of Amtrak's rescheduling of the Washington-Cincinnati-Chicago "James Whitcomb Riley" is a new stop in Manassas, VA, at prime commuter time: 7:24 AM. There are two return trips from Washington, albeit rather late ones: 7:20 PM on the "Southern Crescent" and 9:35 PM on the westbound "Riley".

Perhaps these services will help to revive interest in Prince William County for developing real commuter rail service. (July, 1975, News, p. 3)

NARP Member E.T. Mitchell recently published a two-volume work, *Steam Powered Passenger Trains of Yesteryear*. Together, the two volumes contain 257 pictures on 259 pages. \$5 postpaid, from the author at 107 W. Circular Ave., Paoli, PA 19301.

NARP: A Washington Office Report

While we try in the *News* to keep you up-to-date on the major issues covered and those where your letters are vital, there's not enough space to cover promptly all that we do. Here's a brief update:

- NARP President Orren Beaty wrote to Secy. Adams expressing "satisfaction with your efforts to begin track and roadbed improvements in the Northeast Corridor, doing what the previous Administration could have done a year ago." Beaty also expressed support for Adams' ideas for putting increased gasoline taxes to use on improved urban transit (see article on energy, this issue) and urged more development of commuter rail.

- NARP followed up its criticism of the extra arm-rests in Amfleet cars (January *News*) with a letter to Amtrak President Reistrup re-emphasizing the need to remove these arm-rests. Amtrak's response indicated that, by early June, all 60-seat Amcoaches should have the armrests removed, but the armrests will be kept in the 84-seaters.

- NARP was the principal source of information for a May 2 *Christian Science Monitor* article on railroad stations which, reversing the usual theme of such articles, discussed formerly abandoned stations that are returning to their original use.

NARP Director Dan Monaghan of Garland, TX, was featured in the April *Railroad Magazine* as that journal's "Interesting Railfan Number 172." Freeman Hubbard, editor of the magazine and author of the article, quoted this glowing praise of Monaghan's work for better Texas rail passenger service by Jim Bryant of Amtrak's Public Affairs Department:

"I remember sitting in on a meeting he had with (Amtrak President) Reistrup. . . He gave the Amtrak head one of the best and most concise presentations I've ever heard. He didn't waste an instant of Reistrup's time, and Reistrup said later it was a grand meeting. Dan had an answer to every question that came up about routes, schedules, cost of improvements, estimated revenue, and types of equipment. Their session went past the 30 minutes allotted, and a staff meeting with his vice presidents was held up by that discussion."

- NARP's Orren Beaty and Ross Capon helped the authors of two new railroad books. Those books, which acknowledge that help, are: *North America by Rail, A Traveler's Guide*, by Inez and David Morris (paperback, \$5.95, Bobbs-Merrill); and *Railroads: The Great American Adventure*, by Charlton Ogburn, prepared by the Special Publications Division of the National Geographic Society. The Morris book contains a brief history, an account of a rail tour across the U.S. and Canada, some tips on rail travel, and some reasons why we need trains. The National Geographic book is a history and a look at the future, with some stunning and original color photography by James A. Sugar, and many historical photographs.

Congratulations to NARP Director Charles Dunn, of Miami, who was recently named "1976 NRHS MAN OF THE YEAR" by the National Railway Historical Society. The award was given in recognition of Charlie's energetic work for improved Amtrak service in the Southeast, and of his being named by Lt. Governor Jim Williams to serve on the Florida Transportation Element Policy Advisory Committee.

- On May 12 NARP filed a statement with the ICC regarding Ex Parte 339, the Commission's forthcoming study of rail and bus "through routes and joint fares." The study is mandated by Sec. 106 of the Rail Transportation Improvement Act of 1976 (Public Law 94-555).

"Convenience to the traveler and sensible utilization of the nation's transportation resources" were stated to be the two most basic factors that argue in favor of convenient transfer between the two modes. NARP addressed such items as intermodal terminals, through fares, ticketing, and baggage handling, but argued that the most important component is the need for reasonable intermodal scheduling — i.e. rail/bus connections.

NARP stated: "What the bus industry needs is something that will help it to turn around its steady 20 year decline in bus ridership. Linking buses with a developing and improving rail passenger system may provide an important key toward doing just that."

- NARP's Ross Capon submitted a statement to the ICC's Rail Services Planning Office in May on the *Final Standards, Classification, and Designation of Class I Railroads*. The statement criticized the Coleman decision to eliminate the passenger factor in ranking of the rail lines. The Coleman report justified that decision by noting that there is a "completely distinct and separate method for determining the status of passenger lines. . . under the Rail Passenger Service Act." NARP responded: "This ignores the fact that the Act's creation, Amtrak, must operate within the limited constraint of track conditions brought about by the railroad industry and, now, partly by DOT judgments on railroad applications for aid. . . We want passenger considerations brought to bear 'where freight considerations indicate a tossup between or among route choices.' We want all decisions to be based on long-run considerations. We oppose the neglect of an alternative route which may have favorable engineering or demographic characteristics simply because it is not well maintained today. (Rock Island's Chicago-Omaha line may be a case in point.)"

LOOK FOR A FASTER "LAKE SHORE LTD."!?

"In 1977, track improvements on the New York to Chicago mainline between Albany and Cleveland will eliminate approximately three hours from freight train running times."

—Conrail 1976 Annual Report, p. 11

Michigan Breaks New Ground

Amtrak trains in Michigan now have passenger aides on board who are paid and administered by a foundation set up by the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers. Michigan Passenger Foundation received a state grant of \$104,880 to employ eleven people from March 20 to September 30. The aides — nine of whom previously performed similar jobs on the state payroll — are equipped to give passengers information on connecting trains, buses, airlines, and city transit systems.

John Thomas, Executive Director of MPF, said, "Many people wonder how they are supposed to get around at their destination without a car. The passenger aides will be able to give them this information. Most people are unaware at the extent of public transportation services that are available."

"We have had good results with our rail program in the past, and we think part of the reason is that we have always sought citizen participation and advice in our efforts. Since this project involves a lot of public contact, we thought that we might be able to do more with it if it were actually run by a group of outside citizens. The obvious choice was the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, (MARP) which is a nonprofit consumer group. MARP agreed, and set up the foundation to run the project."

—William Barwis, Manager of Rail Operations for the State of Michigan, explaining the State's grant for passenger aides to Michigan Passenger Foundation
