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(This has news through August 2. No. 6 was mailed July 27.)

RETURN REQUESTED

People Want Trains!

DOT DEADLINE FOR WRITTEN COMMENTS: SEP. 1

Here are the heads of the different "clusters" working on Secretary Skinner's transportation policy. They will accept written comments through Sep. 1. Upon request, they can each provide a background paper outlining issues in which they are especially interested. (Reading these background papers is helpful but *not* essential to providing DOT *your* thoughts.) All phones are area code 202; except for McDaniel, the street address is 400 7th St., SW, Wash., DC 20590.

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California May Consider \$2 Billion in Rail Bonds

A sweeping rail bond initiative is coming closer to reality in California. The Train Riders' Assn. of California (TRAC) and the Planning and Conservation League (PLC) are coordinating efforts to gather enough signatures to put the Clean Air and Transportation Improvement Bond Act of 1990 on the ballot next June.

The TRAC/PLC initiative would provide \$1.99 billion in bonds to fund specified rail and mass transit projects throughout the state (see map). One of the most interesting items: \$5 mill. to study a direct Bakersfield-Los Angeles rail line, badly needed to improve viability of intrastate passenger and freight rail service. (In 1923, Santa Fe surveyed, bought some property for, but never built a 128-mile Bakersfield-LA line. The SP route is 169 miles long; highway mileage is 103.)

(cont. on p. 3)

Polls, Votes, Travel Show Public Leads the Way

Will Federal Policy Catch Up?

Around the country, people are trying to tell public officials they want more and better rail passenger service. They are doing this when they vote on referenda, answer opinion polls, and decide how to travel. You may want to keep the following list and use items from it to help persuade you own public officials.

In considering this list, remember that travel on Amtrak is limited by lack of equipment. Also, the big flurry of California rail passenger activity indicates that the "highway future does not work" and should serve to warn other

MINETA: CLEAN AIR REQUIRES MORE TRANSIT USE

"We can no longer assure better air quality by further reducing tailpipe emissions, since projected increases in automobile travel will more than offset these tailpipe reductions. . . . Every commuter taking mass transit rather than driving reduces his or her contribution to air pollution by more than 58%."

—Rep. Norman Y. Mineta (D-CA), Chairman
Public Works & Transp. Subcomm. on Surface Transportation
in July 9 *Congressional Record*. (25th anniversary of the
Urban Mass Transportation Act)

parts of the country that they would do well to move towards rail now and not wait until they get California-size traffic jams, which present road-oriented policies will bring.

● *USA Today* on May 19 printed 10 responses to its request that readers telephone toll-free with their biggest travel problems: 3 requested more rail transit, 2 lamented the inadequacy of public transit generally, and one chastised *USA Today* for not covering bicycle transportation; no one sought more freeways.

● When the *Orlando Sentinel* asked readers for their solutions to the road jams across Central Florida, 10 of 16 published letters (Mar. 12, 15, 16) advocated mass transit solutions; 8 of those specified rail. Only 2 letters advocated more freeways.

(cont. on p. 4)

Passenger Trains Return To Atlantic City

For the first time in 7 years, revenue passenger train service returned to Atlantic City May 23. The last pre-Amtrak service was only a weekday diesel rail-car shuttle between Atlantic City and the Lindenwold rapid-transit terminal outside Philadelphia, scheduled for daily commuters to Philadelphia. Through service from New York City ended in April 1961; the last train from Philadelphia was Sep. 30, 1969.

Amtrak, however, has 6 departures from Atlantic City daily (more on weekends): 5 to Philadelphia of which one goes through to Washington, and one to New York which changes locomotives and reverses directions right after joining the Northeast Corridor mainline in northeast Philadelphia.

Most Amtrak trains stop at Lindenwold, but 4 stops between Lindenwold and Atlantic City—Atco, Hammonton, Egg Harbor City, and Absecon—won't get service until mid-September. New Jersey Transit's budget crisis postponed startup of NJT's Lindenwold-Atlantic City commuter trains, which are intended primarily for those working in Atlantic City.

The delay angered those along the line who relaxed their opposition to Amtrak's 79 mph trains after securing the promise of local service. NJT initially said there would be no local service before July 1990 and the Atlantic County Improvement Authority (ACIA) filed a suit against NJT for violating a contractual agreement between the 2 agencies requiring commuter service to begin when Amtrak started. But the state budget signed into law July 1 included \$17.5 million in added funds for NJT, some of which will enable Atlantic City service to begin in mid-Sep.

Total project cost was \$101 million: \$30 million from the Northeast Corridor Improvement Project; \$56 mill. from NJT; and \$15 mill. from ACIA, which built the handsome terminal (News, Aug. '83, Oct. '85).

Unfortunately, the terminal's most convenient pedestrian entrance, that facing the casino and boardwalk areas, won't open until sometime in August, due to construction of an underground slurry wall to prevent leaching of toxic wastes which *might* be in the soil nearby (result of a long-defunct



—Photo by Scott Leonard

Crews affix the Amtrak logo to Atlantic City's new rail terminal May 22, seen from the city side. If funding materializes, the station would be part of a complex that includes a huge convention center, an 800-room hotel, and a 1600-car garage.

coal-gasification plant) but which have never been found.

Furthermore, ACIA leases the property outside the terminal to the Atlantic County Transportation Authority (ACTA), which handles ground transportation and "curb management" at the terminal. ACTA forbids individual casinos' limousines to meet trains on a regular basis (as distinct from *ad hoc* pickups of individuals) and established 5 shuttle bus routes serving all casinos. Leisure Lines runs the buses under contract to the Casino Assn. of New Jersey. Amtrak passengers who don't walk or take a cab must pay \$5 a roundtrip (\$3 one-way option added June 5) to ride the bus. (Amtrak sought the one-way option but not the \$3 fare!)

Amtrak can't compete with the free parking in adjacent garages that all casinos offer and with intercity buses that take passengers directly to a casino. Bus passengers—and increasingly those who drive their own cars—get free bonuses (food and beverage coupons, coins—typically \$15 to \$20, and deferred bonuses—typically \$5 extra coins on your next trip).

Amtrak is talking with tour operators, but casinos who offer bonuses for tour operations' bus and air packages have thus far refused to offer bonuses to the same tour operators



—Photo by Scott Leonard

Inaugural specials from New York and Washington after arriving in Atlantic City May 22. Trains are diesel-powered "push-pull"; Amtrak converted 21 of the original Metroliner cars (vintage 1967-68—2 shown above) into cab control cars for Atlantic City, Los Angeles-San Diego service. When completed, the terminal will have 5 tracks.



—NARP Graphics/Scott Leonard

People Want Trains! (cont. from page 1)

● Voters in 17 California counties with about 78% of the state's population have approved use of state gasoline taxes for rail purposes in addition to highways. The composite margin in the 6 counties voting last November was 66% to 34%; yes votes ranged from 54% (Fresno) to 81% (Sonoma, north of San Francisco). 4 of those counties were in the San Joaquin Valley where Amtrak-related projects are the only likely beneficiaries.

● Last Nov., Bay Area counties served by state-owned toll bridges voted (70% in favor!) to increase tolls to \$1 (vs. 40-75 cents before), with about \$200 mill. of the \$1.4 bill. in expected new toll revenues over 20 years going to transit. (90% of new tolls generated on the main San Francisco-Oakland "Bay Bridge" will go to transit!) Some state legislators, Caltrans, and the governor originally opposed giving transit any new toll revenues and even wanted to end the \$11 mill. a year of tolls already going to transit. Over a 2-year period and in response to polls showing public support for transit, however, the package was transformed as described.

BAY AREA WANTS RAIL!

"The people of the Bay Area overwhelmingly blame development for worsening traffic jams, but their favorite solution is not to limit growth or build more freeways. It's rail transit."

—San Francisco Examiner, July 14 news story

● The *Examiner* excerpt quoted above refers to a random telephone poll for the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Alameda County, "Views of Bay Area Residents on Traffic and Growth Issues." 37% of the 1,441 Bay Area respondents said new rail lines would be the most effective way to reduce congestion; "most-effective" ratings for other options ranged from 16% to 22%. Similarly, only 9% rated rail "least effective", whereas 30% gave the "least-effective" rating to building more freeways and limiting growth and development (*Passenger Transport*, July 31).

● Marin and Sonoma County residents overwhelmingly consider light rail or commuter rail between Santa Rosa and Larkspur (ferry connection to San Francisco) the most effective answer to traffic congestion. In a Sep. '87 poll, 46% and 44% of respondents in Marin and Sonoma Counties, respectively, called rail most effective; widening Highway 101 was a distant second (14% and 30% called this most effective).

This poll, conducted by the 101 Corridor Study, was reconfirmed in an April 1989 poll for the Sonoma County Sales Tax Committee: "the Rail project was ranked most important by a 5 to 1 margin; widening Hwy 101 was considered important by a 3 to 1 margin." (*Bay Area Monitor*, July/Aug., Pub. ed by League of Women Voters of the Bay Area).

● "Most" of the 616 respondents to an Oct. 16, 1988, *Los Angeles Times* telephone poll "said they were willing to leave their cars at home and take the train at least some of the time, and a large percentage voiced a willingness to pay higher taxes for more public transportation. . . . Nearly 2/3. . . said they would like a mass-transit rail line across the [San Fernando] Valley. Of all those polled, 2/3 were for light rail, a subway or both. The poll sought to measure opinion on both above-ground light rail and a subway, and light rail won 33% to 21%. Those favoring light rail did so 'even if it went through residential neighborhoods'" (*Jour-*

MICHIGAN. . . A RAILWAY JOURNEY

NARP has a supply of booklets about Amtrak travel released recently by Michigan DOT and the Michigan Travel Bureau. The 18-page 8¼X8¼" booklet has a short text geared toward pleasure travellers to Michigan, many color photos, and a map. To get a copy, send a self-addressed mailing label to NARP.

nal of Commerce, Oct. 28, 1988).

● San Diego County voted 53%-47% for "Proposition A" in Nov. '87 including \$750 mill. each for highways, transit (\$430 mill. for the Trolley; \$130 mill. for commuter rail), and local streets/roads. At the same time, San Bernardino voters defeated a roads-only measure.

● Boston commuter rail ridership doubled from 1982 to 1988 (over 70,000 per weekday now vs. 35,376 then).

● Sacramento light rail ridership responded well to service improvements begun Apr. 2, with weekday ridership jumping from 13,000 to about 18,200. When Sacramento gets more cars, it should be able to meet the 20,000 projection. The system now has 26 cars; 10 more have been ordered and delivery should begin in Nov. '90.

● Maryland commuter rail ridership almost doubled in the past 5 years—based on counts *before* the start of off-peak service on the Amtrak Baltimore line.

● "A surprisingly high 57% of respondents said that they had traveled by rail, either in the U.S. or abroad, during the past year" (*Frequent Flyer*, Sep. '87).

● "A recent street survey conducted by the *Chicago Sun Times* showed that 3 of 4 respondents would prefer using improved Amtrak midwest corridor trains to flying." —Illinois ARP News release, Dec. '87.

● Long-distance travel on Amtrak, measured in passenger-miles, rose 24% from FY '84 to '88.

● From 1975 to 1988, Amtrak ridership rose 381% to 1.7 million a year on the Los Angeles-San Diego line (while frequency rose only 133%, from 3 to 7 daily round-trips) and rose 452% on the Bakersfield-San Francisco "San Joaquins" (while frequency only doubled from 1 to 2 trips).

● From 1980 to 1988, Amtrak ridership rose 40% on the New York-Albany-Buffalo Empire Corridor.

● From 1983 to 1988, Amtrak's Metroliner ridership rose 87%; Metroliners have not posted a decline vs. the year-earlier month since April 1983.

On Mar. 28, Maricopa County (Phoenix) voted 61% against adding a half cent to the sales tax to pay for an estimated \$8.4 billion, 103-mile transit system using the costly, controversial technology found in Vancouver and on Toronto's 4.3-mile Scarborough feeder line. Also, the Arizona legislature had foolishly required a 30-year budget for a regional system rather than a phased rapid-transit plan, and required separate region-wide votes for freeways and for transit. The 61% should be seen as a vote against inept leadership, not against rail transit.

Hopes are alive again in Dallas, where a 58% yes vote in 1983 was followed by endless squabbling and a 59% no vote last year. On Apr. 4, a plan was unveiled that includes 56 miles of light rail and an 18-mile commuter rail line between downtown Dallas and Dallas-Ft. Worth International Airport. The Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) board on June 27 approved the plan, which also includes 44 miles of special lanes for buses and carpools. 5 of DART's 16 cities (not Dallas) vote Aug. 12 on whether to withdraw from DART, which is optimistic that the results will not force a significant scaling-back of the new plan. (See previous Dallas coverage, Aug. '88 News, p. 4). ■