

News from the
**National Association of
 Railroad Passengers**

Vol. 26 No. 10  Oct.-Nov. 1992

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News from the National Association of Railroad Passengers (ISSN 0739-3490), is published monthly except November by NARP, 900 Second Street, NE, Suite 308, Washington, DC 20002, (202) 408-8362. Membership dues are \$20/year (\$10.00 under 21 or over 65) of which \$5 is for a subscription to NARP News. NARP Hotline, updated at least every Friday PM: 1-900-988-RAIL.

Postmaster: send address changes to National Association of Railroad Passengers, 900 Second Street, NE, Suite 308, Washington, DC 20002.

(This has news through Oct. 5. No. 9 was mailed 1st class Sept. 1.)

Second Class Postage Paid
 At Washington, D.C.

Lautenberg Prevails

Senate Levels for Amtrak!

Recession, Airfare Wars, FDA Still Threaten Amtrak

In a move some Washington observers saw as a near miracle, the House-Senate conference on H.R. 5518, the 1993 DOT Appropriations bill, approved the higher Senate-passed numbers for Amtrak capital and the Northeast Corridor Improvement Project (NECIP). The conference finished work on H.R. 5518 on Sept. 24; the full House and Senate approved the conference report Oct. 1. Pres. Bush is expected to sign the bill.

Special thanks are due to the leader of the Senate conferees, Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ), for successfully sticking with his rail passenger figures when conventional wisdom assumed

the final numbers would be somewhere "in between" his and the lower House numbers.

If H.R. 5518 is enacted, in FY 1993 Amtrak would get \$331 million for operations, \$165 mill. for capital and \$204.1 mill. for NECIP (of that, \$35.5 mill. for on-going projects and \$168.6 mill. for Boston electrification).

(See chart in Sept. News, p. 2, for comparison to House bill, authorization bills, and 1992 funding levels.)

Anatomy of Lautenberg's Near Miracle

The House Appropriations Committee on July 1 marked up H.R. 5518 with \$74 mill. for Amtrak capital and nothing for NECIP (both as in Bush's budget). Overall, Amtrak/NECIP would have been cut 51.8% from 1992. At the same time, the Committee increased trust-funded programs, which also benefitted from a July 9 floor amendment by David R. Obey (D-WI) transferring foreign aid money to almost every form of transportation except Amtrak. In the House-passed bill, aviation increased 1.7% and highways increased 8.6%.

On Aug. 5, the Senate passed a bill with the good Amtrak numbers conferees ultimately accepted. Then, President Bush—in his Aug. 20 nomination acceptance speech at Houston—said he would veto any of the 13 appropriations bills, including transportation, which surpassed his original budget requests—even though the total of the 13 bills pending in Congress was smaller than the 13 Bush budget requests.

After House and Senate Democratic leaders decided Sept. 16 to accept the rules Bush outlined in Houston, Rep. Vic Fazio (D-CA) said: "The cuts we have to make will be brutal in some areas."

It is a great tribute to Lautenberg—and a powerful victory

ANOTHER FOR 4414

The latest co-sponsor to H.R. 4414, the intercity passenger rail trust fund bill, is Rep. Robert T. Matsui (D-CA), a member of the Ways and Means Committee.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

October 25 Amtrak Timetable Highlights

- Fourth "San Joaquin."
- Timetable has 9th "San Diegan," but this may be delayed by a last-minute hitch with the Santa Fe Railway relating to complex commuter rail negotiations with Orange and Riverside Counties.
- "Silver Meteor" returns to earlier southbound schedule (dpt New York 3:35p; was 6:30p Aug. 17-Oct. 24) and leaves Florida an hour earlier northbound—producing horrid 5:06a Washington arrival. The Aug. 17 switch was a response to longstanding severe reliability problems. Will the new schedule invite those problems back?
- New Tampa-Miami Thruway (connecting bus) service via "Silver Star," change at Winter Haven ("Meteor" already has Tampa Thruway service). (to page 4)

AN APPRECIATIVE NARP MEMBER

"Dear Senator Lautenberg:

"Thank God you're my senator! Your support for Amtrak and mass transit is indispensable! Thank you. You are my number one reason for opposing term limits . . ."

—from a Morristown, NJ NARP member's Sept. 5 letter to Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ).

for the environment—that those cuts did not involve Amtrak, and that work on Boston-New Haven electrification will continue in FY '93 and a contract to build Viewliners (for single-level long-distance trains) likely will be signed. Boston-Portland trackwork also gets a green light, thanks to \$25.5 mill. in the bill separate from Amtrak, the result of Sen. George J. Mitchell's (D-ME) leadership and letters signed by all six affected U.S. Senators and 10 Representatives. Fate of the 39-car option on the pending Superliner order is unclear.

Operations in Trouble

Unfortunately, the biggest headaches surround the one number that stayed constant through the process: although Amtrak sought \$331 mill. for operations, events since the request was developed have been bleak.

To live with the same figure in FY '92, Amtrak made \$100 mill. in budget cuts during the year. When the Amtrak Board approved FY '93 operating and capital budgets Sept. 23, discussion made clear no one would be surprised if FY '93 saw more mid-year budget "resets." The budget freezes management compensation, eliminates Aug.-Sept. advertising and assumes Amtrak falling further behind its plan to overhaul rolling stock every four years—which does not bode well for improving the reliability of its aging equipment.

In other words, the groundwork is laid for more problems in FY '94. If the economy doesn't pick up, Amtrak could be headed toward full-scale "Penn-Centralization." While Amtrak may not be alone in that, Amtrak is virtually alone in competing with an airline industry which—thanks to low fares—expects to lose \$1.7 billion this year, its third straight losing year.

Amtrak's 1992 woes, covered in NARP Pres. John R. Martin's Aug. 26 letter to NARP members, also included the

AMTRAK'S CONTINUING FDA WOES

On Sept. 24, five long-distance trains left Chicago hours late, including the "Capitol Ltd." with no sleepers and the "Broadway Ltd." and "Lake Shore Ltd." with no slumbercoaches or substitutes. The headlines for Sept. 25 Chicago Sun-Times page-3 coverage: "Mice Foul Up Amtrak, Droppings Stop Passenger Trains in Tracks Here."

This was the most dramatic of a continuing series of incidents in which cars are pulled from trains shortly before their trips begin.

Amtrak, with help from the Food and Drug Admin., is learning of new areas where mice can roam and which need cleaning, for example, a water-cooler-to-ceiling passageway on Heritage cars and the pocket into which doors at the ends of Superliners fit, which can only be inspected when the door is closed. (The doors normally are open during inspections.)

There is also the "salt-shaker" effect, where movement of a car can shake loose old droppings and cause a car that just cleared inspection to be pulled.

AMTRAK REAUTHORIZATION. . .

. . . cleared Congress Oct. 3 with good FY '93-'94 figures—including \$381 mill. for FY '94 operations—and House-passed levels for new section 403(b) state-supported services. The latter could remove Amtrak's current incentive to force states to pay all costs; report language gives particular encouragement to Oklahoma and Seattle-Vancouver services and limits states' shares of operating subsidies for certain new routes to 45% the first year and 65% thereafter.

H.R. 5518 AND TRANSIT

Total FTA funding would be \$3.800 billion, up 0.7% from 1992, and compared to a House (post-Obey amendment) figure of \$4.046 bill. and a Senate figure of \$3.806 bill. New-rail-starts funds total \$721.8 mill.; including \$68 mill. for Portland Westside LRT, \$65.4 mill. for the New Jersey Urban Core project, \$42.5 mill. for St. Louis LRT, \$42.5 mill. for Dallas South Oak Cliff LRT, \$30 mill. for the Atlanta MARTA North Line extension, \$21.3 mill. for central Chicago LRT, \$15.3 mill. for Seattle-Tacoma commuter rail, \$2 mill. for Orlando LRT.

June freight rail strike/lockout, continued reliability problems with equipment (particularly locomotives) and the FDA consent agreement (July News, p. 4)—and even, later, Hurricane Andrew.

FDA-related "early service problems will be short-lived," said Amtrak last summer (July News), but they seem poised to wreak havoc on FY '93 revenues (see box). ■

Federal Maglev/ High Speed Rail Funding

The House-passed FY '93 DOT appropriations bill had no funds for magnetic levitation work but, at the Senate's insistence, the bill Pres. Bush is expected to sign gives the Federal Railroad Administration \$13 mill. for maglev (some of which is for high speed rail safety research). Maglev's federal funding history is shown below.

FEDERAL MAGLEV APPROPRIATIONS

	(Millions of Dollars)			
	FY '90	FY '91	FY '92	FY '93
National Maglev Initiative				
Federal RR Admin.	0	\$8.2	\$8.0	*
Army Corps of Eng. (x)	\$1.0	\$2.0	\$8.0	\$2.8
FRA Safety Research (Maglev and High Speed Rail)				
	0	\$1.8	\$4.0	*
Total	\$1.0	\$12.0	\$20.0	\$15.8

* The FY '93 DOT appropriations bill Pres. Bush is expected to sign includes \$13 mill. to be divided between NMI and safety research.

x The Army Corps is funded through the energy and water development appropriations bill.

Note: FRA did some maglev work in FY '90 using funds not specifically earmarked for maglev.

Maglev did well in ISTE (Jan. '92 News), but the House appropriations bill included only \$3 mill. for FY 1993, limited to high speed rail research. The House report said "it would appear that the prospects of implementation of advanced technology maglev systems in the U.S. are very dim. . . . The Committee believes that many of FRA's proposed activities in support of maglev development have an extremely low potential for success. Given the very real budget constraints which face the nation at this time, the Committee believes these resources would be better utilized in other critical areas of transportation."

The Senate included \$2.5 mill. for maglev and high speed rail, plus a \$45 mill. obligation limitation to come from the Highway Trust Fund for ISTE's National Magnetic Levitation Prototype Development Program.

The conference report says the prototype program was eliminated due to "budget constraints" but that they "intend no prejudice to funding the maglev prototype in future years."



—Photo by Carl Schiermeyer

Los Angeles Co. Transp. Comm. begins commuter rail service on three lines radiating from Los Angeles Oct. 26: Pomona (33 mi.), Moorpark (47 mi.), Santa Clarita (33 mi.). New coach built by UTDC of Canada shown above.

... Senate conferees believe it is critically important to pursue the prototype development program expeditiously so the United States does not fall permanently behind in international competition for this extremely promising technology."

Overseas maglev progress has slowed. Last fall, the prototype vehicle for the Japanese maglev project burned up during a test. In July, 1992, the German Finance Minister said maglev development would get no more government funds. Important tests, like operation in tunnel and two vehicles passing at speed, have never occurred on the "single-track" Emsland test facility, which itself needs repair. A private consortium still seeks to build a line between the Hamburg airport and a future Berlin airport (site unspecified), but how far it will get without government money is anyone's guess.

Meanwhile, foreign high-speed rail construction moves forward in Japan, Germany and elsewhere. *Der Spiegel* (Jan. 16), noting that the under-construction English Channel tunnel, planned transalpine tunnels (approved by Swiss voters Sept. 27) and planned links to Scandinavia (Aug. '91 News) all are being built for rail, worried that any German maglev project would be hemmed in by rail projects. "Only individual, isolated, high-speed segments—which could not be integrated with traditional rail—would be left to the Transrapid maglev," said the German news magazine. (Previous maglev coverage: News, June '88 and Mar. '90.)

TRB: AIR/ROAD MONEY FOR HIGH SPEED RAIL!

"To the extent that high speed ground transport reduces congestion on federally aided airports and highways, it might be appropriate to use some of the federal air ticket or motor fuel tax receipts to subsidize the new service," says Transportation Research Board Special Report 233. "In Pursuit of Speed: New Options for Intercity Passenger Transport" urges development of federal/state capacity to analyze trade-offs between air and high-speed rail investments, is positive on "incremental improvements" to existing corridors and says maglev service is at least 10 years off. When the report was released, Bay-Area MTC Chairman Lawrence Dahms, chairman of the TRB committee that wrote the 179-page report, said: "Anyone my age, if he's going to ride anything in his lifetime, is going to ride steel wheels on steel rails" (*Wash. Post*, Nov. 14, 1991). Send \$22 to TRB, P.O. Box 289, Wash., DC 20055 (CA/MD residents add sales tax).

LINKING BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES WITH TRANSIT . . .

. . . is the name and subject of a new, 103-page report by Michael Replogle and Harriet Parcells in cooperation with NARP. Federal Highway Admin. funded this under Congressional mandate. Send \$15 (\$18 1st class mail) to NARP.

AAA: A FUTURE ALLY?

Evidence is starting to surface in support of our long-standing belief that the vast majority of American Automobile Association members join AAA for maps and road service and are indifferent or hostile to AAA's substantial lobbying efforts against using gasoline tax money for rail—if they even know about those efforts.

In sponsor Al Swift's State of Washington, AAA's May *Motorist* magazine editorialized against H.R. 4414, the intercity rail passenger trust fund bill. When Washington ARP member Craig Thorpe called the state's AAA to complain, he was told that this editorial had produced about 20 complaints (vs. an average three or four complaints per editorial) and that "AAA leadership has sat up and taken notice with so many of their members telling them to rethink their position" *Washington Rail News* (Washington ARP, Aug./Sept.).

The June *Motorist* published this response from Ben Gilbert of Tacoma: "With rapid rail available as an alternative to reduce congestion, the road trip once again would become a pleasant experience. That would be an excellent way to spend gasoline tax money." In the July issue, NARP member Carleton F. Petit of Wenatchee wrote, "Our gasoline is much cheaper than that of many countries . . . [providing for rail] does not deprive the highways of funds."

When a New Hampshire state legislative committee on Jan. 29 considered a proposal to allow motor-vehicle revenues to be used for "transportation" instead of just "roads" (*Mar. News*), the AAA rep from Boston testified that he had no clear mandate on the issue because so many New Hampshire AAA members had written in favor of using gasoline-tax revenues to support balanced transportation!

California State Automobile Assn. (affiliate of AAA) President Brian Hill, in the Sept./Oct. *Motorland*, wrote in favor of November's Proposition 156, which would provide more state rail bond funding. AAA and NARP long have been allies on big truck issues.

Statement of Ownership
 Publication Title: **California State Automobile Assn.**
 Issue Date: **June 1992**
 Issue Frequency: **Quarterly**
 Number of Issues Annually: **4**
 Annual Subscription Price: **\$20.00**
 Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: **June 1992**

1. Title of Publication: **California State Automobile Assn.**
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TRAVELERS' ADVISORY (from page 1)

- New Kalamazoo-Grand Rapids Thruways from trains 352, 366.

- To improve on-time performance, Amtrak ends Virginia-New England through service: the Boston-Richmond "Virginian" becomes simply New York-Richmond. The "Colonial," which—thanks to two significant wrecks within five years—will be renamed "Old Dominion" Oct. 25, similarly was cut from Boston-Newport News to New York-Newport News on Apr. 5.

- Eastbound "Night Owl" loses shortlived Inland Route (Hartford-Springfield-Worcester) section; Inland Route reverts to all-daytime pattern for both departures (to leave Washington 7:20a and 1:20p). "Oddball" daily westbound "Fast Mail" handles passengers only at Boston South Sta. (1:30a) and Springfield; from Springfield carries mail now on "Bankers." "Bankers" will arrive New York 8:45a (leaves Springfield 20 minutes earlier; will be nine minutes faster Springfield-New York).

- One New York-Wash. conventional round-trip dropped Mon.-Sat.; most Saturday NEC conventional trains dropped in May restored; the weekend "New England Express" is not restored. Empire frequencies cut in May are not restored.

- "City of New Orleans" running time over 20 minutes shorter.

- Northbound "Coast Starlight" will depart Los Angeles 45 minutes later, at 10:25a, and will leave Portland an hour later, at 3:35p.

Amtrak's "Capitols" are rerouted to a parallel Southern Pacific line between San Jose and Oakland. New stops coming soon at Fremont and Hayward.

Amtrak Food Service

The Amtrak/FDA agreement (July News) reduced food service car preventive maintenance cycles from 120 to 60 days—thereby permanently reducing available cars. Thus, as of Sept. 21, "Cardinal" and "Desert Wind" lost their diners; as a result, NARP asked Amtrak to consider reducing first-class charges on these trains.

"Cardinal's" diner is replaced with full Horizon dinette serving pre-plated, Amclub meals.

"Desert Wind's" Salt Lake City-Los Angeles diner is replaced with the former Chicago-Bay Area sightseer lounge which now runs Chicago-Los Angeles (no more roof windows in the Sierras). West of Salt Lake City, part of the lower level (the two booths and some adjacent tables) is "dressed up" as a diner during meal periods. First-class passengers are offered catered, boxed meals there or in their rooms (where the presentation includes table-cloths cut to fit the Superliner room table); initially, only about 20% of the passengers chose to eat in their rooms.

For now, "Desert Wind" coach passengers are limited to the lounge menu west of Salt Lake City, but Amtrak hopes by early 1993 to test-market "economical, nutritionally balanced meals capable of easy on-board microwaving" here, on "Carolinian" and on some other long runs currently lacking meal service. By late September, Amtrak had received sample meals from four vendors.

A Superliner snackbar/coach now runs Salt Lake City-Bay Area; smoking upstairs only, i.e., not in the food

area. Elsewhere on the "California Zephyr/Desert Wind/Pioneer," smoking (other than in sleeping-car rooms) is limited to the lounge end of the Denver-Seattle diner and a new (third) Chicago-Los Angeles coach. Until adjustments can be made based on experience, Amtrak is selling only about half of the seats in the snackbar/coach and the new Los Angeles coach.

The "Crescent" keeps its New York-Mobile lounge, loses the New York-New Orleans lounge—snacks to be sold at one end of the diner west of Birmingham.

The "City of New Orleans" Heritage lounge now runs Chicago-Carbondale only and the Horizon dinette has been replaced by an Amfleet lounge, which serves the tray meals and—south of Carbondale—offers lounge service as well.

On Oct. 1, partly due to strong passenger reaction against having meals served on roomette toilets, the "Montrealer" regained the sit-down food service it lost Apr. 1 (including sale of meals to coach passengers). [Other savings instituted in April continue: single food car and locomotive; no coach attendant; baggage car ski-season only; 2nd sleeper only on selected days.]

Transit/Commuter Rail

Delaware Railroad Admin. began weekday "Blue Diamond Lines" bus service Sept. 1 Wilmington (Amtrak/SEPTA)-Middletown-Dover (19 RT's). Connecting shuttles operate Newark (Amtrak)-Middletown (4 RT's) and Dover-Lewes (Cape May Ferry terminal; 2 RT's). Wilmington-Dover one-way fare is \$4; multiple tickets available; tickets are sold at Wilmington Amtrak station (Details: 302/577-2025; in DE 800/400-3800).

Maryland MTA's Baltimore LRT Line was extended 3.2 mi. and 3 stations south from Camden Station to Patapsco Ave. Aug. 30.

SEPTA abandoned Philadelphia's last all-surface street-car line—15/Girard—on Sept. 15 (23/Germantown and 56/Erie last ran in June '91 and June '92, respectively). SEPTA promises to revive them as LRT or trolley bus lines, but SEPTA's capital resources are meager. The subway-surface LRT routes to West Phila. (10, 11, 13, 34, 36) continue.

Bikes on Trains

- New Jersey Transit North Coast Line 3-mo. test through Oct. 31. Collapsible bikes at all times; standard at non-peak times, with permit, two bikes per train (but space must be surrendered to those with wheelchairs). Bike racks to be installed at some stations. Bikes with permits already allowed on Atlantic City line.

- Caltrain test beginning Sept. 19 allows standard bikes on non-peak trains with permit (four bikes per train).

VIA Rail

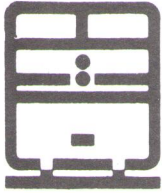
VIA also will issue a new timetable Oct. 25:

- Montreal-Quebec City trip times reduced an average of 0:20. A 4th frequency will be added. A new station will open at Ste. Foy (suburban Quebec).

- The Montreal-Toronto "Metropolis" express travel time will be cut 0:11 to 3:59.

- The "Ocean/Atlantic" will get its first set of refurbished, HEP-equipped cars. The "Chaleur" was so equipped earlier this year.

- Sarnia-Ottawa connections through Toronto will be improved.



News from the
**National Association of
Railroad Passengers**

Vol. 26 No. 9  September, 1992

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News from the National Association of Railroad Passengers (ISSN 0739-3490), is published monthly except November by NARP, 900 Second Street, NE, Suite 308, Washington, DC 20002, (202) 408-8362. Membership dues are \$20/year (\$10.00 under 21 or over 65) of which \$5 is for a subscription to NARP News. NARP Hotline, updated at least every Friday PM: 1-900-988-RAIL.

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(This has news through August 19. No. 8 was mailed August 19.)

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Amtrak Authorization Advances

The House's Amtrak two-year reauthorization bill, H.R. 4250 (see Mar. News, p. 4), was passed by the full House under suspension rules (unrecorded vote) Aug. 11, 8-3. No amendments or negative statements were offered. The following made positive floor statements about the bill: Al Swift (D-WA), Don Ritter (R-PA), John D. Dingell (D-MI), J. Roy Rowland (D-GA), Rosa L. DeLauro (D-CT), Barney Frank (D-MA), Pat Williams (D-MT) and Donald J. Pease (D-OH). Making written statements were Norman F. Lent (R-NY), Larry LaRocco

(D-ID), Vic Fazio (D-CA), Tom Andrews (D-ME) and Pete Peterson (D-FL).

The Senate acted the next evening, Aug. 12, by passing its three-year Amtrak reauthorization, S. 2608 (see June News, p. 3), on a voice vote. Three amendments were made by:

- John F. Kerry (D-MA) to authorize \$220 million for the Northeast Corridor in FY '93 (S. 2608 had not addressed NECIP; H.R. 4250 had);

- Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY) to require Amtrak to develop a plan for redeveloping Manhattan's General Post Office into an intercity rail terminal (see July News);

- Nancy Landon Kassebaum (R-KS) to require all railroad main line locomotives to have "alerting" lights (i.e., ditch or strobe lights) in addition to the standard headlights they already have. Only Amtrak's newest locomotives have ditch lights, but all already have strobes. Kassebaum had been motivated by a multiple-fatality grade crossing accident in Kansas, and had originally tried to amend H.R. 5518 (DOT appropriations) on Aug. 5. Robert Dole (R-KS) spoke in favor of the amendment.

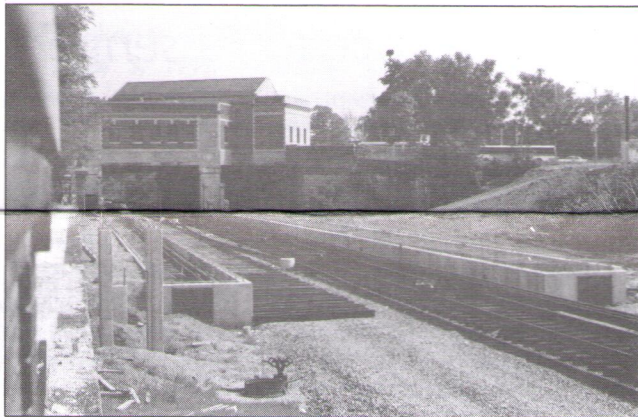
The following made positive floor statements on S. 2608: J. James Exon (D-NE), Ernest F. Hollings (D-SC), Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ), Paul Simon (D-IL), Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA) and Charles E. Grassley (R-IA).

The Next Move

A DOT appropriations conference (H.R. 5518) is still expected after Congress returns from recess on Sept. 9. Conferees will be primarily those on the two Appropriations Committees. As for the Amtrak reauthorization, staff of the two Commerce Committees are expected to begin work on reconciling differences in H.R. 4250 and S. 2608 even sooner than Sept. 9. See the chart on the next page for major Amtrak-related funding figures for all four bills.

On appropriations, please ask your legislators to work hard for the Senate-passed Amtrak and NECIP numbers! On Amtrak authorization, both bills are pretty close to each other, but only S. 2608 has the language requiring a slot on the Amtrak Board of Directors representing the interests of rail passengers—a real consumer voice. Please ask for that Senate language to be retained. ■

ST. LOUIS LRT TAKING SHAPE



—Photo by Barry Williams

Delmar Blvd. (above) will be one of the new Metro Link light rail stations when service begins in St. Louis in July 1993. Delmar was a Wabash Railway intercity passenger station until the late '60's. The building itself is a lamp store now, but may be used for passengers later. As seen in this May photo, tracks are being laid, with used rails purchased from the Illinois Central Railroad after it pulled up most of its double-track.

On June 29, the Bi-State Development Agency, which is building Metro Link, took delivery of its first light rail vehicle, which was assembled by Siemens-Duewag in Sacramento, CA. On July 10, a new maintenance facility was dedicated on S. Ewing Ave., between the proposed light rail stops at Grand Ave. and at Jefferson Ave. (proposed Amtrak intermodal terminal—this LRT stop will not open in 1993 with rest of system).