

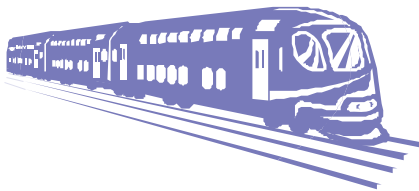


Amtrak Fleet Plan Points Way to Modernization, Expansion

Amtrak Fleet Strategy (www.bit.ly/fleetplan, 99-page PDF) calls for doubling the railroad's fleet over 30 years, based on a conservative estimate of 2% annual ridership growth.

Funding: Amtrak estimates the annual cost of acquiring new equipment at about \$6-700,000 (2009 dollars) through 2040, exceeding \$1 billion in 2014, 2019 and 2039. The peak is \$1.35 billion in 2019.

None of this is in Amtrak's fiscal 2011 budget request (www.bit.ly/amtkreq). The *Strategy* discusses state and federal appropriations, and federal loan programs to be paid back through joint financing with states. The plan mentions commercial financing but acknowledges recession-soured liquidity problems with that.



Not mentioned: tax credits and/or asset depreciation benefits to encourage private leasing companies to buy equipment and lease it to Amtrak and others.

Fleet: First to be retired will be 92 Heritage cars (54- 62 years old). Then comes 17 Metroliner cars (43 years), 412 Amfleet I's (33-36 years), Superliner I's (29-31 years) and 122 Amfleet II's (used on long runs; 29-30 years).

The report notes that the 97 Horizon cars (20-21 years; largely Chicago-based) "suffer from a variety of operational problems in cold tem-

peratures and winter conditions." They are "likely candidates for relocation to a more suitable environment as new vehicles become available."

The report says having a modern, attractive fleet is vital both to draw riders and to control "the cost of maintaining and delivering the service."

Over the next 14 years, these purchases are envisioned: 780 single level cars, 420 bi-level
(cont'd - p. 3)

NARP Members Get Results

The West Virginia DOT must begin work on a state rail plan with more emphasis on passenger trains thanks to Senate Bill 527, adopted without a single 'no' vote in either chamber of the legislature. More info at www.bit.ly/wvbill.

NARP members Bonni McKeown, J. Charles Riecks, and others in the Charleston-based route support team Friends of the *Cardinal*, spent many hours meeting and corresponding with legislators to move the bill forward. McKewon penned an op-ed (www.bit.ly/mckewon) for the *Charleston Gazette* (Feb. 26), urging state rail planners to support running the *Cardinal* daily, increasing MARC commuter service to the state's eastern panhandle, and more bus connections to the *Capitol Limited*.

"Hey, Ohio: We need our railroads back!," wrote Fred Linxweiler in a full-page feature for the *Canton Repository* in May 2009, telling his community not to give up on hoping for direct, frequent train service just because Canton is not on the 3C Corridor. Citing an encounter with NARP President Ross Capon aboard Amtrak, Linxweiler touted "the safety and remarkable fuel efficiency" of trains as a way to "address global warming, growing ... congestion ... and rising gas prices."

ern part of our state, create jobs and bring more visitors to the Quad Cities." At a Moline news conference, he added, "I met with Amtrak [Jan. 29], and they're very commit-

ted to this."

Two daily round trips will cover the Quad Cities route in three hours. The state hopes to eventually extend the service to Iowa City, IA, and Omaha, NE.

The Dubuque route will start with one daily round-trip, eastbound early in the morning and westbound in the evening.

"The Chicago-Rockford-Dubuque corridor project will rehabilitate existing rail infrastructure to maximum operating speeds of up to 60 mph," according to tl-

(continued on p. 2)

Two New Trains in Midwest

Thanks to Gov. Pat Quinn (D-IL) and Illinois and Iowa legislative leaders, Rock Island, IL and Dubuque, IA, are to have Amtrak trains to Chicago by 2015.

Illinois Jobs Now, a state stimulus law, has \$45 million for the first Rock Island trains since 1979. The investment is expected to create 825 new jobs, including 440 construction jobs. Track work and equipment procurement should begin this year.

The train will add service to the existing Galesburg line as far as Princeton; Geneseo, Moline and Rock



The former Rockford station, pictured in 2006.

Photo by Flickr user kla4067

of Princeton). [Rock Island/Moline/E. Moline, IL, and Davenport/Bettendorf, IA comprise an area called "Quad Cities"—the term "Quint Cities" never stuck.]

The same law has \$60 million for the Dubuque train, which will stop in Rockford (without train service since the *Black Hawk's* last run in 1981) and Galena. The project means up to 2,000 jobs.

Rockford Mayor Larry Morrissey committed to rebuilding the station on S. Main St. Construction should begin next year.

Gov. Quinn said in a statement, "This new line [Rock Island] is going to connect Chicago to the west-

Island will be reached via a new connection to the Iowa Interstate at Wyanet (west

Trains Gain from Innovative TIGER Grants

Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood unveiled \$1.5 billion in Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grants on Feb. 17. This part of last year's Recovery Act was initially reported as "supplementary discretionary grants" for surface transportation (Mar. 2009 News). DOT received over 1,400 applications totaling over \$60 billion.

Although many projects benefit more than one mode, broadly speaking passenger rail projects got 38% of total dollars, freight rail 27% and transit (including bus) 47%.

In awarding the grants, DOT emphasized enhanced connectivity between intercity and local transportation, whether rail, road, air or marine, passenger or freight.

Winning projects are detailed at www.bit.ly/rrtiger. Here are some that may be of special interest to you (dollars are grant amounts—not total project costs):

Crescent Corridor (\$105 million): Norfolk Southern's plan to boost intermodal shipments between the Gulf Coast and the Mid-Atlantic via eastern Tennessee and western Virginia.

TIGER

National Gateway (\$98m): Enhancements to rail infrastructure (also used by Amtrak, MARC and VRE) and intermodal terminals owned by CSX in the Midwest and the East Coast.

Moynihan Station (\$83m): Phase 1 of a plan to improve New York City's Penn Station.

New multi-modal transportation hubs in St. Paul (\$35m) and in Normal, IL (\$22m), that will include Amtrak.

New/extended streetcar/light rail lines (\$154m) in Tucson, New Orleans (connecting to Amtrak & Greyhound at Union Passenger Terminal), Portland, and Dallas.

New light rail line in Detroit (\$25) on Woodward Avenue.

Wachusett-Fitchburg MA commuter rail extension (\$55.5m), a \$4.5 million extension plus station and layover facilities and track work.

WIRELESS INTERNET COMES TO ACELA, OTHER TRAINS TO FOLLOW

Passengers on *Acela Express*, Amtrak's high-end flagship service between Washington, New York and Boston, now have unlimited, free high-speed internet access while on board. "Amtrak Connect" can be accessed anywhere on the train using Wi-Fi enabled laptop computers, mobile phones, PDAs and other devices.

Amtrak Connect is also available in the waiting areas at these stations: Washington, Baltimore, Wilmington (after renovation), Philadelphia, New York



Penn, New Haven, Providence, Boston-South Station. Nomad Digital, a partner of Virginia-based GBS Group, operates the service. Amtrak has not ruled out charging for access in the future.

Amtrak has issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to potential providers of Internet service for its trains in the rest of the nation, and hopes to have WiFi available on all trains within two years. *You can read the RFQ at www.bit.ly/wifirfq*

More Texas Track Work

A FY 2010 federal appropriation of \$7 billion is helping to continue double tracking the Trinity Railway Express Dallas-Fort Worth line. The enhanced service reliability will allow the *Texas Eagle* to move from the Union Pacific to TRE, cutting travel time. This is in addition to Recovery Act HSR funds that will speed the *Heartland Flyer* in Texas (Feb. News).

NARP Presentation

NARP President Ross Capon spoke Feb. 24 at the two-day *Financing High Speed Rail U.S.A.* conference in Chicago, presented by American Business Conferences (division of UK-based London Business Conferences Ltd.).

He emphasized the value of the growing U.S. commitment to "incrementally" improving our passenger train services.

Two New Trains

from page 1

Illinois DOT. "It will rehabilitate roadbed; replace ties, rail and ballast; install or upgrade train signaling where necessary and construct passenger stations. It is anticipated that the vast majority of construction activities will be within existing railroad rights-of-way."

Illinois and Iowa hope to win part of the \$2.5 billion for high-speed rail in the fiscal 2010 spending bill to bring both trains to fruition.

Wheels Turning in Illinois

The Illinois Senate Transportation Committee passed the first legislation to explicitly authorize a 220 mph high speed rail network in the Midwest. The bill would create the Illinois High Speed Rail Authority tasked to develop a public-private partnership to build, operate, maintain and finance new tracks for passenger trains capable of traveling more than 150 mph.

Budget Gaps = Transit Woes

As the recession causes the tax revenues that support public transportation systems to shrink, state and local governments and transit authorities are proposing and often implementing service cuts and fare increases. This clashes with growing demand for new routes and for more capacity on existing ones.

Strong urban and suburban transit networks are vital for healthy, livable communities. Transit also is vital for the success of intercity passenger rail networks since they feed people to and from rail hubs.

Many transit riders are willing to pay higher fares, but only if service improves correspondingly. For this to happen, other sources of money must be tapped to bolster operating and capital funds, and management issues sometimes must be addressed. Political resistance requires transit users to organize!

If your area is being hurt by transit funding shortfalls, tell your local elected officials that you are willing to pay higher taxes on driving and other environmentally harmful activities in order to improve public transportation, which in time will boost revenues by fostering greener economic development. If enough people do this, politicians will summon the will to do what is necessary.



New Jersey: Tunnel Criticism Intensifies; Transit Fares Rise

Shortly before his inauguration, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie (R) on Jan. 11 told a news conference that officials will take "a complete look" at the \$8.7 billion Hudson River rail tunnel project.

He said, "We support the project. Now the question is, can we make the project better and how does the project fit during these really challenging economic times?" (*Trenton Times*).

NARP is continuing to press for a direct link to Penn Station, and we are gaining support in the media.

Alfred P. Doblin, editorial page editor of the *Bergen Record*, headlined his Feb. 25 column, "Commuters don't need a miracle under 34th Street," a reference to the controversial, dead-end Manhattan terminal New Jersey Transit (NJT) plans.

Doblin: "[Enhancing Penn Station] should be a higher regional transportation priority than a deep-tunnel station under 34th Street..."

Fleet Plan

cars, 70 electric locomotives, 264 diesel locomotives and 25 high-speed train sets.

Amtrak foresees acquiring about 100 cars a year beginning in 2012, with new additions initially exceeding retirements. In 2012, 65 single-level cars and 35 bi-levels would be added, with 49 and 25 retired, respectively. That year also would see 25 new road diesels, 10 new switchers and 15 new electric locomotives.

Specifics could change. "There could be benefits...from the enhanced seating capacity of [bi-level vs. single-level cars and] some potential operational benefits on routes with shorter station platforms. However, there is resistance amongst some of Amtrak's state partners to the [bi-levels] because of concerns about customer perceptions and acceptance..."

Amtrak recognizes that 2% is a conservative growth rate and notes that market conditions (including riders drawn to brand-new trains) may require a speed-up in new acquisitions or a slowdown in retirements or both. Regular updates are planned to this 'living document' based on the market and on funding availability.

The focus is on buying modernized

"...Billions of dollars [are] committed to transit projects in New Jersey and New York...that make little sense to the people who will actually use the rails every day.

"There is only one commuter who wants a one-seat ride to Macy's [under 34th St.] and he doesn't take the train. Santa Claus travels by sleigh."

Bob Ingle, Gannett's senior political columnist for New Jersey, made our case in a Feb. 25 column: "Christie should take a look at having the tunnel redesigned so it can go to Penn Station. That would get us more bang for the buck, cost less and eliminate need for a new station."

NJT plans for May 1 an unprecedented 25% general fare increase; hearings Mar. 25-27. Gov. Christie opposes raising NJ's gas tax, third lowest in the U.S. ■

New Plains Service Studied

A new Amtrak/BNSF study of potential service expansion in Kansas & Oklahoma is at www.bit.ly/ksstudy.

from page 1

equipment with improved fuel efficiency and reduced emissions.

Stand-by fleet: The following paragraph has drawn much criticism: "It was concluded that the best course of action was to hold a number of vehicles in reserve for a period after they are retired from service but to then scrap the vehicles rather than sell them (with the possible exclusions for museum requests)."

Before Amtrak, railroads handled big peak and special moves with many cars that were not in daily use. Amtrak should define "a number" and "a period" in full recognition of potential future emergency demands and service opportunities.

The document predicts that the dramatic need for new stock will generate sufficient production to galvanize the manufacturing industry regardless of how ridership will change.

NARP sees the fleet plan as a first step towards achieving the modernization we seek (www.narprail.org/equipment).

We will press hard for the largest fleet possible. "Equipped for growth" is the central theme of our upcoming "Day on the Hill" on April 27 (separate article). ■



Photo by Dan Chusid

FLORIDA'S NEW

PASSENGER TRAIN LAW

In a special session focused mainly on passenger trains, Florida's state legislature laid the groundwork for central Florida commuter rail (SunRail, March 2009 *News*) and provided \$15 million a year for South Florida's existing TriRail line.

Gov. Charlie Crist (R) told reporters the deal "really thrusts Florida into the future." He signed the bill into law Dec. 16.

The December 8 Senate vote was an unexpectedly broad 27-10 and came after U.S. DOT Secretary Ray LaHood conditioned approving the state's high speed application on state approval of SunRail.

SunRail faced three obstacles at Tallahassee—the need for a South Florida fix, labor concerns that SunRail would cause 184 union members to lose federal pensions and job protections, and CSX's liability protection needs. CSX will continue to run some freight trains on the line it is selling to the state.

Sen. Jeremy Ring (D-Margate) kept all sides at the table to overcome these impediments. He told the *Miami Herald*, "This will transform the future of Florida. Today, the Florida Senate took the bold step of planning for a 21st century transportation system."

But the deal does not address Amtrak's liability concerns. This could yet derail SunRail or saddle passenger trains nationwide with stiff, new liability costs. Amtrak, under its agreement with CSX, could veto the sale. If Amtrak pulled that trigger, it is possible that the Surface Transportation Board could decide the matter.

Amtrak on Feb. 23 wrote to Florida DOT terminating an agreement to share tracks with SunRail, citing failure to negotiate over three years.

Florida won \$1.25 billion in federal funds towards Tampa-Orlando high speed rail, but the grant has not been finalized. NARP is concerned about the line's lack of connections with other rail service. "Local officials must ensure the Tampa Bay area provides connecting transit links, including light rail and modern bus service, Rep. John Mica (R-FL) said Monday afternoon" (*Tampa Tribune*, Mar. 9). Mica also said "he thinks Amtrak probably ought to have an improved liability agreement" (*Orlando Sentinel*, Feb. 23). ■



National Association of
Railroad Passengers

NARP NEWS

Vol. 44, No. 2

March 2010

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



George Chilson, Chairman; James Churchill, John DeLora, Albert L. Papp, Jr., Arthur Poole, David Randall, Robert J. Stewart, Vice Chairs; Nicholas Noe, Secretary; Kenneth T. Clifford, Treasurer

Ross B. Capon, President & CEO; Sean Jeans-Gail, Communications Director; Tiffanie H. Childs, Coordinator of Resource Development; Malcolm M. Kenton, Transportation Assistant

National Association of Railroad Passengers *NARP News* (ISSN 0739-3490), published monthly (except Nov.) by NARP; 505 Capitol Ct. NE, Suite 300; Washington, DC 20002-7706; 202/408-8362, fax 202/408-8287, <narp@narprail.org>, <www.narprail.org>. ©2009 National Assoc. of Railroad Passengers. All rights reserved. Membership dues \$35/year (\$20/under 21, \$25/over 65), of which \$5 is a subscription to *NARP News*. Periodicals Postage Paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to National Association of Railroad Passengers *NARP News*; 505 Capitol Ct. NE, Suite 300; Washington, DC 20002-7706.

(This has news through March 12. Vol. 44, No.1 was mailed February 4.)

our mission: a modern, customer-focused national passenger train network that provides a travel choice americans want.

NARP Gears Up for Day on Capitol Hill

"Equipped for Growth" is the theme of our message to Congress this year. NARP members from across the country will come to Washington April 27 to meet with members of Congress and their staffs. This year, we are inviting rank-and-file members to join Council of Representatives members and show Congress our strength in numbers. During our office visits, we will:

Praise positive steps taken by Congress, including the \$9.3 billion for intercity trains in the Recovery Act and \$2.5 billion in the 2010 spending bill, and the decision to distribute the funds through a competitive grant program, and

Push for the following actions:

- **A \$4 billion Fiscal 2011 appropriation** for high-speed rail grants to states, with 20% reserved for train equipment.
- **Full funding of Amtrak's FY11 grant request**, plus additional funds to expand the national overnight network.



- **Establishment of a separate national equipment pool** in addition to Amtrak's own, which can be used in emergencies and made available for states, Amtrak and other operators to lease.

Despite tight budgets, transportation remains a priority and a federal responsibility. The current "fly-drive" transportation system is inadequate, deteriorating and vulnerable. It wastes finite resources. Investing in passenger train improvements enhances fuel efficiency, offers more bang for the buck than expanding roads and airports, and gives Americans the transportation choices -- and jobs -- we are demanding.

If you want to join us, fill out the online registration form at www.bit.ly/narpeg. Attendance at Day on the Hill is free of charge, and anyone may attend the entire Council of Representatives meeting for a fee. If you don't have Internet access, call 202-408-8362 and ask to be mailed or faxed a registration form. ■

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Upgrades can be made earlier: The coupon that gives Amtrak Guest Rewards Select and Select Plus members a free one-class upgrade (if space is available) can now be used within 48 hours of scheduled departure, either to upgrade an existing reservation or to make a new upgraded reservation with the accommodation charge waived. Previously, upgrades offered to Select members could only be made within one hour of depar-

ture. Coupons are valid for First Class on *Acela* and Business Class on other trains. Coupons are not valid for sleeping cars.

Select status (including three upgrade coupons) is earned by accruing 5,000 points from Amtrak ticket purchases during a calendar year; Select Plus (four upgrade coupons and unlimited use of station lounges) requires 10,000 rail points. See www.bit.ly/agsrl.

Train Day is Sat. May 8th



Logo © Amtrak

A sampling of National Train Day festivities (* = hosted by Amtrak):

Washington, DC, Union Station* -- Equipment & model train displays, kids activities & more

Philadelphia, 30th Street Station* -- Baseball players discuss teams' train travel, equipment displays & more.

Chicago, Union Station* -- Exhibit on the rail journey of blues music, live blues, model trains & more.

Los Angeles, Union Station* -- The Railroad Braceros exhibit, equipment displays & more.

New York, Penn Station* -- Information booths, kids activities, guest appearances.

Toledo, OH station -- Train-themed displays & activities (May 1st)

Charleston, WV -- Amtrak & NARP will be at the minor league baseball game.

Cincinnati Union Terminal -- Displays and activities

Norman, OK station -- Exhibit hosted by the Northern Flyer Alliance.

North Carolina -- Displays at Raleigh, Durham, Burlington, Greensboro, High Point, Salisbury and Charlotte.

California -- Events in Guadalupe, Salinas and Santa Barbara.

Tampa, Union Station -- Live music, special guests, equipment tours, displays and more.

Check www.nationaltrainday.com and www.narprail.org/trainday for more events, updates & details!