

The Voice of the Railroad Passenger



Support Officials who support good passenger service.

from
**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
RAILROAD PASSENGERS**

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**AMTRAK IS TURNING AWAY
PRIVATE TOUR BUSINESS**

Editorial

Amtrak President Roger Lewis told the *National Journal* (1/1/72 issue) that large group tours, booked well in advance to resort areas, sports events and tourist spots, will help bring up Amtrak's ridership on long-distance trains.

We agree. The Corporation should be out beating the bushes for more passenger capacity and additional sources of revenue.

But they aren't. Amtrak is actually turning away business because several key railroads are refusing to accept commercially-operated private cars on Amtrak's trains.

A survey jointly undertaken by NARP and the Association of Private Rail-Car Owners (APRO) shows that the capacity and revenue potential are there, in the form of more than 100 privately owned cars with a combined passenger capacity exceeding 3100. This is a partial count, representing 47 owners of the more than 100 canvassed.

But, on rail sidings across the continent, these cars stand idle, an indictment of Amtrak's ineptitude and the railroads' arrogance and intransigence.

Before Amtrak came into being, private cars moved with reasonable freedom over the rails of the individual carriers. Conditions and charges imposed by some railroads, notably the Southern Pacific, were certainly not designed to encourage such traffic, but with relatively large investments in equipment, particularly on the part of the commercial tour and excursion operators, the owners paid up and generally went where they wanted to go.

With Amtrak's advent the railroads, led, surprisingly, by the usually reasonable Santa Fe, began to impose conditions clearly designed to keep private cars off the rails entirely. They include demands for \$1 million to \$2 million in cash bond or the equivalent liability insurance. Some carriers, again including the SP, refuse to move private cars under any conditions in freight service, thus leaving equipment that is off the Amtrak system completely stranded. Fees of servicing private cars in at least one instance more than doubled overnight.

Under their contracts with Amtrak, carriers receive 4% above their regular fees to cover liability. Railroads say this isn't enough because private cars pose a special risk, despite the fact that these cars cannot move until they meet the Association of American Railroad's safety and mechanical standards.

Repeated appeals by NARP, APRO, private car owners and others to compel the carriers to live up to their contract obligations apparently fall on deaf ears at Amtrak. One Amtrak lawyer admitted that there "probably" was a violation here, but Amtrak would not sue the railroads.

A study of Amtrak's contract with the carriers clearly indicates to us that the railroads' position is "legally unsupportable." We feel it is time for Amtrak to get off dead center, stop playing the railroads' traditional obstructionist game, and demand that this needed addition to the present passenger fleet be allowed to operate.

**AMTRAK NOT MEETING
ORIGINAL DOT GOALS**

A "briefing manual" developed in late 1970 by the Federal Railroad Administration for the Incorporators of Amtrak has been uncovered by NARP which indicates that some of DOT's original expectations have not been met.

DOT had recommended to the Incorporators that "an information, ticketing, reservation and credit system must be developed and at least be partially implemented by May 1." This hasn't been done.

DOT insisted that the summer packages offered by tour agents are Amtrak's "single most important annual revenue item. It will be critical to the solvency of many tour and travel agents to have an immediate contract within the Corporation who can... guarantee reservations." At this time, no one at Amtrak can guarantee as much space as tour agents can sell.

The document concluded that "increased patronage and revenues appear possible. With innovation, improved quality of service, and heavy promotion we expect a significant turnaround in ridership — not immediately but within the next three years. This time lag has been assumed in our revenue forecasts."

The three year test may never take place. If Amtrak discontinues many trains in July, 1973, when it's money will run out, then the DOT hope will have never been met.

Amtrak is presently having difficulty getting the \$170 million from Congress just to last until mid '73.

Despite Amtrak's many shortcomings, NARP is supporting the funding request.

A RAILROAD YES MAN

Alan S. Boyd, former Secretary of the U.S. Dept. of Transportation and now president of Illinois Central (IC) said the IC would be happy to cooperate with Auto-Train if the new corporation decided to operate Auto-Train service between Chicago and New Orleans. He also said that modern passenger service was a necessity and should be supported with public funds. Boyd appeared on WGN Radio (Chicago) with NARP Chairman Anthony Haswell.

**RIDE NOW — PAY LATER WITH
AMERICAN EXPRESS AND MASTER CHARGE**

Amtrak ticket offices in 62 major cities now accept American Express and Master Charge credit cards. By the end of March, all Amtrak offices in 335 cities will be accepting them.

Passengers are encouraged to purchase round-trip tickets with the cards. A passenger may find that the city to which he has traveled does not accept the credit card, and he will be unable to charge his way back.

Payments for food and drink must be in cash.

Amtrak Ski Train Harassed By Railroads?

Amtrak recently operated a special Ski Train from Los Angeles to Sun Valley over the protests of the participating railroads.

Only at the last minute did the railroads agree to let the train roll. The eleventh-hour decision precluded Amtrak from advertising the run or obtaining advance publicity.

The train should have been a real moneymaker, but wasn't. An Amtrak official contacted by NARP would not release financial data about the operation. It ran with only 100 persons aboard.

Amtrak said it will try to operate another ski train in March. Persons living in Southern California should contact Amtrak Regional Manager Rogert Edgar (213-687-9742) in Los Angeles for details.

Meanwhile, Amtrak has approved operations of a Fun Train between Los Angeles and Las Vegas. It is expected that the train would carry 300 passengers per weekend.

Operation of the trains had been urged following the success of similar runs between San Francisco area communities and Reno, Nev.

The Reno trains, according to the Greater Reno Chamber of Commerce, have been carrying as many as 400 persons a weekend.

NARP Advisory Board Member Speaks:

"We should be rebuilding our railroads. I am not just talking about mass transit—I am talking about all railroads. Every other nation in the world is doing it. We are just assuming that railroads are a thing of the past, when actually they are the transportation of the future."

Milton J. Shapp
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

MEMBERS RELUCTANTLY ACQUIESCE TO NATIONALIZATION

The June NARP News asked readers to choose one of three responses regarding government ownership and operation (nationalization) of the railroads. The returns were as follows:

Favor nationalization as a general proposition	100
Oppose nationalization as a general proposition, but would be willing to accept it if it seemed the only way to get modern passenger service	156
Absolutely oppose nationalization	60
Not classified	7

Of those favoring nationalization, quite a few cited the excellent service on nationalized foreign railroads. Others maintained that railroads should be operated for public service rather than private profit. A few simply said that nationalization was inevitable.

The opponents of nationalization were chiefly concerned with the large financial losses they felt were certain to ensue, which would have to be borne by the taxpayers. Some pointed to the Post Office as an invidious example of government operation. Many stressed as an alternative the traditionally prescribed remedies: abolition of government aid to competitors; fair taxation; relief from excessive regulation; and modernization of labor work rules.

A number of respondents in all three categories commented favorably on the proposal for government ownership and maintenance of track and fixed facilities, with operations performed by private companies paying user charges.

PASSENGERS TO BE PAMPERED BY SMILING CONDUCTORS?

Amtrak has hired Continental Airlines to train 1,250 railroad employees in the art of coddling passengers.

The contract covers about 150 hostesses that Amtrak plans to put aboard its trains, in addition to skycaps, porters, conductors, food-service people and even uniformed guards.

Continental will begin by conducting 60 three-day courses for Penn Central personnel.

"There is a new generation of railroad passengers to be served in the years ahead," said Amtrak President Roger Lewis. "These people have a right to expect the high standards of passenger service which have been established in recent years by the airlines."

BURLINGTON NORTHERN RUNS COLD TRAINS DESPITE HOT CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

Before the House Commerce Committee in December, Louis W. Menk, Amtrak board member and chairman of Burlington Northern Railroad, said "I have watched with keen interest the development of the overall [Amtrak] plan, and I hope I have been constructive in any activities as a director."

As he sees it, one major problem is that "we are doing no preventive maintenance and it is going to be a cold winter up in our country if we are not careful."

Cold it is. Minneapolis Star reporter John Greenwald wrote that on a December trip on an Amtrak Seattle-Chicago train, "there was no heat." For most of the distance the train operates over Menk's railroad.

Greenwald said passengers "put on overcoats and waited. Two hours later we got up and found seats in an empty private compartment where it was warm. A porter made us leave. All the other coaches either were filled or as cold as ours. Past Milwaukee we were able to move into a heated coach, and rode the last hour without overcoats."

NARP member Blanchard R. Anderson of Lincoln, Neb., reported to Amtrak that his Dec. 28th trip on "what we used to think of" as BN's *California Zephyr* was three hours late due to "heating problems... The train was heavily patronized by disgusted riders, most of whom, no doubt, will fly or drive their cars the next trip they make."

At the hearings, nobody asked Menk why he failed to exert his influence as an Amtrak board member to insure that the Corporation had undertaken the necessary car maintenance program. And no one asked Amtrak Chairman Roger Lewis why Amtrak had not requested BN to perform this necessary work.

In a recent statement, Menk shied away from calling passenger trains "stagecoaches" and said federal aid for passenger service "will prove to be a sound one for certain corridor areas of the nation."

GREYHOUND BARKS AT AMTRAK

Top management of the Greyhound Corp., concerned about the effects of competition from passenger trains, has urged its employees to lobby against further appropriations for Amtrak. In a Dec. letter to Greyhound's 10,000 employees in the eastern United States, Harry J. Lesko, president of Greyhound Lines East, said further funding for Amtrak represented a "competitive threat to our jobs, our livelihood and our company." What prompted the letter was not just Amtrak's request for \$170 million, but the rail fare cuts in the Northeast Corridor. On Nov. 19 Amtrak lowered fares between New York and Boston to \$9.90 from \$12.75. Greyhound followed on Dec. 1 by reducing bus fares over the route to \$9.65. "We pay our own way right out of the fare box. Not so for Amtrak. They can operate at a big loss...and they receive tax dollars as a subsidy," said Greyhound President James L. Kerrigan. (Story summarized from article written by Stephen M. Aug, *Washington Star*, 12/21/71.)

WILL SANTA FE HANDLE SPECIAL TRAINS?

At hearings before the House Interstate & Foreign Commerce Committee on Dec. 7, the following colloquy took place between Santa Fe President John S. Reed and Rep. Brock Adams (D-Wash):

Mr. Adams: "...it is my understanding that you have indicated under the contract that you refuse to operate any special passenger trains. In other words, you operate only those that were in the initial contract, is that correct?"

Mr. Reed: "No, sir, I don't know where you got that information."

Mr. Adams: "I just want to know if it is correct. You are willing to operate special passenger trains other than those running at the time the initial contract was entered into?"

Mr. Reed: "That is provided in the contract and we are willing to do it, yes."

Three weeks earlier, however, on Nov. 17, G. M. Schaumleffel, a Santa Fe Sales Representative in Los Angeles wrote to Ed Von Nordeck of Let's Travel Tours and said, the contract between the railroad and Amtrak "precludes the handling of special trains and privately owned cars." NARP asked the Santa Fe for a clarification. Reed said the correspondence NARP submitted "between a commercial tour operator on the West Coast and a local Santa Fe representative in California reflects how misinterpretations and misunderstandings of a general policy can arise."

Reed said special trains "will be operated by Santa Fe pursuant to the conditions prescribed in its NRPC contract. . . ."

NARP will believe Santa Fe is softening its policy when special Amtrak passenger trains are actually moving over Santa Fe routes. Until then, these words are just promises. And railroads have not been known to keep their promises.

AMTRAK TAKING LESSONS IN KILLING TRAINS FROM RAILROAD MANAGERMENTS?

Cleveland's last passenger train, the *Lake Shore*, died a disgraceful death on Jan. 5, 1972.

The train had never really been improved, but Amtrak expected the States to pay 66% of the deficit if service was to be continued.

In anticipation of the Jan. 5 discontinuance, Amtrak pulled out of Cleveland Union Terminal suddenly on Dec. 31 after discovering that if it spent one day of 1972 there, it would have to pay a full year's rent of approximately \$250,000.

Buses took passengers to a muddy, industrial area where the passengers had to wait in the cold for the train. (See additional story, "Amtrak Signals Wrong Bus Line.")

Amtrak, claiming it lost \$3.6 million on the service, failed to supply State officials with audited bills accounting for the costs of operating the *Lake Shore*.

NARP has told Congressman Jack F. Kemp (R-NY) that Amtrak never really tried to save the train. Amtrak merely operated freshly-scrubbed equipment under old work rules, through old stations, with old fares, little advertising and a nearly-useless reservation system.

As best as NARP can determine, Amtrak never requested that the railroads renegotiate costly, unrealistic terminal contracts.

Amtrak did not approach each and every local union along the route to seek work rules modernization.

Amtrak did not ask communities to ease taxes on stations or initiate terminal improvement projects similar to programs which the same cities undertake for airports.

The only thing Amtrak did was operate a mediocre train and demand money from the States. It's not surprising that the States weren't interested.

NARP has consistently asserted that Amtrak is obligated to serve places the size of Cleveland (metro pop. over two million) as part of its "basic system." Amtrak had no business demanding money from the States as a condition for provision of Buffalo-Cleveland-Toledo-Chicago service.

AMTRAK PASSENGER TRAINS RUN LATE AS S.P. FREIGHTS ZIP AHEAD

Amtrak has accomplished little in improving the on-time performance record of most of the nation's railroad passenger trains.

The worst railroad performance has been by the Southern Pacific Co.

Rail Travel Newsletter (1/3/72) reports that between Dec. 19 and Jan. 2, the *Sunset Limited* was on time in Los Angeles only 29% of the time, and on the average it was late one hour and 22 minutes. This is during the height of the holiday travel period.

The *Coast Starlight* never came into the station on-time during that period, and the average time late was three hours 11 minutes.

Amtrak had hoped that SP's performance would improve after it complained about the 13.9% on-time record of the *Sunset* between Aug. 27 and Nov. 16. Throughout that period, the train was late an average of one hour and 42 minutes.

Amtrak Vice President for Operations, Harold Wanaselja, wrote SP Vice President, R.D. Spence, that SP was "not making every reasonable effort to maintain the schedule...as is required" under the contract SP signed with Amtrak. He accused the railroad of "poor, if not negligent dispatching" and indicated strongly that SP was delaying the *Sunset* for freight operations.

Between Oct. 1-7, freight train interference was responsible for 42.9% of all delays to Amtrak SP trains. For the week beginning Nov. 19, freight interference was responsible for 38.2% of SP delays.

RIDING WITH AMTRAK

"I think Amtrak's function should be to preside over an orderly shrinkage of rail passenger service." — Southern Pacific President B. F. Biagini, 1-3-72 interview with U.S. News & World Report.

"The current lackluster financial performance of the *Coast Daylight* reflects 15 years of Southern Pacific efforts to downgrade service and discourage patronage; a virtual absence of Amtrak promotion effort; and under SP operational control, a very poor on-time performance record since inception of Amtrak operations." — NARP Chairman Anthony Haswell to the San Francisco Examiner, 12/19/71.

"Amtrak put out messages to all agents about Dec. 15 as follows: 'All space sold out on *Super Chief*, *City of San Francisco*, *Floridian*, *Empire Builder*, *North Coast Limited*, *Broadway Limited*, *Texas Chief* until after Christmas. Don't take any listings.' This is ample proof that there is need for further train service. Wonder how the SP President accounts for this?" Roscoe C. Migliore, Collinsville, Okla. in a letter to NARP.

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Note: NARP members should not use this form to renew. It would be helpful if members wait until they receive the renewal reminder, and use the special coded envelope enclosed with it.

SENATOR CASE FIGHTS FOR COMMUTERS RIDING AMTRAK TRAINS

Senator Clifford P. Case (R-NJ) in a letter to Amtrak said rail commuters need long-term assurances that Amtrak will continue to accept commuter tickets and maintain commuter fares on its intercity trains between New Jersey, New York City and Philadelphia.

He said commuters "have a right to know — and to know now — where they stand."

Amtrak was also urged to close a gap in scheduling which hurts New Jersey commuters.

The Senator is ranking Republican on the Senate Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee which has jurisdiction over federal funding of Amtrak.

The trains in question are nearly profitable, despite the lower fares paid by commuters.

Amtrak was designed to operate intercity passenger service, not commuter trains. Nevertheless, the Senator pointed out, many Amtrak trains carry heavy commuter loads.

"Of particular importance in this regard are the so-called 200 series trains which, according to the Interstate Commerce Commission, carry more than 50,000 passengers a week in New Jersey suburban service," Case said.

The Senator has been a consistent supporter of improved passenger rail transportation.

NARP TIPS ITS HAT

Not all railroads run late passenger trains. The Milwaukee Road railroad, in the period between May 1 and Dec. 25, 1971, had a 99.2% on-time performance record for trains operating between Chicago and Minneapolis. West of Minneapolis, however, the trains operate over the Burlington Northern, where substantial delays have been encountered.

AMTRAK SIGNALS WRONG BUS LINE

Amtrak was determined to blaze out of Cleveland leaving a train of confusion. On New Year's day, callers dialing the Amtrak number here were told by recording that Greyhound buses, leaving 30 minutes before train time, would take passengers to "trackside." This came to the attention of Lawrence R. Iler, Greyhound director of passenger sales. He was unable to trace any contract with Amtrak, but decided to send a bus to the terminal just in case. "I hope someone will be able to tell us where trackside is," he said. It turned out that Amtrak had goofed. The bus service was being provided by another company. "What the heck," said an Amtrak agent, "it's the same kind of bus painted a different color." (Story summarized from article written by John Clark, Cleveland Plain Dealer, 1/2/72.)

FRIENDS OF THE RAILROAD PASSENGER

Lionel Van Deerlin

After a dreadful train trip in early January which ended 13 hours behind schedule, Rep. Lionel Van Deerlin (D-Cal.) says he'll try to hold up the \$170 million Amtrak has requested from the federal government "until they prove they're running the show."

Mr. Van Deerlin serves on the House Commerce Committee which has jurisdiction over the Amtrak funding request.



He tried to take a transcontinental trip from Washington to his home in San Diego with his wife and daughter. He said the cars were poorly maintained and dirty.

Out of New Orleans, the passengers were taken by bus 165 miles to the *Sunset Limited*, west of the Mississippi, because a bridge was out. Van Deerlin said, "the railroad had forgotten to bring our luggage on the same bus. That made us two hours late

getting started."

At another point the passengers had to wait for six hours while a broken down freight train was cleared from the tracks.

"We sat there on that damn siding an hour longer than it takes me to fly home from Washington," he said. "What they are doing is destroying confidence in Amtrak instead of building it up as they should be."

"It looks to me as if Southern Pacific is still running their trains and they are simply incapable of it."

Outside Tucson, the air brakes locked on one engine. Some people were injured and the train moved at about 20 mph to Phoenix. There, the Congressman's wife and daughter flew to San Diego because they were exhausted.

The Congressman also said four conductors questioned the validity of his ticket.

Mr. Van Deerlin was first elected to Congress in Nov., 1962, and has been re-elected four times, by steadily increasing majorities.

Forms are available from NARP to enable members to evaluate the quality of Amtrak trains. Results will be computerized for Amtrak's benefit. Write NARP for copies today!

NEWS from NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

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