

Northeast Rail Plans 'Crunch' Is Here

Anti-Amtrak Drive: NAMBO (the National Association of Motor Bus Operators) is stepping up its media campaign against Amtrak. NARP has learned that a 35-percent surcharge on annual dues to NAMBO members has been assessed to finance the \$125,000 advertising program. So much for co-operation, eh?



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS**

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Editorial

Louis W. Menk, chairman of the board of Burlington Northern, made no effort to conceal his opposition to passenger train service even while serving on Amtrak's Board of Directors. Gone from the Amtrak board for a year, his spirit lives on in the anti-Amtrak views of BN's present member of the board, Robert W. Downing.

Downing not only is vice chairman and chief operating officer of BN, he is now chairman of the transportation committee of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States.

In this latter capacity, he let his name be used recently in two press releases announcing U.S. Chamber policy (1) supporting federal assistance of up to four billion dollars to rehabilitate the railroads of the Northeast-Midwest, and (2) opposing federal assistance for passenger train service.

The new U.S. Chamber policy statement announced by Downing said: "Amtrak's railroad passenger train service competes with the services of private enterprise. To assure the fairness of such competition, the addition, improvement, or discontinuance of Amtrak service should be governed by economic criteria of the type employed by private enterprise in making managerial decisions. Included in such consideration should be the economic effect of subsidized competition on other forms of transportation."

Downing went on to say that Amtrak's "government-subsidized competition has adversely affected the nation's bus and local service airlines." He showed no recognition, made no mention of the federal aid provided to the commercial air carrier business (\$700 million to \$1 billion a year); no mention of government-built and maintained highways for the buses.

It is a view which could be expected from *Trains* magazine which never misses an opportunity to gig Amtrak, fairly or not, or of bus operators' spokesmen. But for it to come from a railroad executive who serves on Amtrak's board, it is almost beyond belief.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Robert W. Downing and *Trains* and the bus operators all have something in common — they tend to forget that we have a democracy, and that Amtrak exists because the people want it. This has been shown by a Harris poll and has been confirmed by the votes of the people's representatives in Congress.

What this new episode shows is that Amtrak must be freed from the in-house influence of railroad presidents. Congress has considered ways to remove the foxes from "guarding" the chickens. We encourage the key committees to bear down and get railroad representatives off the Amtrak board. In the meantime, we must make certain that Downing's views do not prevail when Amtrak's directors come up with criteria later this year for adding or discontinuing passenger service.

Congress returns from the August recess with only two months to agree on restructuring of the bankrupt railroads of the Northeast, including decisions on how the Washington-Boston passenger train corridor will be operated and how deteriorating tracks and roadbeds are going to be rehabilitated.

By November 9, Congress and a reluctant Administration must find agreement on the Final System Plan for the Northeast which was delivered by the U.S. Railway Association at the end of July.

Part of the package of bills to be considered as both Senate and House plan extensive hearing schedules are ones providing for public ownership of tracks and roadbeds, creation of a trust fund which in one version (originated by Union Pacific, included in a bill introduced by Senator Vance Hartke of Indiana) would be financed in part by a 5-cent tax on every gallon of diesel fuel used by trucks, barges and freight trains, and the Administration bill tying regulatory reform and forced ("voluntary") restructuring of railroads to government financial assistance.

In addition to the Final System Plan — a \$2.5 billion plus program which has received mixed reviews, Congress has received recommendations from the ICC after an analysis of the FSP, and numerous railroad and freelance economists.

The ICC reported that while it agrees generally with the plan to restructure the Penn Central and six other bankrupts, it finds three basic flaws which must be corrected. For one, said George M. Chandler of the ICC's Rail Services Planning Office, financing must be liberalized. Under the USRA plan for eventually interest-bearing loans and stock purchases, he said, the new operating

(continued on page 2)

Boston-Erie-Cleveland Chicago Trains Start Service Oct. 31

Passenger train service between Boston and Chicago through Albany, Buffalo, Erie, Pa., and Cleveland and Toledo in Ohio will begin October 31, Amtrak has announced.

Service for Cleveland has been a long-time goal of NARP.

Specific departure and arrival times have not yet been announced, but trains will depart Boston and Chicago in mid-afternoon; running time will be approximately 25 hours. (See Fares and Service column inside for all stops.)

A New York City section of the train will provide through car services to and from Chicago with connections at Albany.

NARP has mixed feelings. It is extremely pleased that the important northern Ohio cities of Cleveland and Toledo are finally getting Amtrak passenger service. They should never have been without it. NARP also is pleased that there will be a connection west from Buffalo to Chicago serving Erie and the northern Indiana cities of South Bend and Elkhart.

And, although pleased that efforts of NARP members and others in New England have secured this new service for Boston and other Massachusetts cities along the "Inland Route", NARP believes that the missing 12 miles of track which Penn Central removed near Rensselaer must be replaced quickly to get faster service through Massachusetts.

Kalamazoo, Mich., will restore the recently purchased Penn Central station there to a 1900-era appearance and use it as an intermodal center — for Amtrak, city busses, taxis and airport limousine service. Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers helped in the planning and its western committee chairman, James Riley, is on a city committee doing the final planning. Congratulations.

Northeast 'Crunch'

(continued from page 1)

company, "ConRail", would be "so saddled with debt that it might never come out of reorganization."

It also depends on purchase by the Chessie System of some 2,000 miles of lines of bankrupts. If this fails to materialize, ICC said, and ConRail has to operate the full consolidated system, it would not be complying with provisions of the Regional Rail Reorganization Act for competitive railroads in the region.

Finally, ICC said, the Administration insistence on regulatory reform as a price for federal assistance to the USRA plan is "a most improper suggestion." ICC would lose much of its present power to the Department of Transportation if this became law.

Rep. Brock Adams of Washington, a key figure on railroad matters, said he hoped the Administration would "not try to hold the financing of ConRail hostage for passage of . . . regulatory reforms."

Adams suggested financing of rail and roadbed improvements might come from some form of trust fund, but also said government purchase of preferred stock from the railroads should be considered.

Another trust fund plan, promoted by Governor Milton Shapp of Pennsylvania, would be financed by a 5-percent surcharge on rail freight, but he said he could accept the Union Pacific plan. Chairman Fred B. Rooney of the House Subcommittee on Transportation and Commerce, and Senator Hartke, chairman of the similar Senate subcommittee, are arranging a busy schedule of hearings for September and October.

Amtrak's role in the Northeast — whether it will own and operate the largely passenger service corridor or continue as a tenant — is a key point to be settled. Upgrading tracks in the corridor (started with a \$15-million project between Boston and New York and a \$25-million program south of New York) could cost \$1 billion or more. NARP has supported Amtrak's effort to control the corridor.

Its main concern on the overall plan is the indication that both Administration and many of those advocating compromise in Congress view ConRail as temporary — something to get restructuring going until the mainlines and important branch lines of the region can be sold to present viable railroads. If this procedure is followed, ConRail cannot be expected to attract and keep the top flight executives and personnel needed to make the company succeed.

FARES AND SERVICE

INTERCITY: The long awaited Boston/New York-Cleveland-Chicago service begins October 31. Intermediate stops: Framingham, Worcester, Springfield, and Pittsfield, Mass.; Rensselaer, Utica, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo, and — on the New York City leg — Harmon, Poughkeepsie, Rhinecliff, and Hudson, N.Y.; Erie, Pa.; Cleveland, Elyria (near Oberlin), and Toledo, Ohio; and Elkhart and South Bend, Ind. Elyria was included largely due to the efforts of the Rev. Robert G. Wickens, a NARP member, and the Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers.

Beginning September 14, Bloomington and Lafayette, Ind., will be served by the Chicago-Louisville-Florida "Floridian". . . Starting October 26, Schriever, La., and Benson, Ariz., will be added to the New Orleans-Los Angeles schedules, and Deming and Lordsburg, N.M., and Indio, Cal., will become flagstops; Alhambra, Cal., will be deleted. Winnemucca, Nev., will be added to the Chicago-Oakland run; Stanley, N.D., to the run of the "Empire Builder" between Chicago and Seattle; Cambridge and Sandstone, Minn., to the Minneapolis-Superior "Arrowhead"; and Arlington, Texas, and Malvern, Ark., to the St. Louis-Dallas-Laredo "Inter-American". Arlington also to the "Lone Star,"

Dallas section. Hazlehurst, Miss., is being restored to the Chicago-New Orleans route. Deming and Lordsburg, N.M., and Indio, Cal., are going on "probation", which means that they will be dropped if not enough people use them. (The new stops listed above are also on probation.) . . . Quantico, Va., will disappear from the timetable in December, to reappear at some point in the future when additional Richmond service is established. . . Also beginning Oct. 26, Wasco, Cal., will be added to the "San Joaquin". Windsor, St. Thomas and Fort Erie to be added to the "Empire State Express."

Starting on October 26, the schedules of the New York-Chicago "Broadway Limited" and the New York-Kansas City "National Limited" will be lengthened by 1½ and 2 hours, respectively. These trains have rarely been on time this year, and

People on a train are so different, they read, or talk to each other. . . not like on a plane where they just sit. They're relaxed and having fun.

—Karl R. Zimmerman
New York Times

the new schedules are supposed to be "realistic". In addition, the Washington-Harrisburg section of the "Broadway Limited" will run via Philadelphia. This will add 85 miles, and about 30 minutes, but will provide direct Chicago service to Wilmington, Del., and Philadelphia's 30th Street Station (instead of the present stop at North Philadelphia).

Amtrak has changed the rules on its "Colonial Corridor" (Boston-Washington special tickets (May-June News). They will be good on holidays, but will not be honored for travel originating Fridays and Sundays between 1 and 8 p.m.

The U.S. equivalent of the Eurailpass is Amtrak's new 'USARAIL Pass', giving unlimited travel privileges for specified periods of time to those who are not citizens of the U.S. and its territories, Mexico, or Canada; 14 days for \$150, 21 days for \$200, and 30 days for \$250.

The \$99 round-trip coach fares for travel between New York or Chicago and Florida points which Amtrak offered last spring will be in effect again from September 8 through December 19.

COMMUTER: Service between Lake Geneva, Wisc., and Richmond, Ill., ended in early August, less than a month after the Chicago and North Western applied to the ICC. The action was swift because the Commission decided not to investigate. NARP was unable to obtain a copy of the ICC order because the office which distributes them has them filed only by service date, and the office which keeps track of service dates lost the card. If you would like to join Rep. Aspin in asking the Commission to recon-

Auto-Train had net earnings of \$418,771, based on revenues of \$7,103,462 for the May-July quarter, a substantial increase over 1974, Eugene K. Garfield, president, has announced. However, the entire U.S. freight hauling railroad industry, reporting on the first six months of 1975, operated with a loss of \$243.5 million, the Association of American Railroads reported.

sider, refer to Finance No. 27954 when writing to Robert L. Oswald, Secretary, ICC, Washington, D.C. 20423.

The Lake Geneva action puts us on notice that regulatory procedures will in some cases buy almost no time for the development of the ability of state and local authorities to subsidize trains.

New Jersey's Commuter Operating Agency has decided not to subsidize Pennsylvania-Reading Seashore Lines passenger trains between the Philadelphia area and Atlantic City/Ocean City/Cape May after September 30. Presumably the railroad will seek permission from the Public Utilities Commission to discontinue the trains.

San Francisco's BART will raise fares an average 21% in November, although some shorter trips will actually cost less.

'Experimental Route' Designation Is Shifted From DOT To Amtrak

Authority for designating Amtrak's annual "experimental route" mandated by Congress was shifted this year from the Secretary of Transportation to the Board of Directors of Amtrak.

Criteria for adding (or eliminating) routes is being prepared and must be submitted to Congress this fall.

In the meantime, pressure is building up in a number of regions for the next designation (due before June 30, 1976).

Idaho, acting through an advisory committee appointed by Governor Cecil Andrus, has recommended a route serving the state from Pocatello in the southeast to Weiser, near the Oregon border. The Union Pacific line connects at Portland, Ore., with Amtrak's West Coast north-south service. From Pocatello, a likely connection would be south to Ogden, Utah and the Chicago-San Francisco route. Other Idaho cities which would be served are Minidoka, Shoshone, Mountain Home, Boise and Nampa.

The Georgia Department of Transportation has made initial efforts at getting Amtrak service between Atlanta, Macon and Savannah. Such a route would tie in with Amtrak's Boston-Florida trains at Savannah. NARP has long advocated such a service, but extending northwest from Atlanta to Chattanooga-Cincinnati-Chicago.

Florida, meanwhile, with an assist from Mississippi and Alabama, is making a bid for restoration of the long defunct Gulf Wind service connecting New Orleans with Jacksonville. Sen. Lawton Chiles of Florida has been working on it along with the Florida Association of Railroad Passengers.

Some congressional support also has been mustered for the proposed southern transcontinental route from Atlanta to Los Angeles through Shreveport, La., and the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Dr. M.D. Monaghan of the Dallas City-County Amtrak Committee is keeping communications going with all cities along the proposed route. It would tie in with the Southwest Limited's route at Belen, N.M. and follow the Santa Fe to the West Coast. Sen. Lloyd Bentsen of Texas, a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination, is one of the backers.

The Florida ARP also has been trying to get passenger train service for the West Coast of Florida south of Tampa — to Sarasota, Bradenton and Venice through splitting the West Coast Champion at Tampa, and to Fort Myers and Naples through splitting the Floridian at Lakeland. It seems to NARP that one or both of these services could be established with a minimum of cost and trouble to Amtrak and without getting into "new route" designations.

This is not to ignore efforts to get a route into Maine which so far has no Amtrak service, or the Los Angeles-Las Vegas-Salt Lake City route which also has some support.

The Amtrak Board of Directors has a lot of study in store.

Supply exhausted. Amtrak reports that its 175-page Tour Manual on independent and escorted rail tours, mentioned in last month's NARP News, is no longer available. Please don't write.

METROLINER TELEPHONES DISCONTINUED

The on-board telephone service on the Metroliners, which was used for 47,500 calls, costing riders \$242,000 last year, will have to be discontinued October 31, Amtrak has announced.

The radio frequency for the telephone service had been loaned to the Department of Transportation and Amtrak, but that frequency will be required by the government with no replacement frequency available.

The rail passenger market is there, just waiting to be developed, as proved by ridership records of Amtrak's all-Turbo-liner service between Detroit and Chicago. Three trains a day each way produced a 90-percent ridership gain in June over the same month of 1974. It is evidence of how the public will react when new, attractive, functioning passenger equipment is put into service. Amtrak ridership on other routes was mostly down from 1974.

MEMBERS' FORUM

NARP members obviously are interested in better, more frequent rail passenger service. Some also work to preserve threatened freight lines. After all, if freight service disappears, the cost of passenger service will become prohibitive. NARP Director Lettie Gay Carson of Millerton, N.Y. wants to preserve some branch lines for both their freight and passenger potential.

She was featured by the *New York Times* recently for winning restoration of passenger rail service on the Harlem Division of the Penn Central from New York City to Millerton, but she is still fighting to get better freight service. As for the Final System Plan for the Northeast, she says:

"It seems to me their plan will wreck our railroad system. The people in charge seem determined to kill it."

* * * *

NARP Director Sam Stokes of Alstead, N.H., is saddened by anticipated "improvements" in the "Merchants Limited," Boston-Washington, brought about by new Metroliner-type "Amcoaches." He wrote to "Rail Travel News" to comment: "The well-spaced seats in refurbished coaches with large windows, the parlor car and diner will soon be replaced by 84-seat coaches with small windows, 4-inch knee room, no parlor car for the time being and no diner for a long time, if ever. . . Alas!"

* * * *

Mrs. Lyle (Nell) Weber, Columbus Junction, Iowa, member of NARP and Iowa-Nebraska ARP, at a DOT hearing in which she promoted passenger train service: "We hear a great deal of what should be done for the elderly. It usually winds up in building them retirement homes. I, myself, wish to retire to the club car when I go."

* * * *

K.R. Maxwell, NARP member from Mercer, Pa.: "Let me suggest that NARP commend the new president of Amtrak for calling on the nation's bus lines to coordinate their schedules with Amtrak. This effort is badly needed."

* * * *

Bette Dewing Brabec of New York City, a NARP member who recycles paper bags into personally designed envelopes, speaks up against ultra-modern, super high-speed trains with chrome and fluorescent lighting. "Small wonder," she wrote, "that there is a 'nostalgia epidemic' — I am convinced it is rooted in real human need and longing for surroundings that were once so much more compatible with people."

NO PARKING AT UNION STATION

Valet parking at Washington Union Station was ended abruptly by Department of Interior insistence on proceeding with construction which will convert the station into a National Visitors Center. When the east wing demolition started August 23, parking service ended.

NARP has testified in support of Amtrak's request for continued use of Washington Union Station for railroad passengers and has asked the Secretaries of Transportation and Interior to re-examine the entire Visitors Center plan.

NARP Representatives Testify At ICC And RSPO Hearings

(Brief summaries of testimony by NARP in several hearings not otherwise covered in NARP News.)

Interstate Commerce Commission regulations on railroad accounting methods encourage deferred maintenance (a major problem of the nation's railroads), NARP contended in testimony June 12 before the House Subcommittee on Transportation and Commerce.

The ICC regulations also tend to mislead investors by permitting a railroad to present an unrealistically high value for its fixed assets (because rails and ties, for example, are carried year after year at the initial value with no depreciation taken).

NARP urged that railroad accounting be standardized, using Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, including "depreciation" accounting with regard to purchase of new trackage materials instead of the "betterment" system now prescribed.

Before the Senate Subcommittee on Surface Transportation on July 25, NARP urged faster action by the Administration to implement high-speed service mandated by the Regional Rail Reorganization Act: 2-hours nonstop New York-Washington; 2 3/4 hours nonstop New York-Boston.

NARP also urged consideration of the Inland Route (via Hartford, Conn., and Springfield and Worcester, Mass.) in addition to the Shore Line via Providence; providing some Boston and Springfield service from New York's Grand Central Terminal; and immediate provision of more through service between New York, Hartford, and Springfield, citing the line as a "rare example of where, for reasons unrelated to track conditions, Amtrak provides worse service today than it did three years ago."

NARP supports extending corridor service between Washington and Richmond, Va., as well.

(Chairman Vance Hartke of the Senate subcommittee was highly critical of the Administration for delays in reaching a position on the corridor plan and was promised a decision after Labor Day by Asaph Hall, newly confirmed Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration.)

"Flexibility" is the key word which should govern Amtrak and the ICC in regard to the ICC's regulations for intercity passenger service, NARP President Orren Beaty testified.

"In general, the Commission should expedite its actions on individual Amtrak petitions rather than weaken the regulations. . . The very existence of. . . regulations dealing with the rights of individual passengers probably encourages the carriers to be more careful in handling such matters."

Beaty testified at the last of a series of hearings held around the country under Administrative Law Judge Robert Glennon as

part of the ICC's proceedings, "Adequacy of Intercity Rail Passenger Service" (Ex Parte 277, Sub 3, 1975 investigation).

The ICC was "urged to be careful to administer the regulations so that they do not have the effect of minimizing the services available to the public," and, in particular, to respect the rights of states or local authorities which are paying two-thirds of the cost of an Amtrak service "to work out with Amtrak the precise features of the service it wants" (quoting from an Amtrak petition).

Beaty urged Amtrak to adopt more flexible coach seat reservation policies, including both provision of some reserved seats on trains currently all-non-reserved and some unreserved seats on trains now all-reserved. Although Amtrak has stated that "where capacity is adequate to meet demand, a reservation does not serve an important function," NARP believes that the assurance which seat reservations provide can be important to the elderly and the handicapped, to young mothers traveling alone with children, to new passengers accustomed to air travel, and to those "reacting to Amtrak horror stories in the media."

"Perhaps the most important tangible benefit resulting from the regulations to date is the availability of reserved seats on some Boston-Washington trains and the New York-Detroit train," Beaty said. He complained that Amtrak has kept those reservations virtually secret while seeking permission to discontinue them because of their low usage.

Recognizing the costs of providing reservations, and the problems of enforcing their proper use, NARP suggested that Amtrak might assess a reservation charge where a train carries both reserved and unreserved seats.

NARP was represented at three hearings in the series conducted by the ICC's Rail Services Planning Office (RSPO) on the Preliminary System Plan of the U.S. Railway Association.

At Salisbury, Md., NARP supported restoration to mainline status of the Delmarva line and car float linking Wilmington, Del., and Norfolk, Va., to facilitate Washington commuter service and high-speed passenger service to Richmond by minimizing through freight traffic on the B&O and RF&P lines. In Pittsburgh, NARP urged preservation on Amtrak's direct access to the downtown passenger station. And in Washington, establishment of the proposed 80-m.p.h. network of Northeastern and Midwestern corridors was supported; consideration was urged for use of the former New York Central mainline north of Lake Erie as the primary route for through freight between Elkhart, Ind., and the Albany, N.Y. area to reduce the impact of freight congestion on passenger trains which will run via Cleveland.

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