



# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

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417 New Jersey Avenue, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003  
202/546-1550

News Hotline (except during business hours), 202/546-1551

**OFFICERS:** John R. Martin, *President*; Samuel E. Stokes, Jr., *Vice-President*; George Tyson, *Secretary*; Joseph F. Horning, Jr., *Treasurer*; **STAFF:** Ross Capon, *Executive Director*; Barry Williams, *Assistant Director*; Kay Stortz, *Membership Director*

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RETURN REQUESTED

## Secretary Sees Superliners!



—Jim Fisher for The Albuquerque Journal

Sen. Harrison "Jack" Schmitt (R-NM), Secretary of Transportation Drew Lewis, Sen. Pete V. Domenici (R-NM), and Amtrak President Alan S. Boyd in an Amtrak Superliner lounge car on display Feb. 19 at the Albuquerque station.

### Amtrak: Good News on FY '81 And a Look Ahead

Significant positive economic news dominates the introduction to Amtrak's 1982 legislative report:

- Revenue/cost ratio rose from 41.1% in FY '80 to 42.1% in FY '81 and will be 50% this year as a result of Amtrak attaining its revenue projections and/or reducing costs.

- FY '81 revenues were 16% above FY '80 revenues, "about twice the annual increase posted by the nation's scheduled airlines for the same period. In fact, Amtrak was one of the few transportation companies that last year sustained its level of ridership while increasing its revenues." Amtrak President Alan S. Boyd told his board on Feb. 24 that this "was in a context of increasing our long-haul business while losing business in the [Northeast] Corridor."

- On-time performance in FY '81 was 77%—the best ever and up from 69.1% in FY '80—even though schedules were tightened a total of 47 hours during the last half of 1981. During its first months of operation, the 2:59 NY-Washington "Metroliner" (continued on page 3)

Drew Lewis has become the first sitting Secretary of Transportation to set foot in a long-distance rail passenger car. On Feb. 19, he joined New Mexico's U.S. Senators, Mayor Harry Kinney and other Albuquerque officials, and Amtrak President Alan S. Boyd at a preview of the next day's "Family Days" Amtrak equipment display at the Albuquerque railroad station.

The display, the latest of many Amtrak has offered around the nation, was requested by Senate Budget Committee Chairman Pete V. Domenici (R-NM). His staff facilitated the visit by Lewis, who was in Albuquerque for some political fund-raising events.

Lewis was favorably impressed by the Superliners. He publicly endorsed maintenance of a national Amtrak system and was joined in this by Domenici and Harrison "Jack" Schmitt (R-NM), a member of the Senate Commerce Committee.

Schmitt, who has been especially interested in the work of NARP Member Dr. Ronald C. Sheck (Oct.-Nov. News), called for "a major influx of capital to make Amtrak a strong growing railroad passenger system in this country."

Domenici said "Amtrak is a necessary part of a balanced transportation system that must be nationwide." In a separate letter to Jon Messier, President of Rail Passenger Association of the Southwest (RPAS), Domenici wrote: "Affordable, energy-efficient, and safe train service is essential to New Mexican mobility and our state's economic development. I am looking forward to working with you to upgrade transportation in the region and help Amtrak improve its financial condition."

Lewis, Domenici, and Schmitt all praised Boyd as a top-notch executive—praise of great significance when directed by three prominent Republicans at a Democrat. (Boyd served under President Lyndon Johnson as the nation's first transportation secretary.)

Lewis said: "As long as you have Jack Schmitt and Pete Domenici in the U.S. Senate, there is no way that Alan Boyd and I can't" (continued on page 4)

#### TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

A report in the Spring issue of *Getting There* on CORTEX—the California Outdoor Recreation Travel Exchange—carried an address that has changed. The correct address is CORTEX, PO Box 6849, San Francisco 94101. The old address is a private box, so mail is not forwarded. Please re-send letters to the above address. Sorry!

Amtrak has restored some amenities to its dining cars, such as paper tablecloths, vases with flowers, crystal salt and pepper shakers, and metal sugarbowls. Freshly cooked scrambled eggs and buttermilk pancakes are now offered on the long-distance trains (five exceptions listed below) after successful testing on the "San Francisco Zephyr" (and, briefly, on the "Lake Shore Ltd."). The menus will also include hot cereal (reconstituted from powder). For lunch, instead of duplicating lounge-car fare, there's a soup and

sandwich menu with some items varying from train to train. Dinners are the best of the preplated variety already tested, cooked in the more reliable convection ovens, and served in more attractive plates. Two lower-priced entrees have been introduced (spaghetti/meat balls \$2.75; turkey dinner \$4.75). (The "pan-food" dinners tested on the "Zephyr" were dropped, says Amtrak, due to condemnation and control problems.)

As before, more limited menus apply to the Washington-Pittsburgh and Boston-Albany segments and to the "Pioneer" (Salt Lake City-Seattle), "Desert Wind" (Ogden-LA), and "City of New Orleans" (Chicago-New Orleans): these five runs will not have freshly cooked breakfasts or hot cereal and will have a more limited, combined lunch/dinner menu.

Amtrak will continue to look for ways to improve the service without increasing the staffing above the reduced levels set last year. If you ever talk with employees who seem unhappy with management's failure to do the job better within the existing staff limitations, urge them to take the problem up with their crewbase's general supervisor or, if necessary, his or her superior or, if they don't feel comfortable doing that, to call President Boyd's employee hot-line. Passenger Services Vice-President Eugene Eden assures us he reads every hot-line item sent to his department.

On Feb. 7, Amtrak transformed a fourth New York-Washington Metroliner into a 2:59 express, added Wilmington to all express Metroliner schedules while maintaining the previous 2:59 running time; and modified almost all Northeast Corridor schedules, cutting 29 to 38 minutes from five southbound and four northbound NY-DC trains. As a result of NEC modifications, the NY-Cincinnati-Chicago "Cardinal's" schedule was tightened by 32 minutes eastbound and 60 minutes westbound (arrives NY 12:05 PM, departs NY 5:00 PM; schedule unchanged west of DC).

Amtrak and Avis have signed a marketing agreement which, effective March 1, gives rail passengers the opportunity to reserve Avis rental cars for use at 150 joint Amtrak/Avis locations. Under the agreement, Amtrak solicits Avis reservations on a preferred supplier basis, and Avis offers Amtrak passengers one or more special services such as free pick-up, or total or partial taxi reimbursement.

Medford, the largest Oregon city lacking Amtrak service, is now linked to the Amtrak system by means of Trainbus, a van service operated between Medford and Klamath Falls which meets the north- and southbound "Coast Starlight." Fare \$12 one-way; reservations recommended (503/779-2122).

"Spirit of California" is the name of Amtrak's overnight Los Angeles-Sacramento train, which is partially funded by the California DOT.

As a result of the Apr. 25 Sacramento reroute of the "Coast Starlight" (giving Sacramento-Oakland 3 daily round-trips), the train will depart Seattle at 11 AM and run 30 minutes later south of Sacramento. The northbound train will leave LA at 10:15 AM and arrive Seattle 6:30 PM (second day). "San Joaquin" trains 708 and 709 will operate 15 minutes earlier, to preserve the Martinez connection from northbound "San Joaquin" to the "Starlight".

Notwithstanding lots of complaints from New England, Amtrak will not change the schedule of the northbound "Montrealer" next month but is considering running the train later on a seasonal basis in the winters when Vermont skiing business (as Amtrak has painfully learned) requires better times than Amtrak now offers.

"San Francisco Zephyr" riders can look forward to smoother rides later this year between Denver and McCook, NE, where Burlington Northern Railroad plans to replace over 60 miles of notoriously-rough jointed rail with new welded rail.

## ONE REPUBLICAN SPEAKS OUT

"We are accelerating the erosion of the infrastructure of our society . . . we are endangering health care, transportation, resource management. What we are saying is that we can let it deteriorate because we are building more bombs. But if we don't have a strong economy and a strong people, what is our national security?"

—Mark O. Hatfield (R-OR),  
Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee

## The Amtrak/Defense Connection

Early last year, the Senate Commerce Committee asked the Pentagon whether it felt Amtrak was relevant to national defense. The April 10 reply from Deputy Secretary of Defense Frank C. Carlucci, III, to Sen. John C. Danforth read as follows:

"Thank you for your recent letter concerning Department of Defense interest in the military applications of AMTRAK.

"We are interested in AMTRAK insofar as it represents, on a very limited basis, an economical alternative to other forms of passenger transportation. From a purely military standpoint, however, we do not foresee any role which AMTRAK might play with respect to the Rapid Deployment Force or in the event of a sustained action such as the war in Vietnam."

Although this letter did not encourage the use of national defense as an argument for supporting Amtrak, neither did it lay to rest a basic question which many NARP members have been asking: if a "sustained action" forces the Pentagon to commandeer most civilian airliners, how will civilians travel if Amtrak has been dismantled?

Among those who think this a legitimate question is Richard V. Allen, former national security adviser to President Reagan. NARP Board Member Ronald P. Boardman, Jr., discussed the matter with Allen early in 1981. Boardman asked how civilians would travel in time of crisis with commercial airliners diverted

### PASSENGER TRAINS: A MATTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY?

"The countries of Europe have long relied on train service on rail lines that were partly built with funds from the World War II Marshall Plan. The Soviet Union is building a new two-thousand-mile main line into the Siberian wilderness. The Japanese ride on high-speed trains between major city centers. Even the South Africans, who must travel vast distances through unpopulated desert country, rely on trains. . . .

"None of these countries is sitting still. . . . The Soviet Union (which builds two thousand new passenger cars a year for its lines, more than the entire Amtrak fleet) is planning a high-speed line from Moscow to the popular Black Sea resorts for up to two hundred trains a day."

—Don Phillips, "Amtrak Express", May 1981

to military work. Allen's response: by train. Boardman urged Allen to talk with Budget Director David Stockman about increasing rather than shrinking Amtrak capacity.

NARP members with expertise in military matters who disagree with Secretary Carlucci may wish to start a dialogue with him (The Pentagon, Washington 20301), with Major General John D. Bruen, Commander, Military Traffic Management Command (Washington, DC 20315), or with your legislators. Please inform NARP if useful information develops.

Last July, the National War College sought Amtrak's cooperation in a study regarding Amtrak's defense mobilization capabilities. Amtrak suggested three areas of concentration: conversion of passenger cars to ambulance cars; establishment of priorities for defense-related travel; analysis of feasibility of mothballing conventional passenger cars in a state of readiness in military installations. (Severe vandalism problems have destroyed some Amtrak cars stored in Amtrak's own yards in Los Angeles.) Amtrak was not selected as a study topic for the current academic year. ■

## Good News *(continued from page 1)*

Express" Service averaged 97% on-time.

- Average age of Amtrak revenue equipment (rollingstock) decreased from 20.3 years in 1979 to 13.2 years in 1981.

- Productivity: "Even though the federal contribution to Amtrak for operating expenses increased from \$536 million in FY '78 to \$720 million in FY '81, it declined in constant '78 dollars from \$536 million in '78 to \$509 million in '81. During the same three-year period, Amtrak increased the number of passenger-miles generated per constant dollar of federal support by 24%."

- Average passenger miles per train mile (PM/TM) "on long-distance routes improved dramatically during fiscal year 1981 from 175.6 PM/TM [the year before] to 195 PM/TM." The system-wide average for all Amtrak trains reached 155.1 PM/TM.

- Revenue diversification: "Amtrak's newly created Department of Corporate Development will be responsible for developing a corporate-wide revenue diversification strategy by identifying those physical resources and areas of technical expertise within Amtrak which have revenue-generating potential. By maximizing the return on its existing assets, Amtrak will move closer to achieving its long-term goal of reducing dependence on the federal government and financing the Corporation's capital program."

Amtrak estimates FY '83 operations needs at \$650 million (assuming continuation of "Cardinal" and of no service in Oklahoma); labor protection (assuming no new service cuts) \$4 million; and capital investment "almost \$250 million . . . including those [needs] that were deferred in FY '82." In compliance with its legal mandate to explain how Amtrak would spend the \$788 million already authorized (the practical ceiling on what Amtrak might expect for FY '83), Amtrak makes a \$134 million capital

### VERMONTERS BUILDING TRANSIT CARS

In Barre, VT, a new factory owned by Bombardier, Inc. (bom-BAR-dee-ay) recently began work on a 117-commuter-rail-car order for New Jersey Transit and a 26-light-rail-car order for Portland, Oregon's Tri-county Metropolitan Transit District.

While it is good to see this small example of workers producing what Americans really need, we'd be much happier if massive numbers of unemployed autoworkers could be put to work building for public transportation. Instead, we have to wonder if transit operators struggling with massive federal budget cuts will be able to offer enough business even to keep the little Vermont plant (workforce: 175) open.

request which is addressed only generally in the legislative report. Finally, Amtrak offers some "legislative recommendations":

- **Delete "Amtrak" from the name of Amtrak Commuter Services Corporation.** "The National Railroad Passenger Corporation owns a trademark on the term 'Amtrak' and has devoted time, energy, and money toward public association of the name and logo with the unharried convenience of intercity rail passenger transportation. Since the operation of commuter service will be performed by a separate corporate entity offering a limited-distance, single-city rail transit, Amtrak believes that use of 'Amtrak' as a prefix for any Commuter Service Corporation would . . . distort the image Amtrak has worked to establish and confuse members of the traveling public who might have difficulty identifying the proper entity to contact for information and travel arrangements. This confusion could have a significant adverse impact on both intercity and commuter service." (See Sept. News, p. 4)

- **Require performance evaluation reports for Congress once instead of twice a year** "thereby saving considerable administrative resources which can be used far more effectively on other activities."

- **Change requirements related to reporting train revenues and expenses.**

- **Repeal the 1979 requirement that Amtrak enter an industry-wide agreement on the operation of charter and special trains.** "Neither Amtrak nor the operating railroads have been able to

### YOUR LETTERS SAVED AMTRAK!

"The grass-roots battle waged [in 1981] to save the AMTRAK railroad system from the budget ax is a textbook example of what citizen activism can accomplish.

" . . . The National Association of Railroad Passengers mounted a letter-writing campaign that generated thousands of letters, giving supporters the facts and urging them to write original letters. They also had about 125 members hand out leaflets aboard trains in 35 key AMTRAK cities.

"One NARP member who did a lot of leafletting before a crucial Congressional vote said he was impressed by the depth of feeling engendered by Reagan administration proposals to scuttle AMTRAK. According to veteran Washington reporter Don Phillips, 'Such an outpouring of individual and semi-organized lobbying has seldom been seen in this country—the passenger train could not have been saved without the widespread support of the public.'

"As one Congressional staffer put it, 'AMTRAK was saved not because members got 20-30 letters of support on NARP letterheads, but because they got HUNDREDS of letters—from people who ride trains.'

"Perhaps the citizen-backing of AMTRAK proves the truth of what Connecticut's [Rep. Lawrence J.] DeNardis said: 'There are special interest groups galore. But the largest and most potent group is the Congressman's own constituents.'"

—"You Can Influence Congress!" by Judith C. Heffner, in *Senior Scholastic Magazine*, Nov. 13, 1981

### HOW TO INFLUENCE CAPITOL HILL AIDES

"Congressional staff members are more influenced by letters from the folks back home than by press or television coverage, according to a study conducted by the Institute for Government Public Information Research at American University.

"With the rise of congressional power in the last decade, the power and influence of legislative aides have been growing. Congressmen who find themselves overwhelmed by the quantity and complexity of the information they must deal with have to rely on their staffs to control the communication lines.

"The 10 most influential forms of communication cited by the legislative aides were, in order, spontaneous letters from constituents, the Congressional Research Service [Ed.: of the Library of Congress], articles in major daily newspapers, editorials in major daily newspapers, visits from constituents, articles in district daily newspapers, the *Congressional Record*, editorials in district daily newspapers, and government publications.

"Surprisingly, the study found that orchestrated mail campaigns—a favorite but often discounted tool of interest groups—ranked number 11.

"Congressional staff members were almost unanimous in condemning one form of lobbying as having no value whatsoever—issue ads."

—*Nation's Business*, Oct., 1981

develop a constructive proposal for such an agreement in response to this statutory directive."

- **Give Amtrak nationwide relief from state crew laws.**

- **Specify that Amtrak is deemed to be a citizen only of the District of Columbia "for purposes of determining original jurisdiction in federal district courts."**

(A few other minor technical changes were also recommended.)

Amtrak also expresses concern about "two issues facing Amtrak that may result in higher than expected outlays:

- "Rules proposed by the ICC which would alter the amount of freight and commuter compensation payable to Amtrak for operations in the Northeast Corridor [Ed.: NARP will be submitting comments to the ICC in Ex Parte 417 Sub 1, Costing Methodologies for the Northeast Corridor; Commuter Service and Conrail Freight Service, before the Mar. 31 deadline for comments]; and

● "Maintenance of overhead highway bridges in the Northeast Corridor.

"The ICC proposed that Amtrak be reimbursed only for avoidable costs rather than fully allocated costs by freight and commuter services. . . . Unless substantially revised, the final rules could have a significant effect on [Amtrak's] budget projections for [FY '82] and seriously alter the revenue/cost ratio."

Regarding bridges, Amtrak said: "State and local authorities, most notably state public utility commissions, are shifting as much of this expense [of maintaining and replacing the 210 highway bridges crossing the NEC right-of-way] as possible to Amtrak in lieu of using their own funds or federal highway monies. . . . It is impossible to determine what these costs may be for Amtrak in the near future."

About ten years ago, Massachusetts assigned responsibility for maintaining road-over-rail bridges to its highway department (Dept. of Public Works). NARP members in the Northeast might want to encourage their states to follow that example before Amtrak spends much more money intended for passenger trains in New Mexico and elsewhere on Northeast highway bridges.

Finally, says Amtrak, it "is currently involved in critical contract negotiations with the brotherhoods representing Amtrak employees. Success in meeting corporate goals to increase productivity and reduce costs will depend to a great extent on the outcome of our efforts in this area. We will continue to keep Congress informed of the status of these negotiations." ■

## Secretary *(continued from page 1)*

provide Amtrak service to New Mexico." Boyd in turn called Lewis "the most supportive transportation secretary I have known."

RPAS, which deserves much credit for making New Mexico legislators aware of Amtrak's popularity within the state, pre-

### AMTRAK'S "FAMILY DAYS"

**One of Amtrak's most effective forms of promotion is the "Family Days" equipment display. Amtrak parks different types of passenger cars at a station and invites the public to walk through the cars to see first-hand what a train is like. Where possible, short train-rides are offered. Prominent public officials have usually been on hand.**

**Among the most successful Family Days: Washington, DC, in May, 1981, when 45,000 turned out; Los Angeles, Sept., 1980, 45,000; St. Paul, MN, July, 1981, 40,000; Detroit, August, 1980, over 30,000; Portland, OR, 28,000 and Seattle, 24,000 both in March, 1981; and New Orleans, over 20,000, May, 1980. NARP members have helped with advance publicity and staffing.**

**"Family Days" planned for 1982 include: San Francisco, May 14-16; San Jose, May 23; Chicago, July 16-18; and Albany/Rensselaer, NY, Sept. 11-12.**

sented Boyd with a picture of the El Dorado Hotel which was once adjacent to the station, and Mayor Kinney presented a historic plaque. Both items will be displayed in the station.

In reporting the events of Feb. 19, however, the *Albuquerque Journal* used a somber headline: "Labor Rules Cloud Amtrak's Future." The story opened by noting Amtrak's 11th birthday is on May 1 but stated that "America's passenger rail service may never reach maturity without relief from what the secretary of transportation on Friday called 'some ridiculous labor rules.'"

Supersaver air fares, the article noted, are already cheaper than Amtrak from Albuquerque to Los Angeles, Kansas City, and Chicago, the only big cities served by the "Southwest Ltd.," and Boyd was quoted as saying Amtrak will boost its fares about 13% this year.

A local travel agent was quoted on the implications of Amtrak's inability to provide adequate capacity on the run: "It's a chore getting clients on the train. Amtrak runs a limited schedule through Albuquerque and if you want to book a sleeper, forget it. You've got to call six months in advance—if you can get through the busy signal on the phone. I don't recommend Amtrak to my customers."

He also claimed nostalgia was the only reason his customers

used Amtrak, but we expect that will change when the airlines selling supersaver tickets are forced to face reality. It is generally recognized that the recession is currently forcing airlines to sell seats far below cost, and load factors remain unsatisfactory in spite of this.

### Back in Washington

In Mar. 9 testimony before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Lewis himself said the air industry is in poor health: "the only reason six airlines didn't fold this year is because the banks had no use for collateral consisting of used airliners in the present economic climate." He seemed to indicate there would be some airline bankruptcies this year.

The first 20 minutes of the hearing was devoted to Amtrak. Chairman Mark Andrews (R-ND) pointed out that 80% of the subcommittee's time last year was spent on trying to save Amtrak service. Lewis indicated this would not happen again this year. He said the administration's funding proposal would permit Amtrak to operate a national system the scope of its present system although cost-savings would have to be obtained by improved work rules to make this possible.

(Few observers believe \$600 million would save the existing system—or that Congress will accept that figure—but the Secretary obviously can't contradict the President's budget. Furthermore, the Secretary's newly conciliatory approach on Amtrak should encourage labor to be more flexible than Amtrak may have anticipated—something many NARP members would like to see.)

Lewis said he thinks the Amtrak system is about where it should be in size and scope. Now that the route structure is stabilized, he said Amtrak management must work to make the system more efficient.

Clearly, the Secretary's 1982 comments sound more sympathetic to NARP's views than the "corridor-only" comments reported in the December issue of *Nation's Business*. Although he continues to criticize the appropriations language which saved the "Cardinal," NARP feels that, if Amtrak management fully complies with that language, Amtrak will be able to make "good-conscience" FY '83 projections for the "Cardinal" which will find it meeting the criteria and eliminate the need for special language in the FY '83 appropriations bill.

While we're encouraged by the tone of the Secretary's latest comments, we certainly cannot agree that a system which does not serve Columbus, Louisville, Nashville, Oklahoma City, and Dayton is adequate, and we have repeatedly pointed out that the existing network would be more efficient if most of it had more frequent service.

We wish the Secretary would explicitly promise an expanded Amtrak system in return for an end to all requirements for excessive staffing on the trains.

### On the Other Modes

Lewis told the Andrews subcommittee that the auto industry is "a no-growth industry" which "will never again be what it once was" in terms of economic strength and dominance in the U.S. economy. He does not expect any auto bankruptcies, however.

He said improved mass transit would benefit motorists and he reported that the highway construction industry does not oppose his idea of earmarking for mass transit 1¢ of the 5¢/gallon federal gasoline tax increase which Lewis is promoting. (Since the Feb. News went to press, the White House has permitted Lewis to resume this crusade, though it seems clear the President, if he agrees to any gas tax increase, will label it a user charge rather than tax.)

Lewis said mass transit better serves the downtown areas of our big cities and that it is more cost-effective to modernize and rehabilitate mass transit systems than to build new expressways with costly land-acquisitions and garage construction. ■

**LATE FLASH! Pres. Reagan announced on Mar. 15 his intention to nominate to the Amtrak Board Indiana Gov. Robert Orr; former Amtrak Board Member and United Transportation Union President Emeritus Charles Luna; and Ross Rowland of Bernardsville, NJ, founder of the American Freedom Train Foundation, Inc.**