



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

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RETURN REQUESTED

Fast Passenger Trains Endorsed!

SEN. LAUTENBERG DEFENDS AMTRAK, TRANSIT



On Jan. 29, Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ), left, spoke at a Capitol Hill press conference to denounce the Reagan Administration's proposed Fiscal 1988 federal transportation budget, which would devastate mass transit and terminate Amtrak. Also speaking at the conference were representatives of NARP and allied groups. Speakers, top (left to right), were Gloria Hwang, League of Women Voters-National Capital Area; Harriet Parcels, NARP; Gerard Lederer, U.S. Conference of Mayors; Ross Capon, NARP; and Peter Carlson, Environmental Policy Institute. The conference was organized by Harriet Parcels, right.

—Photos by Georgianna Schallenger



CONEG Task Force Finds States Want Action "Now"; Road & Air Congestion Cited

The High Speed Rail Task Force of the Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG) released a report on Feb. 22 that echoes NARP and Commonwealth of Massachusetts arguments for improved intercity rail passenger service (see our Oct.-Nov. '86 lead story). The report said:

- intercity rail is "the transportation mode capable of accommodating the increasing demand [for capacity] in an environmentally beneficial way";
- government reports have identified Northeast Corridor (NEC) airports as having severe and worsening congestion;
- "in densely populated areas where the need for new highway capacity is greatest, the ability to meet that need is constrained by the lack of suitable alignments for new construction. . . .I-95 and the turnpikes serving the New York City region are already overloaded, with congestion worsening each year. . . .Even though the cause of this congestion is largely local traffic, intercity travel also suffers, and it is reasonable to assume that congestion and delays at the critical links used for intercity trips will increase.";

● "trip-time reductions are a short-term solution to improve rail service, for they both increase capacity and attract riders in a cost-effective manner. The CONEG Task Force focused on this goal, with particular attention to reducing Boston-New York City trip time to 3 hours, a time which transportation experts say would make rail, air and highway travel competitive."; and

● "The individual states need improvements in rail service now and are willing to build up to a futuristic system by incremental building blocks of activity. They do not want to await arrival of the most perfect systems. . . .While no information presented undercut the long term desirability of full electrification beyond its present limits on the Corridor, the Task Force is impressed with" other technologies which could produce high speed rail where it doesn't currently exist. "The most promising are: dual-mode popul-

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TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Daylight Time & Amtrak's new timetable start Apr. 5. "Silver Star" will operate 1:30 earlier southbound, and midwestern passengers must access it at Philadelphia via "Broadway Ltd." (Other Midwest-to-Florida connection option—"Capitol" to "Silver Meteor" at Washington—requires longer layover).

To improve reliability in the face of customary summer delays (e.g., heat speed restrictions, track maintenance programs, large passenger boardings/alightings, etc.), Amtrak has added time to summer schedules of Los Angeles-Seattle "Coast Starlight," Chicago-Oakland "California Zephyr," and Chicago-San Antonio "Eagle."

Amtrak trains operating over Baltimore & Ohio and Chesapeake & Ohio will be speeded up, as these railroads have just signed incentive-pay contracts with

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Rail Safety Update

The Jan. 4 "Colonial" wreck and general concerns about drugs and alcohol on the rails and throughout U.S. transportation continue to hold the nation's attention, as this chronology shows:

● Feb. 17: Rail Safety hearing before Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Subcommittee on Surface Transportation, J. James Exon (D-NE), Chairman.

● Feb. 18: Federal Railroad Administrator John H. Riley chairs day-long "special safety inquiry" seeking comments from rail labor and management about how FRA's Drug and Alcohol Use Rule worked during its first year. (Key provisions were effective Feb. 10, 1986.) NARP Exec. Dir. Ross Capon testifies.

● Feb. 18: Following a lengthy background segment on engineer stress (filmed largely on Burlington Northern's Denver-Sterling, CO line), *McNeil/Lehrer NewsHour* carries 14-minute interview by Judy Woodruff with Riley and Capon.

● Feb. 20: Hearing on bills requiring mandatory random drug testing of safety-related transportation employees before Senate Commerce, Science, Transportation Committee, Ernest F. Hollings (D-SC), Chairman.

● Feb. 25: Rail Safety Technology hearing before House Science, Space and Technology Subcommittee on Transportation, Aviation and Materials, Dave McCurdy (D-OK), Chairman. Capon testifies.

● Mar. 30: National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) plans public hearing in Baltimore as part of its investigation of the "Colonial" wreck.

Schedules and Stress: In the 3 appearances listed above, Capon said irregular, unpredictable, and long hours worked by mainline rail freight crews may increase the like-

SCHEDULING & STRESS: A PROBLEM THEN & NOW

While developing FRA's Alcohol and Drug Use Rule, FRA Chief John H. Riley issued a "Notice of Proposed Rulemaking," published in the June 12, 1984 *Federal Register* (pp. 24273 and 24284), which said, in part: "FRA does not disagree that some features of the life style of employees in road freight service on line-haul railroads may tend to aggravate, and may in some instances actually prompt, use of alcohol and drugs that affects job performance. . . ."

"FRA also agrees that, as pointed out by a Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers member, crew assignment practices on some railroad divisions result in disruptions of sleep patterns and may produce fatigue. . . . Several witnesses. . . singled out present crew calling practices as promoting uncertainty among employees and making it difficult for employees who may participate in events where alcohol may be served and then get caught by a short call [ed.: 2 hours' notice to report to work]. . . ."

"Accommodation of the railroad's need for flexibility in scheduling assignments, on the one hand, and the employee's desire to live a more 'normal' life, on the other, is a matter best left to collective bargaining. Labor and management could bargain for a system in which employees would be allowed to mark off without penalty when they receive genuinely unexpected calls that involve short notice. Restrictions could be placed on the number of such instances and their use during holiday periods."

Safety Sidelights

Before Amtrak Pres. Claytor began his Feb. 25 testimony, Subcommittee Chairman McCurdy (D-OK) said: "On a lighter note, those of us in Oklahoma are concerned about rail safety even though we don't have any Amtrak service." Claytor replied: "If we could just get a little more capital money, we'd get you some service."

Later, the FRA's Riley—who often must defend Pres. Reagan's "kill-Amtrak" budgets—said that it was easy to test the impact of freight safety improvements because, with the surplus of freight cars, "we can go out" and crash the cars, but this is not possible with passenger cars because Amtrak has. . . a "surplus of demand."

That neither Riley nor Transportation Secretary Elizabeth Dole believes in the President's Amtrak proposals is suggested by the Secretary's Feb. 19 statement to a House Appropriations subcommittee that her initial FY '88 budget request included \$478 million for Amtrak—not zero.

lihood of "human factor" accidents stemming from crew fatigue and from use of drugs and alcohol.

At FRA's hearing, Capon noted that Riley had identified crew scheduling as a serious problem in 1984 but urged management and labor to resolve it through collective bargaining (see *box*).

Responding to Capon's recitations from the 1984 FRA notice, Riley confirmed that management and labor still have made no progress on these matters, noting that "unrealistic" positions on both sides had stymied his own attempts to encourage negotiations. Looking out at an auditorium filled with rail labor and management officials, Riley warned that their continued failure to make progress would force him to act. He said the decision not to treat this matter in the Alcohol and Drug Use Rule (as, for example, with a mandated pre-work abstinence period) had been a "close call," governed partly by the difficulty of crafting a rule that would adequately address widely varying conditions across the nation.

Riley said he considered the issue important, had been "wondering if anyone would bring it up today," and thanked Capon for doing so. Riley repeated his warning on *McNeil/Lehrer* that evening: "Management and labor have been unable to agree and the fault is on both sides. If we have to do it for them, we will." He also said the Hours of Service Act may need changing: it limits most railroad operating employees to shifts not exceeding 12 hours and mandates minimum rest periods between shifts of 8 or 10 hours, but does not limit total hours or shifts worked in a month.

In explaining the lack of progress, Capon noted on television that railroads are "up against the wall in terms of competition from the trucking industry" and have no in-

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY (cont. from p. 1)

Amtrak and have agreed to tighter schedules. Time-savings: on C&O, :15 Richmond-Newport News ("Colonial"), :15 Chicago-Grand Rapids ("Pere Marquette"), and :30 Washington-Cincinnati ("Cardinal"); on B&O, :25 Washington-Pittsburgh ("Capitol Ltd.").

Main St. auto ramp to Amtrak's Kansas City station is now open (Jan. '86 News).

centive to make changes that would increase labor costs. Riley claimed that labor has been reluctant to address the hours-worked issue, since change would reduce the income of those employees wanting to work a very large number of hours per month.

Automatic Train Control: The television interview also covered automatic speed control and separation of Northeast Corridor (NEC) freight and passenger services (see *Jan. NARP News and Capon's Jan. 20 testimony before the Senate Appropriations Subcomm. on Transportation*). Riley said: "I think that everywhere the transmission system for automatic train control (ed.: ATC, incorporating speed control) is in the track, the locomotives ought to have the receivers so they can use it." At the Feb. 25 hearing, he estimated total cost for equipping NEC freight and commuter trains at \$30 to \$35 million, and Amtrak Pres. W. Graham Claytor Jr. said, "We asked FRA to impose the ATC requirement on freight and commuter users by a reasonable date."

As for nationwide service, Riley said the cost of putting ATC into the tracks is a prohibitive \$230,000/mile but that new technology within 18 months of on-line testing will cost about \$4,000/mile "and that is the future."

U.S. and Canadian railroads are jointly developing the radio-based system, Advanced Train Control System (ATCS), for North American application. Transponders (small transmitters in the roadbed) will locate the trains, and "have been in use for some time on the Swedish Railways where they are used to control the entire system. . . . According to Peter J. Detmold, executive director of the ATCS project, by 1990, the Union Pacific intends to have its entire mainline covered by ATCS." (Feb. *Modern Railroads'* report on ATCS, "Is CTC Obsolete?: Advanced Train Control threatens sales of new systems" by Bob Roberts).

In the wake of the January official report on a devastating Hinton, Alberta, passenger/freight train collision in Feb., 1986, the Canadian government plans to invest \$10 million to speed up installation of ATCS.

Passenger/Freight Separation: On camera, Capon noted that the key need for this is between Washington and Philadelphia, but that a short-term safety benefit resulted from Amtrak's recent imposition of a 30 mph speed limit on NEC freights between 6 AM and 10 PM, "which makes these freight trains on the high speed railroad among the slowest mainline freights in the country." Capon also noted Amtrak is trying to get the freights confined to night-time, "but the long-term solution is not to simply reduce the quality of freight service in the NEC, but to get those freight trains off of the Washington-Philadelphia mainline."

Capon noted that Secretary Dole's recent report said "there were safety benefits to getting those freights off [Amtrak's line]."

Woodruff: "So there's no real disagreement?"

Riley: "We did kind of the definitive study on this back in November, and laid out the options, and costed them out. We're going to take it as far as we can. There is a downside in certain areas of the Corridor, because the [ed.: B&O] track to which the freight would be shifted is track with multiple grade crossings and capacity problems."

W: "So this is something we're not close to having a decision on yet?"

R: "It's something that's being done day by day and piece by piece. You'll never get it 100%."

Passenger Car Interiors: On Feb. 25, Claytor testified that only 10 of 686 seats on the "Colonial" came loose and Amtrak has done "about all we can" to secure the seats. With

the seats more firmly secured, however, the problem of flying cushions has developed. Flying cushions have not hurt passengers, but they have piled up in the aisles, making it more difficult for passengers to exit the cars, and they have exposed metal on the seats. "We know how to fix the cushions," said Claytor, "and we will." In the meantime, Amtrak told NARP, the sheet metal that becomes exposed when the headrest is dislodged will be covered with a soft plastic safety edge.

Claytor said that on "about half" the cars which have microwave ovens, the ovens have been secured with new, stronger anchoring devices. Unfortunately, "Colonial" had some microwaves which had not yet benefitted from this program and some injuries were attributable to the ovens breaking loose. Amtrak told NARP that oven restraint installation should be complete by mid-summer.

"Luggage is the most difficult problem," said Claytor, because you want it to be secure but you also want people "who aren't very tall" to be able to put it on the rack. Amtrak will test placing lateral dividers in the coach baggage racks as well as having a metal rod and a cord run along the length of the baggage racks.

Alcohol and Drug Use: At his Feb. 18 hearing, Riley announced the results of the first year of mandatory post-

OPERATION RED BLOCK

Most railroads have some form of "bypass" agreement which gives employees who admit they have a drug or alcohol problem an opportunity to "turn themselves in," get treatment, and return to service. (The name refers to the bypass of Rule G, which states that use of alcohol or drugs on railroad property is grounds for dismissal.)

A broad consensus in rail labor and management agrees, however, that the most effective bypass program is the cooperative "Operation Red Block." First developed on Union Pacific, ORB agreements vary from railroad to railroad but generally involve (a.) an agreement signed by management and labor; (b.) the railroad's heavy reliance on an objective counselor's judgment in deciding whether or not to reinstate a treated employee, allaying fears that an employee would be held out of service arbitrarily; (c.) use of volunteer worker teams and intense publicity to make other employees aware of the teams and thus to encourage identification of troubled employees; and (d.) contacts between spouses of team members and troubled employees' families.

ORB takes advantage of the fact that fellow workers usually know better than supervisors which employees are troubled. ORB eliminates the reason employees previously did not "turn in" their troubled coworkers: fear that those coworkers would be fired. FRA Chief John Riley, a strong ORB supporter, says ORB has caused self-referrals to increase, presumably because employees have encouraged troubled coworkers to turn themselves in.

In February, Amtrak reached tentative ORB agreements with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and the United Transportation Union; the unions are now following their normal internal ratification processes. At the Feb. 25 House hearing, Riley expressed concern that so many railroads do not have ORB, pointedly noting that Conrail is among them and should be the next railroad to get it.

ANOTHER BIG CONCERN: AIR SAFETY

When Transportation Secy. Elizabeth Dole appeared before the Senate Appropriations Transportation Subcommittee to defend the administration's FY '88 DOT budget request, Chairman Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ) said Dole "appears in her accustomed role as gallant defender of what most of us here consider indefensible. . . .the Administration would destroy 2 key elements of our national transportation system—Amtrak and mass transit."

He said the budget request "continues the same OMB [Office of Management & Budget] vendetta against sound transportation policy. Transportation currently makes up only about 2.5% of total federal spending, but it is targeted for the second largest cut, \$15.4 billion, in the nondefense discretionary budget from FY 1988-FY 1992. It is based on the same doctrinaire economic ideology, which says that the value of any public program is what the direct beneficiaries get out of it. It persists in the same stubborn blindness to the national interest in a balanced, unified, and multimodal transportation system."

But he praised the "almost \$1 billion increase" proposed for aviation: "With over 2 near midair collisions every day, mounting delays, and rapid growth in the volume of aviation traffic, no one can dispute the need for strengthening the air traffic control system. Aviation safety is increasingly at risk. The need to begin restoring the margin of safety is a major concern of mine and of several other members of this subcommittee. Unhappily, the administration's budget does not reflect a comparable concern with rail safety. . . ."

Subcommittee Member Alfonse M. D'Amato (R-NY) was sharply critical of Donald D. Engen, the present Federal Aviation Administrator, and his predecessor, J. Lynn Helms. He said FAA probably needs 500 new controllers rather than the 225 proposed and accused FAA of "splitting hairs with OMB and in so doing they (FAA & OMB) are playing with the nation's air safety. . . .I do a lot of flying from New York to here alone, and sometimes it's frightening." As *Traffic World* (Mar. 2) reported, "He got no argument from Mrs. Dole who said 'we are continually assessing the situation' in regard to the number of controllers required to ensure air safety and 'we will be glad to work with you on this.'"

accident testing under FRA's rule: of 759 employees tested, 5% tested positive (1.2% for alcohol; 3.8% for illicit substances: marijuana, cocaine, and/or methamphetamines). Based on autopsies performed in prior years, Riley estimates the new rule has halved alcohol and drug use among railroaders. At the Feb. 25 hearing, he said he has "become progressively convinced that we can't get below 4% without going to random testing."

The Feb. 20 hearing focussed on such testing. Secretary Dole announced she would submit legislation requiring railroads to test randomly and giving FRA the power to take direct punitive action against individual rail employees. (Currently, FRA inspectors can only report violations to the railroads, and take action against the companies.)

Sen. John C. Danforth (MO), the ranking Republican, became increasingly angry and incredulous at 4 labor wit-

nesses (rail, truck, air, bus) when they argued against random testing on the grounds that it is an abusive intrusion into employees' private lives. Danforth asked what was so abusive about asking people to urinate into a cup once in a great while. When, after several attempts, he saw that he could not get the witnesses to change their stance, he concluded: "The position of these 4 witnesses is the most ludicrous I've ever heard in my 10 years in the United States Senate!"

Sen. James Exon (D-NE) followed Danforth by bluntly telling the labor witnesses their testimony was "not effective." Earlier, he had said: "I've always supported labor and labor has always supported me, but the unions are going to have to" embrace random drug testing. ■

FAST PASSENGER TRAINS (continued from page 1)

sion-diesel/electric and turbine/electric; tilt technology passenger cars. . . .A Task Force trip to Canada to see the world's first regular revenue operation of the advanced tilting vehicle (ed.: LRC) revealed a product of exceptional promise." (The tilt technology, when it works, lets trains negotiate curves at higher speeds.)

Those who are wary of the just-cited technologies may be disappointed at the lack of interest in electrification, which may partly be explained by the large number of major markets the Task Force suggested as ripe for 3-hour rail operations: not just Boston-New York (the nation's largest airline market in terms of passenger volume), but Albany-Philadelphia, Hartford-Atlantic City, and Harrisburg-New York as well.

We should also note two ironies. First, Connecticut is investing \$4 million in permanently removing from service one of 4 main tracks on the 31-mile S. Norwalk-New Haven segment of the Boston-New York (if you like, Hartford-Atlantic City!) mainline the Task Force sees carrying dramatically larger numbers of passengers in the near future. Connecticut DOT claims a one-time savings of \$10.5 million and annual savings of \$1 million. Second, there is a danger that electrification may be removed between Harrisburg and Philadelphia's western suburbs.

The important point, we hope, is that a number of governors are talking with each other and moving towards action to improve rail passenger service. As the Task Force noted, "a lively debate about the exact details of new high speed rail projects to be undertaken can be expected in the coming year."

The governors, meeting in Washington Feb. 22, asked the Task Force to continue its work and to implement the first 3 tasks it identified:

- verifying information collected about Swedish, Japanese, and Canadian equipment (seeking FRA and other funding for this task);

- "formation of an immediate action right-of-way program for congressional action" identifying projects that will improve "both high speed, long haul rail service and commuter and freight service along the Corridor," citing as an example a major New Rochelle track improvement listed in Secretary Dole's Nov. 1986 NEC report, and

- coordinating with the Northeast Corridor Commuter Rail Committee (NECRAC) to "encourage development of solutions to resolve conflicts between the needs of high speed, long haul services and commuter rail operations."

Longer-range tasks identified by the Task Force include testing LRC on the Shore Line north of New Haven and testing other new technology equipment (new turboliners and dual-mode) in the U.S. ■