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RETURN REQUESTED

Bush's Energy-Wasting Plans

PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR PRO-TRANSIT POLICIES

"Half of the American people believe U.S. troops are in the Middle East to protect oil supplies, and 3 out of 4 favor a dramatic redirection of the nation's energy policy, a national poll indicates.

"The poll was sponsored by 3 non-profit groups . . . the Alliance to Save Energy, the Union of Concerned Scientists and the Communications Consortium. It was conducted by Vincent Breglio, co-director of policy & polling for the 1988 Bush-Quayle campaign, and Celinda Lake, who was a national researcher for Michael Dukakis' 1988 presidential campaign . . .

"In the survey, 3 out of 4 said they would favor reducing demand through more fuel-efficient cars, car pooling and mass transit rather than increasing supplies by exploration and drilling off our coasts in wilderness areas. The poll showed broad support across the political spectrum for conservation measures, with 76% of conservative Republicans in favor, along with 79% of moderate to liberal Democrats."

—Boston Globe news story, reprinted in Jan. 15 Jnl. of Commerce

Anti-Rail-Transit Budget and Reauthorization

Some Money for Amtrak

"While U.S. troops are dying in the Middle East partly to protect growing U.S. dependence on imported oil, the Bush Administration has proposed a transportation budget with big increases for energy-wasteful, environmentally-damaging highway and aviation investments, a big reduction in Amtrak spending, and an uncertain transit level . . . NARP is particularly disappointed at the lack of funding for high-speed rail corridors after Congress appropriated \$179 mill. this year."

—NARP's Feb. 5 news release

"This budget, the first since FY 1985 which proposes funds for Amtrak, recognizes that passenger rail is an essential component of an integrated transportation system."

—Sec. of Transp. Samuel K. Skinner, Remarks prepared for Feb. 4 budget news conference

"By minimizing mass transit, the administration's plan sends the wrong signals on energy and the environment. Transportation is responsible for 62% of oil consumption; reducing single-driver commutes would help conservation. Likewise, auto pollution is a big reason why more than 100 U.S. cities are in violation of federal clean air standards."

—Journal of Commerce, Feb. 15 editorial

The need for a sharp turn towards energy-efficient transportation grew dramatically in recent months, but Pres. Bush's 1992-96 highway/transit reauthorization and 1992 budget reflect only modest change, including:

- no money for Amtrak corridor track improvements, despite growing evidence business travelers are eager to ride trains;
 - more pressure to raise transit fares, when the need to make transit more attractive is more obvious than ever; and
 - flat transit spending with the feds paying only 50-60% of project costs; rising highway spending feds pay up to 90%.
- Against two plusses—some money for Amtrak and a slight

PRINCESS DOMES TO AUTO TRAIN



—Photo by John Clark

One of 3 full-length dome cars used in California last year by Princess Tours is shown shortly after arrival at Amtrak's Sanford, FL Auto Train facility. Amtrak bought the cars last fall for \$2.9 mill. for first-class service on Auto Train (see Travelers' Advisory, p. 4).

increase over current levels for transit—consider these min-uses:

- **Priorities.** Railroad/transit spending gets a *smaller* share of federal transport dollars: FY '92 transit/railroad budget authority would be 13.2% of the rail/transit/highway/air total vs. 15.4% this year. Railroad spending would fall and transit fall in real terms, though federal clean air and disabilities acts requirements are increasing costs of providing Amtrak and transit services. But highway spending would grow at roughly the rate of inflation—aviation much faster.

The reauthorization envisions highway spending rising steadily to over \$20 bill. in 1996 (39% above the 1981 level); transit spending would be flat 1992-1995, rising a mere 2% in 1996.

- Funding for **rail transit “new starts”** drops from about \$400 mill. this year to \$300 mill. (plus \$50 mill. for unspecified other needs), including only \$88 mill. “for new projects that meet cost-effectiveness criteria.”

- **Federal funding ratios** would be stacked more heavily than ever against rail (see “Bribery?” box on p.3).

- The proposal to eliminate **transit operating subsidies** (see box) would strengthen pressures to raise fares and cut service—pressures already intense due to higher fuel prices and weakening ridership related to the recession.

- Maglev research money rises again in FY '92—\$15.5 mill. for Federal Railroad Admin. and \$8 mill. for the Army Corps of Engineers vs. \$10 mill. and \$2 mill. this year. Highway

research & development jumps from \$49 mill. this year to \$104 mill., mostly for “intelligent vehicle highway systems” (Oct.-Nov. News).

- Bush would **cut the gasoline tax 31% (5 cents)** after the 1995 end of the recently-enacted budget agreement (Dec. News).

- **The transit time bomb.** Except for \$80 mill./year for Washington’s Metro, Bush would “trust fund” the entire transit program, using up the \$7+ bill. surplus accumulated in the Mass Transit Account of the Highway Trust Fund since 1983.

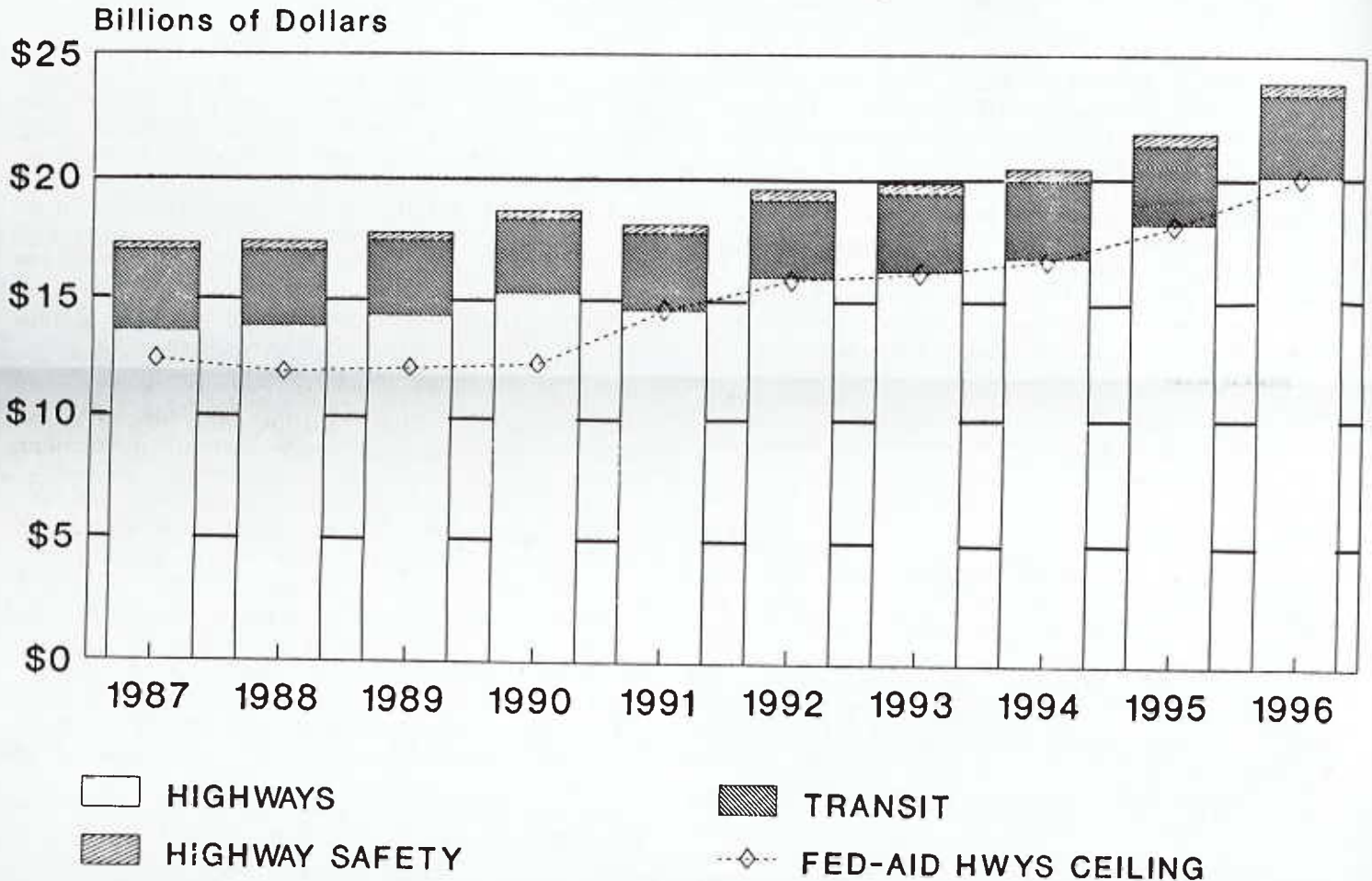
Today, transit is funded partly by general funds and partly—43% this year—by the Mass Transit Account. That account was designed to support a \$1 bill. a year program. If the administration cuts transit off from general revenues and spends a minimum of \$3.3 bill. a year on transit (far below the needs), the Account would be exhausted in 1996, when it could be difficult to restore transit’s claim on general revenues.

While the transit account disappears, Bush projects the highway account surplus will grow!!

- **Flexibility.** All transit funds could be transferred to roads (subject to certification that current transit needs are funded); some highway funds (urban/rural and up to 15% of National Highway System) could go to transit. The type of project would govern the funding ratio—i.e., use of NHS money for transit would mean a lower federal matching ratio.

DOT officials explain this simply as a management tool: if many road projects are ready one year, some transit funds

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM FUNDING In Budget Authority



Graph for U.S. DOT shows flat transit funding while highway spending grows, as called for in administration’s bill.

**President Bush's Proposed FY 1991
Transportation Budget**

Administration	BUDGET AUTHORITY (Millions)		
	FY '92 PROPOSED	FY '91 ENACTED	Change
	Nat. Highway Traffic Safety	\$ 292	
Federal Aviation	\$ 9,267	\$ 7,938	+16.7%
Federal Highway	\$15,979	\$14,605	+ 9.4%
U.S. Coast Guard	\$ 3,677	\$ 3,393	+ 8.4%
Urban Mass Transportation	\$ 3,329	\$ 3,259	+ 2.1%
Federal Railroad	\$ 566	\$ 905	-37.5%
Amtrak & N.E. Corridor	\$ 480	\$ 815*	-41.1%

*Appropriation includes \$11 mill. Interstate Transfer Funds for Empire Connection

could be used; if many transit projects are ready the next year, highway funds could be used.

With the new Clean Air Act poised to kill many planned urban roads, however, all road funds should be eligible for transfer to transit. This would eliminate the possibility that unspendable highway funds intended for cities might go to rural areas with no clean air problems—but no need for an all-road/no-railroad approach to infrastructure investment!

Amtrak in the Budget

Thanks in all probability to good work by Sec. Skinner and Federal Railroad Administrator Gil Carmichael, the White House and its Office of Management & Budget caught up with then-FRA Chief John Riley's 1986 congressional testimony (Mar. '86 NARP News). Riley, confronted with the impossible task of seriously defending a "zero-funding" proposal, offered a controversial list of ways to reduce but not eliminate Amtrak's subsidy needs.

FEDERAL "HIGHWAY BRIBERY"?

As Sec. Skinner said at the Feb. 13 White House unveiling of the administration's highway/transit legislation, "different federal shares" have been set "according to priorities."

Item: state and local government decisions are heavily influenced by the number of federal dollars a given amount of non-federal money produces.

FEDERAL SHARE		PROGRAM
Proposed	Present	
0%	(\$179 mill.)	Amtrak Corridor Improvements
0%	35-55%*	Amtrak 403(b) trains
0%	(\$500 mill.)	Transit operating subsidies for metro areas over one million population
0%	(\$10 mill.)	Local Rail Freight Assistance
35%	0%	Toll road conversion/construction
50%	Up to 75%	Rail transit "new starts"
60%	80%	Sec. 9 ("formula") transit funds
60%	75%	Rail transit modernization
60%	75%	Urban & rural highways (about 700,000 miles of "non-local" roads)
75%	80-90%	Highway bridge rehab/replacement
75%	75%	National Highway System (about 150,000 miles including the 45,000-mile Interstate system)
90%	90%	HOV lanes on Interstate system
90%	90%	Repairing and improving the operation of Interstate highways

*Amtrak now pays up to 50% of capital costs and 55% of first-year—35% subsequent-year—operating support.

AMTRAK BREAKS 6 BILLION PM MARK!

Amtrak reported 6.057 billion passenger-miles in FY '90, up 3.4% from FY '89 (a passenger-mile is one passenger carried one mile). This was:

- the 8th straight increase since 1982's 4.172 bill.;
- the 5th straight record year for Amtrak; and
- 21% above the 4,999 bill. private railroads generated on a much larger route structure in 1970, the last pre-Amtrak year.

Ridership was 22.2 million, up 3.7% from 1989's 21.4 mill. Ridership on "non-Northeast-Corridor" short-distance trains rose 10.6% with Amtrak benefitting from Greyhound's woes, more trains on the Milwaukee, San Joaquin, and Washington-Richmond lines, and from the response of business travelers to higher short-distance air fares and the realization that 80-mph trains have their uses.

In FY '90—as in FY '89—Amtrak's revenues-to-operating costs ratio was 72% (vs. 48% in FY '81). The ratio didn't rise because Amtrak passenger revenues, though up 7%, were below budget. Some major factors: New York-Florida services (including Auto Train) competed with heavy discounts from now-defunct Eastern Airlines; the Northeast and Empire Corridors were hurt by the recession.

A similar list underlies FRA's claim that the FY '92 operating subsidy could drop 47% with no impact on service. FRA contemplates saving an estimated \$91 mill. through legislation and another \$84 mill. from management efficiencies including work-rule modifications and contracting-out of work.

Legislative savings include \$15 mill. by requiring states to pay the full costs of 403(b) trains; \$17 mill. from repealing the Federal Employers' Liability Act, a move rail labor has successfully opposed (NARP News, July '88, p. 3; Apr. '89, p. 2).

But \$59 mill. of the legislated savings come from requiring transit authorities using Amtrak's Northeast Corridor to pay fully allocated costs—a devastating blow to agencies simultaneously facing Bush's proposal to eliminate federal operating subsidies. This proposal, pushed many times before, may still be a political non-starter considering who is on the appropriations subcommittees.

Essential Air Services (EAS)

The administration gives up on some political non-starters. Reagan/Bush budgets routinely proposed killing EAS, an operating subsidy preserving scheduled air service to many communities that would otherwise lose it. This year, in explaining Bush's proposed EAS increase, Deputy Sec. Elaine Chao said "there are communities which need the service" and referred to "certain battles on the Hill which have not proved productive in the past."

BUDGET LIMITS?

How can federal highway spending grow to over \$20 bill. a year in 1996 in light of the supposedly tight budget limits enacted a few months ago? DOT officials say, "We have OMB's blessing."

But the Feb. 14 Washington Post reported "Sen. Donald W. Riegle Jr. (D-MI) . . . said . . . it may be difficult for Congress to increase spending on highways and transit, in part because 'no one understands what the war is going to cost us.'"

"Wheels of Progress"

Herewith, our annual list of major rail passenger improvements planned to enter service over the next 2 years, and the dates of planned openings (subject to change).

1991

- Feb. 15—Los Angeles LRT (Blue Line) extension to 7th & Flower (future connection to the Wilshire subway). (This was accomplished as planned!)

- "Early"—Interim Caltrain extension San Jose-Gilroy (34 miles), 1 round trip, funded by Santa Clara Co.

- Apr. 7—Empire (alias West Side) Connection permitting Amtrak to consolidate all New York City service (including Empire Corridor) at Penn Station, ending station-changes for Albany-Long Island, Albany-Philadelphia, Syracuse-Miami, etc., passengers.

- Apr. 25—South San Jose light rail extension.

- May 1—MARC extends peak-hour commuter service Baltimore-Perryville, MD, 36 miles (between Aberdeen, MD and Newark, DE on the Northeast Corridor).

- May 1—Renovation construction complete at Amtrak's Philadelphia 30th St. Station. Includes new first-class lounge.

- May 11—Washington Metro U St.-Gallery Pl. 1.5-mile heavy-rail segment (Green Line).

- June 1—Washington Metro Van Dorn St.-King St. 3.8-mile heavy-rail segment (Blue Line).

- June—Construction and remodeling at Amtrak's Chicago Union Station complete. Includes new passenger waiting areas, first-class lounge.

- "Mid"—Amtrak service returns to Cincinnati Union Terminal, eliminating "Cardinal's" back-up move.

- "Mid"—San Diego's new light rail terminal at Santa Fe/Amtrak depot.

- "Mid"—New Jersey Transit Waterfront connection partially complete, allowing diesel trains from Bay Head and Long Branch, now terminating at Newark, to continue to Hoboken. Electric trains from Long Branch would still terminate at Newark or Manhattan.

- September—"Royal Eagle," privately-operated San Antonio (Amtrak Sta.)-Laredo-Monterrey service begins.

- October—Northern Virginia commuter rail (Fredericksburg/Manassas-Alexandria-Washington).

- November—Extension of remaining Caltrain commuter trains San Jose-Tamien (alias Alma Ave.) (2.5 miles) to intermodal connection with San Jose's light rail line.

- November—"North-of-the-wall" construction at Amtrak's Washington Union Station complete. Includes new first-class lounge, parcel room, high-level platforms on most upper-level tracks.

- "Late"—WMATA Anacostia-L'Enfant Plaza 2.9-mile heavy-rail segment, includes tunnel under Anacostia River (Green Line).

- "Late"—MARC off-peak service, Camden Line (Baltimore-Laurel-Washington).

1992

- "Early"—Chicago 5-block subway connection south of the Loop between Howard (13th & Roosevelt) and Dan Ryan (18th & Clark) lines. Will speed up Howard line and improve equipment utilization.

- April—Timonium-Baltimore (downtown Camden Station/Stadium complex) light rail trunk.

- "Mid"—Raleigh-Charlotte Amtrak round trip (morning west, evening back), under 403b arrangement with Amtrak.

- "Late"—Baltimore (Camden)-Patapsco Ave. (Baltimore's south boundary) light rail extension.

- "Late"—Chicago Southwest Line 9.2 miles above-ground heavy rail (Midway Airport—SE corner of Loop at Van Buren & Wabash; will run clockwise on Loop).

- "Late"—San Diego-Oceanside commuter trains (42 miles).

- "Late"—Los Angeles-San Bernardino commuter trains (60 miles).

- "Late"—Dallas-Irving commuter train (10 miles).

- "Late"—MARC off-peak service, Washington-Rockville-Brunswick.

- "Sometime"—"Royal Eagle" extended to Mexico City with sleeper service (still originating in San Antonio).

- "Sometime"—Muni's San Francisco State College light rail terminal complete; M/Oceanview line cut back to new terminal, J/Church extended there, partly using M's old route and partly the Balboa Park segment completed Feb. 1991 but never used. ■

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

The "Southwest Chief" became Amtrak's 3rd train (after "Capitol Limited" and "Coast Starlight") to offer glass, crockery and linen dining-car service Sep. 26. The next is expected to be on the former Princess Tours cars on "Auto Train" in March (See p.1 photo). Other dining cars have had improved non-crockery service, table menus and new dinner checks since Dec. Also, an experimental beverage can and newspaper recycling program is in progress on the Northeast Corridor.

Amtrak only accepts personal checks (exact amount of \$25-or-more purchase) with valid photo ID and one of 8 credit cards. On Jan. 1, Amtrak stopped accepting checks in California rather than adapt to a new state law forbidding the writing of credit card numbers on checks as a means of identification.

Amtrak's new first-class lounge, the Metropolitan Lounge, opened at New York's Penn Station in Sep.—M-F 5:30a-9:30p; Sa-Su 7:30a-10p—for Amtrak first-class passengers (all sleeper passengers except slumber-coach, all Metroliner Club & conventional train club passengers). The lounge has a comfortable 92-seat waiting area, train info monitors, fax, pay phones, complimentary beverages and newspapers, private meeting rooms and restrooms. Similar lounges planned for Washington, Philadelphia, Chicago and Los Angeles.

Amtrak moved its Columbia, SC stop Jan. 15, as a result of a long-planned CSX/Southern grade-crossing elimination project. The new station and platform, at the northeast corner of Greene & Pulaski Sts. (about 6 blocks south of the old station), cost over \$600,000 and has parking for 60. It was built and paid for by the city, which leases it to Amtrak. It was designed to be movable and adaptable for other purposes, as the city would like eventually to incorporate the station into a larger office building and also is mindful that "Silver Star" may some day leave Columbia. Carolina Assn. for Passenger Trains would like "Carolinian" extended to Columbia; the train could easily reach the new station on existing track, but would end up facing the wrong direction for through Savannah-Florida service. Therefore, rerouting "Silver Star" via Charlotte-Columbia still would require a new track connection at Farrow Rd. north of downtown, allowing use of the new station. (The city will renovate the old Amtrak station, built by Seaboard in 1906, and transfer it to the visitors' bureau.)