

News from the  
**National Association of  
Railroad Passengers**

Vol. 26 No. 9  September, 1992

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## Amtrak Authorization Advances

The House's Amtrak two-year reauthorization bill, H.R. 4250 (see Mar. News, p. 4), was passed by the full House under suspension rules (unrecorded vote) Aug. 11, 8-3. No amendments or negative statements were offered. The following made positive floor statements about the bill: Al Swift (D-WA), Don Ritter (R-PA), John D. Dingell (D-MI), J. Roy Rowland (D-GA), Rosa L. DeLauro (D-CT), Barney Frank (D-MA), Pat Williams (D-MT) and Donald J. Pease (D-OH). Making written statements were Norman F. Lent (R-NY), Larry LaRocco

(D-ID), Vic Fazio (D-CA), Tom Andrews (D-ME) and Pete Peterson (D-FL).

The Senate acted the next evening, Aug. 12, by passing its three-year Amtrak reauthorization, S. 2608 (see June News, p. 3), on a voice vote. Three amendments were made by:

- John F. Kerry (D-MA) to authorize \$220 million for the Northeast Corridor in FY '93 (S. 2608 had not addressed NECIP; H.R. 4250 had);

- Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY) to require Amtrak to develop a plan for redeveloping Manhattan's General Post Office into an intercity rail terminal (see July News);

- Nancy Landon Kassebaum (R-KS) to require all railroad main line locomotives to have "alerting" lights (i.e., ditch or strobe lights) in addition to the standard headlights they already have. Only Amtrak's newest locomotives have ditch lights, but all already have strobes. Kassebaum had been motivated by a multiple-fatality grade crossing accident in Kansas, and had originally tried to amend H.R. 5518 (DOT appropriations) on Aug. 5. Robert Dole (R-KS) spoke in favor of the amendment.

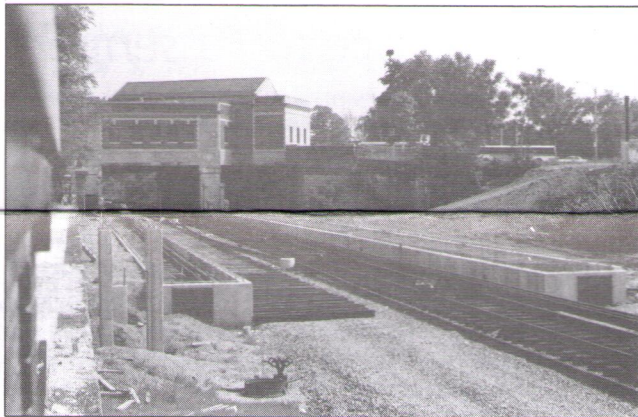
The following made positive floor statements on S. 2608: J. James Exon (D-NE), Ernest F. Hollings (D-SC), Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ), Paul Simon (D-IL), Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA) and Charles E. Grassley (R-IA).

### The Next Move

A DOT appropriations conference (H.R. 5518) is still expected after Congress returns from recess on Sept. 9. Conferees will be primarily those on the two Appropriations Committees. As for the Amtrak reauthorization, staff of the two Commerce Committees are expected to begin work on reconciling differences in H.R. 4250 and S. 2608 even sooner than Sept. 9. See the chart on the next page for major Amtrak-related funding figures for all four bills.

**On appropriations, please ask your legislators to work hard for the Senate-passed Amtrak and NECIP numbers!** On Amtrak authorization, both bills are pretty close to each other, but only S. 2608 has the language requiring a slot on the Amtrak Board of Directors representing the interests of rail passengers—a real consumer voice. Please ask for that Senate language to be retained. ■

### ST. LOUIS LRT TAKING SHAPE



—Photo by Barry Williams

Delmar Blvd. (above) will be one of the new Metro Link light rail stations when service begins in St. Louis in July 1993. Delmar was a Wabash Railway intercity passenger station until the late '60's. The building itself is a lamp store now, but may be used for passengers later. As seen in this May photo, tracks are being laid, with used rails purchased from the Illinois Central Railroad after it pulled up most of its double-track.

On June 29, the Bi-State Development Agency, which is building Metro Link, took delivery of its first light rail vehicle, which was assembled by Siemens-Duewag in Sacramento, CA. On July 10, a new maintenance facility was dedicated on S. Ewing Ave., between the proposed light rail stops at Grand Ave. and at Jefferson Ave. (proposed Amtrak intermodal terminal—this LRT stop will not open in 1993 with rest of system).



## COMPARING THE BILLS

(\$ millions)

	FY '92 Enacted	FY '93			FY '94		FY '95		
		H.R. 5518* (House)	H.R. 4250 (Senate)	H.R. 4250	S. 2608	H.R. 4250	S. 2608	H.R. 4250	S. 2608
Amtrak operations	331.0	331.0	331.0	389.2	331.0	321.5	331.0	—	331.0
New 403(b) services	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.5	5.0	9.5	7.0	—	10.0
Amtrak capital	175.0	74.0	165.0	300.0	300.0	309.3	300.0	—	300.0
Mandatory payments	145.0	146.0	146.0	150.0	146.0	157.0	**	—	**
Northeast Corridor	205.0	0.0	204.1	272.0	220.0	281.0	—	—	—

\*H.R. 5518 is FY93 DOT Appropriations bill.

\*\*"And such sums as may be necessary . . ."—S. 2608

### FROM THE HOUSE FLOOR, AUGUST 11

**Rep. Don Ritter:** "The cost for improvements to rail lines is a small fraction of the cost for constructing new multi-billion-dollar airports or highways. . . .

"When we talk about Federal subsidies for trains, I think we have to put it in some context with what we see for highways and what we see for airports. When we put it in that kind of context, trains have been relatively starved in terms of national infrastructure."

**Rep. John D. Dingell:** "The authorization levels in this bill are but a drop in the bucket compared to the billions of dollars that Members of Congress and the President supported in ISTEA. We consistently support billions of Federal dollars to be spent on highways, airports, and mass transit. But every time that we bring an Amtrak bill to the floor, it is all too predictable that there is substantial opposition to its modest funding levels. By doing so, we ensure that Amtrak can at best limp along as a second-class operation. We ensure that the traveling public, Amtrak's employees, and public policies, including furtherance of environmental laws and policies and support for an integrated and healthy national transportation system are disserved . . . Those who vote against Amtrak funding turn around and scratch their heads and wonder why the French, German, British and Japanese rail systems are able to outperform Amtrak without understanding the financial commitment made to passenger service in these and other countries."

—Both remarks from August 11 *Congressional Record*.

### NEXT STRIKE/LOCKOUT—YEARS AWAY

A future strike/lockout such as occurred in late June is unlikely at least until 1996. Railroad employees are either already under contract through Jan. 1, 1995 or presumably soon will be due to H.J. Res. 517 which Pres. Bush signed June 26; the lengthy Railway Labor Act procedures—which took four years in the recent cases—likely would keep all trains rolling for a few more years.

Changes to the Railway Labor Act seem unlikely; it basically reflects what labor and management have agreed to. The two sides are unlikely to agree on new major changes and enactment of such changes over either side's objections seems even less likely. Laws opposed by strong interest groups get passed only when even stronger opposing pressures develop, such as in response to the strike/lockout.

Thus a continuation of crisis-specific laws such as H.J. Res. 517 seems likely.



—NARP Photo by Scott Leonard

**Volunteers Kimiko Bonner and Margaret Monk providing assistance at the Travelers Aid counter at Washington Union Station. There has been a counter in the station since 1913.**

## Travelers Aid: Direct Service to Passengers

Though most passengers passing through big-city rail terminals may not give them a second glance, Travelers Aid counters have been a welcome presence there for decades. They provide assistance to passengers and others with all types of problems, great and small.

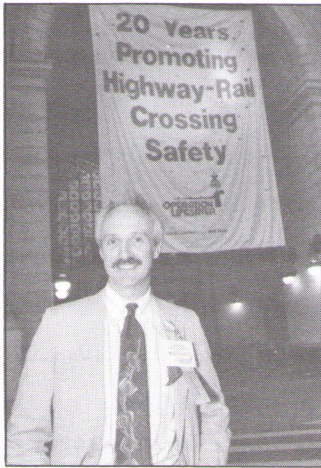
Mostly, the problems are small, though the answers very helpful. One recent morning at Washington Union Station, questions to the volunteers included how to find the Metro, how to take transit to College Park, MD and how to find the nearest mailbox. There was no emergency that day, but travelers who become ill, get mugged or lose their money, cannot speak English, are hearing-impaired and need to receive or send a message, etc. can get assistance from Travelers Aid.

One recent, recurring problem at Union Station has involved several non-commuters from Virginia coming into the city on the new Virginia Railway Express for the day. They became marooned at Union Station because VRE ticket machines don't accept cash, the individuals didn't have credit or cash machine cards with them, and Amtrak doesn't sell VRE tickets. Travelers Aid helped each of them, but has asked VRE to address this problem soon.

Because their services are free and their counters have long hours, Travelers Aid always needs contributions and volunteers. Contact your local society for more information. ■



# Operation Lifesaver: Crossing Deaths Down in '91



—OL photo

OL's Michael Gross

Operation Lifesaver (OL), a non-profit public information and education program concerned with grade crossing safety, reported that grade crossing fatalities were down last year. OL said Federal Railroad Admin. figures show that 1991 fatalities were 608, down from 698 in 1990 and 801 in 1989.

May 13 was declared National Operation Lifesaver Awareness Day, in the middle of National Transportation Week (May 11-15). Safety-awareness events were scheduled around the country, including at Wash-

ington Union Station, where Federal Railroad Administrator Gilbert E. Carmichael spoke.

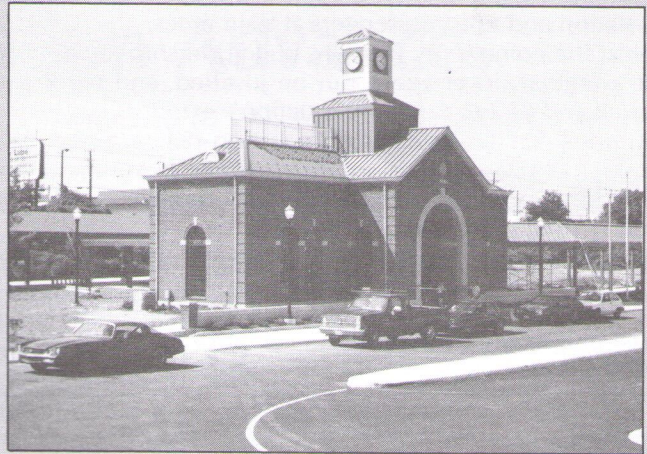
Carmichael noted there are about 200,000 miles of rail lines in the U.S., and 200,000 public grade crossings—an average

one per mile! He said the FRA and the Federal Highway Admin. have a national goal of eliminating 25% of those crossings, thereby increasing both highway and rail safety.

Also appearing was actor Michael Gross, who is OL's national spokesman, owner of New Mexico short line Santa Fe Southern and a NARP member. As the grandson of a Santa Fe switching foreman and as a part-time railroad employee in college, Gross has an extensive railroad background he hopes to draw upon when he takes OL's message into Santa Fe area schools, teaching children the dangers of trespassing and playing on the tracks.

OL has a well-regarded series of videos on grade crossing and pedestrian safety, including "No Exit," which has won five awards. Contact OL at 1420 King St., Ste. 401; Alexandria, VA 22314; 800/537-6224 (703-739-0308 if calling locally) to ask about the videos or to get information on the 49 state-level OL programs (which always need volunteers). ■

## TRAVELERS' ADVISORY



—NARP photo by Ross Capon

Virginia Railway Express commuter service Washington-Manassas began June 22; to Fredericksburg July 20. Shown is new station at Woodbridge.

Effective July 17, VIA Rail Canada offers late train travel credits: "Credits help us regain confidence of our clientele, and stimulate repeat business that we may otherwise lose, sometimes for life. Guests will give VIA another chance if they realize we consider such delays unacceptable," says VIA bulletin #9203H. "The credits apply no matter what the reason for delay." We hope Amtrak will monitor the progress of this innovative VIA program. For policy details, send \$1 and s.a.s.e. to NARP office.

### Transit/Commuter Rail

Amtrak took over operation of the San Francisco-San Jose Caltrain commuter service July 1; most runs were extended two miles to the new Tamien station in South San Jose (interchange with Santa Clara LRT), including two rush-hour, weekday-only round trips which were extended over the entire 30-mile San Jose-Gilroy segment. Southern Pacific had operated S.F.-San Jose since 1864.

San Diego LRT service was extended one stop (5 blocks) north from the Santa Fe/Amtrak Depot to County Center/Little Italy July 2.

## CROSSING ACCIDENTS AFFECT PASSENGERS, TOO

Safer grade crossings also mean safer passenger trains. While passengers are seldom killed in grade crossing accidents, injuries and serious damage can still result. Some examples from recent years:

- Sept. 28, 1989. Amtrak's "Crescent" strikes a fire truck responding to an emergency call at Calverton, VA and derails, injuring 107 and killing 2 volunteer firemen.

- Dec. 19, 1989. An Amtrak "San Joaquin" near Stockton, CA strikes a tractor-trailer loaded with chocolate syrup and derails, injuring 46 passengers and killing 2 crew and the driver. There was heavy fog; the truck had broken through a lowered crossing gate.

- May 3, 1990. Amtrak's "City of New Orleans" strikes a logging truck at Durant, MS and derails, injuring 20 passengers, 4 crew and the truck driver.

- June 21, 1991. The American European Express strikes a stalled truck near Monon, IN and derails. There were no serious injuries, but AEE will say later in the year that the cash flow problem resulting from a temporary service suspension in the wake of the accident contributed to its decision to suspend service altogether.

- Feb. 11, 1992. A truck strikes the side of a moving VIA Rail train at Coteau du Lac, P.Q., injuring 48 passengers and killing 4 passengers. The driver was uninjured.

- Apr. 29, 1992. Amtrak's "Colonial" strikes a dump truck loaded with sand at an unprotected crossing near Newport News, VA and derails, killing the truck driver and injuring 53.

- July 28, 1992. Amtrak's "Sunset Limited" strikes a truck carrying hydrochloric acid at Crowley, LA. The truck ignites; 25 are hospitalized for toxic fume inhalation.

Such serious accidents involving passenger trains are few. More typical are accidents involving automobiles which do not cause serious damage to the train or cause it to derail. Nevertheless, prevention efforts like OL's are important and appreciated by railroad passengers.



## Fostoria Helps With Depot

A ceremony to dedicate Fostoria's renovated Amtrak station was held Mar. 21, capping a six-week community effort of 1600 hours of labor by 50 volunteers. Before that, there was only platform, parking and lights for passengers using the "Broadway Limited," which began serving Fostoria Nov. 11, 1990. The city had contributed \$67,000 toward those basic facilities, but community leaders then set their sights on the old B&O station.

Greg Peiffer, president of WFOB-AM radio in Fostoria, told *Travel Weekly* (Mar. 23), "I went down there several mornings and saw these people standing on the platform in the cold. It was just casting a bad light on Fostoria."

So Peiffer negotiated a lease of part of the station from owner CSX Transportation. WFOB, which pays the rent, set up a radiothon at the station raising \$5,000, and recruited the volunteers. The leased part of the station was renovated into an Amtrak waiting room with pay phone, restrooms and coffee. Old woodwork was restored, walls painted, benches installed and photographs put up. WFOB's staff checks the station during the day. WFOB hired two caretakers to open the station and assist passengers at train times.

Next the community wants to build ridership to the point that a regular ticket agent can be justified, and work with Amtrak and CSX to tidy up the station's exterior.

Atmore, AL, has a similar radio station-rail passenger relationship: WASG regularly broadcasts from the Amtrak station around the morning arrival of the "Gulf Breeze," and interviews waiting passengers. ■

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### MORE ON H.R. 4414

**The latest co-sponsors to Rep. Al Swift's intercity passenger rail trust fund bill are John Miller (R-WA) and Peter A. DeFazio (D-OR)—also see May News.**

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### MISS PINKY'S LAST WAVE

"The ride through southeast Dallas became more bleak during January as we learned of the passing of rail fan Pinky Epperson. From her backyard, Pinky, a local celebrity (with Amtrak rider circles) performed the service of unofficial greeter of rail passenger for the City of Dallas.

"Spotting Pinky, standing outside her pink-trimmed house, waving a pink handkerchief, and usually dressed in pink, was one of those things you naturally did while riding the 'Texas Eagle.' Pinky was always the first Dallasite to welcome you home after a long rail journey and one of the only ones to wave goodbye after you left the station . . ."

—*The Clearance Card*, Southwest Railroad Historical Society, spring 1992.

"During dinner, Conductor [Zeb] Love announces a special sight in downtown Dallas, Pinkie's Crossing. Pinkie is an old black woman who has lived in the same house near the tracks since 1905. She has come out to give a 'big ole Texas wave' to the train every day for the past sixteen years. We are told to watch for members of her family who stand in for her when she can't get out of the house . . . The engineer sounds a special toot which Pinkie can hear and recognize even when she hasn't left the house. As instructed by Conductor Love, every passenger on the left side of the train waves back . . ."

—*Making Tracks*, by NARP member Terry Pindell, Grove Weidenfeld, New York, 1990, pp. 192-193 (see May '91 News).

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Amtrak station at Fostoria, OH.

—WFOB photo

### COMMUTER TOUR PACKAGES

Many travellers are familiar with the tour packages available through Amtrak, but how many know there is a commuter rail operator offering them as well? This innovative operator is one of the newest in the U.S., Tri-Rail in South Florida.

Tri-Rail was the line rail transit detractors loved to hate after it opened on Jan. 9, 1989. Daily ridership grew slowly, only to 3000 by the end of 1989, but is now over 10,000. Over time, Tri-Rail added midday and Saturday trains. The tours were added to beef up off-peak ridership. Over 75,000 passengers have taken Tri-Rail tours since the program began in Apr. 1990.

The only year-round destinations are to two shopping areas, but past destinations include the Metrozoo, Miami Seaquarium and Port Everglades (for six-hour cruises). Tri-Rail plans to restore some of the other tours in the winter season, when demand has been highest. Most tour prices include connecting transportation. More information: 800/TRI-RAIL (FL only) or 305/728-8512 (ask for Customer Service).

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### TAX DOLLARS HELPING YOU LOVE PROJECTS THAT HURT YOU!

California Department of Transportation has a "seminar that easily could be titled 'How to Build a Freeway through Some Citizens' Back Yards—and Have Them Like It'. The official title: 'Systematic Development of Informed Consent.'

"Translation? It's 'a 20-hour community relations course in how to get things done in a hostile world,' according to a Caltrans leaflet for the seminars. . . . 'The course is appropriate for anyone managing a major Caltrans effort . . . as long as it is likely to generate opposition. The course covers why it is so difficult to build major projects, how opponents may try to stop you . . . and how to interact with extreme opponents to secure their consent even when the project is likely to do them serious harm.' . . ."

"Gene Berthelsen, the Caltrans planner who leads the seminars . . . is also the Caltrans official in charge of a new study involving the long-contested Sacramento beltway proposal . . . 'I thought we buried that thing, but it keeps coming up like a hand out of the grave,' [said] Jim Notley, an Orangevale resident who has spent nearly two decades fighting Caltrans' efforts to build a beltway connecting I-80 with Highways 50 and 99."

—*The Sacramento Bee*, Feb. 22 news story

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