

News from the

National Association of Railroad Passengers

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1

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## Lott, Daschle Pledge Early Action on HSRIA in 2001

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-MS) and Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD) pledged early action next year on the High Speed Rail Investment Act. What follows is from the December 15 *Congressional Record*:

Daschle: "Although there are a lot of good things in the [omnibus appropriations] bill we are about to debate, there is one glaring omission—legislation to provide Amtrak with the authority to issue tax credit bonds for capital improvements...Amtrak supporters will not give up on passing [HSRIA]...The majority leader and I have discussed and agreed on how best to proceed..."

Lott: "I know there is a lot of...support for Amtrak. But let me remind my colleagues, I am one of those supporters. I have been an active supporter of the national rail passenger system...I think we need it...I want to commit to our colleagues here that I will join with Senator Daschle in cosponsoring this legislation next year...I believe we can do it early next year. I am not talking about having it languish; I am trying to get movement on it in the first three months, six months..."

Sen. Joseph Biden (D-DE), who had threatened a pro-HSRIA filibuster, called the Lott/Daschle agreement—which his efforts helped bring about—"good enough for me." ■

### TURBOTRAIN ON TOUR



—Donald M. Stewart, Jr.

NARP Member Richard Beadles, Vice President of the Virginia High Speed Rail Development Committee, masterminded the superb Southeast High Speed Rail Conference and Expo, Richmond, Nov. 8-10. Behind him is a nicely refurbished New York State RTG turbotrain, part of a big Amtrak display at the Virginia Science Museum (ex-Broad St. Station) during the conference. The conference heavily involved business leaders fairly new to the issue, eloquently answering complaints that such conferences often involve "preaching to the converted." More on page 3.

## "You Get What You Pay For"

That's what Gov. Tommy Thompson (R-WI), chairman of Amtrak, told reporters on the Acela Express inaugural. It helps explain why just one U.S. route exceeds 110 mph and why Europe and Asia have better passenger rail.

U.S. taxpayers have paid for highway and aviation systems that are laden with problems largely because we have not (yet) paid for a modern rail system. Amtrak's critics often cite the "huge" \$23 billion federal grants to Amtrak since 1971, then contrast air travel growth with Amtrak's. [Consider, for example, 1980 and 1999 passenger-miles, billions: Amtrak 4.5 and 5.3; domestic aviation 204.4 and 484.5.]

Rarely does anyone cite multi-year highway spending totals (much less a 29-year total), yet *federal* highway funding will be \$31 billion in fiscal 2001 alone; in 1999, highway funding at *all* levels of government totaled about \$117 billion.

### Similar Freight Problems

Generous highway spending also has a big impact on freight. Railroads have lost ground since deregulation supposedly liberated them in 1980. Rail revenues grew by \$8 billion (from \$28 billion to \$36 billion); truck revenues by \$295 billion (\$155 billion to \$450 billion). Also, railroads don't have enough track to grow their business significantly, or cash to

build more track (let alone replace their aging bridges).

*The dismal revenue trends were brought to our attention by Randolph Resor of Zeta-Tech Associates (railroad consulting firm of Cherry Hill, NJ). The numbers above are from Consultant Arthur Shoener (Jan. '01 Trains, p. 42).*

Here, the "get what you pay for" principle shows what happens when an infrastructure-owning industry tries to compete with an industry that uses publicly owned infrastructure on which political leaders love to spend money.

Chairman Rob Krebs of BNSF, widely held as the nation's best run large railroad, said BNSF will "stop laying a second track along the last single-track portion of its [Chicago-Amarillo-Los Angeles, not used by Amtrak] main line [and] will halt a plan to add a second track to portions of its Minneapolis-Seattle main line" (Oct. 11 *Washington Post*).

Some now see the need to change how rail is treated. Motorists comment more often on the huge trucks they encounter; big air traffic delays are common. When the damage done to sound public policy by mode-specific trust funds becomes clear to more people, we may yet see a truly balanced transportation investment policy. Meanwhile, billions for roads and air—and peanuts for rail—produces "what you pay for." ■



# Wheels of Progress

Here is our annual list of major rail passenger improvements planned to enter service and the dates of planned openings (if available). Dates and projects subject to change. *NARP News* regularly reports actual start-up dates.

## 2001

- **Jan. 13**—Washington Metro Green Line Anacostia (D.C.)-Branch Ave. (Prince George's Co., MD), completes currently designated system.

- **Feb.**—Amtrak moves into restored Worcester (MA) Union Station. MBTA commuter trains moved there in 1999.

- **Feb. 28**—Amtrak adds second-tier of weekday Acela Express trains—Washington-New York non-stop (morning north, afternoon south) and Boston-New York (morning south, evening north). The first tier, a Washington-Boston weekday round-trip (morning north, evening south) began Dec. 11.

- **Early**—New Jersey Transit City Subway (light rail) extension Franklin Ave. (Newark)-Bloomfield Ave., 0.5 mi.

- **Apr. 13**—Boston-Portland Amtrak service, four daily round-trips, funded by State of Maine. Supplementary bus round trips planned as well, with interchangeable tickets. This service was delayed most recently from November 1999 due to limited track capacity at Boston North Station related to Central Artery highway construction.

- **Apr.**—Amtrak adds further weekday Acela Express trips.

- **Spring**—New Martinez (CA) Amtrak station, next to old one.

- **Spring**—VTA (San Jose) Tasman East light rail line, Baypointe (N. 1st St.)-I-880 (1.9 mi).

- **May**—MetroLink light rail extension East St. Louis, IL-Belleveille Area College (17.4 mi.).

- **May**—Additional Amtrak Capitol Corridor service, bring total round-trips to six San Jose-Oakland, nine Oakland-Sacramento, three Sacramento-Roseville.

- **June**—Amtrak adds first weekend Acela Express service and more weekday trips; the first trains that will honor the NARP 10% travel discount.

- **Summer**—Portland (OR) Streetcar line (2.5 mi.), running generally north-south on 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> Ave., from 5<sup>th</sup> Ave./Mill St. to 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave./Northrup St.; intersecting Tri-Met's east-west MAX light rail line (but about 6 blocks from Union Station).

- **Sept.**—Full service begins on New York City Transit's new 0.3-mile connection between Queens Blvd. trunk line and 21st St./Queensbridge (current B-Q terminus). Limited E-F service on new line could start Jan. 2001, however.

- **Sept.**—New Jersey Transit commuter rail Montclair Connection, allowing direct Manhattan access from Boonton Line.

- **Sept.**—Portland Airport MAX light rail line, 5.5 miles from Gateway Transit Center to the airport.

- **Oct.**—Trinity Railway Express extends commuter trains from Richland Hills west to downtown Fort Worth. Trains use platforms at future site of intermodal terminal at 9<sup>th</sup> & Jones (Sept. '99 *News*), and restored Texas & Pacific building on Lancaster Ave.

- **Oct.**—Dallas DART Blue Line light rail branch Mockingbird-Northwest Hwy.

- **Fall**—New Tacoma rail station (Tacoma Dome); Sounder commuter rail extension Tacoma-Lakewood (9 mi.).

- **Nov.**—Amtrak space at Kansas City Union Station opens (main restoration project completed Nov. '99).

- **Nov.**—Salt Lake City TRAX East-West line, Delta Center-University of Utah (2.5 mi.).

- **Dec.**—MARC Brunswick Line commuter rail branch, Point-of-Rocks to Frederick, MD (13.5 mi.).

- **Late**—Los Angeles-Las Vegas Talgo train service, operated by Amtrak and Nevada DOT.

- **Late**—New Jersey Transit Newark Airport station on Northeast Corridor, with monorail shuttle to airport terminals.

- **Sometime**—Miami Metrorail extension, Okeechobee-Palmetto Expressway (1.5 mi).

- **Sometime**—New Albany-Rensselaer station built by Capital District Transportation Authority. Directly south of the current, 20-year-old building, the \$43-million station will have four times the floor space of current Amtrak station.

- **Sometime**—Regular 90-mph Amtrak service on the Chicago-Detroit line in southwest Michigan, using experimental positive train control signal system, installation of which was completed in summer '99 (Sept. '96 *News*). NARP has urged Amtrak to adhere to its previous plans to run this line with some of the Amtrak 110-mph diesel locomotives as soon as the signal system can support 110 mph operation.

- **Sometime**—Amtrak moves into the intermodal terminal in downtown South Bend, IN (just east of old Union Station).

## 2002

- **Feb.**—Phase 1 of the Richmond (VA) Main St. Station intermodal terminal project completed. Amtrak Acela Regional Newport News trains begin calling there (they pass by now without stopping), in addition to Richmond Staples Mill.

- **Spring**—Tampa-Ybor City streetcar circulator line (serving convention center, Florida Aquarium, and other attractions).

- **Apr.**—New Jersey Transit Hudson-Bergen light rail extension, Newport/Pavonia (Jersey City)-Hoboken terminal.

- **Apr.**—Denver RTD light rail Central Platte Valley spur (1.8 mi.) West Auraria-Broncos stadium-Pepsi Center arena/Six Flags Elitch Gardens-Union Station (opened to stadium for special events in Sept. '01).

- **June**—New Jersey Transit Secaucus Transfer station, allowing for connections between NJT's Hoboken lines and NJT's Northeast Corridor services.

(continued on page 4)



Worcester (MA) Union Station was vacated by Amtrak in 1972, but after a recent renovation, Amtrak will soon return (see Feb. 2001). The station was completed in 1911, but the twin minarets were removed in 1926 (and now rebuilt).



## 20 Years of California Progress

"If the train image is extended to the bus by means of coordinated service and marketing, many people will ride the bus who otherwise would not." That's what Gregory Thompson (now at Florida State University) argued in the 1970's, before "seamless" became such a well used word in transportation.

Thanks in no small measure to the work of Leif Erik Lange, a longtime former NARP Board member who served as Vice President in 1998-2000, California has amply proven the validity of Thompson's view, and given rise to the healthy nationwide trend of making transfer between bus and rail increasingly convenient.

Year 2000 saw the 10th anniversary (June 5) for California voters' approval Proposition 116, the citizens' rail bond initiative and the 20th anniversary (September 15) for start-up of the first Caltrans feeder bus route.

The bus route—Sacramento-Stockton—began after Lange, then a Caltrans rail planner, helped document the poor performance of that route's Greyhound connections that left many rail passengers stranded over the July 4 weekend. Caltrans management, shocked into action, finally agreed to implement dedicated buses. A second route (the important Bakersfield-Los Angeles link) was added in July 1981, and the bus program has grown steadily since.

Lange later joined the Assembly Transportation Committee staff and was instrumental in assisting legislators to enact laws that led to a renaissance in California rail travel, including budget augmentations for increased Amtrak service, broad authority to use gas tax funds for Amtrak purposes, and corridor capital needs studies.

At the same time, the Train Riders' Association of California (TRAC) engaged in discussions with the Planning and Conservation League, a statewide environmental organization, to sponsor a citizens' rail and transit initiative bond measure. TRAC and PCL developed a broadly-based \$1.99 billion funding program with projects in every county, and gathered more than 700,000 signatures to successfully place the initiative on the June 1990 ballot as Proposition 116, when it was approved by 53% of California voters.

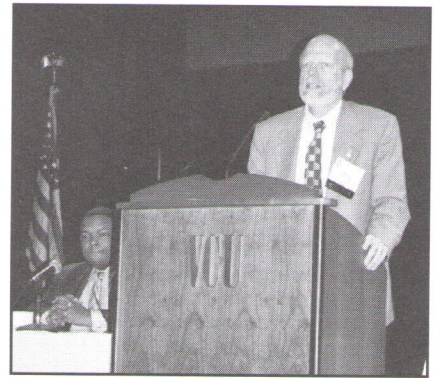
The initiative provided funding for right of way purchases, track and facility improvements, and the purchase of locomotives and passenger cars by the State of California. Approval of the initiative provided the impetus for establishment of the highly successful Capitol Corridor in Northern California, expanded service in the San Joaquin and San Diegan corridors, and allowed the development of Southern California's Metrolink and Coaster commuter rail systems.

Encouraged by the publicity of the citizens' initiative, the California Legislature placed a separate \$1 billion rail bond measure on the June 1990 ballot, which voters also approved. Thus, almost \$3 billion became available for rail development on one day. Most of that has been spent, but Gov. Gray Davis seems supportive of additional major funding. ■



Leif Erik Lange

**RICHMOND CONFERENCE:** NARP's Ross B. Capon was a session moderator once and presenter twice. He moderated (and was a presenter for) a panel discussion of the impact of the elections on passenger rail. Marcus Mason, Director of High-Speed Rail Corridors at Amtrak (at left), was another panelist.



—Donald M. Stewart, Jr.

## IARO, Southeast Conferences

Two important passenger-rail conferences happened this fall: the first-ever-in-USA annual meeting of the British-based International Air-Rail Organisation (IARO), October 16-18 in Washington, and the Southeast High Speed Rail Conference, November 8-10 in Richmond (photos above and on page 1).

IARO <[www.iaro.com/](http://www.iaro.com/)> members include operators of most of the world's airport railways. The Chief Executive Officers of five airport railways were present—possibly a first!

Meeting publicity noted that North America has no such railways—just transit lines that do not cater to upscale airline travelers or to any traveler trying to connect between air and *intercity* passenger rail. That's changing, thanks to Newark International Airport rail station (page 2, col. 2) and the interest of Continental Airlines (one of three airline presenters at the conference) in Amtrak and NJ Transit rail connections.

The conference also saw an airing—in separate segments on separate days—of the apparently ongoing debate about how to link Kennedy Airport with Manhattan. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey did a major presentation of its well advanced plans to build a system that will require an en-route transfer, while American Airlines argued strongly the need for a single-seat ride.

Matthew A. Coogan, a U.S. consultant, presented data from a paper soon to be published by the Transportation Research Board, showing the rail and public transport market shares for *passengers* at the world's major airports. (A later study will focus on aviation employees.) The world record is Oslo—43% rail, 63% all public transport—which has the advantage of being brand new and designed with the railway in mind. Close behind, in terms of all public transport, are Hong Kong 60%, Tokyo 59% and Geneva 45% (35% rail plus 10% bus). The western terminal for many Swiss intercity trains is at the Geneva airport, which thus has direct rail service to most of the country—as does Zurich (34% rail plus 4% bus).

The top public-transport share in the U.S. is 23% (bus only) at Las Vegas; the U.S. top rail share—14%—is at Washington's Reagan National Airport, thanks to the beautiful, new terminal that incorporates the transit station. (It was too costly to move the rails to the terminal, so the terminal moved to the rails!)

The conference ended with a tour of BWI, courtesy of Amtrak and the Maryland Aviation Administration, two agencies now working to coordinate a planned new rail station and a people-mover linking it to the airport. ■



- **Summer**—Dallas DART light rail extensions—Red Line Park Lane-Richardson; Blue Line Northwest Hwy.-LBJ Fwy.
- **Fall**—Rail station on Northeast Corridor at Warwick, RI, serving the Providence's area's airport, T. F. Green. A bus shuttle will be used between the station and airport terminal until a 0.3-mile people mover is built. The station will serve Amtrak and, later, an extension of MBTA commuter rail service from downtown Providence.
- **Fall**—BART extension Colma-Millbrae (connecting with Caltrain), with spur to San Francisco International Airport.
- **Fall**—Dallas DART Blue light rail extension, LBJ Fwy.-Garland.
- **Fall**—San Juan Tren Urbano light metro (10.7 mi.), Sagrada Corazon-Guaynabo-Bayamon.

## AMTRAK NETWORK GROWTH STRATEGY

Amtrak remains hopeful the *Crescent Star* (Meridian-Fort Worth *Crescent* section) will begin in 2001. It depends on reaching final agreements with Union Pacific and Kansas City Southern, regardless of the final choice of routes west of Shreveport.

Amtrak/Norfolk Southern talks on the Chicago-Cleveland-Pittsburgh-Philadelphia *Skyline Connection* continue. There is speculation that NS' interest in the deal—which also would involve expanded Northeast Corridor freight rights—has cooled a bit in response to weakening freight traffic and the difficulties of running freight on the Corridor.

Establishment of service along Florida's east coast is the subject of continuing negotiations between Florida East Coast Railroad and Amtrak. Negotiations have proceeded very favorably over the past 30 days.

Amtrak Intercity President Ed Walker told NARP that other Network Growth Services (listed in Mar. '00 News) will not begin until it is absolutely clear that the express traffic assumed when they were planned is realistic and will be profitable.

- **Late**—First leg of five planned for Nashville RTA commuter rail system; this one extending 31 miles from Nashville east to Lebanon, TN.
- **Late**—Tacoma Link light rail, downtown-Tacoma Dome (connection to commuter rail, Greyhound), 1.6 mi.
- **Sometime**—Sounder commuter rail extension Seattle-Everett (33 mi.).
- **Sometime**—Port Authority AirTrain light rail line, Kennedy Airport-Howards Beach (connect with A subway), in Queens, New York, 3.3 mi.
- **Sometime**—Dallas McKinney Ave. car line extended northeast to DART Cityplace station (open Dec. 2000). ■

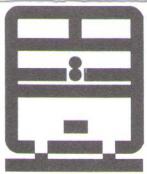
## TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

**Broken connection**—The connection between the northbound *Texas Eagle* and westbound *Empire Builder* was quietly broken by Amtrak on December 7. Amtrak said it was because the connecting van was having trouble making the tight 15-minute connection at Springfield, IL, and 5-minute connection at Columbus, WI. However, the *Eagle* schedule that forced these tight connections has only been in place since October 30, when the schedule was shifted 30 minutes later. Amtrak told NARP the shift was part of the agreement that allowed expanding the *Eagle* to daily service, and efforts are under way to change the schedule to permit restoration of the connection.

## ANOTHER NARP REGIONAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Reg. 4 (DC, MD, VA, WV); Sat., Mar. 17, 2001; Baltimore, MD; Baltimore Streetcar Museum, 1905 Falls Rd.; 12:30-4:00 pm; contact: Jim Churchill, <amtraq@aol.com>.

**AMTRAK 2001 YEAR-AT-A-GLANCE WALL CALENDARS** from Amtrak Calendar; PO Box 7717; Itasca, IL 60143. \$6 for 1, \$10 for 2 (check, money order or credit card), discounts for more. See <www.amtrak.com>.



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