



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

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RETURN REQUESTED

Amtrak Mobbed With Riders!

Americans are taking to the rails this summer in swarms. Amtrak is swamped with business and appears headed for one of its best years ever.

Preliminary estimates place July revenues at about \$62 million, making it the best July in the railroad's 14-year history. Ridership for (fiscal) 1985 appears certain to smash the 20-million mark; Amtrak's current projection is 20.7 million. During August, ridership on long-distance trains was up an impressive 17% over last August, according to NARP preliminary data.

Amtrak reservation/sales personnel are currently handling an average of 22 phone calls per hour each—an extraordinary performance termed “probably the best in the entire U.S. transportation industry,” by an Amtrak reservations official. The volume of calls to Amtrak reservation centers this August was up 18% over last August.

This summer's surge in train travel prompted a front-page story in the Aug. 26 edition of the *New York Times*. William Schmidt of the *Time's* Atlanta Bureau wrote the piece after discovering to his amazement that he couldn't get space on the “Crescent” to Meridian, MS, on any of a number of days due to sold-out conditions!

The *Times* story reported that a number of Amtrak trains have been selling out this summer on a regular basis, such as the “Coast Starlight,” “Broadway Ltd.,” “Capitol Ltd.,” “Cardinal,” “Silver Meteor,” and “Silver Star.” June patronage on the two Florida trains was up 22% over last June. Other heavily-booked trains listed were the “California Zephyr,” and “Lake Shore Ltd.”

While summers are always busy for Amtrak, several new factors may explain this summer's unusually large crowds: the growing public awareness of Amtrak's 2-year-old All Aboard America regional fares; the growth in travel agency rail sales made possible by Amtrak's inclusion in airline computer ticketing systems; increased concern over flying in what has become the worst year for safety in commercial aviation history; and finally, the fear that this may be the last chance to ride a train in America if Ronald Reagan kills Amtrak this fall. “When President Reagan said he was going to take the trains off, it was just like an advertisement,” commented “Sunset Ltd.” Train Chief Bill Mills in the June 16 *Houston Chronicle*.

(Mr. Reagan's advertising of passenger trains apparently didn't end with those 1959 Union Pacific Domeliner promotions.) ■



—photo by Barry Williams

“NOBODY PREFERS TRAINS”: A MYTH

“The other evening I heard one of Mr. Reagan's bright young men state that the American public *prefers* air and automobile travel to rail. All I can reply to that is that in my case the cost of flying from Cleveland to Atlanta ranges from \$300 and up, depending on whom you call and when you want to fly. (This does not reflect the inconvenience of getting to Cleveland Hopkins Airport, and/or the fact that someone must take an entire work day off to make the round-trip from northeast Georgia to the Atlanta Airport in order to pick me up/drop me off.) The automobile the Administration is so certain that I prefer to travel in is used by my daughter to get to and from her second shift factory job; it is not available for my travel convenience, nor are my working son or daughter available from their respective jobs to accompany their 60-year-old mother on the road. I am certainly aware of the Federal deficit and the need to pay it off. However, I am sick of the uncaring rich deciding that since they can afford air travel and since they have a second (and third etc.) car, all of us prefer to travel that way.”

—Letter to NARP from Mrs. T.C. Strobe,
Stow, Ohio

"Dying" Greyhound Retrenches

In late August, Greyhound Corp. announced a widely expected plan to shrink its Greyhound Lines bus subsidiary, which lost \$1.3 million last year.

The retrenchment calls for the firing of 30% of the bus line's management personnel and 15% of its unionized workers, to reflect the declining number of bus travelers. The plan also includes route cancellations (the number was not disclosed) and the elimination, relocation, or reduction-in-size of many of its 127 bus terminals.

The Aug. 16 *Wall Street Journal* reported: "The entire inter-city bus industry has been hurt by the increase in competition from regional airlines following government deregulation. [John Teets, chairman of parent Greyhound Corp.] said that Greyhound carried an average of 64 million passengers a year in the 1960s. Last year, however, the company carried 34 million passengers, and this year it expects to carry 28 million to 30 million."

The August announcement was no surprise. Back in April, Teets stated that unless routes can be stemmed, Greyhound will continue "shrinking" routes and may ultimately get out of the bus business altogether. Apr. 19 *Wall Street Journal*: "If [franchising] doesn't work . . . people are going to get laid off," Mr. Teets says. "Greyhound Lines is a dying business, and closing it down [might be] a viable alternative with [its current] losses," he adds."

The article went on to say that Greyhound has begun selling most of its downtown terminals in major cities for real estate profits and "plans to relocate most of [them] to areas nearer expressways" in existing facilities such as shopping malls.

In May, Teets told shareholders at the company's annual meeting that Greyhound Corp. had decided to focus the resources of its bus unit on short-haul trips of less than five hours because "people won't ride the bus anymore for five hours for a difference of \$10 [from an airline ticket]." The company plans to end long-haul service (over 500 miles) within the next three years.

Greyhound's exit from long-distance markets, and from downtown terminals, will make Amtrak increasingly important in a number of U.S. cities, where it may emerge as the sole provider of long-distance common carrier transportation, and/or the only common carrier offering downtown access. ■

COMMUTER & TRANSIT NEWS

Boston North Station reopened Apr. 20, 15 months to the day after fire destroyed Charles River bridge carrying MBTA commuter tracks into station. Refurbished terminal boasts new lighting, signing, train platforms, canopies, and tracks. Project cost \$11 million.

SEPTA opened 9.5-mile, \$89 million commuter rail line to Philadelphia International Airport Apr. 28. This long-delayed project had at one time been scheduled for 1976 completion! Yellow Line trains operate airport-downtown-Wayne Jc. (perhaps eventually to W. Trenton). Reliability, ridership both high.

Miami's 21-mile, \$1 billion Metrorail transit system (Dec. 1983 *News*) was completed May 19 with opening of final 5-mile North Line segment between Earlington Heights and Okeechobee. 5 new stations include Hialeah, located about 6 blocks from Miami Amtrak station.

Pittsburgh's new 1-mile, \$70 million downtown subway opened July 3. It's part of a major \$545 million project to upgrade city's light rail transit network (May 1982 *News*). Remainder of the project—modernization of surface lines south of Monongahela River and receipt of new light rail vehicles—should be completed next year.

San Francisco-San Jose commuter trains, operated for California DOT by Southern Pacific, are now receiving 63 new bilevel coaches (\$62 million) and 18 new F40 diesel locomotives (\$24 million). Headed for retirement: the line's 1923-vintage Harriman cars.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Maine became 45th state with rail passenger service June 1, with restoration of VIA Rail Canada's Montreal-Halifax "Atlantic Limited." Maine stations: Jackman, Greenville, Brownville Jc., Danforth, Vanceboro.

(New York-)Richmond-Charlotte "Carolinian" makes its last run Sep. 2, due to financial impasse between Amtrak and North Carolina. This popular 403(b) train has carried over 100,000 passengers in its 10 months—Aug. trains routinely carried 300-500. State has new appropriation for new fiscal year, but Amtrak won't continue train until state pays rest of its bill from last year. There's hope train may resume next year.

No decision from Amtrak yet on "Montrealer" restructuring (May *News*). Negotiations continue with Canadian National Ry. in an effort to achieve lower-cost CN contract, so as to avert substitute busing St. Albans-Montreal. No service changes before Oct. 27.

Amtrak probably will not issue system timetable this fall, due to expected late enactment of 1986 budget by Congress, plus need to conserve funds. New regional timetables are expected.

On Apr. 28: New York-Florida "Silver Meteor" dropped Wilson, NC; NY/Washington-Chicago "Broadway/Capitol Ltd." dropped Gary, IN; Kansas City-Centralia(-New Orleans) "River Cities" added Belleville, IL; Chicago-Oakland "California Zephyr" and Chicago-Quincy "Illinois Zephyr" dropped Aurora in favor of Naperville, IL; 12 of 14 Los Angeles-San Diego "San Diegans" gained Custom Class (reserved leg-rest coach) service.

In mid-June, NY-FL "Silver Star" switched to buffet dining; "Silver Meteor" will follow this fall. Pioneered on Auto Train, buffet provides faster service, allows passengers to see what they're ordering, and saves money. Also in June, NY-Chicago "Cardinal" gained full-service diner, while Chicago-New Orleans "City of New Orleans" lost same.

Jesup, GA, and Durant, MS, lost station ticket agents Aug. 31 (latter lost baggage service as well); Cumberland, MD, lost agents July 19.

New Amtrak passenger facility opened at Indianapolis Union Station Apr. 8. Project, including station, tracks, platforms, and canopies, cost about \$3 million and was paid for by Union Station redeveloper as part of a real estate deal with Amtrak. This is only one facet of overall \$50 million private redevelopment of IUS, which is still underway.

Newark Penn Station was rededicated May 21 after completion of \$19 million modernization/facelift. Funding from NECIP, New Jersey Transit, PATH. A beautifully-restored New Haven station reopened July 25, following \$22 million rehabilitation funded by NECIP and Connecticut DOT. Building had been closed since 1972, forcing travelers to wait in pedestrian underpass.

Bakersfield, CA, dedicated new \$225,000 Amtrak station Aug. 20. Funded by California DOT, station replaces trailer which had been in use since 1974 on same site. Santa Ana, CA, opens magnificent Spanish-style transportation center Sep. 4. The new \$17 million structure, housing Amtrak, intercity bus, and local transit, is grandest station built in U.S. in many years. Funding from state and local governments.

On Sep. 2, Amtrak becomes first non-airline to join Airline Reporting Corp. (ARC). A major marketing breakthrough, Amtrak's admission to ARC means that any U.S. travel agent who sells airline tickets will be able to sell Amtrak too. This will almost double number of travel agency locations selling Amtrak tickets. Also, Amtrak's Arrow computer reservation system is now linked with TWA's PARS, American's Sabre, and United's Apollo, with PARS and Sabre terminals now capable of issuing actual rail tickets, and Apollo expected to gain ticketing capability by Jan.

Gumby to the Rescue

America's cartoon characters joined in the fight to save Amtrak at a decisive moment this year. Carrying signs such as "Save Amtrak," and "Kids Love Trains," the likes of Gumby, Popeye and Olive Oyl, and the Smurfs detrained from the northbound "Crescent" on Friday, May 10, to hold a press conference in Washington's Union Station. Joining the characters were U.S. Rep. Wyche Fowler (D-GA), NARP Exec. Dir. Ross Capon, and close to 1,000 Washington-area school children.

The story behind this unique display of support began when Atlanta businessman Randy Richards received a "save Amtrak" flyer distributed by NARP volunteers during this crisis. Richards was later to recall that "one of my most memorable times as a child was a trip with my family across America on a train." During a round-trip to Birmingham with his own children, Richards decided that Amtrak could not be allowed to disappear. As publisher and president of *Retail Market Report*, the trade publication of the nation's toy and gift sellers, Richards was in a special position to act and decided to bring the cartoon and toy industry "on board" Amtrak's defense. Mr. Richards obtained permission from several creators and copyright holders to use their characters.

Richards and NARP then worked together on the logistics: a send-off news conference with NARP Pres. Jack Martin Thursday evening in Atlanta as Richards and his costumes boarded Amtrak's "Crescent," and the main event Friday morning in Washington when Rep. Fowler and many TV cameras greeted the characters as they got off the train. Then the school children lined up to shake the characters' hands and collect autographs—and to walk through some Amtrak cars.

The children—many of whom had never boarded a train—appeared to enjoy themselves immensely, and the teachers were pleased at having such a good field trip literally dropped into their laps.

An especially challenging aspect of this event involved working



—photo by Peter Eldridge

Cartoon characters (l. to r.) Gumby, Smurf, Olive Oyl, Popeye, and Hagar the Horrible urge the public not to "lose track" of Amtrak's predicament after detraining from The Crescent in Washington, DC.

with the characters' costumes. The metamorphosis from seven NARP volunteers to the troupe of children's heroes took place during the twenty minute train trip from Alexandria to Washington.

Equally impressive was the number of school classes which came, even though the first phone call to the schools was not placed until Monday, just four days before the event.

The media's response to the event was enthusiastic. From network affiliates in Atlanta and Washington to Cable News Network, excerpts of the conference were aired on television across the country. The story also got nationwide press and radio coverage, including a front-page item in *The Wall Street Journal*. With the Senate Budget Resolution approved in the wee hours of that same morning, the official news that Amtrak had received a 12½% cut took some precedence over the press conference, but some stories, such as in *The Miami Herald*, linked the two actions, stating that "The cartoon appeal apparently worked, as the Senate Friday rebuffed administration attempts to end all funding."

NARP's thanks to Mr. Richards for his considerable effort on behalf of the passenger train. ■



—photo by Peter Eldridge

With cameras rolling, Congressman Wyche Fowler (D-GA) kicks off the Richards-NARP press conference in the waiting room of Washington's Union Station.

NARP GETS NEW OFFICE & COMPUTER

NARP moved to a new office on Capitol Hill August 1, after 15 years at our old location on New Jersey Avenue. Our new office address is 236 Massachusetts Avenue, NE, #603, Washington, DC 20002. No change in telephone numbers.

Another milestone for NARP: we now have our own in-house computer/word processor in operation. Although bringing the system on-line has resulted in some of the usual transitional problems, the computer will, in time, bring about better service to you, our members, by speeding up a number of activities ranging from address changes/corrections to newsletter production. Thanks for your patience during this transition period.

THANKS LEAFLETERS!

About 80 NARP members across the country worked tirelessly during the spring distributing leaflets to Amtrak passengers, warning them about the threat to the trains.

We salute these dedicated volunteers for the many hours they donated, and extend our gratitude to the thousands of other NARP members who lent a hand in this effort. (*NARP directors in italics.*)

Arizona: George Loulan, Jay Myers. **Arkansas:** Bill Pollard. **California:** Richard Hood, Roger Hooson, Steve Keller, Rodney Lilly, Dan Lovegren, Harry Marnell. **Colorado:** G.W. Pool, Lowell Williams. **District of Columbia:** Jim Churchill, John Dawson, Pete Eldridge, Tom Hoffman, Barry Williams. **Florida:** Charlie Dunn, Jim Herron, Martin Kulacki, David Willing. **Georgia:** Terry Bird, Lynn Cohen-Cole, Carla Dudeck, Ross Goddard, Jack Martin, George Nesmith, Alan Yorker. **Illinois:** Andreas Aeppli, Ken Bird, Bill Francik, Jim Hurtle, Pat Mehlick, Nicholas Norris, Carla Schmakel, Richard Strandberg, Bob Stempel. **Indiana:** Don & Jo Hurst, Nick Noe, Tim Watson. **Louisiana:** John Sita, Greg Slaton. **Massachusetts:** Dave Clinton, Wayne Hall. **Michigan:** John DeLora. **Missouri:** Mark Bucol, Trav Burgess, Wayne Copple, Tom Schramel, Pete Van Zanten. **Montana:** Mike Lustig. **New Mexico:** Jon Messier. **New York:** Frank Barry, Doug Bowen, Ben English, George Forman, Lew Hoppe, Jim Kerner, Richard Tenewitz. **North Carolina:** Edmund Dandridge, Allan Paul. **Ohio:** Larry George, Mike Weber. **Oregon:** Jim Howell. **Pennsylvania:** Mike Borsuk, Rick Hannegan, Larry Joyce, Chuck Rompala, Scott Trommer. **Texas:** John Clark, Murrel Hogue, Griff Hubbard, Kate Landrum, John Payne. **Utah:** George Swallow. **Washington:** Carl Fowler, Jim Hamre, Steve Spear. **Wisconsin:** Jim Sponholz, Jim Woods.

SEPTA Chief Boosts Trust Fund To Save Infrastructure—Amtrak Included!

(On June 7, the *Phila. Inquirer*, under the headline "A trust fund to preserve our infrastructure," printed an article by Lewis F. Gould Jr., chairman of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority [SEPTA], most of which is reprinted below.)

Out of a federal budget of \$970 billion, \$32 billion goes to domestic capital investment—highways, mass transit, waste-water treatment . . . and so forth. The President's 1986 budget would reduce this limited amount by a whopping 445%.

In effect, **this budget says we no longer can afford to invest in America's future . . .** The total value of domestic construction grants in the 1986 budget is more than 59% below the value of such grants in 1980. Put another way, in 1986 the federal government will be doing only half of what it was doing in 1980 to maintain and improve the nation's physical plant. . . .

In 1982, Congress established an advisory committee to report on the nation's infrastructure. Even using the committee's most conservative estimate of infrastructure needs between now and the year 2000, the needs outstrip available resources by more than 40%. . . .

So why are we cutting? The answer, according to the congressional advisory committee, is simple:

"In an era of competition for limited public resources, it has become expedient for public officials to delay necessary capital investments, to reduce expenditures for maintenance, and to allocate these funds to other, more immediate needs."

That is exactly the sort of policy that years ago led to the rapid deterioration of SEPTA. Since 1980, SEPTA has accelerated capital

ANOTHER PROMINENT PHILADELPHIAN AGREES

"The federal subsidy to Amtrak this year . . . is \$684 million. An increase of just half a cent in the gasoline tax, which nobody would notice, would maintain the Amtrak subsidy and keep America's railroad passenger system operating.

"An increase of about 4½ or 5 cents . . . would maintain federal subsidies . . . for mass transit systems . . . An increase of 10 cents could raise substantially the levels of federal subsidies for both Amtrak and mass transit—with a few billion dollars a year left over for bridges and highways . . .

"Taxing gasoline to fund Amtrak and mass transit makes good economic and social sense. Relieving traffic congestion benefits highway users paying the tax. Encouraging more people to use fuel-conserving trains and other public transportation is sound energy policy. Providing mobility for urban citizenry—especially the poor, the elderly and others without access to private automobiles—is beneficial for them and for stores and institutions that serve them."

—George Wilson, of *The Philadelphia Inquirer's* editorial board, in an Op Ed column published May 3 and headlined "Save Amtrak with an increase in gasoline taxes"

investment, and federal assistance has been the key part of our efforts. We now face the prospect of a draconian cut in federal assistance.

In its most recent report to Congress on urban affairs, the administration argued with startling clarity. "The construction and maintenance of local infrastructure is almost invariably a local public need, not a national concern" (Emphasis added) . . .

Highways have conveniently avoided the budget ax. Highway construction is supported by a trust fund, and thus has been relatively immune to recent budget battles. Highways conveniently remain a "national concern" but other transportation is a "state and local concern."

The lesson is clear. **Other domestic capital programs need trust fund stability, too.** As a constructive addition to the budget debate, SEPTA has developed a proposal to establish a National Infrastructure Trust Fund (which) would finance 11 federal programs that are capital in nature: highways, aviation, public transit, Amtrak maintenance and construction, community development

and urban action grants, waste-water treatment, water projects, rural development, and economic and regional development. Total spending would be about \$35 billion per year, in keeping with current congressional authorization levels.

Half of the trust-fund revenues would come from the existing highway and airport trust funds—the remainder would come from several federal excise taxes. The administration proposed to cut cigarette taxes by \$2 billion in 1986; we would capture this money by not cutting the tax and dedicate it to the trust fund. With at-the-pump gasoline prices projected to decline by 5-7 cents by 1986, \$8 billion can be rather painlessly raised via a 6-cent increase in the gasoline tax. Finally, we propose doubling the federal excise tax on distilled spirits (excluding beer and wine), which brings in \$4 billion.

By taking many programs out of the general federal budget and financing them with these new revenues, this proposal **cuts the federal deficit** by more than \$11 billion. Most importantly, it would signal an **end to the shortsighted practice of delaying capital spending in order to pay for today's consumables.** This practice, years ago, led to SEPTA's near collapse, and I, for one, want to see the nation as a whole avoid the same plight. ■

CAPON HONORED FOR DECADE OF SERVICE

Ross Capon was awarded the George Falcon Golden Spike Award by the NARP Board of Directors in April, in recognition of his ten years of service as a member of the NARP staff.

Ross came to NARP from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation in January 1975. At that time, Orren Beaty was NARP's president, William Coleman was federal transportation secretary, Paul Reistrup had just assumed the helm as Amtrak's second president, Amfleet I cars were in production and the Superliner order was about to be placed.

Ross served as assistant director until April 1976, when he assumed his current post of executive director. The award's inscription points out the tremendous growth in the Association's membership and stature during his tenure.

Coalition to Save Amtrak

The "Coalition to Save Amtrak," an umbrella group made up of over 25 organizations, was born in mid-May. NARP has joined environmental and conservation groups, farmers' associations, the travel industry, and rail suppliers as charter members of the Coalition.

The new group will work to coordinate members' efforts in Amtrak-related activities. It has already added another layer of "front line" activists to the fight. Over the Memorial Day weekend, the Coalition organized squads of college students in Washington, New York, and Boston to circulate petitions supporting a budget freeze for Amtrak. Thousands of signatures were collected at the Amtrak stations in these cities.

The Coalition's inauguration became a media event in itself with a Capitol Hill press conference that ran like a "Who's Who" of Amtrak supporters. Speaking words of encouragement and concern were Senators Specter, Andrews, and Biden, and Representatives Florio, Markey, Richardson, Lehman, and Conte. Senator Specter stressed the importance of retaining no less than 90% of Amtrak's funding for the coming three years. Senator Andrews questioned the assumptions that continually place Amtrak's subsidy on the cutting block while leaving untouched the massive subsidies to other modes. The other elected officials echoed these comments.

Don Beavers, spokesman for the Coalition, voiced a growing concern that the strategy used to eliminate Amtrak was in the process of "shifting gears." Rather than call for the complete elimination of rail passenger service, the new approach would be to "bleed Amtrak to death," said Beavers. NARP is determined to resist such a war of attrition and will work both independently and with the Coalition to insure stable long-range funding for Amtrak. ■