



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

Vol. 22, No. 9 September, 1988

John R. Martin, Pres.; Eugene Skoropowski, V. Pres.; Robert Glover, Sec.; Joseph Horning, Jr., Treas.; Ross Capon, Exec. Dir.; Barry Williams, Asst. Dir.; Jane Colgrove, Membership Dir.; Harriet Parcels, Transp. Assoc.

National Association of Railroad Passengers News (ISSN 0739-3490), is published monthly except November by NARP, 236 Massachusetts Ave., NE, Suite 603, Washington, DC 20002. 202/546-1550. Membership dues are \$15/year (\$7.50 under 21 or over 65) of which \$4 is for a subscription to NARP News. Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC.

Postmaster: send address changes to National Association of Railroad Passengers, 236 Massachusetts Ave., NE, Suite 603, Washington, DC 20002.

(This has news through September 2. No. 8 was mailed August 16.)

RETURN REQUESTED

Get It Straight: Infrastructure Includes RAILS!!

WASHINGTON UNION STA. TO REOPEN SEP. 29



—Photo by Barry Williams

Daniel Burnham's Beaux Arts Washington Union Station—one of the most monumental buildings in a city of monuments—will reopen Sep. 29 as a mixed-use transportation-office-retail complex. One of the primary occupants of the restored station will be Amtrak. The landmark building has been closed since Feb. 23, 1981, when heavy rains caused a portion of its dilapidated roof to fail. A parade will begin in downtown Washington at 11:00 AM on Thursday, Sep. 29, and reach the station in time for an 11:45 AM ribbon-cutting ceremony. Evening festivities in Columbus Plaza—immediately in front of the station—include an 8:30 PM concert and 9:25 PM fireworks show.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Amtrak's fall timetable takes effect Sep. 18 (highlights in next issue).

Amtrak ticket counter and nearly half of the waiting room opened Aug. 8 at Boston South Station. Additional interior areas, tracks, platforms—and a direct passageway between station and MBTA's Red Line subway station—will open during the next 12 months or so.

In a major analysis of prospects for transportation funding during the next administration, *Traffic World*—like all too many U.S. public officials—omitted railroads from its definition of infrastructure! Here is a superb rejoinder from NARP Member *Urchie Ellis*, published in the July 25 issue of *Traffic World*. Mr. Ellis spent 37 years in the railroad industry as an attorney, and was general counsel of the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad from 1961 to his retirement in 1986.

"Your 'Special Report—Focus: The Next Four Years' (*T.W.*, July 11, p. 8) did not deal with two major factors related to future infrastructure and traffic volume needs.

"The first is preservation and improvement of most of the remaining railroad operating properties, which represent a very large and presently grossly under-utilized transportation capacity. This represents sunk capital and the replacement cost, whether in highways or new railroads, would be hundreds of millions of dollars. It is currently being weakened and destroyed in segments by adverse government policy, which aids, encourages, and subsidizes the main competing modes. A change of government policy could go far to reduce the future overall infrastructure needs and costs, and add greatly to transportation capacity, and all without any major cost to the taxpayer.

"The second factor is to recognize that a major reason why our highway system is wearing out, and our bridges are in bad shape, is the increase in the size and weight of large tractor-trailer combinations in recent years, and the various tax and enforcement practices that have encouraged the great increase in the number of large vehicles on our road system that was not designed to handle such weights and frequencies. A review of the 1979 General Accounting Office report 'Excessive Truck Weight: An Expensive Burden We Can No Longer Support' will answer the questions. Page 26 thereof had charts showing that only 8 percent of the bridges were capable of handling the then current 80,000-pound limit. See also the 1984 AASHTO

(continued on page 4)

Caltrain Improvements Planned

Plans to significantly improve San Francisco-San Jose "Caltrain" commuter rail service are moving ahead, backed by financial commitments enacted at the federal and local levels over the past year. The improvements will benefit regional and local public transit users, as well as intercity passengers, and will create an important South Bay transportation center.

Planned improvements include rehabilitation of the existing Amtrak/Caltrain Cahill Street Station in downtown San Jose, and construction of a new multimodal transportation center two miles south at Alma Avenue, to which the commuter trains will be extended via Southern Pacific's existing single-track mainline. The SP line will be upgraded to double-track to accommodate the commuter trains.

In addition to commuter trains, the new Alma transportation center will be served by San Jose's light rail line, whose first segment opened in December. Construction of the Alma station is expected to be completed in early 1990. Amtrak's Los Angeles-Seattle "Coast Starlight" uses the SP line and could easily make a "suburban stop" at Alma, providing direct access between Amtrak and the light rail line.

As evidence of its commitment to the project, California DOT (Caltrans) submitted a grant application to the U.S. Urban Mass Transportation Administration seeking funds for a portion of the improvements. At the federal level, through the efforts of Rep. Don Edwards (D-CA), the FY 1988 transportation appropriations provides \$22.6 million in Rail Modernization funds for the Caltrain improvements. The FY 1989 appropriations bill, currently awaiting a House-Senate conference, provides an additional \$6.9 million for the improvements.

The improvements are projected to increase daily Caltrain ridership by nearly 7,000 passengers, up from 3,000 per day currently using Cahill Station, according to the San Jose Terminal Feasibility Study.

A major improvement is planned for the northern end of the commuter line as well. On March 24, the Bay Area's influential Metropolitan Transportation Commission approved a \$2.1 billion transit improvement package which includes a critical extension of the rail line from its present remote terminus at 4th and Townsend Streets to the downtown Transbay Terminal. A thorough study by Wilbur Smith & Associates concluded that the downtown extension would capitalize on line improvements and peninsula corridor growth and could yield a *tripling* of daily Caltrain ridership by the year 2000.

Moving such plans ahead, San Mateo County voters approved in June a ballot measure to increase the county sales tax by one-half cent, with some of the revenues earmarked for Caltrain improvements. A total of \$174 million will support Caltrain right-of-way acquisition, track upgrading and extension and \$183 million will fund priority grade separation projects. A Request for Proposals to fund an Environmental Impact Statement that analyzes various downtown Caltrain station relocation alternatives has recently been issued by the Joint Powers Board (JPB). The JPB is an authority consisting of the three peninsula county transit districts formed to take over management of Caltrain operations after 1990. Caltrain service is presently operated by the state.

Congestion is a growing problem in the San Francisco region. For the past five years, the Bay Area Poll of local residents has ranked transportation as the region's #1 problem. The Caltrain improvements are part of the solution. ■



—Photo by Ross Capora

Skoropowski Elected NARP V.P.

The NARP Board elected Eugene K. Skoropowski of Maple Glen, PA, left, as NARP Vice President on Apr. 23. (He is shown above with Federal Railroad Administrator John R. Riley, right, and their host, former NARP Vice President John H. Kirkwood of San Francisco, aboard Kirkwood's private railcar "Yerba Buena" June 10.)

Skoropowski, Chief Operations Planning Officer for the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA), is one of a growing number of transit officials who began transportation activities as civic activist. While representing the City of Melrose (MA) on the MBTA Advisory Board (1970-77), Gene fought to save Boston's then-beleaguered commuter rail system—and shares with Gov. Dukakis some of the credit for that system's revival. Before joining the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority as Chief Railroad Services Officer, Gene worked 10 years as a private architect (registered in 5 states). He has also been SEPTA's Executive Assistant Treasurer.

NARP Board members know Gene as a good-humored but ruthlessly efficient chairman of the Resolutions Committee and of the special committee which developed NARP's resolution on high-speed surface transportation (Jan. '88 News). ■

San Joaquin Valley: 3rd Train, New Route Possible in '89

A third daily Oakland-Bakersfield "San Joaquin" train, and the rerouting of all "San Joaquins" to the Southern Pacific Railroad between Calwa (4 miles south of Fresno) and Stockton, have both moved a bit closer to reality.

The State of California has approved funds for operating the added frequency, and earmarked \$1.2 million "to fund the acquisition of rail cars and equipment for a third San Joaquin train." On July 8, Gov. George Deukmejian (R) signed into law almost all of the intercity rail passenger money approved by the legislature. The governor said, "I continue to support intercity rail passenger service, and the 1988-89 budget includes \$10 million for capital improvements to the San Diegos" (now defined as Santa Barbara-San Diego).

The state hopes this will enable Amtrak and California DOT (Caltrans) to negotiate an agreement under which Amtrak would increase the size of its new car order from Bombardier (May News) and lease the resulting cars to Caltrans. To realize

the economies of a standardized fleet, therefore, inauguration of the third train would probably lead Amtrak to assign Bombardier cars to all "San Joaquins." This would permit reassignment of Superliner and Hi-Level cars from the San Joaquin Valley to other western routes.

Amtrak must do a revenue-cost analysis and develop an equipment-lease proposal for the third train before the adequacy of the state funding package will be known.

Shifting from the Santa Fe to the Southern Pacific would enable trains to stop in Modesto (pop. 107,000) and Turlock (26,300) instead of Riverbank (5,700) and Denair (1,100), serve better locations in Madera and Merced, and eliminate slow Fresno street-running. The reroute might, however, add about 20 minutes to the overall schedule, due to slower speeds on the SP.

Rep. Tony Coelho (D-CA), despite his demanding job as Majority Whip, has devoted much personal effort to working with Amtrak and SP to secure the third train and the reroute—particularly to helping overcome strong SP resistance to the reroute. ■

ICC DECISIONS

● **Amtrak.** In late June, the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC), by a 3-2 vote, approved Amtrak's petition to acquire by eminent domain the 49-mile segment of Guilford's Boston & Maine Railroad between Brattleboro and Windsor, VT (Mar. News). On Aug. 5, the ICC set the value of the B&M property at \$2.3 million, and granted Central Vermont Railway the right to in turn purchase the property from Amtrak without being subject to the usual lengthy hearing process. Guilford may appeal these decisions in federal court.

● **Greyhound.** The ICC formally blessed Greyhound's acquisition of Trailways Lines Inc. on May 17, on a 3-2 vote, without imposing any restrictive conditions (Jan. News).

Legislative Update

● **Rail Safety.** On June 21, President Reagan signed into law S. 1539, the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 1988 (May News). The new law, prompted by last year's "Colonial" crash at Chase, MD, makes it a crime for rail employees to disable train safety devices, and gives the Federal Railroad Administration the authority to penalize individual employees. Previously, FRA could only penalize railroad companies. (By contrast, the Federal Aviation Administration has long had authority over employees.) The FRA fine limit is raised from \$2,500 to \$10,000 (\$20,000 for grossly negligent safety violations). S. 1539 also mandates a national qualification/certification program for locomotive engineers, and permits the Department of Transportation and/or the nation's railroads to access the National Driver Register in order to examine employees' driving records for alcohol/drug convictions. It also requires all trains operating in the Boston-Washington Northeast Corridor to be equipped with Automatic Train Control (ATC) devices after Apr. 1, 1990.

The safety law also repeals Amtrak's executive pay ceiling, which had caused many talented managers to leave the carrier over the years. The new law states that "The president and other officers of [Amtrak] shall receive compensation at a level no higher than the general level of compensation paid officers of railroads in positions of comparable

PALATKA, NILES STATIONS RENOVATED



—Photo by Barry Williams

Amtrak's handsomely restored Palatka, FL, station was rededicated Mar. 30. The station renovation was part of an \$800,000 project to create a station/community center/museum complex (May News). Federal, state, and a little Amtrak money paid for the project. Among the improvements: replacement of the old tar-shingle roofing with red Spanish tiles. The unsightly chain-link fence near the platform was mandated by CSX Railroad against the city's wishes. NARP has asked CSX to permit a less obtrusive barrier such as a short stucco wall or ornate wrought-iron fence. Mayor Tim Smith writes that the city will attempt to replace the present fence with a more attractive one.



—Photo by Sharon Mahoney

Amtrak's beautifully restored Niles, MI, station was rededicated June 18, following completion of a nearly \$500,000 renovation funded equally by Amtrak and the State of Michigan (June News). The rehabilitation project included chemical cleansing and tuck-pointing of the exterior stone, a new roof, modernization of building utilities, and restoration of the interior's original elegance (chandeliers, stained-glass windows, etc.). This classic 1892 depot has appeared in several recent motion pictures, including "Midnight Run" and "Continental Divide."

responsibility."

● **Transportation Appropriations.** On June 29, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 4794, the Fiscal 1989 Department of Transportation Appropriations Act, 371-40. The bill allocates \$590 million to Amtrak, \$15 mill. to the Northeast Corridor, and \$3.279 bill. to mass transit.

On July 12, the U.S. Senate passed its '89 transportation spending bill, 91-6, with these amounts: \$576 mill. for Amtrak, \$25 mill. for the NEC, and \$3.155 bill. for mass transit. A House-Senate conference committee will resolve differences in funding amounts in September.

● **Amtrak Reauthorization.** There has been no action since our last report (May News). ■

Commuter RR Publicizes Consumer Group

Chicago's Metra commuter railroad publishes and distributes a periodic newsletter to its commuters. While addressing the Illinois Association of Railroad Passengers (Illinois Rail) earlier this year, Metra Chairman Jeffrey Ladd offered to print an article in Metra's newsletter about the consumer group. Here are some excerpts from the article:

"Illinois Rail, regional subsidiary of the National Association of Railroad Passengers, is launching a membership drive, and invites Metra customers to join.

"The Illinois group has been a rail advocate since 1976 and is working with Metra to assure a future for commuter rail service here. 'An organization is only as strong as its supporters, customers, and (sometimes) its watchdogs,' Metra Chairman Jeffrey R. Ladd said in endorsing the association. 'We expect that when we do occasionally err, that it'll be brought to our attention. Our egos might get bruised, but we're not in this business for the glory,' Ladd added. 'We're working to keep our reputation as the best commuter rail system in the nation, and we'll accept the help and suggestions wherever we can get them.'"

The article concluded with specific information about the group, its meetings, newsletter, membership costs, and address. 40,000 newsletter copies were distributed on trains and in stations; Metra's weekday ridership is 260,000. Illinois Rail reports a respectable number of new members as a result of the article! ■

Experts Agree: Raise the Gas Tax

"The U.S. should . . . raise its taxes on gasoline, which are much lower here than in almost every other industrial country. The revenues should be used to reduce the federal budget deficit—not be earmarked to build more highways. And federal, state, and local governments must continue to support the building and modernization of mass-transit systems."

—Editorial, Business Week, May 23, 1988

"Our Congress must be pushed into action to strongly increase gasoline taxes now. The alternative—clinging to the status quo—is frightening. Assuring this tax revenue would be directed toward energy efficiency, environmental protection and a shift to renewable energy is vital to sustainable economic development."

—Jan C. Lundberg, *The Renew America Report*, June-July 1988.

Mr. Lundberg is an energy analyst and cofounder (with his father, Dan) of The Lundberg Letter.

"We need an oil excise tax of 20 or 25 cents a gallon to discourage consumption."

—Economist Robert J. Samuelson, *Washington Post*, Aug. 12, 1987

"The Soviet Union and the U.S., the world's two largest oil producers, will have exhausted their now-known oil reserves by 1996 if they keep consuming at the present rate. Britain, the world's fifth-largest producer, will run dry even earlier."

—Bo Brekke, *Klassekampen*, (Oslo, Norway), *World Press Review*, January 1988

"Gasoline . . . prices in the [U.S.] generally are a bargain compared with the rest of the world. The average price of a gallon of gasoline in New York is \$1.13; in Chicago it is \$1.33. But these don't come anywhere near the \$4.36 you pay in

Abidjan, Ivory Coast . . . Rome, at \$4.03, and Tokyo, at \$3.90, are also costly areas to operate an automobile . . . Dublin, Ireland, \$3.45; and Paris, \$3.27, is also expensive."

—News story, *Journal of Commerce*, Mar. 1, 1988 ■

INFRASTRUCTURE (continued from page 1)

report 'Our Highways—Why Do They Wear Out? Who Pays for Their Upkeep?'

"Review of this subject would, I submit, lead to conclusions that would change government policy so as to encourage greater use of the rail infrastructure and reduce the need for public expenditures for highways and for waterway improvements and maintenance. Solutions would possibly include a national maximum truck size and weight, and a gradual roll-back to a maximum size and weight that is consistent with the design and current condition of the existing highway system. Better enforcement of the truck safety, hours of service, and maximum weight laws would help. A major policy change would be in the taxation of fuel used by large trucks—this could be done by weight distance tax or fuel tax surcharge—to require that they pay their share of the highway costs, and perhaps more to reflect public policy.

"Our transportation resources should not be wasted. The taxpayer should not be paying to build facilities for highway and water transportation that are destroying the railroad system, which is already paid for, and paying taxes in addition.

"Similarly, a comparison of Amtrak with the passenger aviation financial structure would suggest changes.

"All forms of transportation should pay their own way. When they are subsidized it should be the result of a deliberate and open policy decision, with comparable facts and accounting procedures used for comparison. We do not have that situation today. The long range needs of this nation require that we give the subject greater overall analysis." ■

AMTRAK EXECUTIVE UPDATE

Dennis F. Sullivan became Amtrak's Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer on July 1, replacing Henry R. Moore, who retired. Sullivan had been Amtrak's Vice President, Operations & Maintenance. He came to Amtrak in 1973 from the Penn Central.

Coinciding with Moore's retirement was a reorganization of the Operating Department. Reporting directly to Sullivan are 2 newly-created positions: Vice Pres., Transportation Robert C. VanderClute, and Vice Pres., Engineering Peter A. Cannito.

Directly reporting to VanderClute are: Chris P. Wahmann, Assist. V.P., Transportation; James L. Larson, Asst. V.P., Contract Administration & Operations Planning; and the 6 general superintendents on Amtrak's operating divisions. Directly reporting to Cannito are: Gene E. Ellis, Assist. V.P. & Chief Engineer; Robert M. Burk, Assist. V.P. & Chief Mechanical Officer (replacing the recently-resigned Joseph S. Crawford Jr.); and James N. Michel, Senior Dir., Engineering Design.

Norris W. Overton became Vice Pres., Information Systems, on Feb. 1, replacing George E. Gautney who resigned. Overton had been Assist. V.P., Resource Management, in Amtrak's Finance Dept.