



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

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FORD BUDGET THREATENS AMTRAK FUTURE

Amtrak would be largely dismantled under the budget President Ford sent to Congress this month. For fiscal 1977, the twelve months ending September 30, 1977, Amtrak would receive \$378 million, \$62 million less than it requested.

If accepted by Congress, the President's request, under one plausible scenario suggested by Amtrak, would leave Detroit, St. Louis, Cleveland, Dallas, Cincinnati, San Diego, Buffalo, Albany, Birmingham, Denver, and Hartford without service.

"The budget reflects the President's sense of priorities."

—President Ford

Only these routes would survive: Boston-Washington; New York-Florida; one daily round trip Chicago to Los Angeles, Seattle, New York, and New Orleans; and Seattle-Los Angeles; and tri-weekly New Orleans-Los Angeles service.

In any event, Amtrak could not fulfill the existing legal directive to run until March 1, 1977 services begun after January 1, 1973. (Basic system routes may be discontinued after October 1, 1976.)

The Administration has a tricky way of criticizing Amtrak:

Congress Approves Rail Bill; \$1.6 Billion for Corridor

Upgrading of tracks and roadbeds along the Washington-New York-Boston Corridor has been authorized by Congress to the tune of \$1.6 billion, more than half a billion higher than recommended by the Administration, but down by \$800 million from what Congress approved just before Christmas.

More than a month of maneuvering between representatives of the Ford Administration and key congressional staffers — designed to prevent the veto Secretary of Transportation William T. Coleman had threatened — produced a compromise which was promised a signature.

At press time, the President had not put his approval on the bill, the "Railroad Revitalization and Regulatory Reform Act of 1975," but it seemed assured. The overall price tag for implementing restructuring of the bankrupt railroad systems of the Northeast-Midwest region into ConRail, Corridor improvements, and several other features was reduced from \$7.4 billion to just under \$6.4 billion, somewhat nearer the total DOT said it would accept.

If the bill is funded and implemented promptly, work can start on upgrading the Corridor to reduce running times between Washington and New York from 3 to 2:40 hours and between New York and Boston from 4 to 3:40 hours, including five intermediate stops in both cases. However, the new law gives DOT

emphasize how much money Amtrak has received (\$3 billion sounds big when not compared with other transport expenditures and no timespan is mentioned), and invite the conclusion that, since Amtrak still loses money, it is a failure; don't mention the lead times required for new equipment, and improvements in track conditions and working agreements.

Observers agree the President will not get all the requested budget cuts, but there is a danger that Amtrak will have to cut some of its routes. Anxious for as many cuts as they can get, bus and airline interests and the Council on Wage and Price Stability were reportedly preparing to testify before the House Subcommittee on Transportation and Commerce hearings February 3 and 4. The hearings, called by Chairman Fred Rooney (D-Pa.) to consider Amtrak's route criteria (see "The Battle. . .", October News), are likely to deal with the entire route structure and subsidy issue.

The Council has already gone on record opposing the level of Amtrak's subsidies and calling its route structure overexpanded.

So long as opportunities exist, NARP will continue to press Amtrak to become more efficient, and Amtrak is making progress. But the present budget squeeze should not cut short efforts to aid a deserving cause which was almost totally destroyed by the government during earlier years of more generous public spending.

control over the minutest details of the improvement program, and therefore the power to continue the footdragging which has marked its attitude toward Amtrak all along.

ADMINISTRATION POSITION UNCLEAR

In spite of the compromise legislation, supporters of better rail passenger service were awaiting proof of good faith on the part of the Administration. The fiscal 1977 budget cuts which threatened continuance of many Amtrak routes, supported a suspicion that DOT will not request or support full funding of Washington-Boston Corridor improvements. The worst news of recent weeks is that Undersecretary John Barnum will stay at DOT, where his negative influence is always apparent, instead of accepting chairmanship of FTC.

The new legislation gives Amtrak authority to purchase or lease the Corridor, and Amtrak's board has voted to purchase, for \$85 million. One negative vote was cast — by DOT's representative on the board, Undersecretary John Barnum.

The Special Court established to oversee the transition from
(continued on page 3)

SUPPORT NARP — Bring In A New Member

Yes, I want to aid the cause of better rail passenger service. I understand I will receive a membership card and a monthly newsletter to keep me informed of developments.

Enclosed is my remittance for the category checked. I understand that part of this amount is for a one-year subscription to the newsletter.

- | | |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Contributing \$10 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsoring \$50 |
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(NARP members should not use this form to renew. It would be helpful if members wait until they receive the coded renewal reminder.)

Auto-Train and Amtrak Plan Joint Operations

Auto-Train will be able to operate separate trains over Amtrak routes or attach its special auto carriers and passenger equipment to existing Amtrak trains, under a letter of intent signed by Amtrak President Paul H. Reistrup and Auto-Train Corporation President Eugene K. Garfield. Auto-Train would continue to have complete jurisdiction over its sales, marketing, en-route service and personnel.

The executives issued a joint statement proclaiming their intent "to make available rail auto-ferry service to the public between as many points and areas of the U.S. as is economically feasible at the earliest practicable time." The companies initially will make joint studies of various routes, but indicated that a Chicago-Denver route will be given "early consideration."

Auto-Train currently carries passengers and their automobiles aboard the same train on routes linking Florida with suburban Washington, D.C., and Louisville. Said Reistrup: "Amtrak feels that we have all that we can do to provide regular passenger service throughout the country. . . Auto-Train, an example of free enterprise at work, has demonstrated its ability to provide auto-ferry service in a professional, economic, and attractive way."

Unfortunately, the Amtrak Board trotted out this accord as justification for "continued confidentiality of the Board's decision-making process as well as its policy in releasing policy judgments". This was done in a 33-page brief responding to affidavits by *Washington Star* reporter Stephen Aug and NARP Assistant Director Ross Capon who seek to make public the minutes of Amtrak Board Meetings.

The brief, generally a rehash of vague arguments previously made by the Board, claimed that "premature release (of the Auto-Train agreement) could have prevented consummation of the eventual arrangement", but did not explain why.

Fares And Service

INTERCITY: Consistent with NARP's recommendation of last year, Southern's daylight train linking Charlotte and Washington was quietly rescheduled January 18 to connect with Amtrak conventional trains leaving New York at 7 AM and arriving there at 11 PM. (Previously only the expensive Metroliners connected, except there was no northbound Saturday connection. Passengers wishing to make connections from late-running trains should notify the conductor of the train they are on, as trains may not be held if it is not known that people wish to connect.)

Budget sleeper service will be provided on the New York-Cleveland-Chicago "Lake Shore" starting February 1. Boston section passengers using the "slumbercoaches", as they are called, will be able to change cars at reasonable hours. For only \$7.50 or 13.25 above the coach fare, passengers can have private single or double rooms, respectively, with basin, toilet, and somewhat nar-

row beds. Slumbercoaches also run on the New York-St. Petersburg "Champion" (where charges are higher) and on the New York-Pittsburgh-Chicago "Broadway" and were added to the Washington section of the latter when it was rerouted "the long way" via Philadelphia on October 26.

Last year's NARP membership survey showed strong support for further development of budget sleeper service, and the members of NARP Region XII, meeting in Los Angeles recently, passed a resolution urging Amtrak to institute slumbercoaches (and parlor cars) on the Los Angeles-Seattle "Coast Starlight". Amtrak should be able to build more slumbercoaches, as well as standard sleepers, with complete private washroom facilities, now that Congress, in the rail bill about to be signed, has exempted intercity rail passenger service from the retention toilet requirement.

On February 15, many Northeast Corridor schedule adjustments will be made, including elimination of some and changes of other weekend and evening trains. The basic weekday service pattern for Boston-New York declines again, from 10 to 9 round trips, though a 10th will cover the NY-Providence portion; for NY-Washington is back up, from 9 to 10; and for Metroliners declines from 15 to 13. A few more trains will stop at Capital Beltway, Trenton, and Newark.

The early morning "Bankers" from Springfield and Hartford will spend 10 instead of 28 minutes in New Haven, arrive in New York at 9:30, and continue through to Washington. But Amtrak *must* develop the ability to rectify such blatant scheduling errors quickly, rather than letting them drag on wastefully for five months, as this one did.

Also February 15, Amtrak will introduce to the Boston/Springfield-Washington corridor a 25% saving on 30-day round-trip tickets for travel starting any day of the week except between noon and six p.m. on Fridays and Sundays.

Amtrak's Vancouver-Seattle "Pacific International" has been withdrawn pending repair of a damaged railroad bridge, expected to be done by May.

Spring changes, presumably April 25, will include the addition of Aberdeen, Md., on the Corridor mainline and already in occasional use for military movements, and S. Portsmouth, Ky. (for Portsmouth, Ohio) on the Chicago-Norfolk/Newport News/Washington routes. Also expected are speedups of the Broadway

SLOW MAIL FOR NEWSLETTER

Reports on all the NARP regional membership meetings will be carried in the February newsletter. In the meantime, we regret that the December newsletter, carrying details on time and place of each regional meeting, was delivered so late in some areas. It was put in the mails well before Christmas and yet arrived as late as January 10 at some households. We are checking this out.

Limited, National Limited, and Lake Shore. NARP hopes that Amtrak will restore the connection between the Broadway and the North Coast Hiawatha (Chicago-Minneapolis-Seattle) even if this means changing times at the east end of the Broadway's run.

COMMUTER: New Jersey ends its subsidy for services to Atlantic City and Cape May on January 31. Pennsylvania-Reading Seashore Lines probably will petition the state Public Utility Commission immediately for permission to discontinue. If the PUC denies the petition within 120 days, the railroad would then apply to the Interstate Commerce Commission, which must hold hearings but has no deadline for rendering its decision under Section 13(a)(2), which applies to intrastate trains such as these. If PUC takes no action, or grants the petition, the services end.

Other lines in New Jersey may soon be jeopardized as a result of that state's practice of subsidizing commuter services on an "all-or-nothing" basis. (Most commuter rail subsidies in other states involve some share of local funds.)

Congress Acts (continued from page 1)

the bankrupts to Consolidated Rail Corporation (ConRail) is given the power to approve or reject proposals by the Secretary for selling portions of ConRail to other railroads. Thus, ConRail, unlike any other railroad, cannot veto proposals to break up its own system. The fear has been expressed that this would lead it to be viewed as just another interim organization, no better able than the dying Penn Central to attract competent personnel. According to *Traffic World*, however, "Congressional thinking apparently was that if ConRail's board did" oppose a DOT sell-off proposal, "the special court would sustain" the board or risk opening the government "to creditor suits running into the billions".

A compromise regarding the Administration's desire to control ConRail's funding gives either branch of Congress the ability to veto decisions (such as a decision to cut off funding) of an Administration-controlled Government Investment Committee.

Other provisions of the conference report apparently were not changed by the January maneuvers. They include:

- authority for Amtrak to improve service on lines connect-

Amtrak Chickens Out — Pets Will Have to Ride Fourth Class

Amtrak has announced that pets no longer will be allowed in sleeping cars and parlor cars. Effective February 14, they will be handled only in baggage cars.

Since such cars are not air-conditioned, and since heating failures in them are less likely to receive prompt attention, pet owners may view the new policy as a total ban of pets from trains. Also, pets will not be loaded or unloaded at stations which do not handle checked baggage and will not be permitted on trains or routes which have no baggage cars.

Said Amtrak: "Passengers wishing to transport pets in Amtrak baggage cars may provide their own pet containers if they meet Amtrak's minimum standards for safety, security and ventilation," and "containers will be available for sale in 24 of Amtrak's major stations," costing from \$5 to \$30 (plus state sales tax) depending on size. They will also be sold at smaller Amtrak stations upon reasonable advance notice to the agent.

Under the decision of Alfred A. Michaud, vice president-marketing, passengers may visit their pets en route or during station stops of 10 minutes or more if they make prior arrangements with the train conductor.

The Amtrak move marks a break from longstanding tradition. Prior to Amtrak, almost all U.S. railroads which had good reputations as passenger carriers — including Santa Fe, Seaboard Coast Line, Union Pacific, New Haven, Pennsylvania, and Kansas City Southern — allowed pets in sleeping cars. Today, Auto-Train does likewise; Delta Airlines even allows pets on passengers' laps in small containers sold by the airline; of course, pets are standard on European trains.

A glance through several pre-Amtrak timetables, however, shows that most railroads reserved the right to discriminate against "objectionable" pets. Pennsy even allowed "small household pets" in unreserved coaches provided that they did not "occupy a seat or cause annoyance to other passengers." It seems clear that the railroad reserved the right to send the animal to the baggage car if it proved objectionable.

Amtrak has not tried such an approach. Its only form of discrimination was to require large dogs to occupy bedrooms rather than roomettes, and to impose a 400-mile minimum, since space cannot be resold on the same trip because it must be specially cleaned. (The alternate approach of a service charge was not tried either.)

As a result of taking the "easy way out", Amtrak will lose the revenue of many pet owners who have neither had nor caused problems in the past, and who appear to be the victims of Amtrak's unwillingness to deal selectively with objectionable pets and to enforce its own regulations forbidding resale of space before proper cleaning.

ing with the Corridor: Boston-Springfield-New Haven, New York-Albany, and Philadelphia-Harrisburg;

- \$200 million for passenger-related track improvements outside the Northeast Corridor, though the House wording, "the Secretary shall", was watered down to "the Secretary is authorized to";

- \$200 million for electrification of high-density ConRail routes where "operating and financial benefits" are foreseen. Harrisburg-Pittsburgh is the likely candidate. Such a project should permit speeding up the NY-Chicago "Broadway" and the NY-Kansas City "National" (if it survives that long) even beyond what ConRail's track upgrading program will allow.

- apparently reasonable procedures for restructuring railroads outside the Northeast. The Secretary, within nine months of enactment, must publish preliminary standards for classifying all rail lines "according to the degree to which they are essential to the rail transportation system" and preliminary designations for each line. The ICC Rail Services Planning Office, made permanent by the Act, then will hold public hearings and, within four months after publication of the preliminary standards and designations, report to the Secretary its recommendations based on the public testimony and its own studies. Within two more months, the Secretary would publish final standards and designations which would then become criteria by which railroad applications for assistance would be judged. (Thus the public will be able to testify in favor of giving long-range considerations more importance than current track conditions where the two are inconsistent — for example, between Chicago-Omaha where the Rock Island certainly has the best passenger potential and may be equally good for freight.)

- establishment of an "Office of Rail Public Counsel" whose duties will include assisting "communities and users of rail service" who "might not otherwise be adequately represented before" the ICC. NARP President Orren Beaty has urged that Grey Staples be appointed as Director of the new office, based on the outstanding role of the current Office of Public Counsel (within Rail Services Planning Office), headed by Staples, in the Northeast reorganization.

Major Newspapers Support NARP Campaign to Save Union Station

NARP's efforts to preserve Washington's Union Station for railroad passenger use — although it is being converted into a National Visitor Center — won support from the two daily newspapers, *The Washington Post* and *The Washington Star*.

But, work proceeded as the Department of Interior's National Park Service prepared to use the entire building as a visitors center, with all transportation services shifted to a new, small facility behind the existing terminal.

Kent Frizzell, acting Secretary of Interior, assured NARP that access to the new rail passenger terminal will be available through the National Visitor Center "at all times." He also said that present Amtrak ticketing and baggage facilities will not be moved until the new rail station is functional.

Public doubts have been expressed that the rail terminal will be ready for use by the time Amtrak is supposed to vacate the terminal, and that the Visitor Center will be ready for its "grand opening" on July 4 of the Bicentennial year.

NARP agrees with the reported suggestion of John W. Barnum, Deputy Secretary of Transportation, that, since the replacement station is not big enough anyway, its construction should be halted and Amtrak facilities remain where they are in the Terminal. Then, the bulk of Union Terminal could eventually be restored to the use of passengers, both rail and intercity bus.

LINDA STURGILL LEAVES NARP

NARP's long-time secretary, Linda Sturgill, has left the staff to accept a better position with a Washington, D.C. law firm. Good Luck, Linda!

Passenger Train Conference Focuses on Improved Speed

A first-rate conference on "Improved Passenger Train Service" was held in early December at the Transportation Research Institute (TRI) of Carnegie-Mellon University. Chaired by Richard A. Uher, senior research engineer at the TRI, and jointly sponsored by TRI and the Federal Railroad Administration, the conference was an encouraging indication that the mainstream of passenger ground transportation professional thought is now focussing on 85 to 150 mph trains.

About seven years ago, when NARP was already promoting such trains, a TRI conference considered 200 to 300 mph and, as one joke went, "vaporizing people and sending them through underground tubes". Yet TRI's Richard A. Rice told of a New Haven RR study as early as 1947 which found no need to abandon the rails for "maglev" or pneumatic suspension systems.

Speakers devoted an encouraging amount of time to long-distance trains. TRI's Richard A. Rice noted that, from 1950 to 1959, revenues and ridership continued to rise on passenger trains in the south and west, but declined in the east, with the decline eventually spreading to the rest of the country as interchange traffic with anti-passenger Eastern roads withered. Rail historian Arthur Dubin cited three modern examples of long-distance trains which he said competed with air services: a 24-hour luxury run on South African Railways which costs less than \$100 with meals; the "Indian-Pacific" crossing Australia; and the "Trans-Siberian" which runs daily with about 18 cars including sleepers.

Amtrak President Paul Reistrup indicated that he is working on designing a successor to present dome cars, noting that the dome "is really the center of all the action" on long-haul trains. The design of low-level sleepers is still uncertain, as is the nature of future "true first class service". Amtrak's Harold Graham told of plans to enable Amtrak passengers traveling out west to rent recreational vehicles.

Reistrup would like to see long-hauls running around 85 mph consistently, with "an elapsed trip time 2/3 that of the private automobile". Noting that slow orders due to unprotected grade crossings "slow our trains just as much as slow orders for bad track", he said that Amtrak may be "the cutting edge" for development of modern crossing protection systems.

Garth Campbell, of Canadian National Railways, noted that less than half of all travel is for business, and cautioned that the best product won't sell itself. He suggested rail marketing should recognize that young people generally like the sociability aspect of trains, while older people want the peace and quite which trains offer.

Much attention was given to corridor services, including presentations by equipment suppliers domestic and foreign, and rail officials from the U. K. and Sweden. GM described plans to develop super-streamlined power units to go with the Amfleet cars, one unit to be attached to each end of a string of such cars creating a bidirectional train capable of 125 mph and dubbed the "AMT-125 Train".

In response to a question by NARP's Ross Capon, the Rohr Corp. representative said that two-thirds of the 100,000-pound weight increase of the new Turbo trains (compared with the French RTG's Amtrak now operates) results from the need to comply with the FRA regulation requiring ability to withstand 800,000 pounds compression force, and British Railway's chief mechanical engineer said that the standards are too strict.

This illustrates a general NARP concern: the longer we go without challenging possibly unsuitable "rules of the game", the greater the threats to Amtrak's economic viability and the danger that service will be lost without having had a fair test.

Speaking on behalf of Senator Robert Taft (R-Ohio), an enthusiastic supporter of passenger trains, his legislative aide, Bill Lind, attacked the Department of Transportation as "our worst enemy" and said that Secretary Coleman's policy statement is inadequate because it merely projects the status quo into the future. But Lind warned that overcommitment of funds to inappropriate services would hand effective ammunition to political

opponents of rail passenger service. He also described a new coach interior design, a variant of the European compartments, based on the theory that effective competition with the *private* automobile must likewise offer privacy.

Anthony Haswell, NARP's founder, criticized Amtrak for deciding not to rebuild, using more reliable electric heating and air-conditioning, all of the older cars which will remain in use in July 1980. He also suggested that, in light of the high costs of new cars, Amtrak should consider retaining a larger number of old cars. (Southern Railway told the ICC Adequacy of Service Investigation that, "given the stainless steel construction, the cyclical renovation and the careful regular maintenance which we apply to these cars, our mechanical engineers estimate that their useful lifespan is indefinite".)

Haswell also urged Amtrak to work more with labor on improving the economics of the service, and F. S. King, Amtrak Vice President — Corporate Operations, agreed generally, while noting several local improvements which have been successfully negotiated.

Is all this attention too late? Will the general revulsion against government expenditures eliminate Amtrak services before they can benefit from new equipment, good track, and more efficient working agreements? For the President's thoughts on this, see the front page.

Status of Rail Membership On Amtrak Board of Directors

Amtrak's board of directors includes three representatives of stock-holding railroads. One of the members is Robert W. Downing, vice chairman of Burlington Northern.

In his position as chairman of the transportation committee of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, Downing was cited as authority for a Chamber press release last summer which was regarded as hostile to Amtrak.

NARP, reporting that fact in its August-September newsletter, urged that Congress eliminate the railroad positions on the Amtrak board, and sought support from the Department of Transportation. There have been these developments:

Downing told NARP that the Chamber of Commerce news releases did not accurately report the actual recommendations of the transportation committee. (He had just assumed the chairmanship.) He assured NARP that as an Amtrak director he is doing everything he can to help it succeed.

Chairman Warren G. Magnuson of the Senate Commerce Committee, told NARP, after an exchange of letters with Downing, that it is not necessarily an inherent conflict of interest to have railroad industry membership on the Amtrak board. But, he added in a communication to Downing: "Both Senator Hartke and myself strongly feel that many elements of the rail industry have failed to realize the important public relations aspect of rail passenger service for the entire industry, and it is my belief that anti-passenger service sentiments in the industry have not been helpful. . ."

Chairman Fred B. Rooney of the House Subcommittee on Transportation and Commerce, noting that NARP was concerned that railroad board members might have an unhealthy influence on the content of criteria governing establishment or discontinuance of Amtrak routes, said, "We will closely scrutinize Amtrak's route and service criteria. . ."

DOT Secretary Coleman wrote NARP: "As mentioned in the Department's 1975 Report to Congress on the Rail Passenger Service Act, the foreseeable nonprofitability of Amtrak suggests substantial Federal financial assistance. As a result, it appears inconsistent to have railroad shareholders appoint members to the (board). However, I feel that the railroad sector, with its considerable expertise has much to contribute to our nationwide rail passenger system, and, as such, should be represented. . ."

NARP agrees, but will press to change the manner of selecting railroad directors rather than to eliminate them.