



# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

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## LONG-HAUL ROUTES VITAL

### Anti-long-distance Myths Engulf Congress

"The future of Amtrak, if it has a viable future, lies in short distance transportation, from major population centers not more than 200 or 300 miles apart. If Amtrak can be cost-effective, it is in these corridors where it can be demonstrated. This is where Amtrak can be energy efficient. There is no one on this committee who does not believe that is the direction Amtrak ought to go. . . .

"I also believe it is imperative that as we identify those specific areas where Amtrak can be effective, we correspondingly reduce and eliminate other service that we know is hopelessly uneconomical and has little or no social or environmental value. Instead, if we merely end up with what we have now plus new requirements for equipment and personnel, we won't have improved Amtrak one bit."

—Rep. Robert Duncan (D-OR), Chairman,  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, on the House floor, July 31

Although Rep. Duncan will leave Congress at year's end, his views are important because they are so widely held in Congress, and because the actions of Congress in coming months will determine whether several long-distance trains survive beyond, or perhaps even until, Oct. 1, 1981.

Duncan's message seems quite clear: the emerging corridors would substitute for—not supplement and feed—existing long-distance routes, of which many serve no purpose.

NARP believes that properly-routed, modern long-distance trains are energy-savers, and that they provide needed mobility to people living at intermediate points, many of which face declining air and bus service. NARP believes that Amtrak's present

**"Since Florida became the first state in the nation to deregulate bus lines July 1, Greyhound and Trailways have dropped bus service to 35 north and central Florida communities.**

**"Greyhound also has reduced the frequency of routes to other towns it considers unprofitable and added more express runs between larger cities."**

—Washington Post, Aug. 12

long-distance trains are properly routed, except for the Houston section of the "Inter-American," the Indiana portion of the "Cardinal," and the Washington section of the "Broadway."

With a few simple numbers, you can analyze the energy question yourself. For starters, one diesel locomotive gets approximately one-half mile per gallon and can haul up to nine cars, and a reasonable average load factor is 55%.

Suppose that a nine-car long-distance train accommodates 358

people (36 in an economy sleeper, 22 in a standard sleeper, 300 in five 60-seat coaches; baggage/dorm; diner/lounge). At ½ mile per gallon, it produces 179 "seat-or-bed" miles per gallon (358 x ½); with an average load factor of 55%, this means 98.5 passenger-miles-per-gallon (PMPG) (.55 x 179). Since the Congressional Budget Office's 1979 attack on Amtrak projected 27 PMPG for airplanes and 59 PMPG for automobiles in the mid-1980s, you can see that the rather spartan long-distance train we've described is about 3½ times more efficient than air and over 1½ times more efficient than auto—and that's comparing existing rail technology  
(continued on page 4)



**The Board of Directors of the National Association of Railroad Passengers will meet in Detroit Oct. 9-11. Registration for NARP members who wish to attend is \$35, which includes three meals. Rooms at the Book-Cadillac Hotel, 1114 Washington Blvd., Detroit 48226, are \$38/night single and \$48/night double or twin. For further details and to register, please write to Michigan Passenger Foundation, Room 606, 2405 West Vernor, Detroit 48216.**

#### TRAVELERS' ADVISORY—AMTRAK/VALLEY RAILROAD CONNECTION

On Aug. 1, Valley Railroad Co. diesel-powered shuttle trains began operating between Amtrak's Old Saybrook, CT, station and the Essex, CT, terminal of Valley's steam-powered excursion trains. Shuttles depart Essex at 11:15 AM and 5:15 PM and depart Old Saybrook at 12:15 and 6:15 PM. The shuttles and the steam trains will run daily through Sept. 4, then daily except Mondays and Fridays through Oct. 26.

The shuttles are timed to provide a pleasant afternoon on the steam train and connecting excursion boat on the Connecticut River for Amtrak passengers from points east and west. People can leave New York City at 9:27 AM and return at 8:45 PM; they can leave Boston at 9:30 AM with an 8:36 PM return; and leave Philadelphia at 7:35 AM, returning at 10:41 PM on a through train to Washington.

Please do whatever you can to get the word on this connection out to potential riders. Partly because of Amtrak's failure to list the service in its August timetable, the shuttles have been running almost empty.

Five of 11 station stops which Amtrak had planned to eliminate in October (June News, p. 2) will survive—at least for a trial period: Lee Hall, VA; Poplarville, MS; Portage and Tomah, WI; and Thurmond, WV. Thurmond, however, will become a seasonal (summer-only) stop.

# NARP Fights Providence Plan

NARP's strong opposition to a plan to relocate Providence rail passenger facilities away from the central business district and other public transit services was reaffirmed at a July 22 news conference at Providence Union Station.

Thanks to good advance work by the Rhode Island Association of Railroad Passengers (RIARP), an impressive array of reporters and cameras greeted NARP Executive Director Ross Capon after he stepped off Amtrak Train 173. Capon had traveled overnight from Washington to Boston on the "Night Owl," stepping briefly on the platform in Providence (7:30 AM) to give copies of his statement and news release to RIARP's Josephine Milburn. Those documents were in the hands of reporters by the time of Capon's "official" arrival on #173 at 10:35 AM, a more appropriate time for a news conference.

The conference was one day before the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) hearing on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for track relocation, and Capon urged the public to show up in force and oppose the relocation.

Three TV stations included coverage of Capon's appearance on their evening local news programs, and the conference was reported on radio stations WEAN and WJAR. Newspaper coverage included an evening story in the *Bulletin* which became the lead story in the Metro section of the next morning's *Journal* under the banner headline, "Rail passengers' group opposes moving tracks," and the sub-headline, "Group says plan to move station, tracks, would inconvenience, discourage riders."

Additional coverage may result from an interview with *The Christian Science Monitor* during Capon's brief layover in Boston, and an interview at Providence's public TV station along with RIARP's Helen Allen and Fred Love.

Up until the time of the news conference, opposition to the project had received little publicity. Indeed, the project itself did not seem well known and supporters hoped it would be implemented with little controversy. The immediate impact of all the negative publicity generated by NARP apparently was to scare those interests supporting track relocation into turning out in full force at the public hearing, which started at 7:30 PM and lasted until 12:45 AM. RIARP observers estimated, however, that 30% of the more than fifty speakers raised questions about the relocation scheme. RIARP presented its own testimony and submitted NARP's detailed statement for the record.

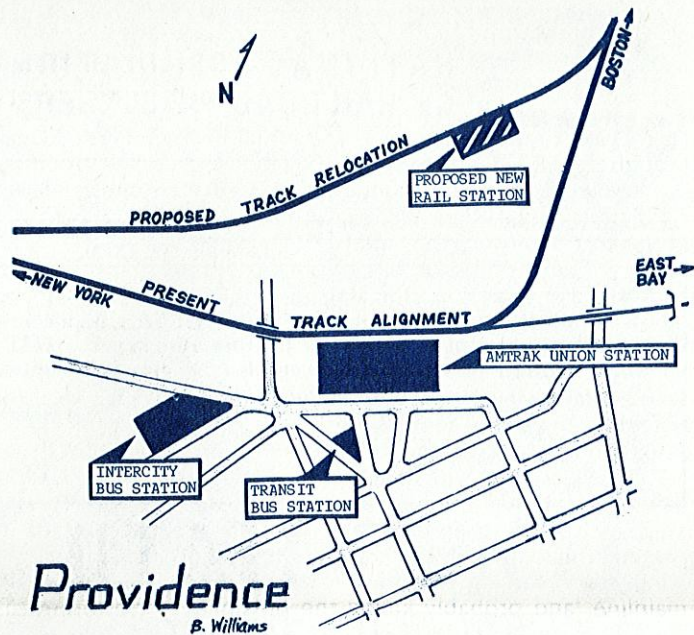
Hopefully, the major impact of Capon's appearance was to make many more people aware of what the city's leaders have planned and, in the long run, kill the project. An indication of how much of a secret the project has been was the testimony of a city council member who had just learned of the hearing by watching television that evening; he showed up to denounce FRA for failing to notify him by mail.

Although Sen. Claiborne Pell (D-RI), a long-time fighter for improved rail passenger service, supports the relocation project, he has been disappointed at the failure of local officials to develop a more open planning process despite his efforts to persuade them to do so. Sen. John Chafee (R-RI) is neutral on relocation.

There is some evidence that the general public is opposed to the scheme. WEAN Radio asked this question of its listeners on July 15: "An environmental impact statement says moving the railroad tracks in downtown Providence will substantially increase economic growth in the city. Moving the tracks would create 2 million square feet of space providing more jobs for the city. Our question today is: do you favor relocating the railroad tracks in Providence?"

In spite of the pro-relocation bias of the information in WEAN's question, 687, or 77% of the 893 respondents answered "No."

**Today: An ideal to admire and emulate.** Currently, the close proximity of all surface public transportation and the compact central business district gives Providence a *de facto* transportation



center that many other cities would love to have. Union Station faces a small park surrounded by two federal buildings, two major banks, offices, shops, City Hall, and a major hotel. The city's major transit bus terminal is in the center of the park, close to Union Station's main entrance. The intercity bus terminal is only 600 feet from the station's entrance. This is important, given Providence's growing role as a rail-bus transfer point for Amtrak passengers going to and from Newport, Fall River, New Bedford, and Cape Cod.

**Tomorrow: Roads, roads, roads—and an isolated rail station?** Under Alternative D, as the FRA calls it, the tracks would be removed from historic Union Station (constructed in 1898, placed on National Register, 1975) and relocated in a ditch to the north. A new rail station would be constructed, and the walking distance between its entrance and the intercity bus terminal would jump from 600 feet to 2,300 feet; there would be similar increases in distance to local bus services and to the business district.

Initially, the station would be literally isolated because it would be in service before the development of nearby land, although, as the EIS notes, "temporary pathways would be provided, and views of the construction activities may be of interest to some pedestrians."

Even in the long term, however, the station would be isolated for practical purposes because the anticipated development near it would be office buildings and "the area is likely to remain unpopulated during the evening hours," which "would lessen the sense of pedestrian security." Since the bulk of passengers arriv-

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**The NARP Executive Committee has approved the appointment of James F. Farny, 12 Squirrel Lane, Newark, DE 19711 as an At-Large member of the NARP Board.**

**The new president of Citizens for Rail California is Byron Nordberg, 1617 Ridgeway St., Oceanside, CA 92054. Our congratulations to the outgoing president, Greg Thompson, on his appointment to the California State Assembly Select Committee on Mass Transit.**

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ing at Providence by rail do so after dark on trains leaving New York in mid- or late-afternoon, the security threat is a real one, except to those using autos and taxis for local connections.

After tracks are removed from the embankment behind Union Station, a six-lane boulevard would be placed there—a new obstacle for walk-on rail passengers. Alternative D also includes an expanded Civic Center interchange to make it as easy as possible for motorists to travel in both directions between downtown and I-95. While NARP prefers Alternative B (Northeast Corridor Improvement Project—NECIP—rail improvements only) plus minor traffic circulation improvements, there is an intermediate alternative, C, which would incorporate most of the interchange

without moving the tracks. As to cost, you pay for what you get:

- A (Status quo) ..... \$ 0
- B (NECIP only) ..... \$14.2 million
- C (B + highway interchange) ..... \$28.3 million
- D (Rail relocation + major new roads) .... \$53.1 million

(The EIS acknowledges only a \$47.1 million price tag for D, although the FRA has already spent \$6 million to repair a railroad bridge which would be abandoned if D were adopted.)

Of course, the Federal Highway Administration would pay 90% of the cost of most of the highway improvements, but a taxpayer dollar is a taxpayer dollar. It seems inappropriate that any money authorized by Congress for Northeast rail passenger improvements should help finance the conversion of Providence into another non-descript monument to the automobile. **NARP members around the country may wish to advise Secretary of Transportation Neil Goldschmidt what they think his decision regarding the use of federal funds here should be.**

One more disadvantage to track relocation: just east of Union Station is a junction with a track running into a tunnel which connects to a potential commuter rail line to Warren and the East Bay area, as well as to an alternate route to Woonsocket and to Amtrak's mainline in Massachusetts. Relocation would break this connection, forcing some more freight onto part of Amtrak's mainline, and probably killing the possibility of restoring East Bay commuter service.

**Why track relocation?:** Read carefully. The feeling is that, if commercial development north of the present tracks is delayed until 1990 (which would be guaranteed with rail relocation), development would be more intense—i.e. taller buildings—on the few remaining open sites south of the tracks. The net result in the year 2000: more total downtown development and office space than if the tracks are kept where they are now.

(In contrast, the State's Historical Preservation Commission worries that the relocation project would force such intense development south of the tracks during the next ten years that it may force demolition of historic buildings and construction of larger buildings "out of scale with the historic district.")

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**"Considering the scale of the rail relocation and Capitol Center redevelopment project, the extent of the federal involvement, and the fact that the entire project is dependent upon federal action to move the tracks, it would seem appropriate for the federal government to take a lead role in identifying the mitigating adverse effects which will result, directly or indirectly, from the federal action. This has not been adequately done, in our opinion, in the EIS or the Section 106 (Determination of Effect) report. . . .**

**"We would add that the loss of function is an adverse effect not only to the (Union Station) complex, but to the Downtown Providence Historic District as well, within which the station (as transportation center) is a major contributing structure in the civic center. The new construction proposed for the station and viaduct sites may also adversely affect the station."**

—July 16 letter from Eric Hertfelder,  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Rhode Island  
Historical Preservation Commission, to Louis S. Thompson,  
Director, Northeast Corridor Project (FRA)

"Who owns this 'land north of the tracks?' " asks Capon in his written statement. "Primarily the Providence and Worcester Company. Furthermore, the P&W also owns some land on both sides of the *existing* tracks—land whose value would presumably appreciate as a result of moving those tracks. Also, P&W—unlike the existing downtown—would remain close to the improved Amtrak service."

The latter point seems to be of no significance to the drafters of the EIS, who see the improved rail service resulting from NECIP as having *no impact* on downtown development. They also see no impact on ridership resulting either from the improved rail service or the removal of the station from downtown, although Providence may be the biggest single beneficiary of the NECIP if its trip time goals are achieved.

**NARP's response.** Revitalize Providence by improving public

transportation—an appropriate response to the energy crisis. Follow the example of Newark, NJ, and make the railroad station the centerpiece for development; not the example of Houston which already sees the need to change its ways. Recognize the value of the coming intercity rail passenger improvements for the downtown; do a fairer analysis of commuter rail potential.

As for "the land north of the tracks," create a secondary entrance and lobby for Union Station on the north side of the embankment and punch the pedestrian tunnel under the tracks through to the new lobby. Hide the embankment some find offensive behind buildings which need be only five stories high.

Several earlier studies referred to in the EIS point the general direction in which Providence should go: *Interface: Providence* (1974), *A Study for Reuse* (Jan., 1976), and "several plans for the downtown and station site . . . under development or consideration by local public and private groups" when NECIP was getting started, including "the City's *Intermodal Study for Union Station.*"

Sadly, some of the testimony from business interests at the recent hearing indicated they had tried unsuccessfully for two years to move in that direction. Perhaps they should give it another try now that everyone knows the energy crisis is here to stay, and Amtrak has a reasonably responsive management.

Capon summed up the development question by asking what will matter most to future generations: "Is the need to prevent pre-1990 development of land north of the existing tracks really great enough to justify handing to the children of the people of Providence—and all future generations—a markedly inferior public transportation system?"

Postscript: An Introduction to Highway Planning Jargon. To forestall plans for massive new highway construction in the vicinity of Union Station, Capon recommended the use of traffic rotaries in place of signals to improve both the capacity and the safety of existing roads, and referred to "Modern Rotaries" by Kenneth Todd, an article which appeared in the July, 1979, issue of *ITE Journal* (available for \$2 from the Institute of Transportation Engineers, 525 School St., SW, Washington, DC 20024).

As the EIS puts it, "the quality of operations afforded by an intersection to peak traffic volumes attempting to pass through is measured in terms of levels of service from A to E, where LOS (Level-of-Service) A means that no vehicle waits longer than one red indication and the intersection approaches appear open, and LOS E indicates that volumes are at or near the intersection's capacity (the maximum that could be expected to be accommodated), long queues of vehicles wait to clear the intersection, and delays may involve several signal cycles."

The authors of the EIS are evidently concerned that, in the absence of their plan to turn Providence into another non-descript monument to the automobile, "four intersections would operate at LOS E by the year 2000 and one at LOS D."

NARP's statement said: "One can view intersections functioning at LOS D and E as bottlenecks needing to be fixed, or as incentives to auto users to switch to transit. The notion that all roads should perform 'acceptably' (LOS C or better) during the rush hours of the year 2000 is an absurd basis on which to justify taxpayer expenditures." ■

**At the urging of NARP member Michael Diem, we are furnishing the address of each of the major presidential candidates.**

**National Unity Campaign for John Anderson  
P.O. Box 37260  
Washington, DC 20013**

**Carter-Mondale Presidential Committee  
2000 "L" Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20036**

**Reagan-Bush Committee  
901 South Highland Street  
Arlington, VA 22204**

## Long-Haul Routes *(continued from page 1)*

with the competitors' technology of five years hence.

You now have the basic information you need to calculate a slightly more luxurious long-distance train which would still beat the competition in energy efficiency. Be sure to add a second locomotive if you go over nine cars!

The disparity between the energy efficiency of rail and the other modes is even greater when indirect impacts are considered: air and auto encourage sprawl and energy-wasteful development patterns which can't be well-served by mass transit, while long-distance trains in cities with well-located stations feed and sometimes supplement local transit services.

Historically, long-distance passengers stayed with trains longer than did most short-distance riders. Prof. George W. Hilton, who has favored the demise of the passenger train since before Amtrak was created, makes this point in his recent 80-page study, *Amtrak, The National Railroad Passenger Corporation* (available for \$4.25 from the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1150 17th St., NW, Washington, DC 20036). Hilton writes: "(1920) saw the highest (passenger) volume in railroad history. . . . By 1929 the railroads had lost 38.1% of their passengers and 34.3% of their passenger-miles. Short-distance passengers converted to the automobile more rapidly than long-distance. The motor bus, too, which made its first significant inroads into railroad passenger volume in this period, originally carried mostly short-distance passengers. Consequently, the average distance of railroad trips rose continuously as the (ridership) decline progressed. In 1929 the passenger train still dominated the long-distance common carrier market so overwhelmingly that it was almost universally expected to survive indefinitely."

Hilton also reports that Amtrak's total cost of moving a passenger in FY 1977 averaged 21.7¢/mile in long-haul services compared with 22.9¢ in the Northeast Corridor and 24.5¢ in other short-distance markets. Because fares are highest in the NEC, the net loss there was lowest: 12.0¢/mile vs. 14.3¢ for long-haul trains and 16¢ for other shorts. These statistics may understate the viability of long-distance trains since, in FY 1977, most such trains were running with old equipment while the shorts had already been converted to new.

In this age of tight budgets, long-distance trains have another

### TRACK STANDARDS: NO REVISIONS

**The Federal Railroad Administration has abandoned its controversial proposal to revise railroad track safety standards (Dec. 1979 News). The proposal, which would have reduced train speeds for many Amtrak and freight operations, was sharply attacked in public hearings by Amtrak, NARP, and the U.S. rail industry.**

**Meanwhile, U.S. District Judge John Garrett Penn still has not ruled on the Justice Dept./Amtrak law suit against Southern Pacific (Jan. 1980 News). Penn had been expected to issue a ruling by April.**

### CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE UPDATE

Since NARP last published the names of congressional committee members (June 1979 News), some changes have occurred. You may wish to make note of them.

House Commerce Committee: Robert Matsui (D-CA) has replaced Russo; James Broyhill has assumed position of Ranking Republican from Devine, who remains a committee member.

House Public Works: Billy Tauzin (D-LA) has replaced Hutto; John Hutchinson (D-WV) has filled a vacancy.

Senate Banking: George Mitchell (D-ME) has replaced Tsongas.

House Appropriations: Vic Fazio (D-CA) has replaced Flood; W.G. (Bill) Hefner (D-NC) has replaced Slack.

House Budget: Thomas Ashley (D-OH) has filled a vacancy.

Senate Budget: George Mitchell (D-ME) has replaced Muskie, but Ernest Hollings has assumed position of Chairman from Muskie.

significant advantage: they can achieve their potential without major track improvements. In fact, of Amtrak's existing long-distance routes, the only track improvements desperately needed would double as corridors: Dallas-Houston for the "Inter-American" and Indianapolis-Cincinnati for the "Cardinal."

We would argue that, just as long-distance passengers were last to leave intercity trains, they are the first to return. In the 1920's, they stayed on the trains because people did not trust their automobiles over long distances due to unreliable performance and inadequate roads. In the 1980's, if given the chance, they will continue to return to the trains in droves because they don't trust their automobiles over long-distances—due to the high cost of gasoline and uncertain gasoline supplies—and they refuse to ride buses over long distances.

Furthermore, long-distance auto trips in the future may require renting cars specifically for the trips, and this rental cost will enhance Amtrak's ability to offer competitive fares. The *New York Times* recently reported: "The all-purpose family car might well go the way of the dinosaur. For example, (Larry L.) Jenney (of the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment, who directed a study of the automobile transportation system published last year) said, the small, highly efficient two-seater may become the staple for city driving. For other functions, such as vacationing, a larger car might be rented or provided under special sales-and-lease arrangements with auto dealers." (July 22)

The traveling public has already shown that NARP's theory is correct: demand for Amtrak's long-distance trains vastly exceeds supply in most cases—a promotional program for the "Broadway" is being postponed because the train is sold-out for the rest of the summer—so Amtrak must turn away thousands of would-be travelers while accommodating virtually everyone who wants to ride its short-distance trains. (There are some standees on the short-distance trains, which are unreserved, but not enough to challenge our basic thesis.)

Under Sec. 130 of the Amtrak Reorganization Act of 1979, Amtrak was required to submit to the Congress and the Secretary of Transportation a report evaluating the "possibility of providing rail passenger service on a portion or segment of any route over which service is discontinued on or after Oct. 1, 1979."

Amtrak looked at segments of its former Chicago-Florida, Chicago-Oklahoma-Houston, Chicago-Billings-Seattle, and Washington-Roanoke-Ashland, KY services. Amtrak found that "none of the potential services standing alone achieves as high a passenger mile per train mile as the discontinued trains themselves; only Chicago-Indianapolis and Chicago-Nashville achieve a lower avoidable loss per passenger mile than the eliminated service. The discontinued trains, with the exception of 'The Hilltopper,' served a variety of cities, communities and resort areas, and provided more combinations of origins and destinations, and thus, more ridership than any one segment could equal. Arrivals and departures at most end points of the long-distance trains were timed to make connections with other trains in the Amtrak system. This is not possible for the isolated segments."

To get a copy of Amtrak's Feb., 1980, "Report on Segments of Discontinued Routes Pursuant to Sec. 130 of the Amtrak Reorganization Act of 1979," write to Lawrence D. Gilson, Vice-President, AMTRAK Government Affairs, 400 N. Capitol St., NW, Wash., DC 20001.

In dialogue with your legislators, please praise the hard, and necessary, advance work for emerging corridors now going forward in the Congress. Lead times are such that, by the time these corridors emerge, the need for them may well be desperate. If your defense of long-hauls comes across as an attack on the corridors, you may wind up with nothing: the budget-cutters will gleefully trumpet your anti-corridor arguments and ignore your defense of long-hauls.

Just as we have argued that intercity bus and rail should be analyzed as feeding each other rather than strictly as competitors, we would emphasize the complementarity between short- and long-distance intercity rail services. Significantly, a large portion of ridership on non-NEC short-distance trains connects with long-distance trains—this is true today and it was true in the past when these corridors had faster and more frequent passenger trains. ■