



AMTRAK: STILL STARVED?

President Obama has put an impressive amount of capital on the table for inter-city passenger trains. Meanwhile, there seems to be a new federal subsidy for road users daily. Still, the news is not good for Amtrak — and thus for new trains one might expect to see reasonably soon.

Fiscal 2010 spending bills that passed the Senate Appropriations Committee July 29, and the full House July 17, followed the White House's lead, shaving \$27 million off Amtrak's operations request and potentially setting the stage for an Amtrak hiring freeze just as demand for added service is about to pick up.

Amtrak's capital and debt service

grant request was slashed \$453 million and \$381 million, respectively, by the full House and the Senate committee. That committee also earmarked \$144 million of the capital for Americans with Disabilities Act station improvements. Enactment of that provision would virtually eliminate capital for anything beyond maintaining the existing operation.

Indeed, combining the House capital figure with the Senate ADA mandate would not even do that.

High Speed Rail (HSR): The Senate committee has \$1.2 billion while the House bill (H.R. 3288) has \$4 billion, \$2 billion of which may be used for a Na-

URGE FULL 2010 FUNDING

In a July 31 statement, NARP President and CEO Ross Capon — noting President Obama's positive passenger train vision—said, "Congress...following the bad example in the Administration's budget...seems headed towards funding levels that threaten...existing service..." The statement and Capon's July 27 letter to the Senate Appropriations subcommittee are at <http://bit.ly/approps>

Please add your voice to our push to give Amtrak the means to grow. Call the Capitol Switchboard (202-224-3121) or visit www.narprail.org/actnow.

"I think it's a little bit silly to provide all of this money to transit districts to buy new buses if you can't afford to have drivers and employees to use the equipment."

- **U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood**, in May at the National Press Club, succinctly describing the folly of inadequate operating grants for transit (and, by extension, Amtrak).

tional Infrastructure Bank.

A floor amendment by Rep. Tom Latham (R-IA) to reduce HSR funding by
(continued on p. 4)

2010 Funding (\$ millions)	Operations	Capital & Debt Service	Total
Amtrak Request	580	1,383	1,963
Obama Admin. Request	572	930	1,502
House	553	930	1,483
Senate Approps. Cmte.	553	1,002	1,555
FY '09 Enacted	531	940	1,490

Operations numbers exclude the Amtrak Inspector General, which got \$18.5 million in 2009 and, starting in 2010, will be funded separately. The Senate committee and House bills both have \$19 million for the IG. The 2009 numbers correct erroneous ones in June News.

NARP Presses Restart of Amtrak's Gulf Coast 'Missing Link'

NARP issued a position paper urging immediate resumption of tri-weekly service between New Orleans and Orlando, with daily service to follow.

This followed Amtrak's July 16 release of its statutorily-mandated "plan" to restore service. The company did not foresee early service restoration.

Amtrak listed three options:

- 1. Restore service as it was before Katrina.** Annual operating grant, \$4.8 million.
- 2. Extend the daily City of New Orleans to Orlando.** This produces the highest expected ridership, but would require



an additional trainset. Annual operating grant, \$11.7 million.

3. New, separate New Orleans-Orlando train. Service would be daily, but may not include sleepers immediately, and would require two trainsets. Annual operating grant: \$18.4 million.

"Capital/mobilization costs" for both options 2 and 3 would be \$58 to \$97 million.

A nationwide concern regarding the economics of serving small communities is the large cost Amtrak alleges for complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act. For the 12 unserved

stations along the Gulf Coast route, the range is from \$386,246 at Pensacola to \$649,333 at Tallahassee. But ADA costs at Crestview and Chipley, both very small, exceed \$600,000. Atmore, at \$501,266, has the same ADA pricetag as Mobile.

We quote a 1991 Amtrak/FRA report (under the first Pres. Bush) which said this route "has often been referred to as the 'missing link' in the Amtrak system."

Key Capitol Hill staffers are reviewing Amtrak's findings, and need to hear from you. Urge your U.S. legislators to fund the fastest possible restoration. ■

Our report is at www.narprail.org/gulf and Amtrak's is at <http://bit.ly/gulf> [PDF].

Needed: More Rolling Stock and Routes

Recovery Act funds for intercity passenger trains are likely to produce measurable improvements in selected short-distance corridor routes, also benefiting overnight trains that use or connect with those corridors. The fate of needed additions to Amtrak's long-distance national network, however, remains uncertain.

Will Amtrak:

(1) replace 50-year-old dining and baggage cars?;

(2) expand capacity on existing overnight trains?;

(3) add new, much-sought-after overnight routes?;

(4) restore New Orleans-Florida service or, as seems likely, continue to treat it as "new" service? (p. 1).

Amtrak is still struggling to find a way to pay for the new rolling stock that will be needed if long-distance service is to expand in a meaningful way—or to avoid contracting as the existing fleet wears out. The company has begun a procurement process to replace elderly dining and baggage cars and to add 35 Viewliner sleepers to the existing, thinly-stretched, single-level sleeping-car fleet.

The company's business plan—due within 90 days after the appropriations law is enacted—must include a fleet plan. The Fiscal 2009 appropriations law required "a comprehensive fleet plan for all

Amtrak rolling stock which shall address [Amtrak's] detailed plans and timeframes for maintenance, refurbishment, replacement and expansion of the Amtrak fleet [and] shall establish year-specific goals and milestones and discuss potential, current, and preferred financing options for all such activities."

The 2009 business plan highlights big ridership growth but is silent on acquisition of *new* equipment. The 2010 plan will be different, though probably not as different as we would like. ■

Meet Us In St. Louis!

NARP's growing Council of Representatives meets in St. Louis October 16-17, and all NARP members are welcome! Registration is \$195, which includes Friday dinner and—for both Friday and Saturday—breakfast and lunch. The NARP guest-room rate at the convention hotel, Sheraton St. Louis City Center, is \$139 a night (single, double), \$149 (triple), \$159 (quad) plus tax, and is available through Sept. 26 by calling 1-888-627-8096. The meeting is preceded by a Mississippi River cruise Thursday evening, for which the charge is \$15. Meeting and cruise registration fees should be made payable and mailed to NARP. ■

Amtrak Security: O'Connor in, Rooney out

In late May, Amtrak Vice-President—Security Strategy and Special Operations William Rooney left the company. Amtrak said it would combine its police and security departments under Police Chief John O'Connor. Rooney had helped launch counterterrorism units at Amtrak and build ties to U.S. and international counterterrorism officials.

Amtrak spokesman Cliff Black told NARP that "Chief John O'Connor has picked up the reins in his acting role overseeing Amtrak's police and security integration. The week of August 17, he is traveling to India as part of a State Department delegation examining counterterrorism issues in the transportation sector." ■

AMTRAK IG OFFICE IN FLUX

Lorraine Green, formerly Amtrak's Vice President of Human Resources, is Amtrak's interim Inspector General (IG). Fred E. Weiderhold Jr., one of the longest-serving IGs in Washington and Amtrak's first, was appointed in 1989 and served 20 years until his June 18, 2009 departure.

A sharply worded July 28 letter to Amtrak Chairman Thomas Carper co-signed by House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Chairman Edolphus Towns (D-NY) and Ranking Member Darrell Issa (R-CA) questioned the appropriateness of Green's appointment. The Committee's news release and link to the letter are at <http://bit.ly/OnDgf>. The release referred to Weiderhold's "forced retirement."

A July 29 Amtrak statement responded, "The [Amtrak] Board has no doubts concerning Lorraine Green's independence."

The *Wall Street Journal* reported Aug. 2 that Ms. Green plans to release a Weiderhold probe "that examined her former department within Amtrak...to remove 'the perception [referenced in the Towns/Issa letter]...I'm holding the report back.'"

Amtrak is one of 31 "designated federal agencies" that employ IGs appointed directly by agency leadership, a situation which Towns has hinted he may seek to change. ■



I want to help expand and revitalize America's passenger train network by joining the National Association of Railroad Passengers. Please enroll me in the following membership:

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Making Better Connections

When passengers book an Amtrak trip with connecting trains, they often are forced to accept very long layovers.

If a passenger finds that he or she is in time to catch an earlier connection, Amtrak exacts the going fare for the earlier train at the time the ticket is exchanged, which usually means paying more.

Being treated like a walk-up passenger can be infuriating, especially if your whole family is with you (driving up the cost of rebooking) or if the connection you want is the one you would have opted for in the first place if Amtrak had allowed it.

A more customer-friendly approach could benefit Amtrak: happier customers; the chance to fill seats on the earlier train that might otherwise have gone empty; and more time to sell space on that later train you are vacating.

We have urged Amtrak to address this situation.

A separate, but related issue is the need for Amtrak to sell tighter connections as on-time performance improves. Amtrak's Gulf Coast report (front page) says "the on-time performance of Amtrak's New York-Miami *Silver Service* trains on CSX has improved from 18% in fiscal 2005 to 70% during the first eight months of fiscal 2009." ■

Washington Watch

Transportation Solutions for Pollution: The Clean Low-Emission Affordable New Transportation Efficiency Act (CLEAN-TEA) would take 10% of all funds from the auction of greenhouse gas credits and direct it to—among other things—new or expanded transit and passenger rail; supporting development around rail and transit stations; and making neighborhoods safer for cyclists and pedestrians.

CLEAN-TEA language was not included in the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009 (ACES; "Waxman-Markkey"), which passed the House June 26. The Senate plans hearings on its version of ACES in September.

An August 18 *Washington Post* editorial, "Cap and Rage," noted growing opposition to "cap-and-trade" and suggested a relook at a carbon tax which many experts believe would be easier to enforce.

Back on May 29, NARP wrote to House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) leaders, noting that 20% of the ACES bill's "revenues come from transportation

Tracks being laid along H Street Northeast in Washington, DC, in preparation for future streetcar service. The line, which will go from Union Station to 36th Street NE via H Street and Benning Road, is scheduled to begin operating by 2015. Another streetcar line is under construction in the Anacostia neighborhood of southeast Washington.

Light Rail Coming to Nation's Capital



- David Johnson

Station Signage Upgrades



- courtesy of Amtrak

A new passenger information kiosk at the restored Southern Railway depot in Anniston, Ala., greets passengers boarding Amtrak's *Crescent*. Amtrak is installing revamped signage across the system, mostly at unstaffed stations. 82 kiosks have been installed to date, with 101 more to come. They display schedules, system maps, security and policy announcements and local transportation information.

users, yet none of those funds would be invested in transportation infrastructure." NARP urged T&I members to work for a positive change, but there was none. Our letter is at www.narprail.org/houseti.

Please ask your Senators to push the addition of CLEAN-TEA language to the energy and climate bill, with an emphasis on investing in green transport.

Surface Transportation Reauthorization: Now or Later?: House and Senate leaders continue to argue over how to reauthorize the surface transportation law that expires Sept. 30. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), Chair of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee dealing with transportation, joined with the Obama Administration in calling for an 18-month continuance of current surface transportation policy with no changes.

Meanwhile, House T&I Chairman James Oberstar (D-MN) won bipartisan support from key House leaders in

pushing for the quick enactment of a full, six-year authorization. His legislation has some bold and innovative changes—including \$50 billion over six years for HSR.

But it is unclear whether lawmakers can agree on any proposal to fund the bill, whether by increasing the gas tax or the per-barrel fee on imported fossil fuels; taxing oil futures speculators; issuing treasury bonds, or "other."

Complicating matters, the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) is running out of money. For the second straight year, the HTF will get a general funds infusion. Pres. Obama signed a law providing a \$7 billion patch on Aug. 7. Similarly, on Sept. 15, 2008, Pres. Bush signed an \$8 billion HTF bailout.

The OneRail Coalition (www.onerail.org) and others support letting states use for railroad projects any Trust Fund dollars that came from general funds. ■





National Association of
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our mission: a modern, customer-focused national passenger train network that provides a travel choice americans want.

NARP Enhances Online Presence

We Want You to Interact With Us!

Over the past two months, NARP has made significant upgrades to its digital communications in an effort to become more accessible and allow members and supporters to more fully participate in our activities.

On July 23, we released our first YouTube video, which can be seen at www.youtube.com/narprail. It explains who we are and why America needs more and better trains, and invites viewers to tell us their reasons for sharing our goals. We hope to use the stories we receive in future outreach and advocacy efforts. To tell yours, go to www.narprail.org/stories.

NARP also has a fan page on Face-



book (www.tinyurl.com/fbknarp), allowing members of the site (membership is free) to receive updates from us and comment on them, and to network with other supporters. Our profile on MySpace (www.myspace.com/narprail) serves the same purpose.

Our Website and blog are updated almost daily. We have also restructured and streamlined our web site's "About Us" and "Info and Links" pages to make them more user-friendly.

Your comments and suggestions are welcome as we continue our quest to grow a broad grassroots network of passenger train advocates. Email us at narp@narprail.org or call 202-408-8362.

Starved?

from page 1

\$3 billion was thankfully defeated 136-284. H.R. 3288 passed the full House on a mostly party-line, 256-168 vote. The spending measure should reach the Senate floor in September, after which key decisions will be made in a House-Senate conference.

Tell your legislators to work to fix the Amtrak funding problem. They may be glad to hear you talk about something other than health care! A country that can quickly cook up \$3 billion in auto "clunkers" handouts can do a decent job of funding passenger trains. ■

Setting the Record Straight

NARP submitted a statement for the record of a Senate Banking subcommittee's July 7 hearing on "Public Transportation: A Core Climate Solution." We listed the many public subsidies lavished on highway transportation, especially the *new* subsidies. We also noted the latest Dept. of Energy energy efficiency statistics by mode and the less quantifiable ways trains contribute to smarter development and a higher quality of life. See www.narprail.org/statements for ours, and <http://bit.ly/bmklIn> for the written testimony of all witnesses. ■

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

New York State specials: If you make a reservation before November 20 and travel before November 23, you will get 20% off all travel within the state of New York. To get this discount, book online as an Adult since this reduction cannot be combined with your NARP discount. Also, Certain Amtrak trains will be making a special stop at the state fairgrounds in Syracuse between August 26 and September 7. Use station code NYF.

New Amtrak-Metrolink ticket cross-honoring policies: Effective around October 1, Amtrak one-way and round-trip tickets will no longer be valid on on Metrolink trains in the Los Angeles area, except between Union Station and Burbank Airport on Metrolink trains 768 and 799. Amtrak 10-trip and monthly tickets will continue to be valid on Metrolink and Metrolink monthly passes will still be honored on Amtrak.

Bay Bridge closure: The bridge, used by Amtrak Thruway buses connecting San Francisco to Oakland and Emeryville, will be closed from 8 PM Sept. 3 to 5 AM Sept. 8 for the installation of a large trestle. Thruway buses will be diverted, greatly lengthening travel times. Passengers are asked to use BART to connect to Capitol Corridor and San Joaquin trains from San Francisco.