



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

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CONGRESS CLEARS AUTHORIZATION

A final version of the Amtrak authorization bill has passed both houses of Congress and has been sent to the White House for signature. The bill was passed by the Senate on September 30 by a voice vote; it passed the House the following day by a vote of 299 to 44, with 87 not voting. While there had been some threats from Secretary Coleman that he would recommend to the President that he veto an earlier version of the bill, neither the White House nor DOT have said as yet what the President will do with it in its

up a long-term capital acquisition program that will allow them to purchase equipment at lower costs" — thereby "giving Amtrak certainty in these areas." Funding levels for 1978 could, of course, be either increased or decreased when further railroad amendments are considered during the coming legislative year.

The bill as it was finally passed also specifies that Amtrak may use its capital grants to temporarily pay off its outstanding debts, a measure which will significantly reduce the amount of cash needed by Amtrak for annual interest payments. DOT has in the past refused to allow this. The new measure, as the Conference Report makes clear, will require the Secretary to make appropriated capital funds available for this purpose.

The bill, if signed, will make Amtrak's president an *ex officio* member of the Amtrak board of directors. NARP had earlier insisted, in recommending the appointment of Paul Reistrup to the Amtrak board, that the person responsible for Amtrak's operations and management must have a full voice in the deliberations of the board to which he reports (June News). In a memorandum to the conferees prior to action on the bill, Secretary Coleman stated: "We see no reason for changing the current statutory makeup of the board." Mr. Reistrup's refusal to go along with the current Administration's attempts to severely cut back Amtrak operations and funding no doubt contributed to the Secretary's decision to oppose this amendment.

Another amendment passed by the Congress will change the
(continued on page 3)

We held up publication of this issue with the hope of reporting final results on the Amtrak legislation. The "October" issue, expected to go to the post office the second week in November, will contain details on the January regional meetings. In conformance with provisions of our mailing permit, there will be no "November" issue.

current form.

The bill includes authorization of Amtrak operating and capital grants for both FY 1977 and 1978. (Differences between earlier House and Senate versions were recently resolved by a joint Conference Committee.) For operating expenses, the Congress has approved \$430 million for 1977 and \$470 million for 1978. For capital acquisitions and improvements, \$130 million has been authorized for each of the two years. As Senator Pastore (D-RI) stated in submitting the bill to the full Senate, "...the conferees approved a 2-year capital authorization to permit Amtrak to set

NARP Calls for Revised Rail Law

Ranking of rail lines for guiding Federal aid programs should be done on a continuing basis, NARP's Ross Capon urged at the Sept. 20 Pittsburgh hearing of the ICC's Rail Services Planning Office. The hearing was part of a nationwide series the Office held to receive public comment on the Secretary's August 3 report (August News, pp. 1 & 2).

NARP's concern "is as much with the need to change the present law as with the Secretary's Report. . . We reject the

At the Pittsburgh RSPO hearing, NARP called for establishment of Cleveland-Pittsburgh and direct Pittsburgh-Washington service. Cleveland-Youngstown-Pittsburgh is the most heavily populated corridor in the nation which is not linked by rail passenger service.

NARP also urged that the Secretary be required to give specific designations to lines within the "Corridors of Excess Capacity", subordinating present track conditions to long-term factors, such as overall energy consumption and rail passenger potential. Capon noted that the "passenger preference would reasonably be the deciding factor", even where passenger traffic is not predominant, "where freight considerations indicate a tossup between or among route choices".

Subsequently, NARP filed detailed appendices listing track segments related or potentially related to passenger service, but which received a designation other than "A Mainline".

More Studies

In addition to the "final" line designations due in early February, several other railroad reports will be forthcoming next year under the 4R Act. These will be of great interest to supporters of rail passenger service, whose cause depends on the maintenance of a healthy railroad system.

By February 5, the Secretary must submit preliminary recommendations on the amount and type of funding to be provided to the railroad industry, based on his view of rehab and
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concept of 'finality' as found in the 4R Act. The need for a continuing planning process is just as important in railroad planning as in highway planning where it has already been recognized. . . A look at changes in rail traffic patterns over the past few decades should make" this clear. Capon urged RSPO to include its views on any inadequacies in the law in its December 1 report to the Secretary of Transportation.

New Single-Level Equipment?

What will be the fate of Amtrak's long-haul trains in the Midwest and the East? Orders for new bi-level equipment will finally provide Western travelers with modern railroad cars — designed specifically for the needs and comforts of the overnight, long-haul traveler. (Some problems still need to be worked out: see August News.) But what about Amtrak's Florida service? The National, Lake Shore, and Broadway Limiteds? The James Whitcomb Riley, the Montrealer, and the Panama Limited? A possible Amtrak Southern Crescent?

Bi-level cars cannot be used on many of these trains because of overhead clearance restrictions. To be sure, the emergence of bi-level cars in the West will permit reassigning some of Amtrak's best old single-level cars to the East. But the long-term potential of Eastern trains is as strong and as important as that of Western trains. Clearly, the time will come when new single-level long-haul cars will be required. Now is the time, we feel, for Amtrak, for the Congress, and for the public to address this issue and to decide what kind of equipment will be needed.

The issue is a far-reaching one and will affect the nature of rail

NARP members are encouraged to write to Amtrak, copying their legislators, urging that some single rooms be included in any new single-level sleepers. It is apparently too late to change Amtrak's plans for the bi-levels discussed last month; the same mistake should not be made with the single-level cars.

Including single rooms should not reduce capacity, since most current sleeping cars have the same capacity regardless of the mix of double bedrooms and roomettes.

travel for years to come. It should not be left up to middle-level Amtrak design or finance or marketing employees.

One answer to the question seems obvious to many people: designs for Amfleet cars have long been completed. Cars are rolling out of production and are now in operation. The easiest thing for Amtrak to do, so the argument goes, would be to introduce necessary revisions in interior Amfleet designs, using the same basic shell for all future single-level acquisitions. However, the "easiest" way is not always the best. A serious question must be faced: as adequate as they may be for short-haul corridor travel, should Amfleet coaches and Amfleet-design shells be adopted as the fleet design for all future Eastern overnight long-haul trains?

Developing a new and different fleet of cars (using, to be sure, mechanical components proven in Amfleet service) would involve added initial costs. Still, the project will be expensive either way. Before millions of dollars are spent, assurances should be made that any equipment ordered will be fully adequate and appropriate for the job at hand.

Problems with the Amfleet shells center around their curving "airline" walls, their limited overhead space, and their tiny "airline" windows. There are indications that people in Amtrak's design department are at work trying to fit dining car facilities and sleeping bunks into the Amfleet shells. We feel certain, however, that reasonable, uncramped facilities and accommodations will require major alterations in the overall shell design.

And even if demands for space can be compromised, keeping

the Amfleet shells, the problem of the Amfleet's small windows will remain unresolved. (The two go together: larger windows cannot be added unless and until the curvature of the shell walls is eliminated or reduced.)

Visibility is and should remain a basic and important ingredient of rail travel. The matter is simple: rail passengers expect to have a decent view of what is passing by on either side of the train. If any travel mode is suited for general sightseeing, it is long-distance rail. To design cars which restrict outside visibility to an airline minimum is, from a marketing standpoint, non-sensical.

Congratulations to Thomas R. Pulsifer, president of the Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers, who was appointed by Gov. James Rhodes to the Ohio Rail Transportation Authority.

We were encouraged to learn that designs for bi-level cars include specifications for windows that will be considerably larger than those in Amfleet cars. Amfleet equipment has not been designed for the sightseeing traveler. Larger windows, we feel, must be provided in any future long-haul fleet design.

It should be remembered that Amfleet cars were designed and ordered under the direction of former Amtrak president Roger Lewis, who liked to refer to them as "Metroliner-type" cars. Should "Metroliner-type" cars be ordered and used for non-"Metroliner-type" routes and services?

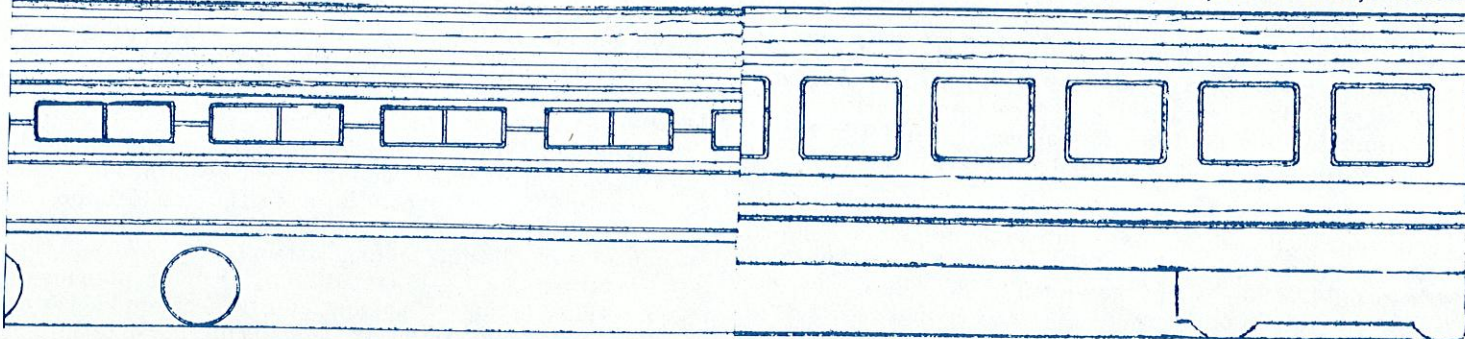
FARES AND SERVICES

INTERCITY: On Oct. 31, the Inter-American becomes a daily through train Chicago-St. Louis-Dallas-Ft. Worth; remains tri-weekly with Mexican connection Laredo-Ft. Worth. Chicago-Seattle trains will be speeded up from 1-3/4 hours to 2 hours 50 minutes; connections in Chicago improved. Chicago-LA and Chicago-KC-Texas services are slowed and run as one train east of KC. New Washington-Parkersburg-Cincinnati "Shenandoah" commences; the "Blue Ridge" is discontinued west of Martinsburg, WV. The northbound Superior train will lose its Chicago connection; the earlier departure from Minneapolis (5:30 PM) is to better accommodate local traffic.

Also Oct. 31, consistent with suggestions NARP made to Amtrak last May, the through New York cars for the Wash.-Atlanta-New Orleans "Southern Crescent" will start running as a separate NY-Wash. section of Boston-Wash. Trains 171-2, to improve reliability for long-distance passengers. The Boston-Wash. section, Amtrak's most heavily used pair of trains, will gain new Amfleet cars, as will coach passengers on the Boston-Wash. "Night Owl". NARP urges use on this overnight run of lower density cars, with window curtains, and praises Amtrak for retaining the sleeper and making these other changes.

SR's Wash.-Charlotte "Piedmont" seems safe at least until Nov. 23, when the ICC must decide its fate. NARP played a major role in the hearings; full report after the decision.

COMMUTER: Conrail reports that Cleveland-Youngstown is the only commuter service for which no notice was received indicating the willingness of a public agency to enter into a contract for continuation of the service during the 2nd 180 day period, which commenced Sept. 28. Thus, even though the 4R Act provided for 100% Federal funding for this period, it appears that the train will die. Conrail is required to provide 60 days notice.



Amtrak's new windows: Amfleet (left), turboliners (right).

November 2

by Orren Beaty

Before you get your next News, you will have voted in the 1976 presidential election, so this is our last chance to comment on the campaign between Democratic Presidential Candidate Jimmy Carter and President Ford.

There are many issues, and, while we believe strongly that the combined question of transportation and energy policies rank among the most important, we are all but overcome by modesty when it comes to suggesting that the future of rail passenger service should be a decisive issue.

Nevertheless, if you are undecided at this point, and are going to make your decision on the basis of which candidate would do the best for rail passenger service, we have some thoughts for your consideration.

Representing NARP on a panel discussion entitled: "Intercity Passenger Service — Where Is It Headed?" during a recent meeting of the Association of Railroad Editors in Boston, I outlined the stands NARP has taken repeatedly in Congressional hearings and other forums — stands our members are familiar with through reading the *NARP News*.

I discussed the steadfast support rail passenger service has received from Congress, with a special bow to the Senate Commerce Committee and its Subcommittee on Surface Transportation; the unwavering resistance the Dept. of Transportation has displayed in trying to block improvement of

Wisconsin supporters of rail service can vote November 2 for a transportation referendum, defeated last year in a recount by only 176 votes, which would enable the state to aid rail, intercity bus, and cross-lake ferry services.

Amtrak; the "tilt" toward more highways and against better rail service DOT and the Ford Administration decision makers have exhibited, and the dispute between DOT Secy. Coleman and Amtrak President Reistrup over the future of the Northeast Corridor.

I told the panel and the audience that I could not venture a solid opinion on the future of intercity rail passenger service in this country until after the election results are known.

If the present team at DOT survives the election to serve another four years, I said, we "fear for the future of the service." Congress has kept the trains rolling, but many of the leaders are dropping out or are in fights for their political lives. Even if all the key Congressional spokesmen for good rail passenger service survive November 2 to serve in the 95th Congress, they may be tired and turn to other causes during the next four years. Certainly some of the hard-working Senate and House staff experts could be expected to find other positions.

A new team at DOT would help. If certain senators are re-elected, we can look forward with some hope, even if the old team survives. But loss of Sens. Vance Hartke (D-Ind.), Surface Transportation Subcommittee chairman; Lowell Weicker (R-Ct.), and Robert Taft, Jr. (R-O.), all facing hard races, would knock a tremendous hole in the ranks of rail passenger service's most dedicated and effective supporters.

Vote as your conscience dictates, but if you believe in our cause, consider the points discussed here. Good luck.

* * * * *

NARP member Gregory L. Thorson of Willoughby, Ohio, had the rare opportunity of questioning the two major political parties' candidates for President when they were in Florida campaigning for their nominations.

During press conferences at Ft. Myers, Fla. he managed to ask both President Ford and Democratic challenger Jimmy Carter about their ideas on Amtrak.

Their replies, as he reported them to us, are more specific than either candidate supplied to NARP in response to direct inquiries. Mr. Thorson reported the replies as follows:

President Ford: Said he had supported Amtrak when it was created and he was a Congressman. He said that Amtrak could

make a contribution in alleviating traffic and energy problems to some extent, but he also expressed concern over Amtrak's growing deficits, and was critical of the creation of Amtrak routes because of purely political pressure. He was not asked to defend the record of his Administration in this area.

Jimmy Carter: Supported a stronger Amtrak; better rail and mass transportation facilities throughout the nation; rebuilding of the rail system, perhaps using government-sponsored public jobs programs. He suggested some consolidations to help maintain adequate service in areas which might be threatened by railroad bankruptcies, and urged improvements in the Northeast through Conrail.

Amtrak Authorization (continued from p. 1)

State share of 403(b) routes from 50 percent of "total" costs to 50 percent of "incremental" costs, thereby reducing the amounts that a State will have to pay for such services. This, from the Senate version (see July News, p. 2), corrects an error in the "4R" Act enacted last February. The Administration, says Secretary Coleman, "vigorously opposes" this change.

The bill also includes a measure which will require Amtrak to reach an agreement with the State involved before significantly changing the scheduling, marketing, or operation of a State-

Let your Senators and your Representative know how you feel about the way they voted on the Amtrak legislation. If you don't know how they voted, contact their regional offices and ask — or ask us and we will tell you. Every legislator's office should receive at least 8 or 10 articulate, informed letters from local NARP members. A file of such letters — commendations just as much as criticisms — can have a much greater impact than you might expect. So do us all a favor, write today!

Another way to "help the cause" is to alert the local media when a rail-related hearing is scheduled in your area. It appears that the RSPO hearing in Pittsburgh would have received no media attention, and the ICC hearings on Southern's "Piedmont" very little, but for NARP's efforts to alert reporters.

supported 403(b) train.

A House measure which would have severely tightened the terms whereby Amtrak could make incentive payments to a railroad for on-time performance (see May News) was deleted by the conferees, as was a Senate provision which would have replaced the "for profit" language of the original Amtrak legislation with language requiring Amtrak to "maximize public benefits when compared to public costs." The conferees approved a House measure stating that Amtrak or any other railroad providing intercity passenger service cannot be required to provide food service "other than during customary dining hours."

The Senate provisions regarding Cleveland Terminal and the study comparing costs of coach and first-class services were deleted in conference.

The bill spells out limits on the interest rates that the Secretary of Transportation can charge for "redeemable preference share" funding to railroads outside of the Northeast Corridor (Title V, "4R" Act; see July News). This provision is intended to "assure that deferred maintenance projects for the weaker railroads are not deterred because of an artificially high interest rate. . ."

The bill authorizes \$120 million to Amtrak for acquisition of the Northeast Corridor and gives the Secretary authority to establish a mortgage lien on the Corridor properties to protect the Government's investment in that property. In conjunction with this provision, the Conference Report criticizes the Secretary for "the delay in the implementation" of the Northeast Corridor improvement project, and insists that the Secretary must "take immediate steps to commence such implementation. . ."

Eleanor Walters received a scholarship to return to school full time and has left NARP. Our new secretary is Wendy Chick. Good luck, Eleanor, and welcome, Wendy!

Northeast Corridor Accord

After lengthy negotiations — and faced with the alternative of shutting down operations system-wide — Amtrak's board of directors decided to sign an agreement conceding to the Secretary of Transportation many of his key demands. Secretary Coleman, for his part, released the operating funds he had been illegally withholding from Amtrak since June. The Secretary also agreed to approve loan-guarantees for the Oct. 1 Corridor downpayment and to request appropriations to cover such payments in the future.

The agreement, which has required some changes in existing legislation, primarily does two things: First, it gives the Government a lien on federal funds invested in the Corridor. This means that the Congress could demand to be repaid its \$2 billion investment, and could take possession of the Corridor properties in the event that Amtrak fails to pay. Second, it gives overall control of the improvement project to the Federal Railroad Administration. Amtrak will issue contracts and oversee work on live-tracks, i.e. in the immediate areas where trains will operate daily. FRA will give out contracts for the remaining portion (approx. 2/3) of the work and in addition will have the final say on overall Corridor designs.

The extent to which this agreement might adversely affect the Corridor project is uncertain. Much depends upon the degree to which the two implementing parties, Amtrak and FRA, can see fit to cooperate with one another. Even more depends upon the attitudes of top Administration officials. An Administration could cooperate constructively and in good faith to see to it that the project succeeds; yet it could also move to interfere, to delay, and to obstruct implementation of the project. Executive so-called "checks and balances" have in the past been employed by various Administrations to effectively dismantle Congressionally approved programs not to that Administration's liking. The fate of the project may hinge upon the results of the upcoming election. But whichever candidate wins, careful scrutiny by the public, the press, and the Congress should focus upon insuring that the demands and needs of the public are met.

One of Secretary Coleman's arguments against giving Amtrak control of the Corridor project was an alleged need to minimize the role of the railroad unions in the project; he has indicated that DOT will assign major portions of the project to private contractors.

Amtrak, like all other major railroads, has an existing agreement with the railroad brotherhoods that right-of-way work which falls within the jurisdiction of a given union must be negotiated with that union. This contractual issue was one of the grounds for Amtrak's refusal to accept the Secretary's terms. As part of the DOT-Amtrak compromise, the Secretary conceded that if a union files suit with Amtrak for work assigned elsewhere, and if the courts rule in the union's favor, DOT will pay all resulting damage payments. However, such payments would, no doubt, come from the Corridor improvement fund — so that the project and the public will come out the ultimate losers if any legal difficulties arise.

As part of their agreement, DOT and Amtrak jointly submitted a number of legislative amendments — evidently drafted by DOT staff — to allow implementation of terms agreed to by the two parties. One would have added a paragraph to the 4R Act stating: "In addition to any other terms and conditions which the Secretary may require as a prerequisite to the payment of (Corridor) funds. . ., the Secretary may enter into such agreements as are necessary to protect and secure the expenditure of funds by the U.S. on account of the acquisition and improvement of (Corridor) properties. . ." Such an amendment, if it had become law, would have given the Secretary legal authority to do just what he has so far done, i.e. to withhold payment of appropriated funds until Amtrak agrees to whatever terms he decides to impose. As was to be expected, House and Senate conferees have re-written these amendments to cover only the specific provisions of which they approved, striking out the blanket and arbitrary powers that the Secretary wished to confer upon himself.

4R Studies (continued from page 1)

improvement needs through December 31, 1985. He must "specifically consider and evaluate. . . public ownership of railroad rights-of-way." (Sec. 504)

By 90 days after this is published, the Secretary of the Treasury must publish his evaluation; within another 90 days the Secretary of Transportation must submit his final recommendations to Congress.

Under Section 902 of the 4R Act, the Secretary of Transportation must study: past railroad aid policies; their relationship to aid to other modes; whether railroads "have been or are disadvantaged" by such policies and methods; ways of correcting any problems "to encourage the establishment and maintenance of an open and competitive market in which rail transportation competes on equal terms with other modes of transportation, and in which market shares are governed by customer preference based upon the service and full economic costs."

He must then, by February 5, send to Congress his findings "together with his recommendations for a sound and rational policy with respect to Federal aid to rail transportation."

Also by February 5, the ICC must submit its report on the effects of conglomerates and other rail corporate structures.

The magnum opus, however, will be the "comprehensive study of the American railway system" due at the end of July. Under section 901, the study must include

(1) a showing of the potential cost savings and of possible improvements in service quality which could result from restructuring the railroads in the United States;

(2) an identification of the potential economies and improvements in performance which could result from the improvement of local and terminal operations;

(3) estimates as to potential savings in the cost of rehabilitating the United States railway system if rehabilitation is limited to those portions of such system which are essential to interstate commerce or national defense;

(4) an assessment of the extent to which common or public ownership of fixed facilities could improve the national rail transportation system;

(5) an assessment of the potential effects of alternative rail corporate structures upon the national rail transportation system;

(6) a listing, in order of descending priority, of the rail properties which should be improved to the extent necessary to permit high-speed rail passenger or freight service over such properties, in terms of the costs and benefits of such improvements and the reasons therefor; and

(7) an estimate of the potential benefits of railroad electrification for high density rail lines in the United States, and an evaluation of the costs and benefits of electrifying rail lines in the United States with a high density of traffic, including—

(A) the capital costs of such electrification and the oil fuel economies which would be derived therefrom, the ability of existing power facilities to supply the additional power required, and the amount of coal or other fossil fuels required to generate the power necessary for railroad electrification; and

(B) the advantages to the environment of electrification of railroads in terms of reduced fuel consumption and air pollution, and the disadvantages to the environment from increased use of fuels such as coal; and

(8) a survey and analysis of the financial and physical condition of the facilities, rolling stock, and equipment of the various railroads in the United States."

RAIL Studies Public Ownership

To encourage detailed examination of the pros and cons of public ownership in the section 504 and 901 studies noted above, the RAIL Foundation (Railroad Advancement Through Information and Law Foundation, Inc.) has made a grant to a non-profit organization, Public Interest Economics Foundation, to undertake a study which will set out an agenda. This will not be biased and is not intended to foster a biased study by the Secretary. Its sole purposes are, through a preliminary investigation, to show what elements are essential in any fair study of the public ownership question, and, later, to provide a yardstick for determining whether the Secretary's studies were fair.

This is a unique and essential contribution to the present long overdue efforts by our government to seriously examine the condition of the nation's railroads and develop an appropriate response.

Because of the "4R" Act deadlines, the study was begun before full funding was on hand. Contributions for this effort are much needed and will be gratefully received. They are tax-deductible. Send them to: RAIL Foundation, 1819 H St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006. A RAIL brochure is available upon request.