



## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

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The printer inadvertently dropped Vol. 12, No. 1, January, 1978 from the newsletter headlined "Carter Budget Released". It was mailed Feb. 10; Vol. 11, No. 11 was mailed Jan. 11.

RETURN REQUESTED

# SOUTHERN WANTS OUT

Southern Railway plans to end its only remaining passenger train, the Washington-Atlanta-New Orleans "Southern Crescent", effective April 6. Protests from NARP and others to the Interstate Commerce Commission (Washington, DC 20423), which has labeled the case "FD 28697", may lead to an investigation and public hearings that would postpone discontinuance four more months.

Meanwhile, Southern and Amtrak are still attempting to work out an acceptable agreement for transfer of the service to Amtrak, following the Amtrak Board's March 1 refusal to accept terms proposed by Southern and endorsed by Amtrak President Paul Reistrup.

The agreement rejected by the Board would have restricted Amtrak's access to the present "Southern Crescent" route and, subject to "future negotiations," Southern's tracks between Chattanooga and Atlanta. It would have barred Amtrak from initiating service anywhere else on the Southern system.

In a March 2 release, NARP commended the Board for its action and insisted that Amtrak be given the right to operate passenger trains on any Southern route that Amtrak sees fit, pointing out that these are the terms outlined in the Amtrak law and which

govern Amtrak relationships with all other Amtrak-member railroads.

"We don't object to Amtrak operating the 'Crescent', nor do we object to Amtrak relieving Southern of its reported \$7 million annual deficit," said NARP President Orren Beaty. "What we object to is the idea that Southern should be granted special terms

**"Yesterday Tennessee Gov. Ray Blanton called for nationalization of railroad beds, 'like the highway system.' . . . Blanton said 'about 70% of all rail accidents are caused by rail beds,' and called the condition of the rail beds in the country 'a national disgrace' . . ."**

—The Washington Post, Feb. 28, 1978

exempting the railroad from responsibilities to the public shared by all other railroads that are part of the Amtrak system," Beaty said.

NARP will file with the ICC protesting Southern's petition, calling upon the Commission to investigate and hold public hearings. In the meantime, Amtrak and Southern are going back to the negotiating table to come up with terms that are more acceptable to the Amtrak Directors.

## Amtrak and the U.S. Postal Service

Additional mail revenues for Amtrak of up to \$50 million/year could result from passage of Section 7 of the Amtrak bill (S. 2478) recently introduced by Sen. Russell Long (D-LA). It directs the Postal Service to use Amtrak services "in establishing mail routes and selecting carriers." The post office would be required to utilize Amtrak trains "so long as using such railroad services results in no significant deterioration of mail service or increase in

**"Does your Congressman know mail is being trucked down the East Coast to Florida? Is it general knowledge that daily trucks are dispatched from Greensboro, NC, Atlanta, Kansas City, and Dallas to Los Angeles? This mail should be carrying people on trains, instead of interfering with them on roads."**

—Frank Schaffer, Associate Editor of *Modern Railroads*

cost to the Federal Government."

In introducing the Amtrak bill on the Senate floor, Sen. Long said that the mail service measure ". . . is intended to reduce Federal spending by combining mail routes with rail passenger service routes. At present, many Amtrak routes are duplicated by mail hauled by truck, which results in the Federal Government paying for two kinds of transportation where in many cases the mail could be more efficiently carried by train at a lower overall cost to the Government."

Mail revenues can do much to reinforce and strengthen Amtrak's position just as the package express revenues of intercity buses make up losses the buses incur in transporting passengers.

California Secretary of Transportation Adriana Gianturco told Congressional officials in a Dec. 5 letter: "As recently as the 1960's, revenues from mail shipment were keeping many California trains in the black. Loss of mail contracts, more than loss of passengers, spelled the end for such California trains as the "Lark", the "Owl", the "West Coast", "Klamath", the "Imperial", the "Argonaut", and the "San Francisco Overland". Overall, mail accounted for over 30% of passenger train revenue."

Jim Snyder, the United Transportation Union's national legislative director, insisted in a letter to House Commerce Chairman Harley Staggers (D-WV) that increasing the volume of mail carried by Amtrak would conserve fuel, lessen highway congestion, and increase Amtrak revenues. The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers newspaper has also supported the concept.

Rep. John Jenrette (D-SC) and Sen. Thomas Eagleton (D-MO) on Nov. 9 wrote to the General Accounting Office requesting an investigation of the discontinuance of NY—Washington railway post office operations. They cited evidence that the Postal Service and Conrail had jointly hiked the rate of compensation while failing to allow Amtrak to bid on the contract. This, they say, "appears to breach federal procurement procedure."

The letter also asked the GAO to provide an estimate of "any revenue gains which could be realized through increased Postal Service use of the Amtrak network."

(continued on p. 4)



# The Passenger Car Shortage

A conversion program to re-equip 59 cars and 9 locomotives to all-electric heating and air conditioning was approved Jan. 25 by Amtrak's Board. Plans are to use the equipment on the Chicago-Boston/New York "Lake Shore Ltd." However, the \$11.9 million program will be subject to funding availability, since it is not currently in Amtrak's capital budget allocation for FY 1978. The entire project, four train sets, should be complete about one year after the program's inception.

The decision is an important step towards making heating and air conditioning reliable on long-distance trains which do not have new cars. Electric climate control, powered by generators in the locomotive, is generally considered vastly superior to the systems now in the old cars: air-conditioning which relies on axle-driven generators and storage batteries, and steam heat. The new Amfleet cars now used on most short-distance Amtrak trains, the superliners under construction for the Western long-distance trains, and most new commuter rail cars use electric climate control.

Amtrak's deficit today would be substantially less if a general conversion to electric head-end power (HEP) had been initiated

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**NARP members may wish to ask their legislators to see that this specific "Lake Shore" conversion program is funded. The program, if successful, would have positive implications for the entire long-distance train network.**

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after Amtrak's establishment, or even just a few years ago. Who knows how many one-time riders never returned to Amtrak because of long rides in over-heated or ice-cold cars? Or how many potential riders were scared off by countless news stories appearing over the past seven years recounting the adventures of those one-time riders? Also to be considered are the added operating costs which resulted from steam- and battery-related failures.

Unfortunately, Amtrak's first management was, to put it politely, uncertain about the future of the long-distance train. And the Reistrup regime has taken a long time to realize that new equipment will not solve the problem. New cars would not appear until several years after the funding became available. The funds are not available now and may never become available unless the public and the Congress can see reliable service first.

NARP has written to Reistrup applauding his decision on the

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**Martin Garelick, formerly Milwaukee Road Vice President of Operations, on Feb. 1 became Amtrak's first Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer. Reporting to him are Vice Presidents heading four Amtrak departments: Northeast Corridor, National Operations, Marketing, and Operations Support.**

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"Lake Shore" project and urging Amtrak to seek "funds for a massive, immediate systemwide HEP conversion program."

A closely related problem is the fact that Amtrak has been selling passenger cars which NARP and other informed observers believe should have been retained as protection against another energy crisis; to permit greater development of the tour and excursion market, which could represent a self-sustaining profit center; and to protect Amtrak against further delay or other problems with the superliners.

On Oct. 25, Amtrak announced that it was selling 163 passenger cars. This announcement came after the start of the Pullman-Standard strike which is still delaying delivery of the superliners. (It is estimated that the first superliners will go into revenue service six months after the strike is resolved, which means yet another summer without the cars.)

While a few cars on the for-sale list were wreck-damaged, and some others were clearly ready for retirement, NARP believes that many others were worthy of retention and rehabilitation. Amtrak in-house estimates indicated that many of these latter cars could have been rehabilitated for revenue service for less than \$200,000/car. Although the resulting life expectancy would have been less than for a new long-distance car (which would cost at least \$600,000), the crisis and the need for reliable equipment is now.

Part of the problem, NARP believes, was a tendency to base judgments on generalities—age, type of carbody—rather than on the specific condition of individual cars. In contrast with stainless steel bodies, carbon steel ones do wear out, but many carbon steel cars in this sale were far from the end of their useful lives.

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**"It had the feeling of new equipment. I can't say enough good about the train."**

—NARP Director Ronald Boardman, after a trip on the LA-San Diego "commuter" train, "El Camino", inaugurated Feb. 14 and consisting of refurbished 30+ year old carbon steel cars.

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NARP could not convince Amtrak President Paul Reistrup that many of the cars should not have been sold. The Amtrak Board's equipment committee reviewed the matter after all Board members received NARP's protest, but decided not to reverse management on the issue. NARP discussed the matter with counsel and with the ICC, but concluded there was no reasonable prospect for halting the sale through legal means.

The sale was especially disturbing in light of evidence which suggested that ridership declines in the summer of 1977 on long-distance trains resulted in large measure from Amtrak's failure to field as many passenger cars as it did in previous years.

For example, the "San Francisco Zephyr" had a smaller normal consist in the summer of 1977 than in 1976, down from 17 to 14 cars between Chicago and Denver.

Amtrak denied over 2,000 requests for space on the "Zephyr" just for the week of Aug. 8-14 (Sept. News, p. 3). Yet, for the month of August, Amtrak reported that the train suffered a 12% decline in passengers and a 15% decline in passenger miles when compared with August, 1976.

The "Lake Shore" program, however, suggests that Reistrup has been listening to what NARP and others have been saying, since his comments a year ago left almost no hope that such a program would ever be started. NARP hopes that the program will be effectively executed and expanded, and that the "too little too late" shortcoming will not prove fatal.

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**The Senate has confirmed President Carter's nominations of James R. Mills, Ronald G. Nathan, and Harry T. Edwards to the Amtrak Board. The Commerce Committee has approved Charles Luna and Frank Neel and they await action by the full Senate. No action has been taken on Anthony Haswell's nomination.**

In a letter to the White House, NARP has reiterated its support for Joseph V. MacDonald's renomination.

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Warren G. Magnuson (D-WA) has become the chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, following the death of John L. McClellan (D-AR). Dale Bumpers (D-AR) has been added to the membership of the committee, though not to the Transportation Subcommittee.

Howard W. Cannon (D-NV) succeeds Magnuson as Chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee. Magnuson continues as a member of that Committee, but John Melcher (D-MT) is no longer a Committee member.

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## More Amtrak Bills

Rep. John McFall (D-CA) has introduced a bill, H.R. 11089, which would replace Amtrak's 13-member board with one consisting only of the Secretaries of Transportation and the Treasury and one railroad representative. The bill would severely limit Amtrak's authorizations in FY '79 and '80: to (for each year) \$460 million for operations, \$50 million for administrative and central management expenses, and \$100 million for capital grants.

Rep. Harley Staggers (D-WV) is expected to introduce a bill providing \$550 million for nationwide operations and \$83 million for the Northeast Corridor (as in S. 2478), and Amtrak's full capital grants request of \$341 million.

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**NARP Members—Please do not use "Membership Applications" as renewal forms. Please wait for your renewal form and remember that the minimum renewal rate is \$15.**

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# PUBLIC HEARINGS DUE

The Department of Transportation's "preliminary recommendation" for a revised Amtrak route structure will become the subject of nationwide public hearings during May, June, and July of this year, if a bill introduced by Senate Commerce Subcommittee Chairman Russell Long (D-LA) becomes law.

According to the time-frame set forth in the Senate bill (S. 2478), the DOT's initial report will be released on May 1, public comment and review will take place during May, June, and July, the ICC's

**Sen. Long's bill, S. 2478, the Amtrak Authorization Act of 1978, was printed in full in the Feb. 2 Congressional Record, starting on page S1109. For copies of this issue of the Record, send 25¢ to the Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.**

Rail Services Planning Office will analyze and summarize public comment and report to DOT by Sept. 30, and the DOT will submit its "final recommendation" by Dec. 31, 1978.

Either the House or the Senate could veto the DOT proposal, and the Administration would then have 45 days to revise and resubmit their plan. If the Congress does not object within 60 days of continuous session, the Secretary's plan would become the new Amtrak system and Amtrak would implement as soon as possible, "... but in no event later than 12 months thereafter."

During the public hearing process, the legal services of the Office of Rail Public Counsel would be available "to protect the interests of those communities and users of rail passenger service which ... might not otherwise be adequately represented in the course of the hearings and evaluations ..."

The bill sets forth the guidelines for preparation of the DOT study and instructs the Secretary to take into consideration:

"(1) the adequacy of other transportation modes serving the same points to be served by the recommended route system;

"(2) any unique characteristics and advantages of rail service as compared to other modes of transportation;

"(3) the role that passenger rail service can play in helping meet the Nation's transportation needs while furthering the national energy conservation efforts;

"(4) the relationship of benefits of given intercity rail passenger services to the costs of providing such services, computing the costs in loss or profit per passenger mile rather than total loss or profit per route;

"(5) the transportation needs of areas lacking adequate alternative forms of transportation; and

"(6) frequency and fare structure alternatives and the impact of such alternatives on ridership, revenues, and expenses of rail passenger service.

The bill would instruct the Secretary to include with his recommendations:

"(1) a recommended route structure for the Corporation by end points and principal intermediate points to be served;

"(2) quality and type of intercity rail passenger service recommended for each route including frequency, speed, and classes of services offered;

"(3) ranges of projected operating expenses, ridership, and revenues, by route, including a measure calculated by loss or profit per passenger mile, and separated for non-State-supported routes and State-supported routes;

"(4) an estimate of the equipment and facilities necessary to support the recommended route structure;

"(5) a recommended plan for coordinating intercity rail passenger service at points on the system with other modes of transportation serving those points; and

"(6) based upon the route level projections, an estimate of operating and capital appropriations required to operate the system for fiscal years 1980 through 1984.

Sen. Long's bill also includes measures that would:

- grant Amtrak an exemption from the "Animal Welfare Act" to allow Amtrak once again to carry pets on its trains;

- remove the "for profit" clause from the Amtrak law, substituting instead language calling for "maximizing the public benefit";

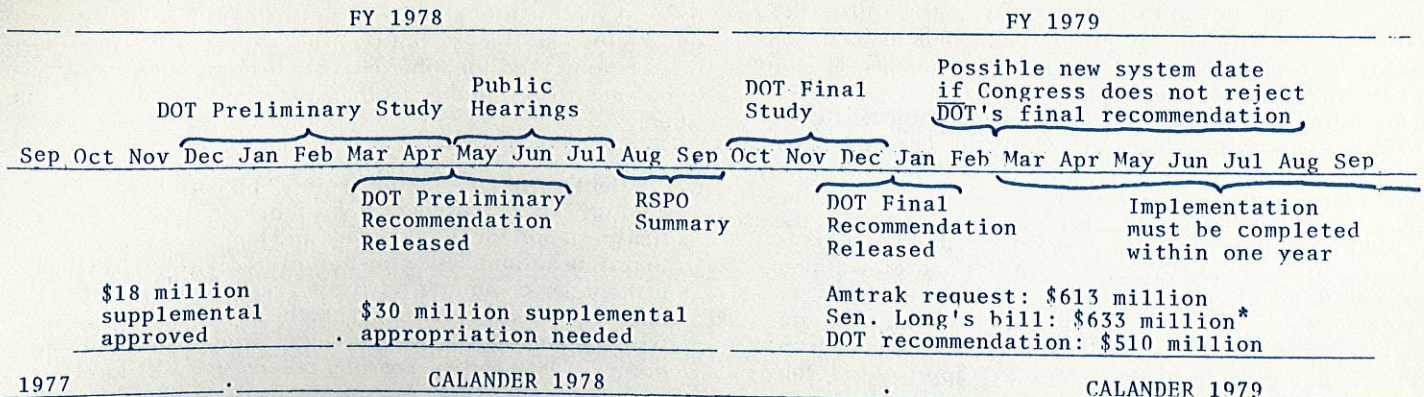
- direct the U.S. Postal Service to utilize Amtrak services for mail transportation except where this would significantly worsen service or increase costs (see separate article this issue);

- allow Amtrak to take over operation of Southern Railway's "Southern Crescent" before completion of the DOT route study process;

- make it clear that Amtrak payments to railroads are to be based on avoidable costs, thereby countering the efforts of several railroads to force Amtrak to pay higher compensation rates for use of railroad facilities.

One provision of the Long bill which appears to set the stage for a tough fight for rail passenger advocates is the section under which the Administration's final route structure recommendation would automatically become effective *unless either branch of Congress specifically voted to reject the plan*. Given the Administration's preoccupation with budget balancing when it comes to Amtrak, we are not optimistic that the final recommendation will be acceptable to NARP or to most rail passenger advocates.

Thus it would be preferable to make the plan's implementation conditional on *affirmative* votes by both the House and the Senate. This would put the burden on the Administration to round up the votes for approval (with NARP's help should it be justified!), instead of placing it on consumer advocates to round up votes for disapproval. NARP members may wish to suggest this modification to their legislators.



\*Sen. Long: "The funding level contained in this bill .. is based on an assumption that [the existing] level of service would continue during the implementation period for the new route structure."



# National Rail Passenger Week

NARP's Orren Beaty has written to President Carter, asking him to declare the week of April 17-23 NATIONAL RAIL PASSENGER WEEK. NARP Directors and State Associations have been urged to write similar letters to their respective governors and state legislatures.

Meanwhile, NARP has prepared a one-page leaflet for public distribution in conjunction with the planned week. The idea is for possible distribution to rail commuters and Amtrak users before or during the week of April 17-23, alerting them to the situation unfolding in Washington, DC.

Volunteers willing to coordinate distribution in particular localities should get in touch with the NARP office. The text of the leaflet follows:

Is the passenger train in the United States traveling down the track toward extinction?

We don't think so.

Public awareness and concern led to the formation of Amtrak back in 1971. The same awareness and concern, if vocalized, can assure that the necessary government support continues

—so that Amtrak can grow stronger

—so that commuter rail services can expand and improve.

The government in the past has invested the taxpayers' money to build the best highway and air traffic systems in the world.

We can afford to do the same for rail passenger service.

As taxpayers we are entitled to comfortable and convenient rail service as a basic transportation alternative.

Automobiles, airplanes, and buses are fine, but they can't do the job alone. And we can't go on expanding our highway systems forever. Existing highways are already becoming overcrowded.

*Energy efficient passenger trains are the answer to the transportation needs of the future.*

During May, June, and July of this year, nationwide public hearings will be held to get the public's views on a proposal from the Carter administration that may call for drastic reductions in the level of Amtrak service now being provided. The Congress wants to hear what the public has to say before deciding whether or not to accept the Carter Administration proposal. The Administration plan is due to be released on May 1.

If you think that now is the time to be adding trains, not discontinuing them, we hope that you will make your views known.

Write your representatives in Congress and find out where the other candidates stand before casting your vote in this November's election.

For more information on the upcoming Amtrak public hearings, contact the National Association of Railroad Passengers, 417 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20003 (202) 546-1550.

## Amtrak and the Postal Service *(cont'd. from p. 1)*

In developing such an estimate, full weight must be given to two new concepts already in limited use by Amtrak and the Postal Service: containerization, and tying in with bulk mail centers.

Not to be confused with the trailer-size containers carried on flat cars by freight railroads, these mail containers are carried inside Amtrak baggage cars. Each container accommodates from 40 to 66 sacks or cartons which otherwise would have to be loaded individually. Thus the container permits much faster and more efficient mail loading and unloading.

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With sorrow, we must report the death of J. Marcus Stubbs, of Savannah, GA, one of NARP's hardest working members. He played key roles in getting Amtrak's "Silver Meteor" to stop in Savannah instead of zipping non-stop between Richmond and Florida, and in getting Savannah on the proposed route of the "Floridian" approved by the Amtrak Board. As a former postmaster of Savannah, he was greatly interested in getting mail back on the trains. He was a gentleman who will be missed by all who worked with him.

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This in turn makes possible mail service to intermediate stations, and through mail service where no through cars are run. (An example of the latter is New York-Houston.)

Most important of all, it gives Amtrak access to the huge volumes hauled between bulk mail centers, which are generally located on Interstate highways and away from railroad stations. Amtrak's first bulk mail center handling began last September between Minneapolis and Seattle and was so successful that it was made a part of the regular four-year contract applying to that route.

Amtrak can save money for the Postal Service, and help provide faster mail service. Amtrak trains are generally faster than trucks. The post office pays only for the space it uses (except it must pay for a guaranteed minimum, which is regularly exceeded)—a good deal in a business where volumes peak sharply in one direction. Furthermore, it is likely that, when only a few containers are ready for a given destination, the post office goes ahead and sends them on the train when—without Amtrak—it might hold such mail until a large enough volume accumulated to justify dispatching a truck.

Containers are also in use in the Northeast Corridor (where some first-class mail is handled), LA-Seattle, Chicago-San Francisco, on the "National Ltd." and "Lone Star", and is planned for the Chicago-Boston "Lake Shore".

## Rail Commuters in Trouble

Blatant discrimination against existing commuter rail and rapid transit systems is a key problem with highway/transit legislation proposed by the Carter Administration.

Traditionally, the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) has made sure that substantial Federal capital funds were available for rail system improvements including rollingstock replacement. This has been accomplished because the "Sec. 3" capital grants program is "discretionary", meaning that UMTA officials can distribute the money to applicants as they see fit.

The Carter/Adams plan, however, would tie this money to a

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**"It's tantamount to closing down the commuter rail system. . . . In my opinion, it would be all over for commuter rail."**

—Boston's MBTA Chairman Robert R. Kiley, Commenting in the Feb. 9 *Christian Science Monitor* on the Administration's highway/transit legislation.

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formula which is based mainly on population and population density and only secondarily on ridership. (Transit ridership has never been the primary basis for a formula because of the political unpopularity of guaranteeing so much money to New York City.)

The Administration may respond to our criticism by arguing that the President proposes increased flexibility regarding the use of certain highway funds. But the likelihood in many instances is that established highway interests would maintain control of "their" funds and leave the rail commuter out in the cold.

Congress should be urged to increase the amount of money available under Section 3 so that adequate discretionary funds will be available for the rail cities. Rail cars are more expensive to replace than are buses—but their life expectancy is more than twice as long. And the inherent attractiveness of rail must have something to do with the fact that "rail cities" are high ridership cities.

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**After the "blizzard of the century" hit parts of New England on Feb. 6, passenger trains provided the only public transportation for about a week, and highways were closed to private automobiles. Some Boston area rail lines had their first Sunday commuter service in years; on Mon., Feb. 13, one week after the storm first hit, the Boston commuter rail system handled 100,000 passenger trips instead of the normal 35,000; and the Providence—Westerly, RI, local was revived for the week. Amtrak service ran every day, with trains making some extra stops to help isolated communities, but commercial airline and intercity bus service to and from Boston was shut down for a week.**

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