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John R. Martin, Pres.; John Kirkwood, V. Pres.; Andrea Banks, Sec.; Joseph Horning, Jr., Treas.; Ross Capon, Exec. Dir.; Barry Williams, Asst. Dir.; Hollyanne Dustin, Membership Dir.; Harriet Parcels, Transp. Associate

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RETURN REQUESTED

New Budget, Tired Old Message

NARP HONORS REP. CONTE



—Photo by Chris Farrell

Rep. Silvio O. Conte (R-MA), left, accepts NARP's George Falcon Golden Spike Award in an Oct. 30 ceremony in Pittsfield, MA. One of the rail passenger's very best friends in the Congress, Conte was instrumental in the establishment of the "Montrealer" (1972), "Lake Shore Ltd." (1975), and "Cape Codder" (1986); the restoration of the Post Road track at Rensselaer, NY, which speeded up the "Lake Shore" by :30 (1979); and the provision of federal funds for the Northeast Corridor Improvement Project and for the renovation of Boston South Station (most recently in 1986). More importantly, Conte was a key player in the creation of Amtrak (1970) and has vigorously defended it against every White House attack over the years. NARP's award recognizes Conte for "his crucial work in preserving and expanding rail passenger service" and cites "his enthusiastic, outspoken support of Amtrak and mass transit. . . ." Conte has served in the U.S. House since 1959 and is the top-ranking Republican on the House Appropriations Committee. Presenting the award is NARP Dir. Kevin Gregoire of Pittsfield.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Service enhancements went into effect Oct. 26 on Chicago-Oakland "California Zephyr," Chicago-Seattle/Portland "Empire Builder," and Los Angeles-Seattle "Coast Starlight." First introduced in May 1985 on Chicago-Los Angeles "Southwest Chief," enhancement package includes feature films and cartoons shown on video system in lounge car;

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For 3rd Consecutive Year, Reagan Seeks to Kill Amtrak

President Reagan's Proposed FY 1988 Transportation Budget

Administration	NEW BUDGET AUTHORITY (Millions)		
	FY '88	FY '87	Change
Federal Aviation	\$5,803	\$4,842	+19.8%
U.S. Coast Guard	\$2,739	\$2,584	+6.0%
Nat. Highway Traffic Safety	\$200	\$200	0.0%
Federal Highway	\$13,473	\$13,574	-0.7%
[U.S. D.O.T. TOTAL]	\$23,602	\$26,110	-9.6%
Urban Mass Transportation	\$1,504	\$3,452	-56.4%
Federal Railroad*	\$17	\$674	-97.5%
[Amtrak + Northeast Corridor]	\$0	\$619	-100.0%

*Includes Amtrak + Northeast Corridor. Excluding these items, Federal Railroad funding would drop by 69%, from \$55 million to \$17 million. Among the casualties: funds for 100 (of 425) rail safety inspectors who patrol the nation's railroad system.

On Jan. 5, President Reagan submitted to Congress his proposed Fiscal Year 1988 federal budget, and it calls—once again—for the elimination of all funds to Amtrak. This is the third consecutive Reagan budget to recommend no money for the nation's passenger railroad. His proposal would also slash funding to mass transit by 56% (that's on top of a 24% cut in transit aid since 1981). But, as in previous budgets, the president is kind to highways and aviation: his '88 budget proposes only a nominal 0.7% reduction in highway spending, and calls for a substantial 19.8% increase in aviation funding.

On both previous occasions, Congress soundly rejected the White House call to kill Amtrak.

White House: Sell Northeast Corridor

This year, in addition to seeking an end to Amtrak funding, the administration is formally proposing the sale of

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NARP Pushes Safety Items

On Jan. 4 at Chase, MD, 16 people perished and 198 were injured after 3 Conrail freight locomotives ran a red signal and blundered out into the path of Amtrak's high-speed "Colonial." In the wake of that wreck, the worst in Amtrak's 16-year history, NARP and others have called for the following measures to improve safety on the Northeast Corridor (NEC) and on railroads generally:

NARP immediately focused on two key issues:

- the need for automatic speed control devices on *all* trains using the NEC—not just on Amtrak trains as at present. Speed control automatically applies the brakes if the engineer fails to respond properly to a signal calling for a stop or speed reduction. Ironically, the electric freight locomotives Conrail stopped using several years ago *had* speed control, but Conrail diesels—and SEPTA and New Jersey Transit electric commuter cars—do not.

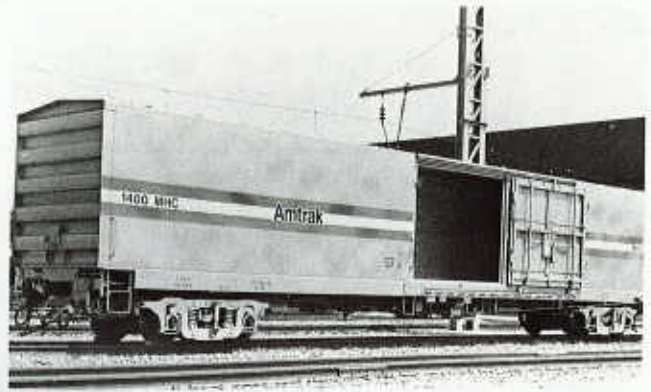
- the desirability of diverting as much through freight traffic as possible from the NEC, consistent with a 1975 U.S. Railway Association recommendation based on efficiency (not safety) and with Transportation Secretary Elizabeth Dole's report on the NEC released last November—shortly after NARP criticized the secretary for failing to release it! (See NARP News, Oct.-Nov. 1986, p. 2.) Her report specifically cited safety as a benefit of reducing freight traffic on the Amtrak NEC machine.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) revived its speed control recommendation in a Jan. 15 letter to Amtrak Pres. W. Graham Claytor Jr. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ), in a Jan. 27 letter, urged Claytor "to move promptly to institute a rule requiring appropriate ATC [speed control] on all trains in the Corridor as soon as practicable." On Feb. 4 Rep. James Florio (D-NJ), introduced H.R. 976, which requires all trains operating over the NEC's Boston-Washington and Philadelphia-Atlanta City lines to be equipped with speed control devices.

After Baltimore *Sun* reporters Michael Ollove and Amy Goldstein uncovered 8 speeding convictions and 2 license suspensions on the automobile driving record of the Conrail engineer, NARP urged railroads to emulate the Maryland Mass Transit Administration and monitor the private driving records of safety-related employees. Similarly, NTSB in 1984, after discovering some correlation between 1981 alcohol-related general aviation accidents and alcohol-related driving offenses, urged the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to seek legislative authority to gain access to the National Driver Register data bank. On Jan. 22, Rep. Cardiss Collins (D-IL) introduced H.R. 718 to give railroads, airlines, and the FAA legal access to the Driver Register.

Since the Conrail engineer and fireman tested positive for marijuana, the Jan. 4 tragedy rekindled concern about drugs on the railroad. NARP has joined Senate Commerce Chairman Ernest F. Hollings (D-SC), the committee's ranking Republican, John C. Danforth (MO), and Transportation Sec. Dole, in endorsing random testing for drugs and alcohol—which requires legislation. The current "reasonable suspicion" testing is not effective, particularly in protecting the public from the effects of substances whose effects can come and go erratically. SEPTA also supports random testing, briefly instituting it in January, after receiving test results from crewmen involved in a Dec. 10 commuter train collision that injured 45. 3 of 6 crewmen tested positive for cocaine.

AMTRAK'S NEW MAIL & EXPRESS CARS



—Photo by Amtrak

During 1986, Amtrak received 74 new mail and express cars built by Thrall Car Co. in Cartersville, GA. The 74 cars, which cost \$7.5 million (total), were purchased to permit expansion of Amtrak's lucrative and growing mail and express business. Gross revenues from mail and express shipments nearly doubled between 1980 and 1985, rising from \$14 million to \$26 million. Thrall built the car shells, while Amtrak furnished the high-speed passenger wheel assemblies and the electrical and communication lines. The final car was delivered in Nov. 1986, just over a year after the car order was first placed. The cars have eased an acute baggage-mail car shortage at Amtrak and have made possible several important passenger service improvements, such as separation of the "Broadway Ltd." and "Capitol Ltd." and restoration of the "Silver Star's" Tampa baggage car. [One of the 74 cars was destroyed in an Oct. 9 "Empire Builder" derailment at Fall River, WI.]

In early February, SEPTA was defending random testing in federal court in Philadelphia. Generally, the unions oppose random testing, claiming it constitutes an "unreasonable search" in violation of the 4th Amendment. On the opposite side of the issue, Senator Hollings put it this way: "When we talk about rights, there is a choice that we in government must make. That choice is between the transportation employee's right to privacy and the passenger's right to safe travel. There is absolutely no question as to where our priorities must lie."

The unions, incidentally, are also challenging aspects of the more moderate existing Federal Railroad Administration rule; the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit is hearing their case.

"Colonial" crash facts: the collision occurred at Gunpow Interlocking, at the south end of the Gunpowder River bridge in Chase, Baltimore County, Maryland. On the Amtrak train, there were 617 people (605 passengers, 12 crew members), of whom 16 died (15 passengers, 1 crew) and 197 were injured. On the Conrail train, there was 1 crew injury. The railroad between Baltimore and Philadelphia was closed for 42 hours. Equipment damage: \$10.8 million, which includes the loss of 2 AEM7 electric locomotives and 3 Amfleet 1 cars. Track damage: about \$815,000.

AMTRAK EXECUTIVE UPDATE

Thomas J. (Tim) Gillespie Jr. is Asst. VP of Government & Public Affairs, as of Jan. 1. He replaces James H. English. VP Gov't. & Public Affairs, who is now the Asst. Secretary of the U.S. Senate. Tim was formerly Senior Director, Congressional Affairs, at Amtrak.

John P. Lange is Asst. VP of Labor Relations, as of Nov. 17, replacing George F. Daniels, who left in Feb. 1986 (see July '86 News). John was formerly head of labor relations at Illinois Central Gulf Rr.

COMMUTER & TRANSIT NEWS

Boston's 270-mile commuter rail system, owned by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), is being operated by a new contractor: Amtrak. On Jan. 1, Amtrak replaced Boston & Maine, whose contract was not renewed due to labor strife and less-efficient work rules. The move adds 900 employees to Amtrak's ranks—and new revenues, too. Amtrak also operates the Maryland Rail Commuter (MARC) system under contract.

Buffalo's \$536 million, 6.4-mile light rail trolley line (Dec. '84, Feb. '86 News) was completed Nov. 29, with the opening of LaSalle Sta. The route links downtown with South Campus of the State Univ. of New York-Buffalo, located on the north side. All of the line is in subway (thus explaining its relatively high cost), except for 1 mile on Main St. downtown. Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) is considering future extensions north to suburban Amherst and Tonawanda.

Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) has scaled down its proposed light rail system to 93 miles, from an original 160 miles (Aug. '83 News). The first 52 miles are to be built by 1998; the remainder by 2010. Ten miles will be in subway—primarily downtown. Funding will still be mostly from a local sales tax. \$52 million is programmed this year to begin land acquisition for the trolley system.

Los Angeles broke ground Sept. 29 for a \$1.25 billion, 4.4-mile heavy rail line (in subway) between Union Station and Wilshire Blvd. at Alvarado St. It is to be the first phase of an 18-to-20 mile line (depending on alignment options) between downtown and North Hollywood. Funding is from the federal UMTA, a local sales tax, and a special tax levied on properties near (and benefitting from) the line.

Miami may become the first U.S. city in many decades to gain permanent commuter rail service. On Jan. 9, the Tricounty Commuter Rail Organization approved an agreement with CSX Rr. for use of

its tracks between Miami and West Palm Beach. Last summer, the Florida Legislature approved \$60 million for the project, and 18 new bilevel commuter cars, costing \$17.5 million, have been ordered from a Canadian builder. Trains will serve 16 points, including 6 existing Amtrak stations, and a new Miami Metrorail transit station is to be built allowing direct transfers to/from the commuter line. Service over this 65-mile route is scheduled to start in July 1988, just as reconstruction of parallel I-95 begins. Incidentally, CSX would like to sell this segment, and the rest of its Sebring-Homestead mainline—possibly to the Florida DOT.

Pittsburgh hopes to complete its \$545 million light rail modernization project (May '82, July '85 News) in late spring. Catenary wire problems caused the project to miss its Nov. 1986 target date.

Sacramento plans to open the first half of its \$176 million, 18-mile light rail trolley system, the 9-mile segment between downtown and northeast-suburban North Highlands, on Mar. 12 (Aug. '84, July '86 News). Regional Transit (RT) has now received 17 of its 26 trolley cars. The full system should open in September.

San Diego's Metropolitan Transit Development Board (MTDB) began work Nov. 17 on the remaining 11-mile segment of its East Line trolley route, between Euclid Av. and east-suburban El Cajon (Aug. '84, Feb. '86 News).

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY (continued from page 1)

informative route brochure identifying points of interest along route; taped music in lounge, diner, and (optional) individual sleeper rooms; specialty drinks and free snacks in lounge during "Hospitality Hour"; and occasional bingo or trivia games in diner during off-hours. In addition, lecturer provides live commentary Sacramento-Reno ("Zephyr") and Gallup-Lamy ("Chief"). Enhancements have been credited for dramatic improvement in "Chief's" passenger-miles and revenues. Chicago-San Antonio "Eagle" and Los Angeles-New Orleans "Sunset Limited" are to receive same amenities this spring.

On Dec. 1, Amtrak implemented a new policy for accepting payment by personal check: passenger must now display 1 photo identification plus 1 of 6 major credit cards: Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Choice, Diners Club, Carte Blanche. Also, checks of less than \$25 will no longer be accepted.

Also Dec. 1, Amtrak increased fares 2-5% on these routes: Washington-Boston, Los Angeles-San Diego, New York-Schenectady, New York-Pittsburgh.

Slumbercoach economy sleeper was removed from Washington-Montreal "Montrealer" Dec. 7 and added to New York-Miami "Silver Star" Dec. 15. Also Dec. 15, dinette replaced cafe car on Chicago-St. Louis "State House" and Chicago-Toledo "Lake Cities" (Dinettes offer table seating), and dome-coach was removed from Chicago-Kansas City "Ann Rutledge."

Waterbury, VT, did not regain seasonal station agent and baggage service this winter.

"Montrealer" passengers *be advised*: this train is subject to delay due to deterioration of Boston & Maine Rr. track Northampton-White River Jct.

BUFFALO COMPLETES TROLLEY LINE



—Photo by Barry Williams

Trolleys and pedestrians have reclaimed Main Street in downtown Buffalo. City's 6-mile light rail line was completed Nov. 29 (see *Transit News*). Portions of the line had been open since Oct. 1984. Line passes over Amtrak's New York-Toronto route at Auditorium Sta., and NARP has urged New York DOT to study enlarging this trolley station into a 2-level, joint facility (replacing Amtrak's Exchange St. Sta., 1 block east) to permit easy transfers between Amtrak trains and NFTA trolleys.

NEW BUDGET (continued from page 1)

Amtrak's Boston-Washington Northeast Corridor (NEC). In fact, Reagan's '88 budget assumes income of \$1 billion from such a sale. This is certainly curious, since the administration looked informally for possible NEC buyers in 1985 and could find none.

Because the NEC loses around \$200 million annually, it's not surprising there aren't any buyers. There never will be unless and until huge public subsidies to competing road and air travellers are eliminated, thus allowing Amtrak to charge sufficient fares. What we have is a change in tactics by an administration bent on killing Amtrak: an NEC sale would ultimately kill all of Amtrak—for both economic and political reasons—but it could be promoted by the administration as a partial solution to Amtrak's deficit problem, without employing the nasty anti-train rhetoric which backfired on the White House during the Stockman years.

In its Dec. 16 issue, the *Journal of Commerce* reported: "[Rail] Industry observers view the proposal to sell Amtrak's northeast passenger lines more as a sophisticated attempt to highlight the company's financial condition than a serious attempt to sell it. . . . 'I can't see anybody crazy enough to pay \$1.5 billion for it,' one lobbyist said. 'It just doesn't make sense.' . . . Several lobbyists speculated the proposal is part of a more sophisticated administration strategy aimed at getting the government out of the passenger [rail] business. . . . Threatening to take the Northeast Corridor away from Amtrak will cause the rest of the system to fall flat on its face, one official said, and draw attention to the total lack of viability of rail passenger service. 'Such a move would bring the rest of Amtrak's numbers under scrutiny and over time would make it easier to get rid of the entire system,' he said."

NARP: 'The Dumbest Idea. . . ?'

The Dec. 22 *New York Times* quoted NARP Executive Director Ross Capon as calling the NEC sale proposal "the dumbest idea I ever heard. It's either an attempt to force everyone to fly or drive, as this administration has been trying to do for three years, or it reflects a colossal amount of ignorance. There will be no private buyer, and states along the [NEC] will be saddled with the costs if they want the service to continue." In the same article, Amtrak Chairman Graham Claytor said, "There are no buyers. It's not profitable. No passenger service in the world is profitable."

The NEC sale proposal precipitated a heated dispute within the administration—one which quickly went public. The Dec. 18 *Wall Street Journal* reported that "the White House Office of Management and Budget [OMB] and the Transportation Department [DOT] are locked in a dispute over whether the pending budget includes a proposal to sell the Northeast Corridor of Amtrak. . . . [DOT] officials deemed absurd the idea of selling Amtrak's Northeast Corridor, given the line's annual losses, which exceed \$200 million. But [an OMB] official said the Northeast Corridor 'is the only potentially viable part of Amtrak. It may be viable' as a going concern and 'has valuable real estate.'" DOT fought the sale idea, fearing a collapse of Amtrak would create new costs for NEC freight tenant Conrail and thus jeopardize the sale of Conrail—but OMB emerged victorious.

In a harshly critical Dec. 16 editorial, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* commented, "The real motive behind this proposal is [Pres. Reagan's] ideological conviction that government is bad, and that everything from railroads to foreign

SEN. BYRD RIDES 'CARDINAL'

"The 'Cardinal' runs through some of the most breathtaking scenery in southern West Virginia. Every season of the year along this route showcases a unique aspect of West Virginia's wild and scenic beauty. I thoroughly enjoyed my most recent trip on the 'Cardinal' and I would highly recommend it to anybody who has the opportunity to travel this route."



—Senate Majority Leader Robert C. Byrd (D-WV), commenting on his Sep. 3, 1986, "Cardinal" trip from Thurmond to Hinton, WV

policy should be surrendered to private-profiteers. That's the significance of this Amtrak-sale proposal—it shows Mr. Reagan's determination to keep sending Capitol Hill the same tired old budgetary non-answers that even a split-party Congress sensibly rejected before."

On the same day, the *Chicago Sun-Times* editorialized: "The Reagan Administration wants to sell Amtrak's [NEC], even though there are no buyers on the horizon. That means 10.5 million people in eight states who use the corridor each year will now be gnawing their nails again. Will it sell? Won't it sell? If it doesn't sell, will the government continue to operate it? If it does sell, will the buyer actually operate a railway? Or will he put his greedy paws all over the downtown real estate where the major rail stations now are and turn them into office rentals?"

The Reagan Administration's call for selling the NEC appears to be timed to exploit Amtrak's improved financial situation. Weeks before the OMB proposal leaked out, the Nov. 23 *New York Times* had featured a glowing story on Amtrak, reporting that Amtrak's NEC had surpassed Eastern Air Lines and "is [now] carrying more passengers daily than any of the airlines with which it competes" in the New York-Washington city-pair market (i.e., excludes intermediate points). The story also reported that Amtrak expects to cover its direct (or "over-the-rail") operating costs systemwide for the very first time in Fiscal 1987. A number of U.S. newspapers reprinted the *Times* story.

Sen. Lautenberg Denounces Budget

In a Jan. 29 news conference at the U.S. Capitol Building, Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), the new chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, attacked the administration's plan to abolish Amtrak and slash transit and vowed to "fight" for these programs.

Lautenberg also announced that he was introducing S.R. 93, a resolution which "rejects the administration's proposal to conduct a 'fire sale' of Amtrak's assets. This resolution sends the message that we won't go along with plans to abandon the government's commitment to maintain a national passenger railroad system." As of Feb. 5, Lautenberg had a dozen resolution cosponsors: Claiborne Pell (D-RI), Robert Byrd (D-WV), Daniel Moynihan (D-NY), Spark Matsunaga (D-HI), Lowell Weicker (R-CT), Carl Levin (D-MI), Joseph Biden (D-DE), John Melcher (D-MT), John Heinz (R-PA), Paul Sarbanes (D-MD), Arlen Specter (R-PA), and Howard Metzenbaum (D-OH).

Joining Sen. Lautenberg in the Jan. 29 news conference were NARP's executive director, Ross Capon, and transportation associate, Harriet Parcels, along with representatives of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, Environmental Policy Institute, and the League of Women Voters. The conference was organized by NARP's Harriet Parcels. ■