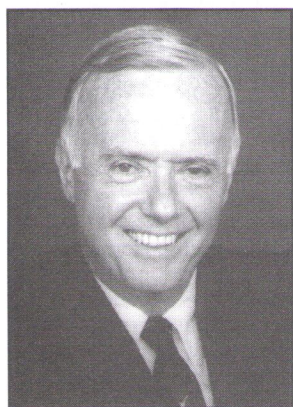


Upbeat Ways and Means Hearing!

Chairman Amo Houghton (R-NY) and his Ways and Means Subcommittee on Oversight held a hearing on "Tax Treatment of Transportation Infrastructure." The July 25 hearing included much positive discussion of the High Speed Rail Investment Act, which Houghton introduced in the House (H.R.3700), and a good summary by a Union Pacific witness of how government policy is biased against freight railroads.



Rep. Amo Houghton

Houghton's opening statement said, in part, "The tax law historically has sought to address the special needs of the transportation sector, but it has not always provided uniform assistance. Regrettably there is an imbalance in how federal law addresses the unique needs of the various modes of transportation...There is no comparable [to highways and aviation] source of stable, long-term federal support for the infrastructure related to passenger rail service...If the current tax law does not treat

all transportation modes fairly, then we should point out where an imbalance may exist and explore how to correct it."

Amtrak Chairman and Gov. Tommy Thompson (R-WI) noted that the U.S. Conference of Mayors endorsed H.R.3700 at a Senate Finance Committee hearing that morning.

Kenny Hulshof (R-MO) said he heard Amtrak's new service guarantee means "if you don't like the service, you ride free...I'm looking forward to my ride to Philadelphia this weekend" [for the Republican convention]. Gov. Thompson answered, "I'll be on the platform to meet you."

Asked by Hulshof about the satisfaction guarantee program (July News), Thompson said Amtrak is at 99.6% and hopes to get to 99.8%. (That is, four dissatisfied customers per 1,000

requesting vouchers; the goal is two.)

James Oberstar (D-MN), ranking member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the leading House co-sponsor of H.R. 3700, spoke enthusiastically for the bill—and the prospect of major high speed rail development in the U.S. His enthusiasm—so intense that he frequently lapsed into French—partly comes from first-hand knowledge of what passenger rail investments can do. He rode French trains as a student in the 1950s and more recently as a congressman.

No witness or subcommittee member expressed opposition to the bill. Wes Watkins (R-OK) said, "One of the worst

(continued on page 2)



NARP's Ross B. Capon (second from left) accepts Robert K. Pattison Award in Philadelphia. From left: Pattison, Capon, William Nevel (chairman of the High Speed Ground Transportation Association, HSGTA), and Don Deer (chairman of the Intermodal Passenger Institute).

Ross Capon Honored for Commitment to Rail

The second annual Robert K. Pattison Partnership Award was presented to NARP Executive Director Ross B. Capon May 12, in Philadelphia at the High Speed Ground Transportation Association's annual conference.

The Intermodal Passenger Institute established the Pattison Partnership Award last year. In presenting the award, Institute Chairman Don Deer said, "I am personally very proud to make the second Pattison Partnership Award to someone who almost daily demonstrates his commitment to industry partnership...He has been an untiring team builder and a

(continued on page 2)

"Look at this bill not as an Amtrak capital program but as a capital program for states. We will work with Amtrak and take advantage of their expertise...We intend to build infrastructure in partnership with Amtrak but also in partnership with freight railroads as well and with local transit agencies (for terminals)...States have a good record of managing big transportation projects, but we've never had the federal government as a funding partner for rail...We have a more stable program for bicycle investment than for rail, without the federal partnership..."

—David King, North Carolina Transportation Secretary

Ways and Means

(from page 1)

votes I ever cast was deregulation of airlines." He and Gov. Thompson each claimed their own state was hurt more by deregulation. Watkins concluded: "I enjoy Eurail. I enjoy Britrail. I want to be for this bill, but I want to make sure the bucket isn't empty by the time it gets to Oklahoma."

James Query, a bond expert with Morgan Stanley, the investment firm, effectively answered Hulshof's concern about lack of investor interest in Qualified Zone Academy Bonds ("QZABs"). Query said he was confident that investors would be attracted to the proposed rail bonds, and that lessons learned from the QZAB law have been incorporated both in a new, bipartisan school construction bill and in the High Speed Rail Investment Act.

As Congress recessed July 27, H.R.3700 had 147 sponsors and S.1900 had 50 co-sponsors. The newest Senate co-sponsors, added in July, are Richard Lugar (R-IN) and Kent Conrad (D-ND). Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME), who would be the 51st, indicated her support just after adjournment.

The day after the hearing, Houghton attended an American Passenger Rail Coalition reception at Washington Union Station and received APRC's annual Rail Leadership Award. APRC is a trade organization of Amtrak suppliers. ■

Opening statements of Chairman Houghton and Ranking Democrat William J. Coyne (D-PA) and prepared statements of most witnesses are available at <http://waysandmeans.house.gov/oversite/106cong/ov-22wit.htm>.

MICHIGAN UPDATE

The Grand Rapids-Chicago *Pere Marquette* and Toronto-Port Huron-Lansing-Chicago *International* exist due to Michigan's financial support. The last Michigan-Amtrak agreement (Oct. '98 *News*) expired September 30, 1999, after a six month extension. A new, fiscal 2000 agreement should be signed soon.

Discussions for the future continue, including an August 7 meeting with Amtrak Intercity President Ed Walker. Amtrak will give the state more data on both routes, including a separate Port Huron-Chicago service—probably on a different schedule.

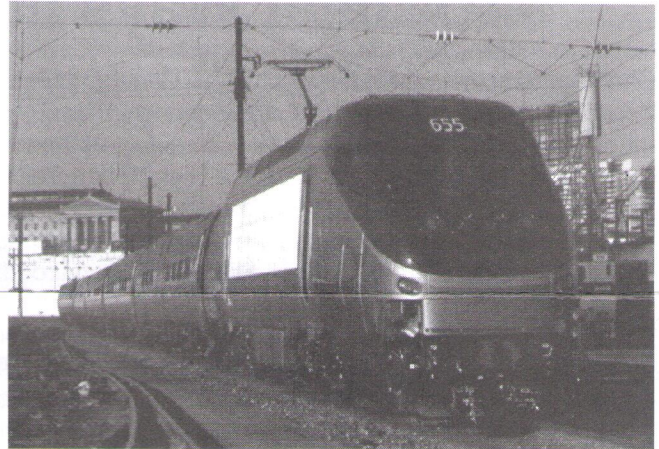
If there is no new agreement, the *International* could end October 2, because Amtrak has given the state 180 days' notice, as federal law requires. A Chicago-Detroit-Toronto service Amtrak proposed February 28 (Mar. *News*), designed to keep Chicago-Toronto service without state support, remains possible.

Chicago-Detroit schedules—NARP President John R. Martin expressed strong concern in a July 19 letter to Walker because the May 12 timetable shows the 2:10 pm Chicago-Detroit train taking 6-1/2 hours (34 minutes longer than before, with the 8-mile Dearborn-Detroit segment taking 71 minutes—passengers waiting while express is unloaded). The train actually was slowed 14 minutes rather than 34 minutes. Walker since has told Michigan and NARP he agrees it is unreasonable to lengthen running times on a corridor where the state has invested \$30 million. He is investigating unloading express *after* Detroit passengers detrain, so express can be handled without implementing the published schedule.

"For the first time outside the Northeast, we'll be able to develop 500-700-mile high speed rail systems. We need to actually do it instead of continuing to support a cottage industry of consultants. We don't need the studies, we need to do it!"

—Rep. James Oberstar (D-MN), at July 25 hearing

NEW LOCOMOTIVES BEGIN ARRIVING



—Amtrak

As an adjunct to the 1996 order for high-speed train sets, Amtrak ordered from the Bombardier/Alstom consortium a set of 15 electric locomotives. The 8000-horsepower "HHL's" (High-Horsepower Locomotives) are the most powerful locomotives in North America. They were built at Bombardier/Alstom plants in Plattsburgh, NY, and Barre, VT. (The much delayed Acela Express train sets have 12,500 hp, divided evenly between the two power cars.) The first HHL began revenue service on July 27 in Keystone service (one is shown above at Philadelphia on an earlier test run).

As electric train service is expanded on the newly electrified Boston line, the new, 125-mph HHL's will supplement Amtrak's existing fleet of electric locomotives, the AEM7's. [They are 7000 hp, built in the 1980's from Swedish designs.] The new locomotives also are meant to replace the 6000-hp E60's, built in 1975, which now haul long-distance trains between New York and Philadelphia and which are limited to 90 mph.

Capon Award

(from page 1)

nationally ordained missionary where change and balance are called for in our rail passenger services...For 25 years he has...invested much personal effort and energy in fostering partnerships between and among the various and diverse elements of the public and private sectors, and, most especially, between the old and new transportation modes and technologies—all of which are vital to the success of high speed ground transportation."

Capon's brief "acceptance" remarks emphasized the important role that NARP's board and membership play in the fight for balanced transportation, and urged advocates never to lose sight of important rail passenger success stories that show the public wants good trains and is eager to ride them.

The award is named for Robert K. Pattison, an HSGTA founder, two-term chairman and 16-year board member, who is now an honorary board member. Deer called Pattison's 50-year career at Parsons Brinckerhoff and the Long Island Rail Road "legendary." Last year, Federal Railroad Administrator Jolene Molitoris received the first Pattison award. ■

Chicago-St. Louis High-Speed Rail Efforts Move Forward

The Illinois Department of Transportation has approved a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) for high-speed rail service between Chicago and St. Louis. This is a big step toward realizing the goals of the nine-state Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MRR; Feb. '99, Sept. '98 News). The May 16 DEIS proposes eight daily round trips (besides Amtrak's *Texas Eagle*, one of the three current trains) with a top speed of 110 mph on most of the route (with a 125-mph zone between Lincoln and Springfield), using fossil-fuel technology. Total travel time would be about 3:30, down from today's 5:30-5:45.

The DEIS found that a "no-build" alternative (i.e., the current Amtrak service) would not further the Department's goal of "enhancing the passenger transportation network in the Chicago-St. Louis corridor." The DEIS rejected 140-mph electric service because added revenues due to shorter travel times would not justify the added capital cost. It also rejected 90-mph diesel-electric service because capital costs were almost as great as those for 110-125-mph service.

The current route south of Dwight (including the East St. Louis rerouting) is assumed, but there are three Dwight-Chicago route options:

- The current route via Joliet Union Station on Union Pacific and Illinois Central tracks, to Union Station;

- Via a new stop in Joliet and Blue Island on Union Pacific and Metra (ex-Rock Island) tracks, possibly terminating at La Salle St. Station; and

- Via Kankakee and a proposed "third airport" (at Peotone) on Norfolk Southern and Illinois Central tracks, to Randolph St. Station or—with the Grand Crossing connection restored (Feb. '99 News)—to Union Station.

The current route crosses more railroads at grade and requires the most building displacements, but also is the shortest and requires the fewest highway-crossing closures. NARP has told Illinois DOT in formal comments that we prefer the present route but that access to Union Station is critical. (The state is likely to press for the Kankakee route if the new airport goes forward.)

Only Union Station can provide direct transfers to the many Amtrak trains serving Chicago—which will increase in number after other MRR routes begin operation. It also offers connections to several of Metra's busiest commuter lines, and

the chance to run through-services to other Midwestern routes and to O'Hare Airport. These advantages far outweigh the other stations' closer location to parts of the Loop.

Indeed, failure to serve Union Station would negate one of the MRR's main selling points—"operation of a 'hub-and-spoke' passenger rail system providing through-service in Chicago to locations throughout the Midwest"—by needlessly forcing inconvenient station transfers in Chicago. Such transfers were the norm when intercity trains served several terminals, but one of Amtrak's big accomplishments was consolidating the services it inherited into Union Station in 1971-72.

Progress on Advanced Signals

U.S. Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater on June 21 announced award of a \$34-million contract for a Positive Train Control (PTC) system on 120.5 miles of the Chicago-St. Louis line (see also Feb. '98 News), from Mazonia in the north (25 miles south of Joliet) to West Ridgley in the south (3 miles north of Springfield), on Union Pacific tracks. (This project is part of the \$60 million, industrywide North American Joint Positive Train Control Program. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is providing \$28 million, Illinois DOT \$12 million, Association of American Railroads \$20 million.)

A team led by Lockheed Martin Corp. won the contract. The system—required to be ready by the end of 2002—will let the Union Pacific's Omaha control center *continuously* monitor train locations, in contrast with centralized traffic control (CTC) systems which simply indicate which block the train is in. On-board computers display information to engineers and stop trains if necessary.

In Michigan, 79-mph Chicago-Detroit and Chicago-Toronto Amtrak trains (and Norfolk Southern local freights, since August 10) use a simpler "Incremental Train Control System" (ITCS) on 20 route miles of Amtrak-owned track around Niles, soon to expand to 67 miles, Kalamazoo-New Buffalo. A computer on the locomotive (rather than a control center as in the Illinois project) makes most decisions, based on information from the existing, conventional wayside CTC system. Speed targets are 90 mph this year and—after safety verification—110 mph next year. FRA, Amtrak, Michigan DOT and Harmon Industries (the system supplier) have financed the program.

Both of these systems use global positioning technology. The hope is that these new systems will be cheaper than other systems long used to support over-79-mph operation. ■



DIVORCE YOUR CAR!...

...is a new book by NARP member Katie Alvord, of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The 320-page paperback is interestingly divided into three segments discussing how Americans ended up "married to cars," why that marriage is "on the rocks," and what anyone can do to reduce or end their auto dependence (the "divorce"). The book, published by New Society Publishers of Gabriola Island, BC, Canada, is also a useful summary of information relating to the cost to society of driving, while acknowledging the benefits of rail and transit. More information is at <www.newsociety.com/divfs.html>.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Next new route—Start-up for the Chicago-Cleveland-Pittsburgh-Philadelphia *Skyline Connection* could be as early as August 21, probably with a Viewliner sleeper. Amtrak hopes to have enough new electric locomotives (see page 2 item on "HHL's") to extend the train to New York in November.

Sleeping car reassigned—The Chicago-Jeffersonville, IN, *Kentucky Cardinal* lost its sleeping car August 11-12, becoming a coach-only, overnight train. On August 13, the *California Zephyr* regained a third sleeper over its entire Chicago-California route (only two sleepers had been running west of Denver, quite full). The sleeper may return to the *Kentucky Cardinal* after the peak season.

Meteor earlier—Train 98, the northbound *Silver Meteor*, effective August 14 leaves Miami at 7:00 am (20 minutes earlier than before), and runs up to 25 minutes earlier at all points to the north through Richmond (but on the current schedule north of there). This is to accommodate schedule changes on the Tri-Rail commuter trains (Miami-West Palm Beach).

Checked baggage—Amtrak's *Twilight Shoreliner* (trains 66/76 and 67) handles checked baggage at Richmond, Alexandria, Washington, Baltimore, Wilmington, Philadelphia, Newark, New York, New Haven, Providence, and Boston, since August 1.

This means two trains in each direction (one at New London) carry checked baggage for passengers connecting with Amtrak's long-distance trains. For those passengers, the service continues on the 10:20 am from Boston and 10:30 am from Washington. NARP repeatedly has expressed concern about inadequate checked baggage service on the Northeast Corridor. The new baggage car is a positive step.

Michigan—Amtrak does *not* plan to implement the 6-1/2-hour Chicago-to-Detroit schedule shown in May 21 timetables. The 2:10 pm from Chicago arrives Detroit at 9:20, not the published 9:40. (See page 2.)

MORE RAIL CAN HELP AIR TRAVELERS

"...The summer of 1999 was the worst on record for late flights, and this summer is turning out to be worse yet; delays in June rose 16.5% from June 1999...Thirteen of the 15 most congested metropolitan areas are located on [corridors where high-speed rail service is feasible], as are 18 of the 20 airports with the most flight delays in 1999...Sen. Lautenberg's bill [The High Speed Rail Investment Act, S.1900, H.R.3700] has strong support from the National Governors Association, the National Conference of State Legislatures, individual state leaders around the country, and environmental organizations. Congress, too, should get aboard."

—Trenton Times editorial, July 23

BUSINESS WEEK: RAIL IS RX FOR AIR GRIDLOCK

"For air passengers, this is the summer from hell. Record traffic has produced record delays...This summer, there has been a boom in limousine and taxi travel between New York and Boston by frustrated airline passengers...It's actually more economic and prudent to pile four people into a car and take a four-hour drive rather than risk a one-hour flight that may be delayed indefinitely. This raises another issue of public policy: infrastructure. Any reasonable country would have high-speed rail service between cities just 200 miles apart. That would relieve a lot of airport congestion..."

—From "Economic Viewpoint" by Robert Kuttner, Business Week, August 7

THE AMTRAK REFORM COUNCIL on August 8 announced that Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott appointed Nancy Rutledge Connery to the Council. She replaces Joseph Vranich, who resigned abruptly on July 10. Connery, of Woolwich, ME, is "an independent researcher and policy advisor" in transportation. She has criticized extending Amtrak to Maine.



News from the National Association of Railroad Passengers

Vol. 34, No. 8 August 2000



RETURN REQUESTED

John R. Martin, President; Ken Burbach, George Chilson, Wayne Davis, Alan Yorker, Vice Presidents; Robert W. Glover, Secretary; Joseph F. Horning, Jr., Treasurer; Ross B. Capon, Executive Director; Scott Leonard, Assistant Director; Jane L. Colgrove, Membership Director.

News from the National Association of Railroad Passengers (ISSN 0739-3490) is published monthly except November by NARP; 900 Second St., NE, Suite 308; Washington, DC 20002-3557; 202/408-8362, fax 202/408-8287, e-mail narp@narprail.org, web www.narprail.org. ©2000 National Association of Railroad Passengers. All rights reserved. Membership dues are \$28/year (\$15 under 21 or over 65) of which \$5 is for a subscription to NARP News. For the latest passenger rail news, visit our on-line Hotline, changed at least weekly.

Postmaster: Send address changes to National Association of Railroad Passengers; 900 Second St., NE, Suite 308; Washington, DC 20002-3557.

(This has news through Aug. 14. Vol. 34, No. 7 was mailed July 31.)

Second Class Postage Paid
At Washington, D.C.