



Amtrak's New Plan and Wake-Up Call

Amtrak's new five-year strategic plan, the second produced under President and CEO David L. Gunn, has three elements:

- Continuing to bring Amtrak itself back to a state-of-good-repair.
- Identifying state passenger rail corridors ready for development, and classifying those which have met all or most of

eight "readiness criteria" as "Tier I" or "Tier II" passenger rail corridors that are ripe for incremental investment.

- Identifying threats to the nation's rail freight network and thus Amtrak's national network. Maps showed low-density routes which could be downgraded or abandoned, as well as congested routes

where Amtrak delays average more than 1.5 or 2.5 hours per 1,000 miles.

Significantly, officials from California, North Carolina, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin and major freight railroads also spoke at Gunn's news conference.

Gunn said, "The update to the five-year
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—Scott Leonard and David R. Johnson

"Tier I" Corridors: How to Maintain Impressive Ridership Growth

An improving conventional rail service with growing ridership clearly adds credibility to the case for rail, and potentially becomes a foundation for "true" high-speed rail.

Washington and Oregon DOT decided in the early 1990's to take the incremental approach. With input and support of the primary host railroad, Burlington Northern-Santa Fe, key infrastructure projects were identified. Tilting train equipment, permitting higher operating speeds, with modern interiors were purchased

from Talgo of Spain and station improvements were made.

For short-distance trains, Seattle-Portland running-time was cut 30 minutes (12.5%). Frequency (including *Coast Starlight*) went from three to four daily round-trips.

Ridership has more than tripled. Customer satisfaction figures have risen as well. In the planning stages: triple tracking of most of the route between Tacoma and Vancouver, Wash., and construction

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Incremental corridor development has led to large ridership gains over the past ten years (ridership in millions):

	1993	2003	%
<i>Capitol</i>	0.278	1.139	310%
<i>Pac. NW</i>	0.226	0.691	206%
<i>Metroliner-Acela Express</i>	1.980	2.937	48%
<i>Pac. Surfliner</i>	1.778	2.179	23%
<i>Carolinian-Piedmont</i>	0.212	0.257	21%
<i>N.E. Regionals</i>	8.391	8.998	7%

Scott Leonard: From NARP to Amtrak

After serving your Association reliably and faithfully for 15 years, Scott Leonard resigned as assistant director effective June 18. He will become a Government Affairs Specialist at Amtrak in July.

Scott joined NARP in April of 1989. He ushered NARP into the electronic era. He brought the newsletter layout and publication in-house, established e-mail access and established NARP's web site and maintained it. He acquired on the job—and over many evenings in the office—all the technical knowledge these tasks required.

He maintained the high quality of our maps (e.g. Richmond Main St. Station

and environs, Dec. '03 *NARP News*), in the early years drawing them by hand; more recently using Adobe Illustrator.

He has maintained volumes of transportation statistics of all types covering funding, ridership, safety, and service start-and-stop dates.

In addition, he monitored newspaper coverage of Amtrak as well as hearings on Capitol Hill, and talked at length with reporters and NARP members. He was always a valued source of advice to your executive director.

His departure is a great loss for NARP, but it is good that his knowledge and skill remains in the rail passenger business at Amtrak. —*Ross B. Capon*



Floyd Hall to Amtrak Board

In a July 1 release, President Bush stated his intention to "recess appoint" Floyd Hall to a five year term on Amtrak's Board of Directors. Hall, of New Jersey, is known as a leader of turn around and growth companies (in

cluding K-Mart, 1995-2001).

Recess appointments only can happen when Congress is not in session. Recess appointments expire at the end of the next calendar year (in this case, 2005) unless the Senate votes to confirm.

Incremental

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of a bypass near Olympia-Lacey.

The California program is well known. Modest San Diego-Los Angeles-San Luis Obispo (*Surfliner*) ridership growth is partly because some former Amtrak trips now are taken on Metrolink trains.

North Carolina has an impressive work program—track, stations, trains; details are at <www.bytrain.org>. Ridership growth has been dampened by work-related delays and a consequent hold on state marketing efforts, but strong growth is expected to start next year.

In 1990, the *Carolinian*, providing daylight service between New York City and Charlotte (including Greensboro, Raleigh, Rocky Mount), was restored. In 1995, the state bought its own equipment to inaugurate the Charlotte-Raleigh *Piedmont* on a daylight schedule opposite the *Carolinian*.

North Carolina DOT assisted with a purchase-lease agreement involving the Raleigh-Greensboro line that Norfolk

Southern and Amtrak use. The owner, state-owned North Carolina Railroad Company (NCR), chartered in 1849, now is organized as a real estate investment trust; the state reinvests dividends into capital improvements on NCR. Targeted investments have cut Raleigh-Greensboro trip time by nearly 30 minutes—with more savings to come. ■



—David R. Johnson

The State of North Carolina is showing that making incremental improvements to passenger rail service (including purchasing new locomotives and refurbished rolling stock, seen here on the *Piedmont* at Raleigh) can increase ridership quickly and economically.

NARP's David Johnson

David R. Johnson is no stranger to NARP. He joined the NARP staff full-time in October 2003, and was introduced to NARP members in a November 13 letter from then-President Alan M. Yorker.

Johnson worked for NARP twice before as an intern. He is a May 2000 graduate of the University of Maryland, College Park (B.A. in Government and Politics). While at Maryland, he served as the first student member of the Amtrak Customer Advisory Committee.

From August 2000 to September 2003, Johnson was the Manager of Transportation and Hotel Services for America By Rail of East Lansing, Mich. Here, he reserved and kept track of all the Amtrak, VIA Rail, motorcoach, and hotel group reservations that America By Rail needed for its 70+ tours a year. He also person-



ally led many tours. This work gave him a high degree of familiarity with Amtrak and the issues its passengers face.

While living in Michigan, Johnson was active in advocacy efforts, primarily to save the two state supported services: the *Pere Marquette* and *International*. The culmination of these efforts was a January 2003 rally at the state capital building in Lansing, organized by Johnson and other rail supporters.

Upon returning to NARP in October 2003, he initially focused largely on contact with members of Congress, interaction with other nonprofit groups, and youth membership development. His focus has expanded to include web site maintenance, newsletter production, and compiling various statistics.

Johnson, an avid bicyclist, enjoys attending professional sports events. As a member of the Screaming Eagles, the booster club for Washington's D.C. United soccer team, he is active in its social and charity events. He is a Maryland Terrapin fan at heart, but also likes Michigan State University athletics. ■

Five Year Plan (from page 1)

plan continues the effort we began last year to provide specific and precise details on exactly how every dollar is to be spent to bring the existing Amtrak system up to a state-of-good-repair. However, states and the freight railroads face serious problems of capacity, congestion and reliability, and there is a growing consensus within the rail industry that we must come together to address these challenges.”

The Omaha *News Herald* said June 30, “The Norfolk Southern and Canadian Pacific Railways issued statements in support of Amtrak’s proposal. A Union Pacific representative attended the event.”

Of Gunn’s list of ready-to-go state corridors, he told reporters, “It’s not a wish list. These are all corridors where there has been real work done and where there’s real state commitment...It seems to me this is a pretty small investment to test the viability of intercity rail.” Alluding to criticism of huge estimates for gold-plating every designated high-speed rail corridor, Gunn said, “This is not a massive \$100 billion program—it’s \$2 billion over five years” (Lincoln, Ill., *Courier*, July 2).

The eight Tier I corridors:

- Philadelphia-Harrisburg
- Raleigh-Charlotte
- Chicago-Milwaukee-Madison
- Chicago-St. Louis

- Eugene-Seattle
- San Diego-Los Angeles-San Luis Obispo
- San Jose-Sacramento-Reno
- Bakersfield-Oakland/Sacramento.

The four Tier II corridors:

- Boston-Portland
- Washington-Raleigh
- Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac
- Seattle-Vancouver.

Patrick Simmons of North Carolina DOT noted that interstate travel is important to the state: “Our biggest city pair is New York City-Charlotte.”

Eugene K. Skoropowski, speaking for CalTrans, said Union Pacific and Burlington Northern-Santa Fe have contributed \$90 million to date to cooperative capital investment projects in the state.

Skoropowski spoke for many when he expressed frustration that the federal government brought essentially no money to the table: “Think about things that we

NARP ON THE AIR

Wisconsin Public Radio’s Ben Merens had NARP Executive Director Ross B. Capon on the first hour of the June 17 show. All callers supported passenger rail and NARP’s efforts. The archived show is at www.wpr.org/webcasting/.

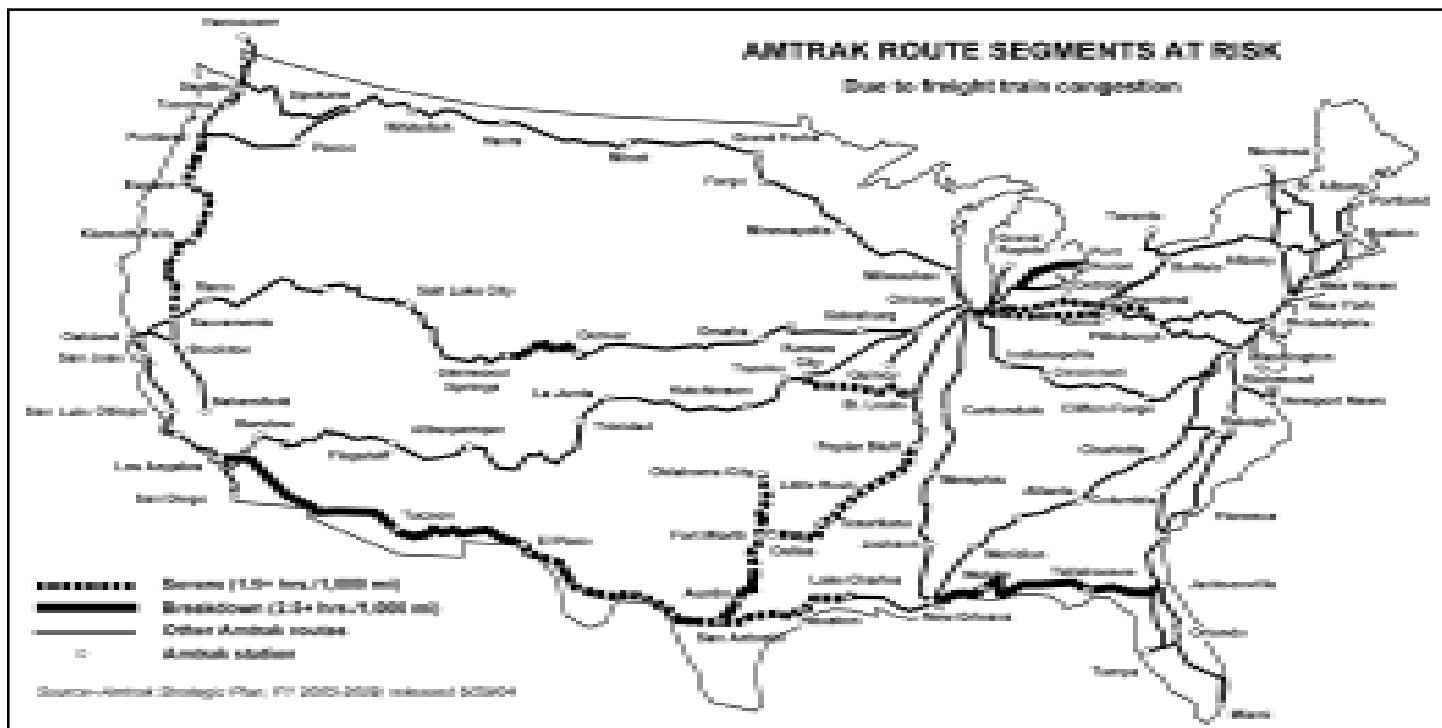
could do {on rail projects} with \$2 to \$3 billion of federal match money. That’s not much, considering that a good highway interchange is \$200 million.”

NARP promptly issued a release supporting the plan, and noting that Amtrak’s work with states ready to develop corridors “highlights the need for the federal government to step forward as a funding partner for those states.”

Amtrak’s “state-of-good-repair” plan has infrastructure work not just along the Northeast Corridor and in Michigan (where Amtrak owns a third of the Chicago-Detroit line), but also in Florida (Miami and Sanford), New Orleans, Chicago, northwest Indiana and east of Albany, New York. The plan has more work on Oakland and Seattle maintenance facilities. ■

NARP’s June 29 release is at www.narprail.org. For Amtrak’s plan, go to www.amtrak.com/press (click on “Financial Reports,” the fourth link). The 2MB file requires Adobe Reader, which can be downloaded from a link on Amtrak’s page.

Five-Year Plan Annual Costs			
(in millions)			
	Operating	Capital	Debt Service
2005 —	\$570	\$767	\$258
2006 —	\$570	\$939	\$256
2007 —	\$570	\$858	\$341
2008 —	\$570	\$788	\$294
2009 —	\$570	\$767	\$278



Happy 75th Birthday, *Empire Builder*!

On June 11, Amtrak's *Empire Builder* celebrated 75 years of operation. Amtrak President David L. Gunn rode the westbound train from Chicago to Whitefish (appropriately led by engines #7, the current train number, and #31, the number used by the Great Northern Railroad). In addition, the last remaining Great Northern Railroad dome car in Amtrak service was part of the train.

The governors of Wisconsin, North Dakota, Montana, and Washington and U.S. Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) were among the dignitaries participating in on-line ceremonies. In a July 11 speech at Seattle's King Street Station, Murray, a longtime supporter of Amtrak, emphasized that Amtrak is important for the mobility of Americans, especially in light of our overcrowded highways and airports. A theme repeated by speakers at every stop was the importance of the *Empire Builder* to rural mobility and how much of a lifeline the train is to the communities it serves.

Passengers on the trains were given a commemorative bag with gifts and souvenirs. Celebrations were held in Chicago, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Rugby, Minot, Havre, Shelby, Whitefish and Seattle.

In addition to Gunn, J. Craig Thorpe, artist of this year's Amtrak timetable cover, rode the westbound train and participated in the events.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Transit—Minneapolis opened the first segment of its Hiawatha light rail service June 25—Hennepin Avenue in the Warehouse District of downtown Minneapolis to Fort Snelling, southeast of town. An extension to Minneapolis Airport and Mall of America is scheduled to open in December.

Charlotte Heritage Trolley opened a 1.4 mile extension from South End/Convention Center to Uptown (9th St.) on June 28. The service is now provided seven days a week and is operated by Charlotte Area Transit System (volunteers remain as docents).

San Jose VTA opened a 6.5 mile extension from Milpitas to East San Jose on June 23.

Democratic Nat'l Convention—

- Boston's North Station closes at 8:05 pm Friday, July 23, to reopen Saturday, July 31. (*Downeaster* resumes Sunday, August 1; Concord Trailways buses honor rail tickets as usual.)

- Commuter trains terminate in suburbs, with Boston passengers using connecting rail transit (Fitchburg and Haverhill lines) and buses (Lowell and Eastern lines).

- South Station—where train service is unaffected—is terminal for special buses, including Lowell and Eastern lines feeders. (Exception: Eastern off-peak buses feed Blue Line Wonderland station).

- During the same period (from 8:00 pm Friday), Orange Line trains skip North Station; Green Line trains end at Haymarket.

- MBTA will allow no packages larger than briefcase or pocket book on Orange Line and I-93 buses.

- MBTA will conduct random searches of bags—a new, on-going policy for which ACLU and others have said they will sue MBTA.

- Updates at <www.mbta.com>

Republican Nat'l Convention—

August 30-Sept. 2 above New York's Penn Station; no indication (yet) of security-related train service interruptions.

Boston - Newport News—

Amtrak re-extended to Virginia points the overnight Northeast Corridor train, effective July 2. Since through service ended in April 2003 (when *Twilight Shoreliner* became *Federal* in April 2003), passengers have been required to transfer in Washington, depressing ridership.

Silver Service—returned to normal operating patterns on July 7 (departures from Miami and New York).

Adirondack—The State of New York assured Amtrak that the full payment of \$4.4 million for two years' *Adirondack* operation will be paid by July 31. Therefore, Amtrak plans to continue service. Earlier, Amtrak said service would end September 30 if the bill was not paid.



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