



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

Vol. 23, No. 9 September, 1989

John R. Martin, Pres.; Eugene Skoropowski, V. Pres.; Robert Glover, Sec.; Joseph Horning, Jr., Treas.; Ross Capon, Exec. Dir.; Scott Leonard, Asst. Dir.; Jane Colgrove, Membership Dir.; Harriet Parcels, Transp. Assoc.

News from the National Association of Railroad Passengers (ISSN 0739-3490), is published monthly except November by NARP, 236 Massachusetts Ave., NE, Suite 603, Washington, DC 20002. 202/546-1550. Membership dues are \$20/year (\$10 under 21 or over 65) of which \$5 is for a subscription to NARP News. Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC.

Postmaster: send address changes to National Association of Railroad Passengers, 236 Massachusetts Ave., NE, Suite 603, Washington, DC 20002.

(This has news through October 6. No. 8 was mailed August 31.)

RETURN REQUESTED

Midwest Progress!

BUSH RECOGNIZES RAIL PASSENGER BENEFITS

President Bush, in a letter read at the opening ceremonies of the Grand Canyon Railway Sep. 17 (see Travelers' Advisory), said that the restoration of rail service "would alleviate many of the problems that have come with the increase of tourism. By reducing the flow of motor vehicles, as well as accompanying air pollution, noise and congestion, the railway will help preserve this geologic marvel in its splendor."

—Tucson Citizen, Sep. 18

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Amtrak's May 21 timetables are good through Oct. 28, except that Atlantic City schedules changed Sep. 17. New schedules take effect nationally Oct. 29, Atlantic City included. After flirting with 3 timetable changes per year, Amtrak quickly reverted to 2, coinciding with start and finish of daylight time. (The first 1990 change will be Apr. 1.)

The Oct. 29 timetable has some noteworthy additions. Milwaukee-Chicago daily round trips increase from 4 to 6 with new 403b money from Wisconsin and Illinois. Local trains (other than "Empire Builder") will be called "Hiawatha Service". 4 limited or non-stop weekday Metroliners will be added, bringing total to 2 AM and one PM run northbound Washington-New York, and one AM and one PM run southbound. "Crescent's" new Mobile-Evergreen-Greenville-Montgomery-Birmingham section, "Gulf Breeze," also begins Oct. 29.

Amtrak's Galesburg-Springfield, IL Thruway buses now also serve Peoria (Holiday Inn). These connect with "California Zephyr" and "Texas Eagle".

The Chicago-Carbondale "Illini" began serving Du Quoin, IL Aug. 25. "Sunset Ltd."

(continued on page 2)

State Officials Endorse 60-90 mph Corridors!

Federal and State Legislators Must Hear Your Support

"The implementation of this development program can occur with relatively small increases in funding levels. The premise of the program is to use the existing rail passenger system as a base on which to build."

—Report of High Speed Rail Compact

Near-term improvement of conventional intercity rail passenger services in the 5-state "High Speed Rail Compact" area got a big boost recently.

The Compact—which includes Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania—approved a report in June recommending upgrading of conventional rail corridors as an interim step towards high speed rail projects. The Compact was formed in 1981 to press development of high speed rail and has never before expressed such a clear interest in conventional trains.

The new report acknowledges that the Compact's high
(continued on page 4)



—NARP Graphics/Scott Leonard

Revived "Montrealer" Heavily Used

A single food service car overwhelmed by too many passengers! That was the serious problem which angered many passengers this summer on Amtrak's revived Washington-Vermont-Montreal train, which now includes Amtrak's first New Hampshire service.

Revenue service began July 18 after an impressive July 17 Amherst-to-Montreal inaugural run, with speeches at all stations reflecting strong bipartisan support for the service. (The City of Montreal hosted a reception in the train's honor the next afternoon, followed by a station reception just before the first southbound departure.)

There were even kind words from New Hampshire Gov. Judd Gregg (R), a consistent Amtrak opponent when he served in Congress 1981-88.

August "Montrealer" ridership was 15,000—5% above the August 1986 level, 2% above August 1985. This is especially impressive, considering that service began on less than 6 weeks' notice. Tour operators plan months in advance, so "Montrealer" did not benefit from tour bookings in August.

Next year Amtrak expects to assign a second food-service car in the peak season, instead of continuing to provide both sit-down meals and snack bar service in a car where seated diners feel inundated by long snack-bar lines and all are frustrated at the long waits for food. The problem was critical on southbound summer trips since the car closes during the dinnertime border crossing and everyone descends on the car when it reopens.

Early ridership figures relieved those who worried that the revived "Montrealer" would be haunted by the new, 47-mile-longer route—via New London and Amherst instead of Hartford and Springfield—which adds about 1:45 to the running time, and the train's history of bad track, ever-slower schedules, bad railroad labor relations, and service interruptions.

Making the reroute permanent (see "lawyers" box) probably would lead Amtrak to add a Willimantic, CT, stop, but could dash hopes for reviving the daytime New York-Montreal "Ambassador," which the private railroads ran along with the overnight "Montrealer" until both trains ceased in 1966. Such a train would be more dependent on shorter-distance travel and thus would suffer more from the slower running times and loss of Hartford/Springfield.

Central Vermont Railway is obviously pleased that Amtrak uses CV tracks all the way south to New London. Gerald L. Maas, president of CV's Detroit-based parent Grand Trunk



Corp., said at the station ceremonies, "Amtrak is a very good customer of ours and a welcome companion in our operation. Amtrak and CV have been good friends for a long time. . . . We want to lessen our dependence on the automobile."

Gruesome History

Amtrak's "Montrealer" began service in the fall of 1972. In Feb. 1986, Amtrak launched a major "Montrealer" marketing effort with a special Washington reception and equipment display that included an impressive model Vermont ski slope in the station concourse.

Timing could not have been worse. Due to the strike against Guilford Transportation Industries, which purchased the Boston & Maine Railroad in 1983, "Montrealer" first took major delays on a reroute via Palmer, MA (Mar. 7-Apr. 23, 1986), and then, because the reroute was so expensive, was cancelled until the strike ended May 17.

B&M tracks deteriorated until Amtrak, faced with much slow running including 30 miles at 10 mph, cancelled the

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY (cont. from p. 1)

began stopping at Coolidge, AZ Sep. 23.

With summer over, "All Aboard America" fares return (until May 24). Travel in one region is \$179, 2 regions \$229, 3 regions \$259. Off-peak one-way-plus-\$7 round-trip fares are also back. Certain other medium- and long-distance fares have been cut for the season.

American-European Express, a private luxury train, begins 6-days-a-week Chicago-Washington service coupled to the rear of Amtrak's "Capitol Ltd." Nov. 15. (No Tuesday eastbound or Wednesday westbound departures.) Similar to Orient Express in Europe, this is the first train of its kind in U.S. One Way fare, \$695 (\$1042 double occupancy). Info: 800/677-4233.

Grand Canyon Railway began steam service Sept. 18 Williams-Grand Canyon Village, AZ. Weekend trips

through Dec. 3 and on New Year's Day weekend. Daily service begins next Mar., a 2nd frequency will begin June 1. Info: 800/THE-TRAIN. Nava-Hopi Tours may run buses in 1990 between Flagstaff (Amtrak & Greyhound stas.) & GCR's Williams station. Santa Fe's service on the 64-mile Canyon line ended in '68.

On Sep. 1 the diesel-powered "Texas Ltd." began weekend (Thurs.-Sun.) service between Houston's Amtrak station and Galveston's railroad museum (former Santa Fe station, also served by a gasoline-powered trolley that runs on rails). Info: 713/522-9090.

Sunday service returned to New Jersey Transit/Metro North Hoboken-Port Jervis line July 16. Area around Tuxedo, NY is scenic and schedule is convenient to hikers. Write New York/New Jersey Trail Conference, 232 Madison Ave., Room 908, New York, NY 10016 for information packet on hiking in area.

"THE LAWYERS AREN'T FINISHED"

After B&M's track seriously deteriorated and B&M refused to upgrade it, Amtrak sued B&M, claiming B&M was not fulfilling its contractual obligations to maintain the line. Amtrak sought to force B&M to comply with the contract and to pay damages to Amtrak. As called for under the Amtrak/B&M contract, the National Arbitration Panel heard the case. The NAP agreed with Amtrak that B&M was not in compliance, but has not yet specified a remedy for B&M's failure to properly maintain the line.

Amtrak has not pushed this recently, partly due to negotiations earlier this year aimed at restoring the Massachusetts portion of B&M's Connecticut River line. B&M asked Amtrak to drop the arbitration proceeding as part of an agreement under which the Massachusetts track would have been restored. The 3-way agreement involving B&M, Amtrak, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has not been reached, a victim for now of the "pro-rail" state's fiscal crisis. At some point, Amtrak may renew its efforts to seek a remedy from B&M before the NAP.

In a separate matter, Guilford appealed the Interstate Commerce Commission decision which valued B&M's 48.8-mile Windsor-Brattleboro line at \$2.3 million and allowed Amtrak to acquire the line using eminent domain powers in the Amtrak law. Guilford says it is improper for Amtrak to acquire property and give it to a freight railroad. The ICC had argued that the transaction was legitimate because its purpose was to help Amtrak carry out its responsibilities under the law.

train Apr. 6, 1987. Amtrak inaugurated a daytime dedicated Burlington, VT-Springfield, MA bus that connects with Springfield-Washington trains and with the "Lake Shore Limited." The bus remains, so Vermonters now have 2 daily Amtrak choices for trips south, especially useful for those who can use "Montrealer's" schedule in one direction but not both.



—Photo by Jane Madsen

The State Capital deserves better!! WashARP's Lloyd Flem at the Amtrak stop at East Olympia, WA. WashARP would like to see a new station built 3 miles away in a safer, more convenient location.

Washington State's Rail Passengers Working Hard

The Washington Association of Railroad Passengers has reached a milestone of sorts in its pro-passenger rail work—it has gotten the ear and respect of its state's DOT. Evidence of that is an award received by WashARP Executive Director Lloyd Flem at the Washington State Transportation Conference in Spokane on Sept. 8 for his outstanding service in promoting public transportation. Washington DOT Secretary Duane Berentson praised Flem as a "well-qualified spokesperson for not only passenger rail service, but public transportation as a whole."

The many members of WashARP, some of them DOT officials, can be credited with the progress that has been made. Still, much of that credit goes to Flem. He often puts in 30-40 hours a week during the legislative season lobbying for WashARP in Olympia. WashARP is able to reimburse Flem a small amount of money during those times, as well as provide an office for him to use.

Flem will serve on a new committee established by Amtrak to assemble ideas on rationalizing rail, intercity buses and local transit in the state of Washington. Washington DOT will also be asked for help.

Flem and NARP Region 8 Director Jim Hamre testified at a U.S. Department of Energy policy hearing in Seattle Aug. 28, representing WashARP and NARP and providing the only testimony that day on national energy policy's relation to transportation.

State Rail Passenger Funding: WashARP is still working toward a \$500,000 appropriation for intercity passenger rail improvements. The money has passed the Washington House of Representatives at least twice, but has never come to a vote in the Senate. A special legislative session is possible for the fall to resolve this and other transportation funding issues. The main stumbling block has been disagreement between key senators and the governor over the size of a proposed gas tax hike. If there is no special session, the matter will be left until the next regular legislative session in January.

Rail Development Commission: From mid-1987 to the end of 1988, the Washington State Rail Development Commission, set up by the legislature, held a series of hearings throughout the state. Four WashARP members were on the commission; other WashARP members were active in attending the hearings and in testifying. In fact, WashARP was the sole voice for passenger rail in the hearings, as Amtrak was not involved. (Burlington Northern and Union Pacific testified on freight matters.)

WashARP considered the intercity passenger rail section of the Commission's draft report to be weak. WashARP mounted a campaign to change that and got most of its suggestions incorporated into the final report, including the request for \$500,000 in improvements.

East Olympia Station: WashARP Director Rich DeGarmo has led the fundraising effort to provide a new replacement Amtrak stop for East Olympia. WashARP is selling personalized tiles to be placed in the new station and is soliciting donations of material and labor (write Amtrak Depot Committee, P.O. Box 1964, Olympia, WA 98507 for more details). Stalled negotiations with Burlington Northern over liability insurance are now moving toward resolution. Thurston County has agreed to include BN under a county insurance policy on matters relating to the station. Ground-breaking could still take place this year. ■

Conventional Trains Endorsed *(cont. from p. 1)*

speed rail proposals (which are still active) require large amounts of public funding which are not now available.

For years, NARP and many of its members have urged development of conventional services. We have suggested that the value of 80-90 mph trains has been underestimated and that faster trains need to "evolve" from well-used conventional services as they have in Europe and Japan; we

STIRRINGS IN FLORIDA AND NORTH CAROLINA

Florida DOT is also looking at conventional rail as a step toward high speed. If studies are favorable, the Miami-Tampa "Silver Palm," a "403b" train which ran until the state withdrew funding in 1985, could resume in 1993 (a disappointingly distant date!). Under current state thinking, the "Palm" would last until startup of Miami-Orlando-Tampa high speed rail service. That startup is projected for 1995, but many uncertainties remain. Indeed, it is still possible the high speed line will not be built, in which case "Silver Palm" could become permanent.

Another revived 403b train (also dropped in 1985) could be North Carolina's "Carolinian." The state wants twice-daily Rocky Mount-Raleigh-Greensboro-Charlotte service. When Amtrak said it could only provide equipment for one trip (presumably through to/from New York), the state began negotiating with UTDC, the Canadian firm which built and operates Miami's commuter trains. The state is now checking the legality of using UTDC rather than Amtrak to run the service.

question whether adequate political support can ever be gathered for massive high-speed rail investments in corridors where passenger trains are nonexistent or nearly so.

[Our views were well articulated by Consultant Carl R. Englund Jr., when he addressed the NARP Board in 1983 (*News*, Dec. '83 & Jan. '84). Englund even claimed that New York Central developed a tremendous Cleveland-Cincinnati corridor business in the mid-1950's only to have its economics destroyed by Cincinnati Union Terminal, which he claimed ate up \$4.50 of each ticket.]

The new report, which seems in harmony with our views, was prepared by the Compact's Technical Committee at the request of Compact delegates. Each state has 2 delegates; they are gubernatorial appointees and include the top Illinois and Indiana transportation officials and Ohio DOT's "number 2" person. The technical committee consists of state DOT employees.

Recommended Service

The report explores options for 3 levels of service to be operated by Amtrak (see map):

- High Level Service (the 6 busiest corridors): 80-90 mph, 4-8 daily round trips, 80-100% cost recovery, vigorous marketing, full meal service, coordinated feeder services.

- Intermediate Level Service (6 feeder corridors). 60-80 mph, 1-3 daily round trips, 60-80% cost recovery, light meal service, regional marketing, limited feeder services.

- Long Distance Service. Includes all present Amtrak long distance trains serving the 5-state area. Calls for train speeds of 60-80 mph, daily frequency and limited feeder services.

The report also recommends improved links between the rail network and major airports, improved links with

local transit systems and a California-style feeder bus network.

The proposed high and intermediate service rail route mileages total 1,700 and 1,300, respectively—3,000 in all.

Recommended Funding

The report cites the need for reliable federal funding that would allow Amtrak to provide the maximum 35% of operating support and 50% of capital costs which Section 403b of the Amtrak law permits. (The law allows Amtrak to contribute up to 55% of operating support during a service's first year.) The report estimates states would have to pay operating costs "in the \$500-600,000 per year range," and suggests track and signal improvements for the high and intermediate level lines would total between \$200 and \$300 million.

The report says the "preferred approach" for new rolling stock "would be for Amtrak to provide this equipment out of their national fleet," but "this may not be possible until Amtrak receives additional federal funding for new equipment acquisition. An alternative approach is for states to purchase equipment, either directly, or in a joint program with Amtrak. This is occurring in both Michigan and Illinois where state funds are providing for the acquisition of push-pull equipment for the Chicago-Detroit and Chicago-St. Louis corridors. In California, the state is acquiring locomotives and passenger cars for the Oakland-Bakersfield corridor."

The report says best results would come if states act at the same time "since the strength of the program is that it provides an integrated regional system with each part helping strengthen other parts of the system."

Action

The Compact, at its July meeting, passed a resolution to work toward closing the rail service gap between Cleveland and Pittsburgh, restoring 79 mph service to St. Louis-Chicago and creating rail or bus feeder services into Indianapolis from Cincinnati, Louisville, Bloomington, Muncie and Anderson. It also set up a committee to map strategies to carry out both short and long-term proposals. State officials briefed Federal Railroad Administrator Gilbert Carmichael in August, and Amtrak staff in September. Other meetings are planned with state legislators and congressional delegations.

New Hope for an Old Idea

The Compact's report recalls a similar proposal from United States Railway Association (*News*, Mar. '75 lead story). USRA called for upgraded service for Chicago-Milwaukee (10 round trips), Detroit-Cincinnati (2), Detroit-Buffalo (1), Cleveland-Buffalo (2), Pittsburgh-St. Louis (2), Pittsburgh-Washington (2) and Washington-Norfolk (2).

Though Amtrak eventually established single daily round-trips on the latter 2 segments, USRA's recommendations were essentially ignored. They were only advisory and were overshadowed by USRA's main responsibility—planning Conrail's birth, which in turn kept the states busy learning about rail freight service and the need to save many lines Conrail would drop.

While the fight to get meaningful state funding for intercity rail passenger service remains a big one, the Compact report, considering its authorship, should be a much more significant step on the road to success than was USRA's.

(To get a copy of *Regional Rail Passenger Development Program*, write to Senator Robert Boggs, c/o Ohio High Speed Rail Authority, 16 East Broad St., Suite 1003, Columbus, OH 43215-3412.) ■