

News from the

National Association of Railroad Passengers

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(This has news through June 8. Vol. 27 No. 5 was mailed June 2.)

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NARP Urges "Full Amtrak Funding"

Would NAFTA Mean Heavier Trucks?

"Sidebar negotiations" among the U.S., Canada and Mexico under Article 913 of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) have the potential to liberalize—or create pressure to liberalize—truck size and weight limits. Pro-Longer Combination Vehicle (LCV) policy changes would divert freight from rail to road, jeopardizing the rail network Amtrak uses.

Mexico allows much heavier trucks—total gross weight 170,000 pounds—than either the U.S. (80,000) or Canada (137,000). On the other hand, the U.S. and Canada allow 53-ft. trailers, whereas Mexico's limit is 48 ft. (Mexico does allow "Rocky Mountain Doubles"—one 48-ft. trailer and one 28-ft. trailer.)

The Province of Alberta is pressing for longer combination trailers and establishment of "NAFTA corridors" on which LCV's would be allowed.

Also, the Western Assn. of State Highway & Transp. Officials (public servants!) votes June 26 on a resolution—already approved by two WASHTO committees—asking Congress to lift the ban on expanded LCV operation in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Act of 1991 (ISTEA).

A bipartisan majority (32) of the 61-member House Public Works & Transp. Committee, led by Reps. Robert A. Borski (D-PA) and Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY), on Mar. 24 wrote to Pres. Clinton's trade representative, Mickey Kantor, reaffirming ISTEA's LCV provisions, noting safety problems with "expanded use of LCV's, including triple trailers" and urging him to use sidebar negotiations "to reaffirm and promote the U.S. restrictions on the use of LCV's."

(NARP's Harriet Parcels, speaking for the Campaign for New Transportation Priorities, testified Jan. 8 before the Subcomm. on Truck Size and Weight of the American Assn. of State Highway & Transp. Officials. For a copy, send NARP \$1 and a s.a.s.e.) ■

NARP, CNTP Pro-Rail, Pro-Transit Testimonies

NARP's Ross Capon and Harriet Parcels appeared before two House subcommittees this spring: the Appropriations Subcomm. on Transp. chaired by Bob Carr (D-MI) [Capon, Mar. 29] and the Public Works & Transp. Subcomm. on Surface Transp. chaired by Nick Joe Rahall II (D-WV) [Parcels, accompanied by Capon, on behalf of the Campaign for New Transportation Priorities, Apr. 27].

Capon urged full funding of the Amtrak authorization and said if that is not possible, it would be better to fund both Amtrak and ISTEA (the highway/transit authorization) at the same percentages of full funding, than to "fully fund" ISTEA, in effect at Amtrak's expense.

He also noted North Carolina's unsuccessful attempt to use ISTEA funds to improve Raleigh-Charlotte rail passenger service. Carr himself is no fan of ISTEA, believing its formulae are biased against his state and his district (Lansing, and area to its east).

Capon's written statement included this: "Mr. Chairman, we agree with your emphasis on the need to improve existing facilities...rather than create all-new systems, especially magnetic levitation. We are concerned that the \$1.3 billion for 'magnetic levitation and high-speed rail' in the President's five-year investment program [should] go to the greatest extent possible for immediately useful rail improvements."

Capon skipped over this passage in his oral summary. When Capon was done, Carr underlined his commitment to "incrementalism" by summarizing that passage himself.

Before Rahall's subcommittee, Parcels expressed concern that Clinton's FY '94 budget request fully funds highways at the ISTEA level but not transit, in spite of new, federally-imposed transit costs associated with the Americans with Disabilities and Clean Air Acts.

Parcels said states have failed to take adequate advantage of the flexibility ISTEA provides to spend highway funds

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Around the States

• **Washington**—On May 7 the legislature passed \$40.2 million for passenger rail—\$31 mill. for operating support for Amtrak “403 (b)” service and capital projects to improve train speeds, the rest for stations. The initiation of a rail program in a budget which cut other transportation programs is an impressive victory for Washington ARP.

• **New Jersey**—The New Jersey Transit board approved the Waterfront light rail plan Feb. 10. Construction would begin in 1996 on a 15-mile line linking Vince Lombardi park & ride (on N.J. Turnpike) to Port Imperial, Hoboken rail terminal (connecting with NJT trains and PATH) and Jersey City (connecting with PATH at Exchange Place). Victory for New Jersey ARP.

In April, the NJT board approved including Bayonne in plans for the Waterfront LRT, and extending the Newark City Subway—an old streetcar trunk line using PCC cars and serving Newark Penn Station (Amtrak/NJT Trains)—to Newark International Airport and Elizabeth.

• **New York**—Starting with the fiscal year beginning April 1, the state will spend \$7.5 million a year for four years on rail projects, thanks in part to efforts by the Empire State Passengers Assn. It was to be decided in mid-June how to divide that between freight and passenger projects. ■

NARP'S TIMETABLE HOTLINE

On an experimental basis, 202/408-8331 will update you on Amtrak timetable changes “free” except for any long-distance charges. Also, we can send you Amtrak, MARC and Virginia Railway Express timetables free with a self-addressed stamped envelope; we will send other local U.S. rail transit timetables for one dollar each. Amtrak's National and Northeast Timetables require large envelopes and 75 cents postage for one, \$1.21 for two.

Pease and Kiley Join Amtrak Board

Pres. Clinton made two appointments to the Amtrak Board of Directors May 25:

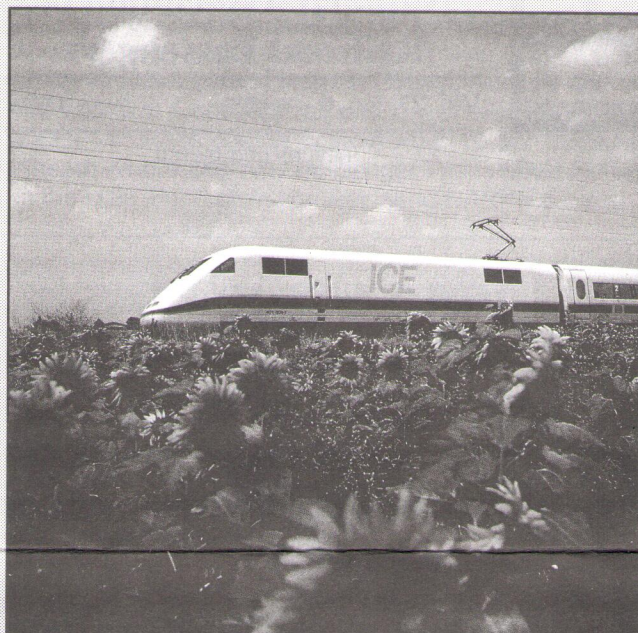
• Donald Pease of Oberlin, Ohio, (just west of Cleveland) was an eight-term congressman before retiring in 1992. He served on the Ways and Means and Budget Committees and co-sponsored the Swift “Ampenny” bill last year. A frequent Amtrak passenger, he knew as much as anyone in Congress about Amtrak operations. NARP urged his appointment in a Mar. 3 letter to Sec. Peña.

• Robert Kiley—President and CEO of Fischbach Corp., a New York electrical and mechanical engineering firm—was chairman of New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority (1983-90), and of the American Public Transit Association's Transit 2000 Task Force (see Oct. '90 News lead story, “Kiley Tackles Auto Head-on”). Earlier, he chaired the Mass. Bay Transp. Authority and was Boston's Deputy Mayor.

Pease and Kiley get the commuter authority slots, replacing two Bush appointees—Eugene Croisant (who resigned May 3) and David Girard-diCarlo.

Two Amtrak board vacancies remain, both requiring Senate confirmation—the labor slot, last held by Charles Luna (who died Oct. 1—see Feb. News); and the business-interest slot, last held by Carl Vogt, who now chairs the National Transportation Safety Board. The labor slot is expected to go to Danny Collins, a retired United Transportation Union official from Ohio. (See also Feb. '93 News lead story.) ■

GERMAN ICE TO VISIT U.S.



—Deutsche Bundesbahn photo

An InterCityExpress (ICE) high-speed train set is expected to arrive in the U.S. from Germany at the end of June, make a national tour in August and early September, enter Northeast Corridor revenue service in the fall and return to Germany in December. (For tour information, send NARP a s.a.s.e. or call our hotline.) The ICE entered revenue service in June 1991, over new rights-of-way Hannover-Wuerzburg and Mannheim-Stuttgart and conventional lines to several other German cities. Through service has since been extended to Zurich and Berlin. On its own right-of-way, the ICE travels 155 mph and is capable of 175. It does not have the tilting mechanisms and radial-steering trucks the X2000 has, but the ICE's manufacturer, Siemens, is confident that fast acceleration and low center-of-gravity (for faster speeds on curves than most non-tilt trains) will make up for that.

More on New-Style Seats for Amtrak Coaches

The cost of new-design seats appears small considering the seat's life (five to 10 years, almost 200 passengers per year in long-distance service) and the ability to charge more for a better seat. The cost we quoted (May News, p. 3) was approximate and referred to *pairs* of seats, not individual seats. Total costs would decline over time with the spreading of tooling expenses over more seat orders.

Our list of problems with Amfleet-II seats (now going into overhauled Superliner and Heritage coaches) was incomplete. The seats also have been criticized as too hard and not giving enough lower-back support. Indeed, some people report back-aches after spending the night on such a seat. Amtrak must decide quickly if the first of the new Superliner coaches are to have new-design seats.

If a new seat is purchased, would it be the best seat? Amtrak awarded \$100,000 “new-seat” development grants to three companies. Compin, a French company, won the technical competition. Now, the other two companies—both American—are lobbying hard against Compin on the basis of “Buy American” even though Compin, which has been working with a Pennsylvania firm, would build its seats in that state with U.S. workers. ■

High-Speed Rail Hearings

Prompted by Pres. Clinton's high-speed rail initiative and public interest fanned by the X2000, House and Senate authorizing and appropriating committees this spring all held high speed rail hearings. All four, to some extent, explored the proper role of incrementalism in developing high speed rail, as well as what part Amtrak should play.

"Incrementalism" generally means improving existing tracks rather than building new ones or, to quote NARP's Mar. 9 letter to Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ), "making the best use of existing resources and increasing rail ridership in the near future...exactly what a 'pro-environment,' 'pro-cost-effectiveness' administration...should be pushing."

Here are a few highlights from the hearings:

- Senate Appropriations, Transportation Subcommittee; March 4. Chairman Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ) noted how crowded the airports and highways in the Northeast would be without Amtrak and asked, "How can we emulate the Northeast Corridor's success elsewhere?" Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski (D-MD) spoke glowingly of maglev, saying "I can't wait to see it run 300 mph between Baltimore and Washington," adding, "We do not see maglev in lieu of other programs."

Kenneth M. Mead, Director of Transportation Issues for the General Accounting Office, said "incremental is the right approach." He said it would take far more federal investment than Clinton has proposed to induce significant private investment in any type of high speed rail.

- House Appropriations, Transportation Subcommittee; March 15. Chairman Bob Carr (D-MI) said: "We must focus our resources on low-tech, less-risky, incremental options rather than on showpieces. This Committee has been consistently opposed to maglev funding. There is no evidence of maglev's readiness or ability to attract investors....We need to develop mid-length corridors, not just satisfy the 'field of dreams' notions of contractors and developers." Commerce Chairman John D. Dingell (D-MI), the first witness, said, "We must build on what we have...We need to encourage *incremental* improvements that will increase trains speeds."

Southwest Airlines Pres. Herbert D. Kelleher unsurprisingly made the incredible statement that America "already had a 500 mph; privately financed; unsubsidized; intercity mass transportation...called American commercial aviation." He said he had no reservations about incremental improvements, but he complained that TGV-style, 150-mph-and-above high speed service requiring separate rights-of-way would "bankrupt public and private treasuries alike" if offered as an alternative to his own Dallas-Houston spine. (He did not discuss the environment or energy efficiency.)

Joseph Vranich, High-Speed Rail/Maglev Assn. Pres., said aviation gets things rail doesn't, like publicly owned infrastructure. Carr: "I take issue with the notion that airlines are subsidized." Vranich said the air trust fund didn't even exist until 1970, but aviation enjoyed public support long before then. Carr: "Well, we can go back to the rail land grants."

[NARP wrote to Carr explaining that the 19th century land grants affected only 7-8% of U.S. rail mileage; *all* railroads repaid the grants with low rates for government freight and passengers (mandated by law through 1946).]

Carr: "It may be helpful to have a rail trust fund using ticket surcharges. I can't support the proposal for an Amtrak gas tax penny. That is financial intermodalism."

- House Energy & Commerce, Subcomm. on Transportation & Hazardous Materials; April 29; chaired by Al Swift

(D-WA). Rep. Carlos J. Moorhead (R-CA) said rail was important for the West, where you have "just expensive air service out there. Trains are environmentally benign; they can do the job." Rep. Frederick S. Upton (R-MI): "We will have broad bi-partisan support." Rep. Lynn Schenk (D-CA): "I was known in unflattering terms as the Mother of the Bullet Train in California. Well, if you wait long enough, you give birth....I am concerned about dilution. How do we get the biggest bang for our buck, and not spread it out over too many corridors?"

Upton asked Amtrak Pres. W. Graham Claytor Jr. about the freight railroads' concern about liability where high speed trains use their rights-of-way. Claytor: "Freight railroads want full indemnification. If we indemnify the freight railroad for an accident they cause, that is a big problem." Claytor said exemption from punitive damages may be the solution.

After Swift asked how "to determine the net social benefits of rail," Association of American Railroads Pres. Edwin Harper said the difficulty of putting social benefits into monetary terms means "the New York subways wouldn't be built today. Companies won't invest if there is no return in ten years, but the social benefits of these projects go on for decades."

This hearing also included testimony from the California, Washington, Massachusetts and Ohio state DOTs.

- Senate Commerce, Science & Transportation, Surface Transportation Subcommittee; May 20. Chairman J. James Exon (D-NE) said he was glad that "we can now lay the foundation for the transportation system of the future. Revitalized passenger service, both conventional and high speed, will play a greater role....Our economic competitors have moved ahead in high speed rail and will reap the benefits."

Sen. Richard Bryan (D-NV) and Grumman Corp. Director of Advanced Concepts Dr. Richard J. Gran made some positive points about maglev. Gran claimed it would cost only \$20 million a mile to build, gratuitously contrasting this with \$100 million for the Washington Metro (which includes tunneling). ■

RAILROADS SEEK TO WEAKEN AMTRAK LAW

The freight railroads are threatening "the cornerstone of Amtrak's existence" (Amtrak's words)—section 402(a) (1) of the Rail Passenger Service Act, under which the Interstate Commerce Commission resolves compensation disputes and must consider service quality as "a major factor" in setting compensation above incremental costs. The very existence of this provision has enabled Amtrak and the railroads to agree without ICC involvement most of the time.

Freight railroads sometimes complain they are limited to "incremental cost" payments from Amtrak. In fact, all of Amtrak's contracts except the one with Conrail provide for incentive payments (for good on-time performance) in addition to incremental costs. Amtrak incentive payments have totaled over \$300 million. If high-speed rail investments create a physical plant better suited to good passenger—and freight!—performance, incentive-earning opportunities could be even brighter.

Railroads don't want 402 (a) (1) to apply to routes getting Clinton high-speed funds; Amtrak says this change would make such routes "prohibitively expensive to operate" and eliminate incentives for good railroad performance.

Campaign's Testimony *continued from page 1*

on transit. No Surface Transp. Program money went in FY 92 to major urbanized areas in Arkansas, Connecticut, Iowa, Nevada and New Hampshire, or to Fresno, Bakersfield, Seattle, Toledo, Fort Wayne, New Orleans, Las Vegas or El Paso.

Regarding Congestion Management/Air Quality (CMAQ) funds, "of 39 states which have one or more non-attainment areas for ozone and/or carbon monoxide, *no* CMAQ funds were obligated in FY '92 by Texas, Florida, Missouri, Alabama, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire and South Carolina. Also, Pennsylvania, Michigan and Louisiana only obligated 2% of such funds.

Parcells urged the committee to monitor this and make sure it "does not become a pattern."

CAMPAIGN URGES ISTEA INCLUDE AMTRAK

"As a coalition that cares deeply about the future of the nation's passenger railroad system, we were disappointed in the failure of ISTEA to include the Senate-passed language making intercity passenger rail generally eligible for STP funding. We continue to believe that future inclusion of such intercity passenger rail eligibility would strengthen ISTEA and provide states with an important additional means of alleviating congestion and air pollution and creating a more energy-efficient transportation network."

*—Harriet Parcells, on behalf of the
Campaign for New Transportation Priorities,
in Apr. 27 testimony before House subcommittee*

At the same hearing, Robert Molofsky, representing the Amalgamated Transit Union, noted one barrier to flexibility: absence of key transit agencies from membership on the metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) that control spending decisions. Citing Philadelphia as an example, he asked: "How [will] a voice for flexibility...at least be heard if the leading transit authority in the area is not on the MPO?"

Parcells also said "discussions we have had with citizen groups around the country" reflect "an overriding sense" of inadequate opportunity for public involvement. One example: "Philadelphia's MPO gave the public just one week to comment on its first Transportation Improvement Program and no opportunity to comment on its [clean air] conformity analysis."

For copies of the complete written statements, send \$1 per statement requested and specify Capon Mar. 29, Parcells Apr. 27. Capon also submitted three statements for the record in connection with high-speed rail hearings: Senate Appropriations (2-page Mar. 9 letter to Sen. Lautenberg); House Energy & Commerce (Apr. 29); Senate Commerce (May 20). Finally, Capon submitted a statement for the record of the Senate Commerce Mar. 25 hearing, "Oversight of the Intercity Bus Industry." All \$1 each. ■

PASSENGER TRUST FUND PROPOSED

The House Ways and Means, in a June 2 news release, said the Subcomm. on Select Revenue Measures will hold hearings covering "miscellaneous issues" of interest to its members. One issue advanced by Rep. Mel Reynolds (D-IL) would create an Intercity Rail Passenger Capital Improvement Trust Fund using "1 cent of the tax on diesel fuel used by railroads" (including Amtrak and commuter rail).

CANADIAN PASSENGER-TRAIN CONFERENCE

Transport 2000 Canada and other organizations are sponsoring a "National Passenger Trains Conference" at the Chateau Laurier Hotel in Ottawa, Aug. 19-20, on the future of Canada's rail passenger service. NARP Exec. Dir. Ross Capon speaks Aug. 19 on: "Looking Ahead: Where and Why Passenger Trains Make Sense in the U.S." For registration flier, send NARP a s.a.s.e.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Amtrak Capitol Corridor trains began serving Great America May 21 and Fremont June 4. Both are between San Jose and Oakland. The new Emeryville station opening has been delayed to October, and Oakland-Jack London Square to mid-1994.

Amtrak tickets now are honored on New Jersey Transit's Atlantic City trains. (Send NARP \$1 and a s.a.s.e. for the NJT schedule.)

Last year, Amtrak reduced agent hours at Petersburg, VA to 10a-6p, so "Silver Meteor" passengers did not even have access to the waiting room. In response to NARP's protest (Dec. '92 Advisory), Amtrak arranged for a "caretaker" to open the waiting room for "Silver Meteor" passengers.

Smoking on Intercity Trains

Since Aug. 4, 1992, smoking has been prohibited on "Coast Starlight" lounges; part of one coach became a non-revenue smoking area; the rest of that coach was sold as revenue-space to all passengers. This was *not* terminated last Oct. 24 (Aug. News), but in May the coach became "all smoking"; only smokers are assigned seats in it.

To clarify our March box, smoking *is* permitted on the Chicago-St. Louis-Kansas City "Ann Rutledge" and in Auto Train sleeping cars.

Effective June 1, VIA Rail Canada banned smoking on its Montreal-Ottawa-Toronto-Windsor/Sarina/Niagara Falls trains. Exceptions: Chicago- and New York-Toronto trains operated jointly with Amtrak.

Bikes on Trains

Passengers may carry folding bikes onto Amtrak trains, if folded before boarding and placed in areas other than the overhead racks (Dec. Advisory). This policy took effect Oct. 25, 1992, but Amtrak's May 2 timetable still reflects the old policy. We pointed this out to Amtrak. We were promised the Oct. timetable would get it right.

New Jersey Transit is expanding its on-board program. Since 1990, bikes are allowed on the Atlantic City line; the Coast and Raritan Valley lines were added more recently; Bergen Main Line will be July 1. Permits required; call 201/491-9400.

Transit

Maryland MTA's Baltimore light rail service will be extended south 2.2 miles from Linthicum to Dorsey Rd. in Glen Burnie June 20.

Atlanta's MARTA heavy rail East Line will be extended 3.4 miles from Avondale to Indian Creek June 26.

The Old Pueblo Historic Trolley, using streetcars along 8th St. and University Ave. in Tucson, opened Apr. 17.