



Kummant Appointed Amtrak CEO

The Amtrak Board of Directors has appointed Alexander Kummant as Amtrak's eighth president and CEO. He assumes duties September 12.

Amtrak Chairman David Laney said, "Alex Kummant has the outstanding credentials and experience to lead a changing Amtrak that is more customer-focused and fiscally responsible. His appointment fulfills the board's commitment to select an extraordinarily strong and capable leader for Amtrak's future, building on the growing national desire for more and improved passenger rail service." That was in Amtrak's news release of August 29, the day the board made the appointment.

Kummant and Railroads

Kummant served Union Pacific 1999-2003 as Vice President and General Manger—Industrial Products, Vice

President—Premium Operations and finally Regional Vice President—Central Region.

"Kummant's first job on the railroad came at age 18 in Lorain, Ohio, working on a track crew for the Lake Terminal Railroad at the U.S. Steel Lorain Works" (Amtrak's release).

His profile in the June 1, 2005, *Crane's Chicago Business* began: "Alex Kummant has a self-confessed 'emotional tie to big stuff in industrial settings.' In a pipe mill he has shouldered a sledgehammer. At Union Pacific Railroad, where he managed regional operations for four years, seeing engines charge across the Great Plains gave him goose bumps. Until this year he was president of Bomag, a German manufacturer of steamrollers and other hefty machines."

His wife, Kathleen Regan Kummant,

is a former senior executive with the Santa Fe and BNSF railroads; her positions at BNSF included Vice President—Business Development.

Education

He received a B.S. in mechanical engineering from Case Western Reserve (1982), a masters in manufacturing engineering from Carnegie Mellon (1986), and an M.B.A. from Stanford Graduate School of Business (1990).

Other Work Experience

Kummant comes to Amtrak from Supplier Invensys Controls, which he joined in May as vice president/general manager of Controls Americas with responsibility for the overall Americas business.

In April, 2005, he joined Komatsu America Corporation as President and Chief Marketing Officer. Komatsu, a Japanese company, is the world's second largest supplier of construction equipment.

In 2004, he became president of Bomag, a German company specializing in the manufacturing of steamrollers and other heavy equipment. Bomag is a division of SPX Corporation, with which he was associated earlier (last bullet, p. 4).

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New Station for Sturtevant, Wisconsin



—both photos, Don Heron

Amtrak, the Village of Sturtevant, and the State of Wisconsin opened a new station in Sturtevant (above) on August 12. The facility is about one mile north of the old facility and is a major upgrade for this ever-growing stop on Amtrak's *Hiawatha* route. Speakers at the dedication included Governor Jim Doyle (D, left). With the recent commencement of work at the downtown Milwaukee station, *Hiawatha* trains soon will call at five modern, convenient stations. Through 10 months of fiscal 2006 (October-July), *Hiawatha* ridership was up nearly 12% above the year-earlier period.

LATE NEWS

S. 1516, the bipartisan rail passenger reauthorization (Aug. 2005 *News*), could be on the Senate floor in September.

President Bush nominated Mary Peters to be DOT Secretary. NARP President George Chilson, in a Sept. 8 statement, noted his work with her when she headed Arizona DOT, and called her "smart, creative, action-oriented, open minded, and a good listener." He praised her "strong belief in multi-modal transportation."

More details on our website.

On-Time Performance Issues Heat Up

"Many host railroads have structured their operations to give Amtrak trains the preference required by...law, while successfully conducting their own operations. Some hosts indicate that when Amtrak is running on time, it is a sign their network is functioning well. Operating Amtrak is not a zero-sum game where other traffic must suffer if Amtrak does well."

—Amtrak Acting President and CEO David J. Hughes, in August 17 letters to Surface Transportation Board Chairman Charles D. Nottingham

After NARP criticized CSX and Union Pacific handling of Amtrak trains in a July 12 letter to then-Surface Transportation Board (STB) Chair W. Douglas Buttrey (July News), he sought those railroads' responses. Both companies protested that they were doing their best to handle Amtrak. Then Buttrey on August 9 wrote to NARP reporting on—and appearing to accept—what CSX and UP told him.

Amtrak's David J. Hughes, in two separate, detailed August 17 letters dealing with CSX and UP, weighed in, making clear that Amtrak did not accept what the railroads had written. He noted, for example, that "none of the capacity investments specifically cited in CSX's letter is on lines used by Amtrak," and that "UP's efforts have been ineffective in reducing slow orders faster than new slow orders have appeared." In July, over

67,000 Amtrak passengers on UP and over 36,000 on CSX rode long-distance trains that were more than four hours late.

What happens next could be influenced positively by President Bush's August 14 appointment of Charles D. Nottingham as STB chairman, at last giving STB its statutory three board members. Nottingham was the Federal Highway Administration's Associate Administrator for Policy and Governmental Af-

Amtrak's New Switch Engines



—W. David Randall

New switcher 579 at Amtrak's Wilmington, DE, Shops July 13. Amtrak ordered ten in 2004 from Motive Power Industries of Boise, ID, for just over \$1 million each. The replaced units were over 50 years old. The new ones are cheaper to run, meet EPA's Tier 1 emissions standards, and have a specially designed low-clearance cab for New York City tunnels.

Amtrak's New Customer Service Managers

Amtrak has 24 newly designated Customer Service Managers, selected from almost 500 internal applicants. They are to help fulfill a board mandate—in the Strategic Reform Initiatives—"aimed at measuring and improving customer service." In general, the goal is to help Amtrak adhere more closely to the idea that "the customer is always right."

Three of the 24 comprise a Field Operations Group: Brian Rosenwald, Senior Director, Customer Services Field Operations; Jim Brezezinski and Dee Mason, Directors of Customer Services Field Operations East and West, respectively.

All 24 have previous Amtrak experience, including customer service and supervisory experience; a few have worked in the hospitality industry outside Amtrak. After two weeks of intense training, the new managers in July went to the field offices where they are based—Chicago,

Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York, Seattle, and Washington.

Amtrak says the managers are to improve "the overall travel experience of the Amtrak customer." They will—among other tasks—work with all Amtrak employees to ensure that Amtrak is offering patrons excellent customer service; identify training needs; and assess the performance of "front-line" customer service employees.

Managers will ride all routes, emphasizing those instituting changes or not performing as well as expected. They should not be confused with Train Chiefs of years past, who—on the long-distance trains—rode the entire length of every trip.

Unlike other Amtrak managers who only deal with employees, the new managers are expected to interact with passengers aboard trains "to get their per-

spective on the quality of our service." Amtrak has set lofty expectations: "We want 90 percent of the passengers we survey to rate our service as 'good', indicate that they would recommend it to others, rate our trains as clean, and feel that they were treated helpfully, courteously and professionally by our employees."

Amtrak is excited about this initiative, and hopes to set the standard for travel industry customer service.

Long-Term Oil Prices: Up, Up, Up

"Even as prices for crude futures fell to a five-month low, Thierry Desmarest, chief executive of Total, the French energy giant, said the industry will not be able to meet the global demand for crude forecast by the International Energy Agency. He doubts the world can raise output by the 40% required over the next 25 years. Desmarest cites the problem of BP's rusting, leaky pipes in Alaska. He says the industry is having to wring every last drop out of ageing oil fields."

—Stephen Beard (of *The Economist*) on Marketplace Morning Report (American Public Media), Sept. 8

Managers will be challenged to reverse Amtrak's long-standing reputation of uneven service—some outstanding crews, and some not. Managers also will face employees upset by recent reductions in dining-car crew sizes, even though the reductions were accompanied by food preparation changes intended to be compatible with smaller crews. ■

NARP President Addresses Transportation Leaders

NARP President George L. Chilson addressed the Ninth Annual Texas Transportation Summit on August 10, 2006. The event, organized and hosted by the City of Irvine, allows “federal, state, regional and local elected officials and industry professionals from across the country...to discuss every mode of transportation and issues affecting highways, transit, high-speed rail, seaports, aviation, security, safety and financing.”

Chilson was to be one of four speakers at a breakout session, but the others were federal officials unable to attend the day after the British air terror plot was foiled, so he had the floor for over an hour, and an audience of about 100.

His primary focus was on the role passenger trains can play in the future. He made three predictions:

- “Oil and congestion will change American life during the next 50 years in ways as significant and unexpected as the Interstate Highway program has done in the last 50 years.
- “We will need to include railroads within the scope of national and state transportation policy; and
- “We will need to update the mechanisms we use to fund transportation.”

Oil: Citing the volatility of prices and

unpredictability of supply, Chilson called oil a dangerous commodity to rely on for virtually all U.S. transportation needs. He said the long-term price trend will be “relentlessly upward” (see box, page 2), even though the market has softened lately.

Need for Rail: Highway congestion is perhaps the biggest problem facing the United States because “it has no solution.” The cost of adding capacity in urban areas is the “highest and return per dollar is lowest” and is also politically sensitive and defeatist: “we can’t build our way out of highway congestion, even if we could afford it.”

Chilson offered statistics and anecdotes about rail’s energy efficiency—and its outdated infrastructure. He said Tower 55 in nearby Fort Worth was symbolic of the problem: “a major north-south rail line that crosses a major east-west rail line at grade...It’s as absurd as having the intersection of I-20 and I-35 cross at grade with signal lights.” (That grade-separated intersection is directly above Tower 55.)

Funding: Chilson noted projections that the Highway Trust Fund will go into deficit as soon as 2009, even as the U.S. is “still grossly under-investing in all our transportation infrastructure.” Chilson proposed changing the gas tax to a “percentage of fuel price, not a fixed rate per gallon...this method would maintain an adequate revenue stream even as higher fuel prices lead to lower consumption.” He further urged that these funds be made available for all forms of transportation, including provision for an 80/20 federal/state match for intercity passenger rail investment. ■

Passenger Rail Gets PAC

Passenger Rail Today is a new Political Action Committee (PAC) that has been formed to promote passenger rail and pro-rail legislators. The group is led by longtime Washington passenger rail lobbyist Tim Gillespie.

According to PRT’s website, “...a strong rail passenger system will allow us to deal effectively with many of the other key problems facing our country today: traffic congestion, skyrocketing energy costs, air quality and disaster readiness.”

Ed. Note—The above is not an endorsement of Passenger Rail Today. As a Section 501(c)(3) organization, NARP cannot endorse or oppose political candidates, contribute to their campaigns or to PACs, or endorse PACs.

Virginia Trains To Stay

The *Richmond Times Dispatch* (August 24) reported rumors that Amtrak might cut one of its two daily Newport News, VA round-trips—the daytime Washington-Newport News part of the overnight Boston-Newport News run—in October.

This is half the service at Richmond’s Main Street Station, beautifully restored by the city and opened to service in December 2003. The Commonwealth of Virginia has invested heavily in the CSX route, including a new bridge at Quantico Creek (August News), crossovers, and other capacity investments. A project soon to begin will eliminate a bad bottleneck in downtown Richmond.

Service cuts also make no sense given the approaching 400th anniversary of Jamestown Settlement and the throngs of visitors expected in the Williamsburg area.

Virginians For High Speed Rail spearheaded the save-the-train effort and drummed up media coverage along the route. This led to an August 31 meeting between Amtrak and Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation.

Publicly, Amtrak never went beyond saying it was considering “all options,” but after the Richmond meeting Amtrak agreed to keep the trains running.

This does raise the question of what other cuts Amtrak may be considering.

FRA Chief Cites DOT’s Commendable Rail Freight Goals

Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph H. Boardman, on behalf of Acting DOT Secretary Maria Cino, responded in a three-page August 25 letter to NARP’s complaints that Secretary Mineta’s May 16 *Congestion* report was silent on rail (July News). Here are some excerpts:

“...The Department is acutely aware of the critical role rail...must play...We all agree that rail passenger services, both inter-city and commuter, have an important and growing role in mitigating this critical problem [but] it is the privately owned rail freight industry that has the greatest potential for alleviating highway congestion.

“The Department has taken a number of steps apart from the congestion initiative, to encourage expansion of rail capacity...The Federal Government does not provide grant funds to private railroads for infrastructure improvements [but] the Department is giving [rail] a very high level of attention. The challenge remains to expand capacity at a fast enough rate that railroads can increase market share and reduce the growth of trucks on the highway. I assure you we intend to work toward that goal.”

That’s ambitious, given projections that rail traffic must double by 2020 just to hold onto its existing market share. ■



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TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Transit openings—November 10: Sacramento RTD light rail spur to Amtrak station (0.7 miles); November 17: Denver "T-Rex" Southeast Corridor Light Rail, I-25 Broadway to Nine Mile Road and Lincoln Road (two branches, 19.1 miles total); and late November (date TBA): Little Rock River Rail street-car branch, Commerce & 2nd Street to Heifer International Headquarters and Clinton Library (0.5 miles).

Harpers Ferry update—Service suspension (August News) extended through Sept. 19; Amtrak passengers may board at Martinsburg, WV or Rockville, MD.

Hammond, LA, ticket office now open daily—Effective Sept. 8, hours are 10:00am-5:15pm and checked baggage service again is offered.

Empire Builder trackwork—Canadian Pacific trackwork project near Portage, WI, Mondays-Thursdays, September 11-October 26 will cause the eastbound *Empire Builder* to hold at La Crosse for one hour, or until 11:37am. All Chicago connections guaranteed.

Starlight back to regular times—Trackwork (August News) was completed ahead of schedule, *Coast Starlight* reverts to printed timetable times.

Kummant

(from page 1)

During 1982-99, his employers included:

- Standard Oil Company (Senior Engineer, 1982-85),
- Carnegie Group, Inc. (Project Leader, 1986-88),
- The Timken Company (Senior Analyst, Steel Business Unit, 1990-92),
- SWECO (Division of Emerson Electric, 1992-98; was President 1996-98),
- SPX Lightnin and SPX Filtran (Divisions of SPX Corporation; President, 1998-99).

Reactions to the Appointment

Some Amtrak supporters expressed concern about Kummant's employment with Union Pacific, noting that railroad's terrible performance for Amtrak, but NARP's Ross Capon told BNA (publisher Bureau of National Affairs) he did not read anything negative into Kummant's relatively short stint at Union Pacific.

Noting Kummant's many employers, Capon told BNA, "Amtrak needs stability and someone to be around for a while" (*Transportation Watch*, "A BNA Monitoring Service," Aug. 31). BNA quoted Frank Wilner, a spokesman for United Transportation Union, in a similar vein. It seems unlikely, however, that Kummant would have been picked absent assurance that he plans several years at Amtrak.

Kummant reached out to NARP the week of his appointment, in courtesy phone conversations with President George Chilson and Executive Director Ross Capon. ■

Amtrak Must Expand!

NARP President George Chilson, in a June 12 message to Amtrak Chairman David Laney, wrote, "(NARP is) unanimous in our concern that rearranging existing routes and services—rather than adding new frequencies and routes—does not address the American people's growing need for trains to avoid 'gas pains.'

"Worse, route rearrangements create large risks but few benefits in the short term...The result would be intense pain and little gain for Amtrak and its advocates."

Chilson cautioned that it would be "difficult to reverse a decision eliminating a route or route segment if it proved to be a mistake."

He concluded, "To gain the funding the Amtrak board requested from Congress, we need unity, not division...Good service on the current network will deliver a large and rapid payoff in terms of ridership, revenue, efficiency and financial performance."

Chilson in part was responding to arguments that the Amtrak has too many route miles or too many "wrong" ones.

Ongoing internal studies about possible route changes will probably be high on the agenda of Amtrak's new CEO.