

FIGHT BREWING OVER TRACK OWNERSHIP

Amtrak's authorizing legislation for the fiscal year starting July 1 (plus authorization for supplemental funding needed to complete the old fiscal year) was cleared by Congress and signed by the President. In the House, the vote was 280 to 63 with 89 not voting; Senate approval was 75 to 22 with two not voting. The supplemental funding was delayed so long that Amtrak had to delay payments to railroads for several weeks.

Recession's effect on travel again was reflected in ridership results for Amtrak in April, when total number of passengers carried was 1,279,580, down 20 per cent from the total of 1,599,211 for the same month in 1974. Declines were recorded on every long-haul train and all the short-hauls except two. Washington-Cumberland gained six per cent; Springfield-New Haven, 10 per cent. January-April declines in ridership were about the same, an 18 percent loss from the same period of 1974.

Southern Gets ICC's OK To Kill Three Trains

The Interstate Commerce Commission has approved three applications for discontinuances of Southern Railway Co. passenger trains. (Southern is the only major non-Amtrak intercity rail passenger operation.)

These were the first such intercity cases since passage in 1970 of the Amtrak Act, with the ICC resuming a trend of giving the railroads what they ask regardless of consequences — a trend which led to formation of the National Association of Railroad Passengers in 1967.

NARP fought against portions of the Southern service reduction, as did some of its individual members, other citizens, and colleges in affected cities. Amtrak, whose connecting services are also affected, made no effort to oppose reduced service or suggest improved schedules.

Trains 7 and 8, providing daily service between Washington, D.C., and Lynchburg, Va., were discontinued effective May 22, and the Washington-Atlanta day service provided by the "Piedmont" was discontinued south of Charlotte starting June 1.

Also on June 1, the "Southern Crescent", pride of the Southern passenger service, was reduced to thrice-weekly between Atlanta and Birmingham. (It will continue to run daily Washington-Atlanta, and tri-weekly Birmingham-New Orleans.)

At press time, the North Carolina Utilities Commission had not acted on Southern's request to discontinue its only other passenger train, a tri-weekly service between Salisbury and Asheville. Meanwhile, the rescheduled "Piedmont" arrives Salisbury 20 minutes after the Asheville train's scheduled departure.

Birmingham newspapers and those of some of the smaller cities affected covered the ICC hearings adequately. The *Atlanta Constitution* and the *Journal* did not cover the hearings, letting Southern — a favored corporation in the area — make its move without alerting the public adequately and without any editorial discussion of the merits.

Newspapers in Washington, D.C. and in other major cities along the route of the "Crescent" failed to cover the hearings and to report the ICC decisions. With no mention at all of passenger service, the *Washington Post* had two long articles about Southern's president and its freight operations.

The Commission illogically considered Trains 7 and 8 in separate proceedings, and discouraged public participation by holding no hearings north of Charlotte for the other trains. Thus
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The nation's profitable railroads and the Ford Administration are strongly opposed to public ownership of the railroad tracks in the Northeast — a concept supported by NARP and growing numbers of state officials and congressmen.

NARP believes public ownership "offers the best assurance that the inevitable public investment in track upgrading will be protected against a future recurrence of deferred maintenance, provides the best mechanism for assuring that passenger agencies will get fair treatment, and is the simplest solution to the problem of putting massive public funding into private property".

That defense of public ownership was contained in a statement by NARP President Orren Beaty filed with the House and Senate transportation subcommittees.

Railroad opposition in part represents a fear that the public ownership solution might spread beyond the region, and a normal reluctance of managers in "total control" of their property to lose some of that control.

While NARP recognizes that "ConFac" — Consolidated Facilities Corporation, the name for the public track agency suggested by the U.S. Railway Association — "will pose new problems more complex than are faced by other modes," it believes that "such problems can be solved and that ConFac will have a beneficial impact overall." (All other modes of transportation in the U.S. use public fixed facilities.)

Railroad managers also fear that public ownership would mean the chaos of unlimited access by different carriers to the tracks, whereas NARP believes that the issue of who runs where should remain separate from the ownership issue.

The Administration seems bent upon minimizing government involvement in the short run, despite the immediate opportunity to realize the advantages noted above, and despite the risk that, if Conrail, the new operating company, is given ownership of the tracks, the government may have to make subsequent payments to the Conrail stockholders (today's Penn Central bondholders) should the new company not do as well as hoped.

Public ownership is by no means dead. Rep. Brock Adams (D-Wash.), a key subcommittee member, said: "There'd be enormous resistance to putting several hundred million dollars into a system for the benefit of a few private individuals." The New England governors supported it in a June 7 meeting with the President. The subject is ripe for letters to Congressmen.

The NARP statement said with respect to passenger service: "Our observations of several commuter operations, as well as the early years of Amtrak, confirm our belief that it makes more sense for both passenger and freight carriers to deal with a neutral agency than for passenger agencies to be at the mercy of freight carriers... The world's most tightly written passenger operating contract will not cancel the undesirable incentives inherent in the rail equivalent of having Flying Tiger (an air freight carrier) sitting in the control tower with power over both its freight and passenger flights."

Paul H. Reistrup, Amtrak president, Chicago speech on May 23: "Americans have become accustomed to very high standards for highway construction as well as for air travel, and nothing less than a comparable standard for passenger rail service can be considered acceptable."



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a Washingtonian who made regular trips to Birmingham would have had to travel at least 750 miles to be heard.

Commissioners Kenneth H. Tuggle, Willard Deason, and Charles L. Clapp, in their conclusions, ignored NARP's suggestion that a shortened "Piedmont" carry a New York coach or at least connect with conventional Amtrak trains. So, under SR's rescheduling, the "Piedmont" just misses connections with the first southbound and last northbound New York conventional trains. It connects only with expensive Metroliners, but with nothing on Saturdays northbound. NARP fears this will hurt ridership badly, since a large portion of the people who normally make all-day rail trips have relatively low incomes, and a NY-Washington round-trip costs \$15 (\$16 starting July 1) extra by Metroliner.

The ICC report does not even mention the complicated restrictions on certain station stops, which led an attorney at the Charlotte hearing to observe that "it almost takes a slide rule to decide where you can get off and on this train".

For example, the "Piedmont" stopped in Clemson, S.C., only to handle passengers traveling north of Lynchburg, and at High Point, N.C., only for passengers traveling to or from Atlanta or Charlottesville or beyond. Since, then and now, the faster "Crescent" stops for anybody at both High Point and Clemson, it appears that the restrictions were placed on the "Piedmont" to help kill it.

The national advertising industry should be interested in one of the ICC's rationalizations: ". . . it has not been shown that any benefits would be realized from expenditures of the sums necessary to advertise the trains."

NARP believes that the public interest would be served best if Southern joined Amtrak. Shortcomings in Amtrak's management are being rectified, and Southern is about one step away from operating only what Amtrak had planned in early 1971. Southern has neither promoted its service vigorously nor ordered new passenger equipment; in the near future, as Amtrak puts more cars into service, the respect accorded the "aging elegance" of the "Crescent" will disappear, and the economics of operating the older equipment will continue to worsen. Looking ahead, there has to be some doubt that through cars, New York to Los Angeles, will continue after Amtrak converts to electric heat.

The taxpayers of the Southeast are supporting Amtrak as much as are those in any other part of the country, and are entitled to a fair share of the benefits of Amtrak's capital investment and marketing programs. Amtrak offers the best hope for long-term continuation of the "Southern Crescent", consolidation of the Birmingham stations, and restoration of another needed route, part of which should use Southern tracks: Florida-Savannah through Atlanta and Chattanooga to Cincinnati-Chicago.

But the Commissioners showed little sensitivity to the concerns which led Congress to establish Amtrak. They stated: "Advocation by certain parties that Southern should merge its passenger operations with AMTRAK has little or no merit when viewing AMTRAK's burdensome financial record in the past."

Southern's applications were supported by four chapters of the National Railway Historical Society, whose national president, E. L. Pardee, testified for Southern. Many of the railroad's freight customers also supported the service reductions, and those Chambers of Commerce which spoke up did so for Southern.

Politics has certainly distorted Amtrak's priorities in some instances, although NARP believes that forceful Amtrak management can minimize such distortions. But politics is also at work on Southern — passenger service decisions are made by the nation's best-managed freight carrier which then uses its control and well-deserved prestige and influence to back up its decisions. The ICC's performance suggests that it will continue to facilitate service reductions, both in its procedures and its determination of what evidence is important. The result is less service than is justified, and, possibly, in the foreseeable future, no service at all.

COMMUTER RAIL WORKS!

By Ross Capon

The announcement was made in 1965. Said a top official: "What we are looking for is a better use of our transportation dollar through a balanced use of all modes of transportation. . . ." He told of plans to provide commuter rail service on 42 route miles of track in two directions from a major city center.

Two years and \$24 million later, service began — with all new cars. Three months after that, in August (a low-ridership month for commuter operations), passenger volumes reached 15,000 trips per day, the figure which originally had been suggested as the measure of success if achieved after two years!

A few trains served a more distant community for which all-day service was not justified. And the opportunity to start service on additional lines with short lead-times and relatively small investments is being used: a new 29-mile branch has been added, initially with rush-hour-only service, and a fourth branch, 21 miles long, is planned for 1976.

For more details, we recommend an excellent booklet, "The GO Transit Story", available from the Toronto Area Transit Operating Authority, 3625 Dufferin St., Downsview, Ont. M3K 1Z2.

For similar success stories in this country, we recommend that policymakers in many U.S. cities give closer attention both to the Toronto experience and to studies (some long since completed) which suggest commuter rail opportunities here.

Why were GO trains operating so soon after the policy decision was made? Primarily because the system made greatest

Comparatively good results can be achieved at relatively little expense if one is prepared to forego the perfection of an entirely crossing-free route and be satisfied with achieving 80 to 90 per cent instead of 100 per cent (or even 150 per cent in some cases!) of a given level of service quality. Costly perfection is pointless if it means that a reasonable transport system can only be achieved in time for the next generation.

—Railway Gazette International, May, 1975

possible use of existing facilities. It shares tracks with Canadian National freight and intercity passenger trains, except at certain stations and servicing facilities.

This sets it apart from the suburban portions of rail transit systems on the drawingboards and under construction in some U.S. cities. In these urban areas, many more years will pass and many more dollars will be spent before suburban rail services will operate because they must await the construction of central-city subway tunnels as well as exclusive-use tracks in some cases paralleling existing railroad tracks.

Also, future operating deficits may rise needlessly high as too frequent service is provided to the ends of the lines. And communities located beyond the ends will not be able to have even a skeletal service pattern — they will have no through rail service from the central city, except as a by-product of intercity operations, or unless the transit-only tracks are extended, probably at unreasonable cost in terms of both dollars and land.

Obviously, there are situations where commuter rail would not be best. The Lindenwold extension of the Philadelphia-Camden subway was a logical and successful project where commuter rail would have been impractical, probably requiring a new Delaware River bridge and Philadelphia terminal.

In other situations, commuter rail may be a short term solution to be converted to "light rail" (trolley car) or full rapid transit as demand develops.

At the same time, a word of caution is in order regarding some existing plans to convert successful commuter rail operations into rapid transit lines, where the disadvantages — high costs, end of direct service (or the potential for same) to more distant points, disruption of construction — may not justify the benefits.

Bus People Continue 'Low Road'

The nation's bus companies are continuing their co-ordinated attack on Amtrak. The feared phantom flag of "nationalization" of the nation's transportation system was raised by Charles A. Webb, president of the National Association of Motor Bus Owners (NAMBO) on a couple of occasions, probably more.

In Hartford, Conn., he spoke on "Amtrak: Harbinger of Nationalization," a theme he repeated in an interview with the *Washington Star*. A subsidized Amtrak, he claims, is the biggest problem facing the intercity bus industry, forgetting that the government builds and maintains the roads the buses use, while railroads build and maintain their own and pay taxes on them.

In Minnesota, a Greyhound vice president, James Nenow, wrote to the "letters to the editor" department of the St. Paul Pioneer Press, objecting to increased Amtrak service in that state because of the "waste of energy."

NARP member Ralph E. Senn of River Falls, Wis., put it in proper context with his reply in the same column: Mr. Nenow knows, Mr. Senn wrote, "that the total amount of fuel used by Amtrak trains and intercity buses in Minnesota is infinitesimal as compared to gasoline used by private automobiles. . ."

Mr. Webb and others forget that the buses and trains should not really be competitors; both should be seeking passengers from the hordes who still use their cars.

Durand, Mich., high school seniors held their spring prom in Port Huron this year, riding Amtrak's 403b train, the Blue Water both ways. Arrangements were started months in advance; at a late date Amtrak tried to back out. Congressional pressure and the help of the Michigan state rail operations office were enlisted and the party came off. Score one victory for the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers.

BUY PASSENGER TRAIN ANNUAL NOW, GENERATE A CONTRIBUTION TO NARP!

The publishers of *Passenger Train Journal* are presenting their first photo *Annual* — a slick production, in color and black and white, featuring intercity, commuters, Canada, Amtrak, independents and a touch of nostalgia — it's all there. As part of this special offer, NARP will gain a contribution of \$2.50 from the sale of each *Annual*. Buy a passenger train book that you or a friend will thoroughly enjoy and generate funds for NARP's fight for better rail passenger service at the same time. What could be better?

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HIGH SPEED N.Y.-BOSTON-D.C. SERVICE HELD-UP BY CONDITIONS OF TRACK

High-speed Boston-New York-Washington passenger service was mandated in a law signed by President Nixon on January 2, 1974. Eighteen months later, track conditions continue to worsen south of New York, and Metroliner rides get bumpier.

A small but encouraging step is being taken north of New York, where Amtrak has begun a \$15 million track program. There is still hope that a similar interim program for the NY-Washington segment can be accomplished south of New York this year, but it awaits the conclusion of an agreement between Penn Central and the Federal Railroad Administration.

Meanwhile, the multi-billion dollar program to achieve major reductions in running times is still being studied by DOT.

MORE NARP DIRECTORS

A partial list of the new Board of Directors of the National Association of Railroad Passengers was published in the NARP News last December.

Additional strength was added to an already strong and representative board by the acceptance of membership of those whose appointments completed organization. This was accomplished in time for the first meeting on April 26.

Those members not previously listed in NARP News are:

Region I — Dr. Thomas C. Mendenhall of Northampton, Mass., president of Smith College, and Eugene Skoropowski of Melrose, Mass., partner in the Boston Architectural Team.

Region II — Barbara Hollerith of Old Greenwich, Conn., partner in Sloan-Roberts.

Region III — Henry F. Harris of Philadelphia.

Region IV — Lorena F. Lemons of Silver Spring, Md., management consultant, Booz, Allen & Hamilton; Peter B. Bell, Washington, D.C., chairman, RAIL Foundation, and E. Neel Edwards, Alexandria, Va.

Region V — Lee E. McIlvaine of Jacksonville, Fla., lawyer, investor.

Region VI — Arthur A. Schupp, Saginaw, Mich., retired, and Richard M. Scaife, Pittsburgh.

Region VII — William H. Bryan, Alton, Ill., executive, Alton Box Board Co.

Region IX — James R. Gough, Houston, Tex., attorney.

Region X — Dr. Jerome G. Alpiner, Littleton, Colorado, University of Colorado, Chairman, Speech Pathology and Audiology.

Region XI — Mrs. Helen R. Nelson of Saratoga, Calif., and Arthur L. Lloyd of Portola Valley, Calif.

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Be sure to send your orders directly to NARP, so that NARP can receive credit.

New Amtrak Chief Asks NARP Help On Track Problem

Amtrak President Paul H. Reistrup, addressing the first meeting of the new board of directors of NARP, called the condition of tracks and roadbeds the No. 1 problem and asked the Association to help Amtrak solve it.

It was the first appearance of an Amtrak president before an audience of members of the National Association of Railroad Passengers.

Tracks need improving now, he said, and work should be started without waiting for new legislation or for ConRail to be established to manage the affairs of the restructured bankrupts of the Northeast.

If no track work is done this summer in the worst areas, steps being considered include discontinuing the National Limited, which has not run on time at all in recent months.

Asked what NARP can do to help rail passenger service, in addition to pushing for steps to get improved trackage, the Amtrak president said: "My suggestion is to continue doing what you are doing."

During his talk and a question-answer session, he told of the new equipment which is on order and said newly delivered and fitted-out Metroliner type coaches will be put into service first on the New York-Boston run, probably starting in July.

He said parlor sections will be included in the French-designed Turboliners — both those built in France and the ones on order from the U.S. manufacturer, Rohr. The Turbos are in service, Chicago-St. Louis and Chicago-Detroit, with a new weekend test run, Chicago-Milwaukee.

Among the "metrosHELLs", as the locomotive-hauled, Metroliner-styled cars are called, will be 15 parlor cars, and some sleeping cars. Also, the recently ordered bi-levels for western routes will include some snack lounge cars.

(Other "metrosHELL" interiors which already had been agreed on include snack lounges; diners; club cars; and coaches with these seating capacities: 52 without and 40 with snack facilities for long-haul, and 84 without and 60 with snack facilities for short-haul. And already agreed upon for new-bilevels are 86-seat coaches whose capacity can be increased for short-haul, diner-lounges, and 52-person sleepers.)

The NARP board in morning and afternoon sessions discussed membership growth proposals, fund-raising needs, and other organizational matters. It authorized the Executive Committee to select a Finance Committee which will consider questions involving different categories of membership, annual dues, and ways to get NARP on a sound financial footing.

Anthony Haswell, NARP founder and former executive director, is now managing director of passenger services for the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad. He will, said the *Wall Street Journal* story, "get a chance to practice what he has been preaching".

FARES AND SERVICE

INTERCITY: Amtrak hopes to begin Chicago-Dallas service on or soon after July 1. Dallas cars will be switched at Fort Worth to and from the existing Chicago-Houston "Lone Star". Amtrak was initially unable to reach an agreement with the Texas and Pacific Railway Company and filed a petition asking the ICC to direct the railroad to operate the service, but the petition was withdrawn after an agreement was reached. Earlier, Amtrak had taken the T&P to court to win the right to run the "Inter-American" over T&P tracks between Texarkana and Fort Worth.

Some Amtrak fares will rise on July 1: First class rail fares (but not accommodation charges) on western routes will go up 10%, and Boston-New York-Washington corridor fares will rise \$2 for Metroclub; \$1 for Metrocoach, parlor, and sleeping cars; and 50¢ for conventional coach.

A special 21-day "Colonial Corridor circle ticket" good on conventional trains September 8, 1975 through December 31, 1976 (except for peak holiday periods) will allow a complete round-trip between Boston and Washington starting from any Amtrak stop on the route for \$40 (\$20 for children under 12). That compares with a regular fare of \$58 (after July 1) for people starting their "circle" from Boston or Washington, and even higher fares for those starting from intermediate points. "This offer not good on Metroliners or TurboTrains."

Albion, Michigan, had its passenger service restored on May 23, when one Chicago-Detroit Turboliner round-trip began stopping there.

COMMUTER: Amtrak 46-trip tickets — good in non-reserved coaches — will go into effect July 1 on the New York-Philadelphia and Philadelphia-Harrisburg lines, reflecting increases of 25% and 10%, respectively (except locally between Philadelphia and Downingtown). Amtrak will discontinue honoring PC commutation tickets for through passage on Amtrak trains via Trenton without transfer of trains there.

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Orren Beaty, President
Ross Capon, Assistant Director
Robert J. Casey, News Director
Linda Sturgill, Executive Secretary

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