



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

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RETURN REQUESTED

BUSINESS ♥'s AMTRAK!



—Photo by Frank Gardner/Woodbine Corp.



—Photo by M.D. Monaghan

DALLAS UNION STATION during last stages of restoration. At right, the first "Inter-American" with Superliners, southbound last Apr. 27, pauses in Dallas with the Hyatt Regency behind it. The city has secured funding for an attractive platform canopy that will blend in with adjacent structures. Construction is slated to begin soon.

With the possible exception of Newark, NJ, where frequent train service made station-based development the city's obvious hope, no major U.S. city has done more than Dallas to make its Amtrak station a center of activity. As we noted in the Sept. '78 News, the station "was upgraded as a result of an \$8.3 million city bond issue; also by \$2 million of private capital invested in the Paradise Restaurant (now the Hyatt-operated Stationmaster Restaurant) which opened in the station Oct. 5. The station has become a part of the \$85 million ReUnion complex to which it is connected by a tunnel under the tracks. The complex includes a 1,000-room Hyatt Regency hotel and a 562' observation tower/restaurant. This \$85 million investment will expand over 15 years to \$210 million as offices and apartments are added." Developer of the ReUnion complex is Woodbine Development Corporation, subsidiary of Hunt Oil Company working with the City of Dallas.

The *Christian Science Monitor* began its July 13, 1979, story headlined "Union Depot: refurbished cog in hub of Dallas" with these words: "Like a dowager receiving homage from younger generations, the bright, white facade of downtown Dallas's restored and revamped Union Depot stands regally before the silver-glass-walled, 1,000-room new Hyatt Regency Hotel and the 50-story domed-topped tower restaurant and observation point of the developing ReUnion complex. More and more, people are thronging to this west-end enclave of the newly awakening 'after 5' downtown Dallas area. Passengers walking from Amtrak or the Hyatt Hotel through the underground corridors dotted with potted plants emerge at the entrance to the depot's ground floor, where they are greeted by a benignly smiling, 10-foot-high bronze statue of a Texas Ranger. The corridor is as plush as today's airports. . . ." On the ground floor of the station are "Amtrak's ticket counter, Avis Rent-a-Car, and the brochure-laden Visitors Information Center, manned by Dallas Chamber of Commerce information specialists and volunteers for the Committee for Foreign Visitors of the Dallas Council on World Affairs." Other businesses in the building are a television station and an FM radio station, a florist, and a newsstand. The Grand Hall on the second floor is regularly used for tea dancing and evening dances with live bands. Buses such as the one pictured in front of the station link it with Dallas-Fort Worth Airport.

The *Monitor* concluded: "The lively sounds of the Delta Queen's Riverboat Rambler's Band entertaining Union Depot's lunch crowd during its tour has normally dignified young executives and young people toe-tapping and smiling across the tables in a welcome resurgence of an earlier American neighborliness. A pleasant woman en route from Cleveland expresses her joy at 'finding such a nice place to eat and rest' during her travels. The Dallas Repertory Dance Company also will entertain, and soon the huge city-owned 18,500-seat Sports Arena (ed. note: it opened in 1980) . . . will bring even more life to the west end of downtown Dallas.

"The restored Union Depot is queen of it all."

● The Central Oregon Recreation Association, a group of ski operators, financed the construction of a passenger platform and

shelter in Chemult, OR, where the LA-Seattle "Coast Starlight" began stopping daily last Oct. 26. CORA's largest member, Mt.

Bachelor, Inc., funds a shuttle bus which transports Amtrak passengers to and from Bend, where most of the ski lodges are located.

The Jan. 31 (Portland) *Oregonian* reported: "Mount Bachelor is the envy of ski season pass holders everywhere. Even in a winter plagued by a snow drought, Bachelor regulars have been able to ski when they wanted. . . . Bachelor continually strives to improve the programs and skiing it offers. A big change came in November with the addition of an Amtrak stop at Chemult, 66 miles south of Bend. This allows Bay Area skiers to board a night train in San Francisco and be skiing Bachelor the next morning. 'We've got about 3,000 bookings through the Chemult stop,' said Cindy Low, Bachelor's publicity director."

- General Electric (Specialty Plastics Division) supplied free MARGARD sheet glazing material for the new, downtown Pittsfield, MA, station, served by the "Lake Shore Ltd."

- The Berkshire Hilton Inn of Pittsfield, MA, in its "Ski Your Socks Off" flier notes, under "How to Get Here": "By Rail: Lakeshore Limited serves Boston, Pittsfield and Chicago."

NEEDED: HIGHER AIR SUBSIDIES?

A June 9 report by the House Government Operations Subcommittee said the number of failures involving computers used by air controllers to monitor aircraft traffic was much higher than had been previously reported by the Federal Aviation Administration and that these so called "outages" present a serious threat to passenger safety. (Congress Daily, June 10, p. 3)

- The Albuquerque Convention & Visitors Bureau includes the following information at the top of its nationally distributed "Destination Albuquerque" ads: "ACCESSIBILITY AND CONVENIENCE . . . served by 7 major airlines, Amtrak, major bus lines and national interstate highways."

- Colonial Williamsburg (VA) includes the following travel information in its fliers: "The city of Williamsburg is located on Interstate 64, about halfway between Richmond and Norfolk. It is served daily by Amtrak from Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Richmond, and other eastern points via the 'Colonial.' Airports at Newport News, Richmond, and Norfolk provide excellent air service. . . ." (Frequent Greyhound service not mentioned.)

- A large *LA Times* ad by the Las Vegas Authority and Visitors Authority was headlined: "Desert Wind Breezes to Las Vegas," and featured a big stylized drawing of the train in Las Vegas.

- The Union Plaza Hotel/Casino, which serves as Amtrak's Las Vegas station, has run ads in Los Angeles headlined: "AMTRAK DELIVERS YOU TO OUR DOORSTEP."

- Lady Luck Casino's recent ads were headlined "RELAX AND ENJOY IT. Lady Luck Casino and Amtrak get you there in a relaxed mood."

- In its 1981 reservation form, Wildwater Expeditions Unlimited, Inc., of Thurmond, WV, begins its transportation information with a big Amtrak logo and these words: "AMTRAK service is available to and from historic Thurmond and it is just a five minute walk from the train station to our base camp. . . ." When Amtrak was considering ending "Cardinal" service at Thurmond, Wildwater Expeditions was instrumental in securing retention of the stop on a summer-only basis.

- Yosemite Park and Curry Co. ("an MCA Company") shows the Merced-Yosemite bus schedules in its "Ski Yosemite—Badger Pass" flier and notes: "Provides a direct connection with Amtrak San Francisco/Oakland San Joaquin trains. Special Amtrak ski package also available; contact Amtrak or your travel agent."

It is interesting to note that, by coincidence, all of the above private efforts except at Yosemite are related to Amtrak routes served by only one daily round-trip. This is clear evidence of the attractiveness of rail passenger service—and it suggests that private efforts which stimulate ridership will expand when service is increased.

We welcome additional examples of private companies supporting Amtrak. Where appropriate, please remind companies in your area that they can benefit from letting the world know that they can be reached by train. ■

STATION AREA DEVELOPMENT REPORT PUBLISHED; NATIONAL MEETING PLANNED

The Council for Northeast Economic Action (CNEA) and the Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG) have recently published the Second Annual Report of the Northeast Corridor Station Area Development Project. "Northeast Corridor Station Area Development: Catalyst for Regional Revitalization" contains twelve city reports which constitute valuable information on station area development planning in the Northeast Corridor. A highlight of the report is its conclusion that railroad stations in the Corridor present unique opportunities for urban revitalization and intermodal transportation development.

CNEA and CONEG have also published a series of twelve station area brochures collected in one portfolio which document the more than two billion dollars in office, retail, residential, and industrial development which is being stimulated by the Northeast Corridor Improvement Project. Intercity passengers, commuters and visitors that pass through the Northeast Corridor station area are generating a high level of economic activity which will support a wide variety of new commercial business in the Corridor. The portfolio demonstrates that these station areas will serve as centerpieces of urban development and will create new city landmarks that are planned to last for decades.

"The concentration of the various modes of public transportation into one location is an idea being considered by numerous cities. This is a splendid idea, but these centers should be kept away from railroad facilities."

—Donald J. Skaff, Southern Pacific RR,
in June 12 letter to L.M. Brown, City of Oxnard, CA

Copies of the above reports are available free of charge by sending a request to: Ms. Patrice Lombardi, Station Area Development Project, CNEA, 100 Federal Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02110, (617) 434-2886.

A December conference is being planned in Chicago by CNEA to bring together public and private sector individuals and organizations which are involved in rail station area development in the United States. This conference will exchange information and ideas to encourage the use of rail stations as catalysts for economic development. Information about the Chicago meeting can also be obtained by writing to CNEA (above address.) ■

SENATORS SUPPORT TRAINS!

Many Senators deserve thanks for keeping the Amtrak issue alive and securing Commerce Committee approval of a funding level above that requested by the President. Dave Durenberger (R-MN) organized a meeting of Senators concerned about Amtrak which alerted the leadership and Commerce members to the strong bipartisan support for a national rail passenger system.

Letters to Commerce from Strom Thurmond (R-SC), Dan Quayle (R-IN), and Arlen Specter (R-PA), and extensive work by Quayle's staff played a large role in the outcome of the Committee's work.

Among Commerce members, ranking Democrat Howard W. Cannon played the crucial role of developing and fighting for the increased-funding amendment which apparently would have been adopted if the Chairman had not removed the need for voting; Daniel K. Inouye (D-HI), Wendell H. Ford (D-KY), and J.J. Exon (D-NE) joined with Cannon in voting against the Administration funding level on April 29; Nancy Landon Kassebaum (KS) was the most supportive committee Republican throughout the process; Donald W. Riegle, Jr., (D-MI) joined Cannon and Exon in signing forthright pro-rail passenger "Minority Views" included in the Committee report; and Harrison Schmitt's (R-NM) longstanding and well-known interest in rail passenger service was also helpful.

Chairman Bob Packwood (R-OR), for all the negative letters he wrote to NARP members this spring, was admittedly the man on the spot, the person on whom the Administration concentrated its pressure but who nevertheless managed to increase the funding and obtain Budget Director Stockman's acquiescence.

While the debate was proceeding, Durenberger and Max Baucus (D-MT), another strongly pro-rail Senator, formed and became Co-chairmen of the Senate Rail Caucus. The Caucus was formed to educate Senators and their staffs on rail issues, primarily by having luncheons at which rail experts and relevant officials speak.

LATE FLASH! CONFEREES AGREE ON AMTRAK

On July 28, House-Senate Commerce conferees, in one of 58 separate mini-conferences dealing with various parts of the reconciliation bill, agreed on \$735 million and \$788 million Amtrak authorizations for FY '82 and '83, respectively, and approved the crucial deferral of interest on government loans. Amtrak will use about \$100 million in '82 for capital, and \$635 million to fund what it estimates will be about 85% of existing operations.

California Overnight!

A national arbitration panel has ruled that overnight passenger train service may begin operating between Los Angeles and Sacramento, California, within 60 days under the terms of Amtrak's operating agreement with the Southern Pacific Railroad.

The service, which was originally proposed by Amtrak at the request of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in November of 1977, will be the first overnight passenger train service to operate between Los Angeles and Northern California since 1967.

WHERE THERE'S A WILL . . .

"For (NARP Director) Kevin Gregoire, it was something of a personal triumph. The effort to locate the (Pittsfield, MA) passenger terminal downtown . . . began about six years ago, Gregoire recalled, when Amtrak began . . . service through Pittsfield. At the time, he and others were told that it could not be done.

"A bemused Gregoire said, 'To this day, I don't understand why it wasn't possible then.'"

—The Berkshire Eagle (Pittsfield, MA), Apr. 27

Caltrans originally requested the train under Amtrak's 403(b) program which allows states to jointly fund train operations with Amtrak. The new train would operate between Los Angeles and Oakland over the route of the "Coast Starlight," thence over the "San Francisco Zephyr" route to Sacramento.

Amtrak had originally asked SP to operate the service under a provision of its operating agreement with the railroad which entitles Amtrak to request and receive expanded services that can be feasibly operated by SP. Under the agreement, such a request must give due regard to the operating characteristics of SP and to the avoidance of unreasonable interference with its other railroad operations. A controversy developed between Amtrak and SP as to whether Amtrak's request met these conditions. SP claimed the new service would require major Amtrak-financed track improvements and the matter was submitted to the arbitration panel for resolution in December 1978.

On July 15 the panel resolved the dispute in favor of Amtrak by ruling that the service would not unreasonably interfere with SP's other rail operations, and ordered the new passenger trains to be placed into service within 60 days or on any later date established by Amtrak.

In late July, observers were optimistic that SP would not challenge the decision in court and that the train would begin running over its 559-mile route as early as Oct. 25.

This would be the first new long-distance train Amtrak has ever established (outside NY-Florida) which will require no new stations or route miles. Thus it should significantly improve Amtrak's revenue-cost ratio by permitting more intensive use of existing facilities. It should reduce terminal charges assessed against all other California trains. In particular, the "San Francisco Zephyr" would no longer be sole occupant of the Sacramento station.

The train, besides connecting with San Diego service in Los Angeles, would establish a pattern of three well-spaced round-trips between Oakland and Sacramento, if one counts the "Coast Starlight" which requires use of a 14-mile bus connectoin to and from Davis. ■

DOT's Highway Mania

Under Secretary of Transportation Drew Lewis, the U.S. Department of Transportation is:

- continuing to support the costliest and most highway-oriented option relating to the Providence, RI, station area;

- opposing the use of Northeast Corridor Improvement Project (NECIP) funds to permit immediate correction of the serious inconveniences to passengers at Washington Union Station, and opposing the District of Columbia's plan to use interstate funds to complete the station parking garage ("We would like to see (the money) used on the interstate.");

- opposed to any politically viable method for ending the federal government's anti-transit policy of allowing employers to offer free parking spaces but not transit fares as untaxed fringe benefits;

- proposing a gradual phase-out of federal support for vital urban and secondary road maintenance while including (admittedly with strong Congressional support) \$3.3 billion in the FY '82 budget for construction of new interstate highways, though most of the segments probably would not be built in the absence of 90% federal support; and

- enforcing a ban on new rail transit "starts," projects which would only get 80% federal support at most.

In DOT's "Final Environmental Impact Statement" on Providence "Railroad and Highway Improvements," released in May, the most expensive option is supported and its severe shortcomings ignored or glossed over.

The "preferred option," which involves relocating the tracks and building a new station away from the present downtown, is now estimated to cost \$73.9 million, up 57% from the \$47.1 million estimated in the June 1980 Draft EIS. The NARP-supported option would cost only \$19.2 million, and a compromise that includes some but not all of the highway improvements envisioned in the high-priced option would cost \$46.4 million.

In a July 1 letter to Secretary Lewis, NARP stated: "we are appalled that DOT under your administration continues . . . the Carter tradition of 'paving the way' (literally!) for a costly project that will draw in part from Northeast Corridor Improvement Project funds yet provide only disbenefits to the intercity rail passenger. . . . We believe that (the DOT preferred option) is a massive public subsidy primarily for the benefit of the Providence & Worcester Railroad, whose land will drastically appreciate in value if (this option) is chosen." (NARP News, Aug. & Oct., 1980)

Incidentally, Columbia Pictures Industries Inc. recently agreed to buy the Providence-based Outlet Co. Outlet and its President, Bruce Sundlun, who will join the Columbia board, have been major promoters of the rail relocation project. ■

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY—MORE ON FOOD

Amtrak is testing certain changes in its "modified dining car service." Convection ovens may replace microwave so that cooking will be more reliable and a larger number of dishes can be cooked at one time. Disposable table cloths such as are on the "Silver Meteor," and matching napkins, will be introduced to brighten up the appearance of the cars. Higher quality utensils will be provided.

To relieve the chaos that followed elimination of the maitre d' position, the ultimate plan, when labor agreements are secured, is for attendants to go through the train giving numbered slips to those who want to eat and notifying them when space is available. As an interim measure, the public address system will announce when X dining car seats are available for new customers.

As soon as the proper trays are secured, by October or November, first class passengers will be offered meal service in their rooms.

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