

News from the
**National Association of
 Railroad Passengers**

Vol. 25 No. 10  Oct.-Nov., 1991

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News from the National Association of Railroad Passengers (ISSN 0739-3490), is published monthly except November by NARP, 900 Second Street, NE, Suite 308, Washington, DC 20002, (202) 408-8362. Membership dues are \$20/year (\$10.00 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, 900 Second Street, NE, Suite 308, Washington, DC 20002.

(This has news through October 11. No. 9 was mailed September 18.)

Second Class Postage Paid
 At Washington, D.C.

“Supertrains” by Joe Vranich

**LAUTENBERG WINS MORE
 ELECTRIFICATION MONEY—page 3**

Clean Air, Massachusetts and the Central Artery

CLF Complaint Ridicules Air Quality, Transit Alternatives Analyses

“Carol Blair, transportation manager for Boston’s Metropolitan Area Planning Council, said estimates show area auto traffic will double by the year 2000. A [huge] project to dismantle a key portion of the city’s highway system and put it in underground tunnels will only compound the area’s congestion.”

—Joe Vranich, in *Supertrains*

“The proposed Central Artery/Tunnel Project (CA/T) is the most expensive, resource-intensive highway project ever planned by defendant Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) or the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It would cost approximately \$5.5 billion and require at least seven years to construct. The project would represent a huge expansion of the highway system in Boston, adding dozens of lane-miles. . . . [CA/T-caused] traffic congestion and unhealthy levels of ozone, carbon monoxide and particulate matter [would mean]. . .

- diminished productivity of forest and other crops. . . ;
- diversion of sharply limited state funding and financing resources to this project from transit projects. . . ; [and]
- increased costs of pollution control passed on to consumers by, and/or. . . reduced competitiveness of, businesses to whom more of the burden of complying with the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 would be shifted in Massachusetts.”

—Complaint filed Aug. 17 in U.S. District Court by Conservation Law Foundation of New England, Inc.

If Conservation Law Foundation of New England Inc.

(continued on page 2)

Former NARP, Amtrak Official Says it All

Media Eagerly Seeks Forthcoming Book

“Why should Washington refuse to help build a Chicago-Milwaukee-Minneapolis Supertrain line while it will help pay for a new Chicago airport? The train line will reduce air pollution, while a new airport will increase it. So why is the clean train system left in the poorhouse while the dirty airport benefits from free flowing cash? . . .

“There is no logic—if there were, the nation would have a unified transportation trust fund building systems that are easier on the environment, that save energy, and are more appropriate to travelers’ needs. . . .

“The federal government must help upgrade Amtrak routes that cross many state borders and constitute interstate commerce. . . . How about earmarking a one cent per gallon tax on gasoline to upgrade Amtrak? Samuel E. Stokes Jr. of Alstead, New Hampshire, has been advocating just that: ‘The United States is the richest country in the world with the cheapest gasoline in the world. We can afford it.’”

—Joe Vranich, in *Supertrains*

Enter the definitive contemporary book for all passenger-train supporters—one that promises to give valuable new media exposure to the shortcomings of a transportation system strangled by the aviation and highway lobbies, and to the need for more and better passenger trains.

The book has generated more requests for radio and TV talk show appearances and for book review copies than any of the other 239 books in publisher St. Martin’s Press’ current lineup.

Vranich knows all aspects of the rail passenger community. He served two years as NARP’s executive director,

(continued on page 4)

CONGRESS, COURTS MEAN BUSINESS
ON CLEAN AIR:
DOES YOUR STATE?

From the supporting memorandum accompanying CLF's complaint: "The Senate Report on the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 includes an account of past failures to attain the ozone standard. The report lists among the 'reasons for the failure to attain healthy air' a 'lack of political will at all levels of government. . . . This is most clearly seen with respect to measures to reduce vehicle use in heavily polluted and heavily congested areas. The largest number of State (Clean Air) Implementation Plan (SIP) provisions that were submitted and approved but that have not been implemented are provisions that call for transportation control measures. . . ."

In a key victory for transit advocates under the new law, a federal judge on Dec. 21, 1990, ordered construction on three San Francisco-area highway expansion projects not to proceed until officials devised a valid procedure for determining conformity of projects to SIPs and the projects were found to conform.

Also, the new law ratified a pro-transit court decision earlier in 1990 which vacated the Environmental Protection Agency's approval of a SIP for Phoenix which lacked mass transit projects, parking controls, bus and carpool lanes, reduced transit fares and other transportation control measures that would reduce hydrocarbon emissions. EPA said those measures wouldn't accelerate the date of compliance with hydrocarbon standards; the court said EPA "arbitrarily shifted from Arizona the burden of demonstrating that control measures would not accelerate the projected attainment date."

CLF (continued from page 1)

(CLF)—and NARP—can force improvements in Boston's mammoth highway project, civic, environmental and transit activists nationwide can take heart, thanks largely to federal environmental laws, especially the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 (CAAA).

Nationwide, highway officials still press projects that violate the CAAs. These people either don't know the law or are trying to sneak around it with nonsense arguments that more highway capacity means less congestion and cleaner air.

Planners are making just these arguments to justify doubling the capacity of the Capital Beltway bridge across the Potomac River at Alexandria, VA.

The CA/T "would increase [Central Artery] capacity from the existing four to six lanes to between eight and ten lanes in different areas."

In passing the CAAs, Congress had higher hopes. CLF's complaint quotes the Senate report on the CAAs, which lamented that "Federal transportation dollars have continued to finance programs and projects that have not been sufficiently reviewed for their potential adverse effects on air quality." (See also Congress/Clean Air box above.)

CLF Goes to Court

On Aug. 21, CLF filed suit against state and federal transportation officials to force the CA/T into compliance with the federal Clean Air Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, which require safeguards so the project will not worsen ozone and carbon monoxide pollution during and after construction.

Flawed Air Quality Analysis

The project has been sold largely on the basis of alleged air quality benefits. Project Director Peter M. Zuk, in an Aug. 22 letter to NARP Director Samuel E. Stokes Jr., stated: "Our studies show air quality will be 14% better with the road underground."

Yet the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) says the state's air quality analysis "now predicts only limited air quality benefits." In a recent letter to FHWA, the EPA Regional Administrator called these benefits "so small as to be within the margin of error."

To get even these "limited benefits," the state cooked the figures, imposing artificial limits on its analysis in violation of the law and making ambitious assumptions about transit projects and policies.

Geographical Limits: The "project study area" includes only downtown Boston and immediate environs (South Bay/South End/South Boston areas, East Boston, Charlestown, East Cambridge, and Somerville) although the CAAs require analysis of "all roadway links that are potentially directly and indirectly impacted by the project."

The state admits the project would cause "traffic flows to connecting radial routes outside the study area" to increase 9%. About 76,000 more vehicle trips per day would enter or leave the study area, all producing emissions outside the study area that the state's analysis excludes.

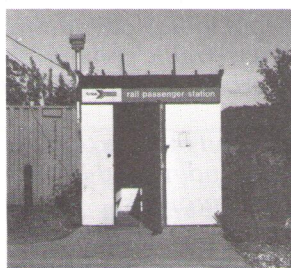
Though CLF mentions the North-South Stations railroad link only in passing, CLF has set the stage for NARP's argument, since such a link—by improving commuter rail service—could divert many of the just-noted longer trips out of the auto. The state's absurd geographical limits artificially reduce the apparent benefits of the rail link.

State figures show CA/T causing a 7% increase in total vehicle miles traveled *within* the study area, a decline in transit use, and an increase—from 63% to 73%—in the share of air passengers traveling to and from Logan Airport by automobile. (The state admits that, without CA/T, "inferior highway conditions" would encourage more people to use transit to reach Logan.)

Time Limits: The air quality analysis does not look beyond 2010, at most 12 years after the project's completion, even though the state also admits that the hydrocarbon benefits of the project would diminish by almost one-half between 1998 and 2010.

Transit Projects and Policies: The air quality analysis assumes—but FHWA's May, 1991, Record of Decision does not require—completion of some big transit projects and

GOODBYE, FISHING SHANTY



—Photos by John A. Ross

A new shelter was dedicated at Ticonderoga, NY Aug. 13 (Sept. *Travelers' Advisory*), on the route of Amtrak's "Adirondack," whose survival beyond Nov. 1 is jeopardized by a state/Amtrak funding dispute. The new, state-funded structure replaces a "fishing shanty" that looked in winter as if ice-fishermen had just dragged it off frozen Lake Champlain. The new stop is on Rte. 74, closer to the Vermont ferry and Ft. Ticonderoga.

MASSACHUSETTS IGNORES TRANSIT ALTERNATIVES

"The analysis of alternatives is the 'heart' or 'linchpin' of an environmental impact statement [regulations of the President's Council on Environmental Quality, and 1975 federal court decision, respectively]. Yet in a case involving one of the most expensive, lengthy highway projects in American history, the defendants rely on a [1980] analysis of transit alternatives which is more than a decade old [and was done before the start of CA/T's environmental review], which never even appeared in the record except in a summary occupying a single page, which did not purport to consider anything more than improved service to Logan Airport, and which did not mention most of the many transit projects and HOV measures which state agencies have at some stage of planning."

—CLF, in *Supporting Memorandum to the Court*

adherence to some demanding policies, including:

- confine current road system, including radial routes into Boston, to its present capacity; and
- preserve the pre-construction balance between MBTA fares and driving costs, both of which would increase no faster than the rate of inflation.

The fare level policy is an especially tall order for a transit system with "no dedicated source of revenue"; indeed, MBTA expected its Sep. 3 and Oct. 1 fare increases to divert up to "43,000 daily riders—6.4% of total ridership—to automobile use, and thereby increase hydrocarbon emissions by 0.42% in the Boston region."

(To get the 50-page complaint, 87-page supporting memorandum, and 3-page motion for a preliminary injunction and for summary judgment, send \$12 to Conservation Law Foundation, 3 Joy St., Boston, MA 02108.) ■

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Highlights of Amtrak's Oct. 27 schedule:

- **Two more Chicago-Milwaukee round-trips (new daily totals including "Builder": eight; seven on Sundays).**

- **New Chicago-Battle Creek-East Lansing-Flint service via Thruway buses connecting with trains 351, 352, 354.**

- **Local Philadelphia-Atlantic City trains dropped; continued Atlantic City service on longer-distance trains from Harrisburg, Washington and Richmond—all stopping in Philadelphia—as well as from Springfield and New York City. Amtrak and New Jersey Transit are discussing extension of NJT's Atlantic City trains into Philadelphia's 30th St. Station.**

California's Capitol Corridor (that's how Caltrans now spells it) is now set to begin Dec. 12. Corrections from Sept. News: no on-board telephones for now; cafe meal service only—not "San Joaquin"-style meals.

American-European Express will migrate south for the winter. Beginning with Nov. 19 New York departure, AEE's "Royal Floridian" will serve (twice weekly) Philadelphia, Wilmington, Baltimore, Washington, Orlando, West Palm Beach, Ft. Lauderdale and Miami. In late Mar. '92, AEE will revert to present Greenbrier-Chicago route. Info.: 800-677-4233.

Appropriations Conference Boosts Electrification

A House-Senate conference on Oct. 2 approved \$3.8 bill. for mass transit; \$651 mill. for Amtrak; and \$205 mill. for the Northeast Corridor Improvement Project (NECIP), all as part of the FY '92 Dept. of Transportation appropriations bill. The House approved the conference report Oct. 9; Senate approval and Pres. Bush's signature are expected soon. Original bills passed the House July 24 (Aug. News) and the Senate Sept. 17.

Conferees included \$331 mill. for operations, \$175 mill. for capital and \$145 mill. in "mandatory payments." Amtrak believes it will need \$342 mill. for operations. NECIP gets:

- \$54.9 mill. for on-going projects; and
- \$150.1 mill. for electrification vs. the Senate-passed \$193.8 mill. and the House's zero (conferees eliminated \$20 mill. for the flyover junction at New Rochelle, NY and cut \$15 mill. from the Senate-passed electrification level).

On the Senate floor, Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA), John F. Kerry (D-MA) and Joseph I. Lieberman (D-CT) thanked Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ) and Ranking Republican Alphonse M. D'Amato (NY) for their commitment to New Haven-Boston electrification. Lieberman said the project's clean air benefits are "crucial for States in the area as they strive to achieve the tough new air quality standards of the Clean Air Act."

Conferees included these House-passed items: \$700,000 for more Raleigh-Charlotte service; \$500,000 for a Chicago-St. Louis high speed rail study; \$500,000 for noise barriers near Readville, MA; and requirements to study station needs at Willimantic, CT and Toledo. Conferees cut a "revenue-generating" demo project at Philadelphia 30th St. Sta. from \$10 mill. to \$7 mill.

Conferees lowered the third-year cost-recovery requirement for Amtrak's Atlantic City service from 80 to 75% and approved drug and alcohol testing for safety-related transportation workers.

Conferees provided \$12 mill. for maglev/high speed research, \$4 mill. of which is earmarked for maglev and/or high speed rail route subsidies, with no one route getting more than \$500,000 and these routes mandated: Baltimore-Washington, New York-Albany-Boston, Milwaukee-Chicago (Sept. News), Allegheny Co., PA and Clark Co., NV.

The Senate report urges Amtrak to consider acquiring more equipment for the Empire Corridor, should this "serve to maximize revenues," and said—as to resumption of Oklahoma and establishment of Maine/New Hampshire services—"Amtrak should consider requesting the necessary amounts over a reasonable period beginning with its fiscal year 1993 submission to Congress." ■

AAR OFFERS ANTI-BIGGER-TRUCKS FREEBIES

The Association of American Railroads offers its "How Long Till It Ends?" poster while supplies last. It's 11"x48" and features a 1/27-scale photo of all but the very end of a 110-ft.-long triple tractor-trailer rig, with a compact car for comparison. The poster also has an 800 number for more info. Also available: 12-page basic info booklet, "Why the Big Trucks Have to Stop Here." One of each per person. Write to: Truck Materials, Ofc. of Information & Public Affairs; AAR; 50 F St., NW; Wash., DC 20001.

“Supertrains” (from page 1)

worked for Amtrak Public Affairs, and is now a consultant who is also Vice-President—Public Affairs for the High Speed Rail Association.

Supertrains, of course, emphasizes high speed trains—including magnetic levitation, which gets an entire chapter, and the successes of the French TGV and Japanese Shinkansen—but the handling of Amtrak’s difficult history and current successes is sympathetic and impressively detailed.

Vranich calls the Carter Administration “short-sighted” for trying in 1979 to ax “six long-distance trains that were experiencing double-digit ridership increases”; he highlights the Metroliners but also notes ridership rose 376% since 1975 on the Los Angeles-San Diego line and credits Amtrak with improving service there and between New York and Buffalo, Milwaukee and Chicago, and San Francisco and Bakersfield, “thanks mostly to state aid.”

High Speed Plans

Part of the book seems like an endless—and relentlessly optimistic—list of public officials who have expressed some form of support for better ground transport. Coupled with the index, it is an invaluable reference for virtually all the high-speed ideas that have been considered in the U.S., as well as environmental and other critics of our fly/drive dependence.

HIGH SPEED TRAINS WOULD CREATE JOBS

“High-speed rail construction. . . ‘could mean the revitalization of many ailing industries,’ said John H. Reck of the United Steel Workers of America. ‘We view it as a program that will not only enhance transportation, commerce, and communications products, but also steel-making for tracks, wire, bridges, and the fabrication of steel and other metals for various related products.’ ”

—*Supertrains*

Vranich takes Pennsylvania Gov. Robert P. Casey (D) to task for killing the state’s High Speed Rail Commission four months before completion of its study and—after commissioners and staff completed the study on a volunteer basis—for initially refusing to accept a federal grant to print the study, relenting 18 months later after “public and editorial pressure.”

Rep. Robert J. Mrazek (D-NY) also comes in for criticism for opposing use of foreign technology in U.S. high speed systems.

Air Subsidies, Opposition to New Airports

Consistent with the dominant thinking of the high speed rail movement today, Vranich acknowledges that U.S. Supertrains need some public funding. He concentrates his guns on government handouts the competing modes enjoy. His handling of subsidies—both contemporary and pre-Amtrak—is comprehensive and superb. Many of the facts have appeared in *NARP News* (Joe is a NARP member, of course), but his coverage—especially of aviation subsidies—is more extensive.

Vranich considers the “aviation-aerospace lobby” more powerful than the highway lobby, citing the approval within 32 days of Boeing’s request for an embargo exception so Boeing could deliver \$150 million worth of 757s to China shortly after the Tiananmen Square massacre.

THE POWER OF OPPOSITION TO AIRPORTS

“The Federal Aviation Administration’s administrator for the northwest region, Fred Isaac, said that he sees the possibility of only three new airports in the nation being built—Denver, Chicago, and Austin, Texas”

“[At an April 12, 1988, Washington news conference, Southwest Airlines Chairman Herb] Kelleher complained that no new airport had been built since Dallas-Fort Worth in 1974 and that existing runways are not being expanded fast enough. Yet, when in Texas, Kelleher said just the opposite. To justify his opposition to Supertrains, Kelleher told Texans that airport capacity there was sufficient to carry more passengers. Those statements weren’t true In Kelleher’s backyard, officials are trying to expand the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport, over community objections.”

—*Supertrains*

Vranich also reports in detail on the growth and power of the movement against airport expansion and new airports.

A Plug for Local Transit

He says little about land-use patterns and local transit connections as contributors to the success of foreign high-speed trains. This is, of course, a book about *intercity* travel. But the final chapter, a fanciful ride on a San Francisco-Los Angeles maglev in 2005, shows sensitivity about the need for change in local travel: Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal “is a bustling hub for local light-rail lines, a rapid transit system, and scores of commuter trains to Orange, Riverside, and Ventura county population centers.”

Rail Passenger Supporters: A Call for Unity

Some who now support “incremental” rail passenger improvements because they can be done quickly were first attracted to criticisms of the U.S. “fly/drive” system by maglev’s “sex appeal.”

Vranich may help even more people make that “intellectual journey.” He marshals his indictments of prevailing transport policies to boost passenger trains of all types—local, Amtrak, TGV, Shinkansen—and maglev.

One hopes that reading this book will give maglev supporters a new appreciation of the value of systems that serve people today and can be improved quickly. Conversely, the book may help those who believe that “incrementally” improving Amtrak is the *only* answer to appreciate the degree to which the high speed movement helps attract people to the fundamental message: the U.S. needs modern ground transportation.

(The book will be released in Jan., but you can place your order now by sending \$29.95 to St. Martin’s Press, 175 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10010. The 416-page book’s cost is partly explained by the fact that it has 113 illustrations.) ■

AIRPORT STUDIES NEGLECT SUPERTRAINS

“ ‘I suggest we round up the politicians, deny them food, give them tainted water and stick their noses in the tail end of a jet fuselage,’ said Gloria Weidner, of Kankakee (IL) Area Research and Education, a non-profit corporation founded to oppose the new airport. . . . ‘The Illinois DOT, still in the Stone Age, has not included high-speed rail as part of the study process in solving Chicagoland’s air and highway gridlock.’”

—*Supertrains*
