

## In Blizzard, Only Amtrak Keeps Running!

*“Amtrak has been about the only transportation between Washington and Boston since Sunday, running with minor delays.”*

—The Washington Post, *news story, Wednesday, January 10*

*“How I got back here on Sunday night proved to me the importance of Amtrak. I came all the way down from Vermont.... The efforts which those crews put on, and how packed that train was when it finally got to New York City, and then on to Washington, emphasized how important that means of travel is in times of crisis like this. Without Amtrak passenger service we would be in trouble.”*

—Senator James M. Jeffords (R-VT), January 10 floor statement

The “Blizzard of '96” reminded Northeasterners of a big advantage of Amtrak and most rail transit: the ability to travel during and after a major snowstorm, and to do so safely.

Unfortunately, this message was lost elsewhere as the national media focused on a *Cardinal* halted in Charleston, WV, where its 96 passengers spent two nights in hotels.

The *real* story was that the Northeast Corridor kept running while airways and highways were paralyzed. The New York-Florida *Silver Meteor* didn't miss a trip; the companion *Silver Star* and the Washington-Chicago *Capitol Limited* missed only their Monday, January 8, departures. Sunday's Chicago departure waited six hours in Toledo behind a derailed Conrail freight, reaching Washington 12 hours late at 1 am Tuesday. Amtrak let satisfied customers use the train as a hotel until 8 am. A Sunday afternoon train from Boston also reached Washington 12 hours late, Monday morning. Other trains had much shorter delays. Many Metroliners did not run due to low demand and top speeds (80 mph).

Airlines reduced service Saturday, January 6—the day before the blizzard—so planes would not get snowed in. Major Northeast airports were closed Sunday-Tuesday. At Miami International Airport, “at the height of the [closed-airport] crisis Monday, 1000 passengers who couldn't get into the blizzard zone camped on benches and floors” [*USA Today*, January 11]. Wednesday air service was far from normal, and a smaller blizzard disrupted service again Friday.

Commuter rail and rail transit lines generally kept running, while buses were hit hard. [New Jersey Transit ran no buses Sunday night and Monday; New York City Transit cancelled buses Monday after 200 got trapped in drifts or behind stuck vehicles. Almost all bus routes were back by Thursday.]

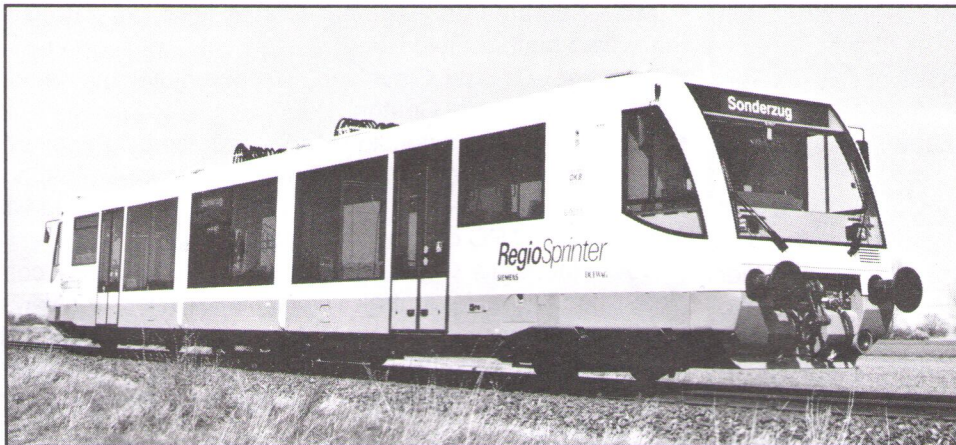
*(continued on page 4)*

### MARK CANE TO HEAD “INTERCITY” UNIT

The Amtrak Board on January 19 confirmed Mark Cane as the next CEO—effective February 1—of the Amtrak unit with all Midwest services and most long-distance trains. Amtrak President Thomas M. Downs said: “Mark brings...exceptional strategic and analytical skills in addition to a career in railroading that began as a cook on an Amtrak dining car when he was a college student. Those skills, combined with his vision and enthusiasm for the future of the business unit, provide just the mix of talent needed.”

At Burlington Northern, Cane rose from Operations management trainee to Vice President—Intermodal. He accepted a buy-out last year. He has an economics B.A. from the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, MN; an M.B.A. from the University of Minnesota.

### GERMAN DIESEL “LIGHT RAIL” CAR TO VISIT NORTH AMERICA



The Siemens Rail Sprinter has fast acceleration and deceleration, and is ideal for runs up to about 30 miles. It permits light-rail-type transit on non-electrified lines. It likely is too light to convert to heavy U.S. “buffing strength” standards, but could use tracks that freight trains do not use, or use only at night. In a five-month demonstration starting in April, the car will use a 3.4-mile CP Rail line, running south from Calgary's Anderson light rail service to 162nd Street. Then the car will visit California (including APTA's early-October annual meeting in Orange County) and several U.S. cities in other states. The car is similar to Siemens' low-floor (electric) light rail cars now operating in Germany.

—Siemens Transportation Systems

# Wheels of Progress

Here is our annual list of major rail passenger improvements planned to enter service and the dates of planned openings (if available). Dates and projects subject to change. *NARP News* regularly reports actual start-up dates.

## 1996

- Feb. 1—Amtrak begins New York-Chicago through-car service (two Amfleet II coaches) on the *Three Rivers* and *Capitol Limited*, in response to passengers' horrid night-time transfers between those two trains at Pittsburgh this winter. The forced transfer was caused by the elimination of the *Broadway Limited* in September. Logical next steps: through Viewliner sleepers, restoration of separate train, or a Chicago-Philadelphia section of the *Capitol Limited* using Superliners.
- Feb. 1—Shore Line East extends two commuter train round-trips, Old Saybrook-New London, CT (18 mi.).
- Feb.—Talgo train (now in Northwest) visits California.
- Feb.—BART Daly City-Colma extension (1.6 mi.).
- Feb.—Metrolink commuter rail extension, Riverside-San Bernardino (10 mi.).
- Mar.—Chicago Transit Authority Green line (Lake/Jackson El) reopens after two-year reconstruction project.
- Mar. 18—Fourth Amtrak/Caltrans *Capitol* round-trip, Bay Area-Sacramento.
- Mar. 23—Second season of occasional American Orient Express long-distance luxury tours begins, with cars run by American European Express several years ago. Transcontinental, western national park packages available, fare range \$3850-\$7450. Contact: T.C.S. Expeditions, 800/727-7477.
- May 24-Sept. 2—Trial of daily Mobile-New Orleans service funded by Amtrak, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana.
- *Late Spring*—Amtrak brings IC-3 (Jan. *News*) to U.S. for two years of demonstrations in various markets.
- June—Electrification work begins on Amtrak's Boston line.
- June—Dallas DART light rail inaugural, West End-Union Station (Amtrak)-Illinois/Westmoreland (9 mi.).
- June—Phase 1 of new Nashville, TN intermodal facility ("Landport"). First (and in near-term, only) rail service would be specials to the Olympics (see July 19, below).
- June 22—Atlanta MARTA North Branch extension Lindberg-Buckhead-Medical Center-Dunwoody (7 mi.).
- *Mid*—New Jersey Transit Kearny connection, allowing Dover-Newark (Broad St.)-New York Penn Station electric commuter train service.
- *Summer*—San Diego North-South light rail line extension to Old Town (3.2 mi.).
- July 12—Cleveland light rail extension, Tower City (ex-Terminal Tower)-Waterfront (Amtrak).
- July 16—Los Angeles Red Line subway extension Westlake/MacArthur Park to Wilshire/Western.
- July 19-Aug. 6—Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta and nearby cities. The *Crescent* may run daily to Birmingham or New Orleans. If Olympic corporate sponsors offer funds, other possibilities include: extend Raleigh-Charlotte *Piedmont* to Atlanta (or Birmingham); run daily Atlanta-Birmingham; and—if CSX and Norfolk Southern cooperate—run trains from Nashville (probably overnight), Macon, Athens, Gainesville.
- *Late Summer*—New Metra commuter line Chicago-Antioch (on Wisconsin border) on Wisconsin Central route (53 mi., 12

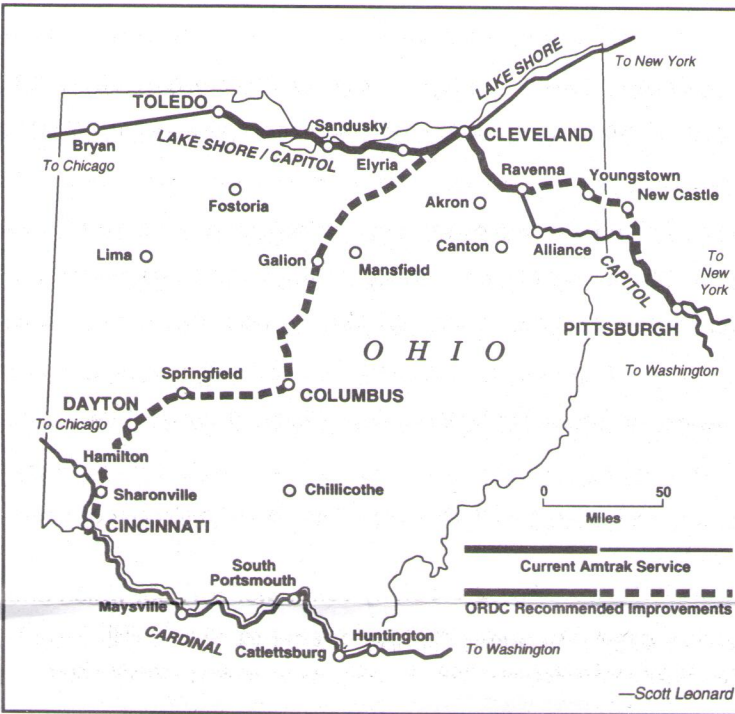
stops). One station will tie into O'Hare Airport's people mover.

- *Late Summer*—Tobacco company Philip Morris launches its *Marlboro Unlimited*, a cruise train using 18 custom-built cars (by Rader Railcar of Denver) and two General Motors locomotives. Passengers will be those who win tickets and \$1000 cash (making a Western tour package worth about \$6000). Extra-strong ventilators are being built-in to accommodate the smokers. The train cost about \$50 million.
- *Fall*—Boston-Portland Amtrak service, four times a day, partly funded by State of Maine. Four bus round trips planned as well, with interchangeable tickets.
- *Fall*—Dallas-South Irving, TX commuter rail, 10 mi., using rebuilt rail diesel cars.
- *Late*—Tri-Rail commuter rail extension (2 mi.) to a new terminus nearer Miami airport (future intermodal terminal site).
- *Late*—Two more BART extensions: Bay Fair (Fremont line)-East Dublin/Pleasanton (14 mi.); and North Concord/Martinez-Pittsburg/Bay Point (5 mi.).
- *Dec.*—MBTA Old Colony commuter service, which ended in 1959, resumes on 11.4-mile Boston South Station-South Braintree trunk, then on lines to Middleboro (25 mi.) and Kingston (25 mi.; plus Plymouth tourist branch).
- *Dec.*—Dallas LRT extension West End-Park Lane (7.2 mi.).
- *Sometime*—Amtrak West opens a first-class lounge at Portland, OR; restores all *Capitol* service to San Jose; re-equips remaining *San Joaquins*.

## 1997

- Jan.—First American Railways, Inc. plans to start the *Florida Fun Train*, Port Everglades (at Fort Lauderdale)-Orlando Airport, using Florida East Coast to West Palm Beach, then CSX (Amtrak route) to Orlando. Rader Railcar is to build new cars, including entertainment cars. Contact: 305/668-8449.
- *Early*—Stockton-Altamont-San Jose commuter rail (85 mi., Sept. '94 *News*).
- *May*—Memphis' downtown streetcar shuttle (opened 1993) expands to Riverside Loop along west edge of downtown, with Central Station at south end (see below).
- June—Washington Metro Blue Line extension, Van Dorn-Franconia (3.3 mi.).
- *Mid*—Completion of \$2.3-million restoration project at Tampa Union Station (purchased by Amtrak in 1995 for \$950,000), using mix of ISTEA, state and local funds.
- *Mid*—San Diego Mission Valley (West) light rail line, Old Town-Murphy Stadium (6.1 mi.).
- *Mid*—Dallas LRT extension Illinois-Ledbetter (2.9 mi.).
- *Mid*—Sacramento Regional Transit light rail extension Butterfield-Mather Field Rd. (2.5 mi.).
- *Summer*—Greater Cleveland RTA commuter rail demonstration to Akron and Canton.
- *Summer*—Three extensions to the Baltimore light rail system—Timonium-Hunt Valley (4.5 mi.); Linthicum-BWI Airport (2.7 mi.); Mt. Royal-Penn Station (0.3 mi.—connecting with Amtrak and MARC commuter trains).
- Nov.—Memphis Central Station intermodal facility complete—good news for Amtrak's worst station (Dec. '89 *News*).
- *Late*—Delivery of two new tilt-trains for Amtrak service in the Cascadia Corridor (Eugene-Portland-Seattle-Vancouver).
- *Late*—Metrolink commuter rail Riverside-Fullerton-Los Angeles (62 mi.).

(continued on next page)



## BIG STEP AHEAD IN OHIO

The Ohio Rail Development Commission (Sept. '94 News) approved on January 11 a capital budget request which would lead to much improved passenger rail service in the Buckeye State. The request, for \$60 million, goes to the Ohio General Assembly.

Part (\$10.7 million) of the money is for extending Amtrak's New York-Philadelphia-Pittsburgh *Pennsylvanian* to Toledo (May '95 News). Needed track and signal work east of Cleveland would restore service to Youngstown (dropped last September) and provide Cleveland with a daytime travel alternative to the east.

The rest (\$49.3 million) would go to service on the "3-C" line, Cleveland-Columbus-Cincinnati. Though talked about for many years, there has been no service on this logical corridor since 1971. Dayton and Columbus have had no service at all since 1979, making Columbus the largest urban area by far with no passenger trains. Of the 3-C total, \$17.5 million would be for new equipment.

These two corridors would bring passenger trains within 20 miles of 73% of all Ohio residents. Mark Carlson, a NARP director and president of the Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers, hailed the plan. He said that while some might balk at spending \$49 million to provide 79-mph train service over the 260-mile 3-C line, it compares favorably to highway projects, such as the \$36 million that will be spent during 1996 to rebuild one 10-mile stretch of parallel I-71.

## Wheels of Progress

(from previous page)

- **Late**—Two MBTA commuter rail extensions—Stoughton-North Easton, MA (4 mi.); Attleboro-New Bedford (31 mi.)/ Fall River (29 mi.).
- **Late**—Syracuse intermodal terminal opens, serving Amtrak, ONTrack (local commuter shuttle), local transit, intercity bus, airport limousine.
- **Late**—Remaining segments of Jacksonville Skyway (1.8 mi., 6 stations), completing 2.5-mile system.
- **Sometime**—San Francisco Muni Metro streetcar extension Embarcadero-CalTrain Station, connects local rail transit to commuter rail service for the first time in many years.
- **Sometime**—Vermont Agency of Transportation commuter rail, Burlington-Charlotte (20 mi.).
- **Sometime**—Amtrak West opens first-class lounges at Seattle and Los Angeles; extends the Roseville *Capitol* to Colfax; re-equips the *San Diegans*. ■

### THANK YOU, HARRIET PARCELLS!

Harriet Parcels, after 10 years on our staff, left December 1 to work full-time for the American Passenger Rail Coalition (APRC), a Washington-based organization of Amtrak suppliers.

Harriet's major accomplishments at NARP include founding our Campaign for New Transportation Priorities, publishing a series of respected policy papers, strengthening our communications with environmental groups, and representing the Campaign at several conferences.

Her accomplishments are even more remarkable in that her NARP work was part-time as she continued to raise her two young boys. In the year before she left, she worked full time, with slightly more than half of her hours devoted to APRC. We miss her, but are glad Amtrak continues to benefit from her work.

## YOUR TAX DOLLARS AT WORK

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) represents state transportation departments, two-thirds of which must vote for a policy for AASHTO to adopt it.

AASHTO's board, meeting in Norfolk October 29, approved "Policy Position Statement R-1" on conventional intercity passenger rail passenger. R-1 generally endorses reforms helpful to Amtrak, including Amtrak's original position on liability (prohibiting punitive damages; capping "noneconomic compensatory damages"). [HR 1788 allows limited punitive awards but is considered consistent with reasonable, new Amtrak/freight-railroad agreements. Jan. News.]

ISTEA (the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act, the big highway/transit authorization law of 1991) expires September 30, 1997, but Congress may start work on the next law this year. In this regard, AASHTO's board asked Congress to reduce federal oversight and relax ISTEA's "pro-balanced-transportation" aspects. AASHTO wants the federal government to fully fund ISTEA but wants states to:

- regain project selection power that ISTEA shifted to metropolitan planning organizations;
- control public participation in decisions;
- determine allowable truck sizes/weights; and
- be able to use transportation law to make clean air and water requirements "more practical."

[But eight state DOT heads wrote Congress December 21 saying previously-stated views were not "monolithic and we do not support efforts to eliminate or fundamentally change the character of ISTEA."]

AASHTO has *not* supported letting states spend ISTEA funds on Amtrak, an idea more popular among elected governors than appointed DOT heads—and less costly than letting states control truck weights.

## Trains Run in Snow

(from page 1)

The Long Island Rail Road relied on diesels to keep its three principal lines running (Port Jefferson, Ronkonkoma, Babylon), as wind-whipped, powdery snow, made electric operation nearly impossible. Other lines returned to service between Tuesday and the following Sunday (January 14). New York subway lines in open cuts also had interruptions.

Third-rail icing forced Washington's Metro to close surface routes part of Monday and Friday. Metro's image was tarnished when the federal government reopened Thursday, even though many highway lanes and half Metro's rail fleet

were unusable.

When everyone finally returned to work on Tuesday, January 16, Metro performed well while highways were still paralyzed by unplowed, closed lanes. Sadly, local media did a poor job of reporting that Metro had largely recovered, while the highways had not.

Philadelphia had an all-time record 30 inches of snow, leading Pennsylvania Gov. Thomas Ridge (R) to ban non-essential auto use Sunday-Thursday, January 7-11 (as did New Jersey for two days). SEPTA trains and buses were the only way to go. (About 60% of SEPTA bus routes had detours due to snow and improperly parked vehicles.) ■

### TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

**Tickets No Longer Refundable:** Effective February 13, excursion (i.e., most) tickets on long-distance trains are non-refundable once issued. Exceptions: travel within one "corridor" (e.g., New York-Richmond, Chicago-St. Louis, Los Angeles-Redding); upgrades on same train, same day; hardship (e.g., illness, death in family); Amtrak-caused problems. "Non-refundable" tickets may be *exchanged* for a charge—\$20 per adult, \$10 per child.

**Late Cancellations:** Since November 29, 1995, sleeping car space may be canceled 24 hours in advance without penalty (the limit had been 48 hours). Club service space may be canceled one hour before departure without penalty.

But, if you miss the new deadline, Amtrak won't refund *any* of the sleeping car or club charge. (Before, Amtrak charged only a sliding-scale penalty.) There are exceptions for problems caused by Amtrak or hardship.

**City of New Orleans:** Greater capacity for Mardi Gras; and two sections—one "All-Pullman" (no coaches)—go south Friday, February 16, and north Wednesday, February 21 (not a normal day of operation).

**Crescent:** The fourth New Orleans trip apparently will continue through early August.

**New York-Pittsburgh-Chicago coaches:** Feb. 1 (p. 2).

**Video ticket machines (Mar. '95 News):** Amtrak's first

went into operation at Lafayette, IN, January 4.

**Thruway bus:** Through March 24, bus runs Fridays from northbound *Adirondack* at Whitehall, NY to Killington Ski Resort, VT; returns Sundays (both in addition to Whitehall-Rutland-Burlington bus service).


**Intermodal:** Trailways has left Indianapolis Union Station while the Trailways space is remodeled; when buses return, Greyhound may come as well.

**Amtrak Northeast:** On January 21, most individual train names—even *Night Owl!*—were eliminated on the Northeast, Empire and Keystone Corridors, including the Richmond and Newport News line. A new timetable was to be issued in mid-January.

This is related to the decision last fall to market the "conventional" (i.e., non-Metroliner) trains as "NortheastDirect" service. Trains will be identified only by class (Metroliner, NortheastDirect, Clocker, Empire) and train number. Harrisburg-Philadelphia trains remain "Keystone"; New York-Harrisburg trains are *Harrisburg Expresses* westbound, *New York Expresses* eastbound. The fate of the *Cape Codder* itself is "uncertain." No long-distance train names are being dropped.

The national media noted the change ("Now the only Yankee Clipper is Joe DiMaggio"). The change means the end of some names familiar to travelers for decades, such as *Congressional* and *Senator* (Pennsylvania Railroad), *Bankers* and *Merchants Limited* (New Haven) and *Mohawk* (New York Central).



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