

## Administration, States Support Full \$989 Million

A group of state transportation officials met on Capitol Hill to announce their support for fiscal 2001 funding for Amtrak at the authorized, \$989 million level. Speakers at the February 1 event included Wisconsin Deputy Secretary (now Secretary) of Transportation Terry Mulcahy and officials from New York, Illinois, Mississippi, and North Carolina. These officials have joined with DOT officials from a total of 17 states so far to form the States for Passenger Rail Coalition. Energized state DOT officials can be as valuable to the passenger-rail cause as supportive governors.

President Clinton's budget, unveiled February 7, nominally includes the full \$989 million authorized for Amtrak. But \$468 million of the Clinton passenger rail funding is redirected "excess" gasoline-tax funds which TEA-21 (the big 1998 highway/transit funding law) earmarks for highway programs. Clinton would use \$521 million in general funds for Amtrak—the amount that should keep existing Amtrak services rolling.

Excess gas-tax revenues are called "revenue-aligned budget authority," or RABA. A similar Clinton RABA proposal

last year was "dead on arrival" in Congress.

This year the case for redirecting RABA funds is stronger. The "excess" gas-tax funding pot is so much bigger—an estimated \$3.1 billion vs. \$1.4 billion last year. Also, Congress just approved a huge aviation spending increase. It is senseless to starve energy-efficient passenger rail while lavishing money on aviation (in many cases to meet needs that rail could meet better) and giving road spending a further boost (above the healthy increase in "basic" TEA-21 funding—see table). This is especially true since energy experts suggest that "cheap" gasoline will disappear within 10-15 years.

Resistance to diverting RABA remains strong on Capitol Hill, so legislators need to hear a clear message that a piecemeal approach to transportation spending that leaves passenger rail "out in the cold" is unacceptably bad policy. It is critical that budget committees develop budget resolutions with adequate room for passenger rail.

## Amtrak Expansion, For a Change

The eagerly awaited "Market Based Network Analysis" (MBNA) led to Amtrak's first major expansion plan, released February 28. Here are some highlights from the first phase of what Amtrak calls its "Network Growth Strategy" (NGS):

- **A new daily Fort Worth-Dallas-Jackson-Meridian** section for the New York-New Orleans *Crescent*;
- **Expanding Chicago-San Antonio Texas Eagle** service from quad-weekly to daily;
- **Rerouting the Houston-EI Paso** segment of the *Sunset Limited* via Dallas, Fort Worth, and Odessa;
- **Establishing another overnight New York-Chicago** train, this one via Philadelphia-Pittsburgh-Cleveland.

### Phase One: \$65 Million Net Benefits

The report was the first phase of a continuing process, so more routes could show up later. This phase focused on long-distance services that could be implemented with equipment Amtrak has today—including some newer cars that have been out of service awaiting relatively minor repairs—and some cars to be removed from existing trains. The just-announced initiatives taken together (see below) "are estimated to improve the bottom line by approximately \$65 million" in 2003.

### Budget Sleeping Rooms Get Tentative "Thumbs Up"

Amtrak's February 28 report says, "Preliminary analysis shows that long distance service can offer an economy sleeper as well as the traditional First Class Sleeper service, and, by

(continued on page 2)

### 2001 TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Compared with Previous Years  
Appropriations (\$ millions)

	1998 Enacted	1999 Enacted	2000 Enacted	2001 Clinton Request	Change, Clinton vs. 2000
<b>Administration</b>					
Federal Highway	21,585	27,077	28,729	30,358	+ 6%
Federal Aviation	9,102	9,807	9,941	11,222	+ 13%
Federal Transit	4,844	5,389	5,785	6,321	+ 9%
Federal Railroad	748	778	740	1,180	+ 59%
* Amtrak + N.E. Corr.	594	609	571	521	- 9%

\*Also in Federal Railroad Administration total.

### Intercity Passenger Rail Categories

<b>Amtrak:</b>					
Operations (A)	344	(B)	(B)	(B)	—
Capital	0	609	571	521	- 9%
Northeast Corr.	238	(B)	(B)	(B)	—
Penn Sta./Farley	12	0	0	0	—
High Speed Rail	20	21	27	22	- 19%
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>630</b>	<b>598</b>	<b>543</b>	<b>- 9%</b>
"TRA money" (c)	1,092	1,092	—	—	—
Passenger rail fund (D)	—	—	—	468	—
<b>PASS. RAIL TOTAL</b>	<b>1,706</b>	<b>1,722</b>	<b>598</b>	<b>1,011</b>	<b>+ 69</b>

#### NOTES:

A) Includes "mandatory payments" (federal railroad retirement and unemployment insurance costs in excess of Amtrak's demands on system) ranging \$120-150 million each year.

B) For 1999, these categories were discontinued, with maintenance of equipment made eligible for capital item that year. For 2000, both maintenance of equipment and maintenance of way are eligible, as is already done for transit. This needs renewal in 2001.

C) Taxpayer Relief Act money, non-appropriated capital funds provided for Amtrak in 1998 and 1999—not subject to Amtrak or Clinton requests, but shown as information.

D) "Expanded Intercity Rail Passenger Service Fund," coming from excess federal gas-tax revenues. Under TEA-21, the latter goes to highways.

# National Growth Strategy

(from page 1)

so doing, achieve large gains in revenue and large savings in operating costs. The preliminary analysis found that, for the one train tested, a mix of sleeper service classes could yield more than \$2 million in net benefit to the bottom line."

NARP heartily agrees. We hear regularly from our members who want budget sleeper service restored.

## No Route Cuts

While rail passenger advocates were pleased at Amtrak's general direction, some critics—who had anticipated route cuts—were not. When Chairman Richard Shelby (R-AL) of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation expressed his disappointment at a March 9 hearing, Amtrak President George Warrington explained that individual analysis of each route showed that dropping it would eliminate more revenues than costs. An example in Amtrak's MBNA "Report to Congress" says, "While the contribution of the *Sunset Limited* is projected to be negative \$3.2 million in [fiscal] 2002, removing it from the network [worsens] the overall bottom line by \$1.5 million" because other trains would lose connecting passenger, mail and express revenues.

## Amtrak's Planned Future Studies

Warrington said Amtrak would outline its new-equipment requirements for both corridors and long-distance services this summer. Corridor and more long-distance routes (i.e., *Pioneer*) will get more study before the next announcement about routes, which may be part of the equipment announcement. To the extent that potential mail revenues are significant, it is surprising that some type of Chicago-Atlanta service has not shown up already.

In a February 16 letter to Warrington, NARP President Jack Martin said, "Amtrak's efforts to expand its route structure are long overdue and much appreciated...I have suggested that the credibility of any proposed 'national' network that does not provide for direct Midwest-Florida service will be suspect."

He also noted the need for "service to Las Vegas from the east, and service between the northwest and the Denver and Texas areas."

Martin highlighted "the continuing lack of sufficient equipment to make meaningful expansion a reality." At the February 28 news conference, a reporter asked about this concern. Warrington replied, "In many ways, I agree with Jack. We clearly need more cars over the long term...The practical reality is that today we must make do with what we have. Do I disagree with Jack? No."

## More Detail on Each Route Proposal

The numbered items below are keyed to the map. Start-up dates given are what Amtrak would like, as shown in its Report to Congress. Actual dates will depend on negotiations with the freight railroads, which are underway. Also, changes are possible, as determined by the Amtrak officials responsible for implementing service. Two segments would lose service; see #3 and #11.

**1. Kentucky Cardinal** (which started December 17, 1999) extended 3 miles from Jeffersonville, IN, to Louisville, KY. Though a logical extension to Nashville, TN, was not part of the NGS, it remains under consideration.

**2. New Manhattan Limited** (summer 2000) New York-Pittsburgh-Cleveland-Chicago, running overnight east of Pittsburgh and by day west of there, complementing the *Three Rivers* schedule. This is far more passenger-friendly than the *Pennsylvanian* schedule, and fairly close to what NARP's Martin recommended for the *Pennsylvanian* in an April 28, 1999, letter to then-Amtrak Intercity President Lee Bullock.

**3. Several changes affecting Michigan:** *Twilight Limited* (now Chicago-Detroit-Pontiac) runs Chicago-Dearborn (MI)-Niagara Falls-Buffalo-New York, overnight, non-stop through Ontario. "*Three Rivers*-type service begins in fall 2000," i.e., not full dining-car service. Another Chicago-Detroit-Pontiac train is diverted to Chicago-Dearborn-Toledo, spring 2000.

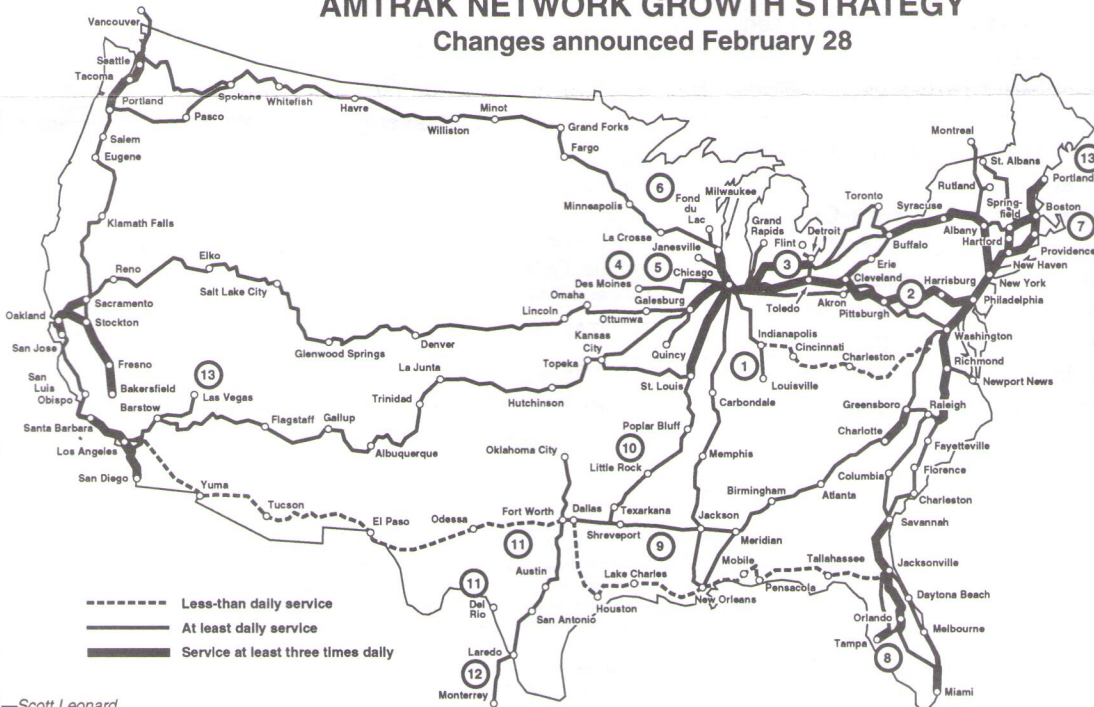
The *International*, now Chicago-Lansing-Port Huron-Toronto, would run Chicago-Dearborn-Windsor-Toronto, fall 2000. Battle Creek-Lansing-Flint-Port Huron-Sarnia would lose all service, unless Michigan decides to support continued service over some or all of that segment. NARP has asked Amtrak to look at a Dearborn-Detroit-Port Huron routing.

The report implies only one Detroit/Pontiac train (of today's three), but Amtrak is exploring the operational feasibility of keeping two there (excluding the *International*).

## 4. A new Chicago-

## AMTRAK NETWORK GROWTH STRATEGY

Changes announced February 28



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## Proposed Service Changes

(from page 2)

**Savanna-Davenport-Iowa City-Des Moines** overnight train, fall 2000.

**5. A new Chicago-Fox Lake-Janesville (WI)** train, morning south and evening north, spring 2000.

**6. An extension of a Chicago-Milwaukee Hiawatha** to Fond du Lac, WI, morning south and evening north, spring 2000. A stop at Brookfield in Milwaukee's western suburbs—which attracted much Chicago business during a 1998 trial extension to Watertown—would be useful.

**7. Extend a Florida train to New Haven-Hartford-Springfield-Worcester-Boston**, summer 2000. Report says *Silver Meteor*, Amtrak now says *Meteor* or *Star*. Springfield has a mail and express terminal. The faster Shore Line has a traffic cap related to moveable bridges and boating interests.

**8. All three Silver trains split** at Jacksonville, with two sections to Orlando-Tampa, two to Daytona Beach-Miami, one to Ocala-Tampa, and one to Orlando-Miami, in fiscal 2001.

**9. New Meridian-Jackson-Shreveport-Dallas-Fort Worth** section of the *Crescent*, summer 2000.

**10. The Texas Eagle runs daily** Chicago-Fort Worth-San Antonio, rather than quad-weekly, "tentatively" summer 2000 (see also #11).

From a sidebar in Amtrak's MBNA report: "The Portland-Boise Task Force, under the leadership of Senators Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Mike Crapo (R-ID), has assembled representatives from local and state governments, the Union Pacific railroad, community groups and businesses to identify sources of non-traditional revenue to cover the operating loss and necessary capital investment needed to launch service from Portland to Boise. The expected passenger revenue shortfall for daily service...is estimated to be at least \$4.6 million annually."

At the Senate Commerce hearing (right column), Amtrak Chairman Tommy Thompson told Wyden that it "might have been a mistake" when the previous Amtrak board in 1997 discontinued the *Pioneer* [Seattle-Portland-Boise-Salt Lake City-(Chicago)].

**11. The Sunset Limited is rerouted across Texas**, "beginning in 2002." It runs Houston-Dallas-Fort Worth-Odessa-El Paso, rather than today's Houston-San Antonio-Del Rio-Sanderson-Alpine-El Paso. Our February 1984 *News* commented on this favorably. The reroute cuts about 10 hours off travel between *Texas Eagle* points east of Fort Worth and west of El Paso, while adding up to four hours to travel between the *Sunset's* Houston-New Orleans segment and points west of El Paso. Connections are planned at the new Fort Worth "hub" among trains in six directions (clockwise: Oklahoma City, Chicago-Little Rock, New York-Atlanta, New Orleans-Houston, San Antonio, Los Angeles-Tucson).

Except between Chicago and Fort Worth, there will be big schedule changes, with service across Arizona and California by day and few if any connections in Los Angeles. New Orleans-Houston will be overnight. Initial plans, however, call for roughly the current Orlando-New Orleans times, and thus a passenger-unfriendly, eight-hour layover at New Orleans.

The switching point for *Texas Eagle* cars shifts from San Antonio to Fort Worth. (Today's once-a-week, separate Los Angeles *Texas Eagle* will split off the San Antonio *Eagle* at Fort Worth and go west on the new route, maintaining the current four-times-a-week Los Angeles-Texas frequency.)

**12. A new Aztec Eagle, San Antonio-Laredo-Monterrey**, "tentatively" summer 2000. As a day train, Amtrak's first-ever train across the Mexican border would require an overnight layover at San Antonio to connect with the *Texas Eagle*.

**13. Other proposed services not in the NGS**—Amtrak continues to plan for Los Angeles-Las Vegas (likely fall 2000) and Boston-Portland (Jan. 2001).

Not shown on the map, but part of the NGS, is a 60-hour, eight-stop "luxury transcontinental service of up to five days per week...one day a week service is slated for the fall of 2000." The train would use private cars and likely run New York-Pittsburgh-Cleveland-Naperville, IL (not Chicago)-Kansas City-Albuquerque-Los Angeles. ■

### HOUSE VERSION OF HIGH-SPEED BILL

Rep. Amo Houghton (R-NY) introduced H.R.3700, a counterpart to the Senate's High Speed Rail Investment Act (S.1900, Dec. '99 *News*). So far, there are 30 sponsors. More are needed! As a tax bill, this goes to the House Ways and Means Committee, on which Houghton is a senior member. Similarly, S.1900 goes to the Senate Finance Committee, though its chairman (Bill Roth, R-DE) has yet to indicate a position.

## Amtrak Gets Support on Accounting

A Senate Commerce subcommittee seemed to give an encouraging answer to our February question: Will an accounting debate bore everyone to death, or kill Amtrak? The debate might go away. Chairman Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX), DOT Inspector General Ken Mead, and Subcommittee Member John Kerry (D-MA) made clear that Congress did not intend to require Amtrak to cover depreciation and "progressive" equipment overhaul costs in order to meet the statutory "test for self-sufficiency." Gil Carmichael, chairman of the Amtrak Reform Council (which could make a damaging finding that Amtrak likely would fail the test) appeared to accept this message, though the entire Council's reaction may not be clear until its next meeting (March 30-31 in Denver).

The February 23 hearing saw a new sort of Boston-Austin alliance, with Hutchison and Kerry eloquently restating their pro-Amtrak views. Hutchison: "Amtrak can and should be a vital part of our integrated transportation network." Kerry: "It is stunning to me that people in this country are still arguing against this form of transportation." Noting energy efficiency, transportation gridlock and airplane-legroom concerns, he asked, "Do we invest in our rail system now, or do it later at much greater expense? If we don't make the investment, we can have a self-fulfilling prophecy. We can kill the railroad."

Max Cleland (D-GA): "For top long, Atlanta has literally buried its railroads, building highway viaducts on top of its railroad yards. Our people want affordable transportation choices. Atlanta has the worst congestion in the south. I think we're at the start of a rail renaissance." ■

## TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

**Amtrak/California**—The 7th Sacramento-Oakland daily and 4th Oakland-San Jose Capitol Corridor round-trips began February 27. The Colfax trip was cut back to Auburn.

**Surf** (between Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo) becomes a *San Diegan* stop March 18.

**Amtrak Promotion**—The Choice Hotels' Guest Privileges Frequent Traveler Program is offering a "free companion" Amtrak rail fare offer, with purchase of a regular, senior, or disabled adult fare, through April 16. Choice Hotels includes Comfort Inn, Clarion, Quality, EconoLodge, and others.

**Valet parking**—This service now offered at Philadelphia 30th St. Station for Amtrak passengers and visitors Mon.-Fri., 7 am-11 pm (and on request on weekends). A new, indoor, 108-space lot is being used. Vehicles can be retrieved any time.

**Transit**—San Francisco Muni F-Market streetcar service extension from Embarcadero to Fisherman's Wharf began March 4.

**Speedway specials**—San Bernardino Associated Governments will charter special trains from Metrolink (with tickets sold through Amtrak) on four routes to the California Speedway for the NASCAR (weekend of April 30) and CART (weekend of October 29) events.

**Thruways**—Since January 7, two round-trip buses connect Redmond and Bend, OR, to/from *Coast Starlight* at Chemult, running Sundays, Tuesdays, Fridays, morning and evening...A tri-weekly bus from Portland Union Station to Redmond, Bend, Burns, Ontario, Boise started March 2 (connecting at Bend for Eugene and Coos Bay; and to [not from] Chemult bus).

Senate Environment & Public Works Chair Bob Smith (R-NH) supports S.1144 (letting states use federal TEA-21 funds for intercity passenger rail). Two key senators were delaying floor action in mid-March.

## MILESTONE IN MADISON



—Ken Burbach

ProRail, the Madison chapter of the Wisconsin Association of Railroad Passengers, held a gala 15th anniversary meeting at the new Monona Terrace convention center on January 30. The guests of honor were the three founders of the group (above center, left to right), NARP Executive Director Scott Leonard, former NARP Director Patricia Robbins, and Mike McCoy, all three of whom have been ProRail officers. Currently, Robbins is newsletter editor and McCoy is vice president. At far left is NARP President John R. Martin, who addressed the group, and at far right is ProRail President Ken Burbach, who is also a NARP Director.

Now, as in 1985, the group's primary focus is getting train service back to Madison, which has gone without since Amtrak was formed in 1971. With the advent of the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (Feb. '99 News) and with a supportive state government (led by Governor and Amtrak Board Chairman Tommy Thompson), there is widespread optimism in ProRail that their 15 years' hard work will result in train service in the foreseeable future.

## STATION GRANT IDEAS WANTED

The Great American Station Foundation seeks grant applications for rail revitalization projects. This year's due date is April 14. Grants range from \$5,000 to \$30,000, mostly as seed grants to jump-start community efforts to restore a station and make it into an intermodal facility. For full information, contact Janice Varela at 505/425-8055 or visit web site <<http://www.stationfoundation.org/2000Application.html>>.

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