



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

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417 New Jersey Avenue, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003
202-546-1550

Orren Beaty, President
Ross Capon, Executive Director
Thomas G. Crikelair, Assistant Director

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(No. 7 was mailed August 4)

RETURN REQUESTED

BI-LEVELS SCRUTINIZED

After nearly 30 years, newly designed and manufactured long-haul passenger equipment may soon again be a reality in the U.S. Amtrak's recently revised order for bi-level cars now calls for a total of 249: 102 coaches, 42 combination coach/baggage cars, 35 diners, and 70 mixed class sleepers, all with electric heating and air-conditioning.

While enthusiasm is certainly warranted, it should not blind one to the fact that Amtrak does not appear to have addressed major design issues satisfactorily, although there may yet be time for corrections. We refer to: lounge and dome facilities; leg-rest seating; sleeping accommodations and fares.

In making the following criticisms, we are keenly aware that Amtrak faces a difficult task balancing concerns of economy and consumer satisfaction in a design art which has been neglected for twenty years.

We would have preferred to discuss our comments at greater length with Amtrak officials. But since time is short and it may be a long time before such equipment can be ordered, we are presenting the latest information we have obtained, along with our comments, and an invitation to NARP members to write to us or Amtrak with your comments.

Lounges and domes: One of the most glaring deficiencies in the current Amtrak order is the absence of lounge, dome, or snack cars. Anyone who has ridden or worked on a long-haul

new diners will apparently be reserved as lounge areas, and a few booths and tables (without snack service) may be added in some coaches. So Amtrak is aware of the problem and is reportedly taking steps to correct it. Still, the problem should not have arisen in the first place.

But the true dome seems doomed in Amtrak's planning. The "sightseer-lounge" cars are said to be equivalent to the ex-Santa

"To see something of the American scene I took the train from Minneapolis. . . I spent a long time in the sun-drenched, bubble-domed car high above the train which gave me an unrestricted view all around. . . British Rail could learn a thing or two from Amtrak. . ."

—Ann Steele in the *Daily Telegraph*, London
quoted in an Amtrak press release

Fe hi-level lounge cars now on the "Southwest Ltd." They will have curved window panes along the upper walls of the cars, and are offered as a compromise to those who want domes. But dome characteristics may not be provided by the envisioned high-level lounges:

The dome, where attention is focused outside the train, is very different from the lounge, where the focus is inside. In a dome,

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SALT LAKE CITY—BOISE—PORTLAND

The Amtrak Board, following a Congressional mandate, has designated an experimental route linking Portland, Ore., with Boise, Ogden, and Salt Lake City. The train is expected to begin operating next spring.

Amtrak's press release indicated that its staff recommends use of Amfleet equipment, and a schedule permitting through operation to and from Seattle, as well as good connections at Ogden and Salt Lake City with Amtrak and Rio Grande trains serving points to the east.

The absence of sleepers on the overnight run presumably will require Amtrak to obtain an exemption from the ICC. NARP believes that a coach-only service is acceptable initially, but that the Amfleet cars should be fitted with leg-rests before being used in the service.

train knows that some kind of fully operative lounge facility is absolutely essential on these trains.

Amtrak officials insist that they recognize this. Thirty-five bi-level "sightseer-lounge" cars, they say, will be ordered, probably in October. But, due to the time required for actual manufacture, new bi-level trains will operate for up to a year or more without regular lounge accommodations. To compensate, portions of the

Nationwide Rail Lines Classified

Secretary of Transportation William T. Coleman, Jr., in compliance with the 4R Act, released a report, *Preliminary Standards, Classification, and Designation of Lines of Class I Railroads in the United States*. In it, every mile of rail line in the nation is placed in one of the following categories: A or Potential A Mainline, B Mainline, or A, B, or Defense-Essential Branchline.

The final version of this report, due January 30 after public comments have been considered, is to enable the Secretary, in responding to railroad applications for Federal funds for track improvements, to put the funds "where they will do the most good".

Thus, to the extent that the railroad industry generally or individual companies become dependent on Federal aid, the designations may determine which lines survive. (It seems likely that any move toward a better intermodal balance will come through increased aid to railroads rather than reduced aid to other modes.)

The present report identifies eleven "Corridors of Excess Capacity" (including Chicago-Omaha), all served by at least four

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Bi-Levels Scrutinized (cont'd. from p. 1)

windows provide as wide a range of viewing as possible, with windows front, back, and over-head; lights are kept off at night; seats face forward, and, because of raised floors, are as close to the windows (and to the scenery) as possible, instead of far below the roof as in a lounge car.

In the bi-level equipment, with the possible exception of forward and rear vision, Amtrak should be able to provide all of the "old dome" features, including roof windows. Portions of some of the new coaches could be partitioned off for this purpose.

Amtrak should also consider assembling, for its most scenic routes, conventional equipment rebuilt with electric heating and air-conditioning, including a maximum number of existing dome cars.

Leg-rest seating: We have heard reports that Amtrak will provide all over-night travelers on the new coaches with traditional full leg-rest seats. We hope these reports are true.

Anyone who has traveled long distances in coach accommodations knows that the presence of leg-rests, along with ample leg and feet room, is vital on an over-night trip. With the leg-rests currently available on most of Amtrak's Western route equipment it is quite possible to obtain a full 6-8 hours of uninterrupted night-time sleep. Most of Amtrak's passengers travel coach.

Sleeping car accommodations: Bi-level sleepers currently on order include double "first-class" rooms and double "economy" rooms, but no single sleeping accommodations of either class. There will also be two special rooms on each car: a family room and a room for the handicapped with a special toilet.

The "first-class" rooms are larger than the existing double bedrooms and, like the existing bedrooms, will include complete private washroom facilities. The economy rooms have no such facilities, but will have full-width beds, contrasted with the narrow slumbercoach beds. The layout apparently will be five first-class bedrooms and ten economy rooms upstairs; downstairs will be four economy rooms, the two special rooms, and five public restrooms required for the economy room passengers.

NARP believes that relative charges for the new first-class and economy accommodations should be no higher than for present first-class and slumbercoach rooms, respectively, even if this means redesigning the rooms to more closely approximate the size of existing rooms. Further, steps should be taken to assure that single travelers will be able to obtain private rooms at rates which, on a relative basis, are no higher than current charges for roomettes and slumbercoach single-rooms.

The all-double-room plan raises serious questions: Is the demand for double rooms, especially during off-peak seasons, high enough to justify elimination of single rooms? Even if it is high enough, will it be economically feasible for Amtrak to sell at least half of the double rooms — especially the new larger first-class ones — at the single-occupancy rates we believe essential?

We are told that "fair" single-occupancy rates will be offered to

persons traveling alone who wish a private bedroom accommodation, but such a promise is easier for Amtrak to make now when justifying an equipment order than later when actually establishing or revising fares. It does not appear that adequate measures have been taken to see that full use will be made of available space or to guarantee that the single traveler will be treated fairly.

Rail Lines Classified (cont'd. from p. 1)

routes, and designates all of these routes "Potential A Mainlines. . . to avoid pre-judgment by the (DOT) of the relative treatment of the competing routes in any rationalization plan (developed) by the railroads" affected.

The problem, if you assume that rationalization is required, is that DOT's posture and the law seem based on the unlikely assumption that competing railroads in these corridors will be able to agree on consolidation plans.

Further, the law may also need to be changed to give the public a chance to comment on the preliminary designation of lines in the "Corridors of Excess Capacity" — just as it does now for the rest of the system — before those designations are finalized.

Even the preliminary designations in these corridors should be made only after public-interest considerations, such as passenger service potential, have been examined by DOT, Amtrak, the general public, and the Rail Services Planning Office (RSPO). NARP is particularly concerned, for example, that Rock Island's Chicago-Omaha line survive whatever "rationalization" may take place.

The ICC RSPO, 1900 L St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036, is holding nationwide hearings September 13-23, and will also consider written comments (10 copies on 8½ x 11" paper) received by October 1 in developing its December 1 report to the Secretary. "Statements received (by RSPO) after October 1 will be made a part of the record, but may not be reviewed by the Office."

The report is available for inspection at 24 ICC and 8 Federal RR Administration regional offices, and 8 offices of (DOT) Secretarial Representatives. It can be ordered from the U.S. Government Printing Office, Dept. of Public Documents, Washington, D.C. 20402. Vol. I is \$1.15, order #050-005-00016-0; Vol. II, which has all the maps, costs \$4.40, order #050-005-00015-1, but GPO requires 3-4 weeks to process mail orders; sending a telegram would save about a week.

FARES AND SERVICES

INTERCITY: New York Governor Hugh Carey has finally decided in favor of retaining the daylight NY-Albany-Montreal "Adirondack" for four more years. Its continuation through June 30, 1977, is assured; continuation thereafter depends on action of the state legislature.

A fourth LA-San Diego daily roundtrip (4:10 PM from LA; 8:20 PM from San Diego) began operation on September 1, funded jointly by Amtrak and California DOT under Sec. 403(b) of the Amtrak law. Amfleet equipment is being used.

The NY-Savannah "Palmetto" will continue indefinitely; it was not removed September 8 as called for in earlier plans. 25% reductions on round-trip fares were introduced July 25 on the Washington-Richmond segment of the run, as well as on the Washington-Newport News segment of the NY-Newport News "Colonial".

September 8 through next May 15, U.S.A. Rail Passes will cost \$165, \$220, and \$275, for 14, 21, and 30 days, respectively, of unlimited coach travel on Amtrak and Southern trains. Special off-peak coach fares to Florida are offered through December 17.

September 7 was to be the last day of operation for Amtrak's United Aircraft turbotrains on the Boston-New York line.

COMMUTER: Off-peak bargain fares are no longer offered on Boston and Maine Railroad commuter trains, at the direction of the Mass. Bay Transportation Authority.

Organization of the NARP Board

by Orren Beaty

NARP was organized by a few dedicated people who in the mid-1960s determined that strong and continuing efforts were needed to save railroad passenger service in this country.

The work and contributions of Tony Haswell at that time are legend. He and some associates provided money, work, and leadership to create an effective organization of supporters of rail passenger service, gaining nationwide participation.

NARP drew its first Board of Directors and Advisory Committee largely from this group: Lawyers who had initiated and fought "Train Off" cases before the ICC and the courts; persons in the media; some sympathetic railroaders; others.

This sufficed as NARP incorporated in 1967, moved from Chicago to Washington, and gained strength and recognition — as long as Tony Haswell could contribute more than full time to the effort and a large portion of his personal financial resources. When, in 1974, it became clear that his time and money could no longer be available, new by-laws were approved featuring an expanded Board of Directors, with representation from regions, created to include all parts of the country.

The old Board provided that the new one would first be appointive, selected from among those who had made important contributions to the cause, whether or not through NARP, and who were willing to volunteer for additional service. After the first year it would be elected by the membership at meetings in each of the 12 regions.

A vital source of membership on the expanded Board was the old Board — those well-seasoned Directors who desired to continue the effort, as well as their like-minded associates. Others were chosen on the basis of material financial contributions; still others were logical choices because of their professional work — in publishing, the media, etc., or whose writings had furthered the cause. The variety of experience and professions on the expanded board was virtually endless; the common characteristic was the belief that the nation needed better rail passenger service and that NARP was a logical — in fact, the only visible — instrument for achieving this.

Last January, the first regional membership meetings were held. The widest participation occurred where NARP and state or regional associations of rail passenger supporters worked together in the planning and execution.

Some meetings were only lightly attended. Meeting arrangements were made belatedly in some cases; NARP itself got the final notices in the December 1975 News into the mails too late for some West Coast members.

The reaction to the meetings generally was good; new enthusiasm developed. In one region, however, there were some objections to the way in which proxy voting was handled. Also, in geographically larger regions, some protested that meeting sites were too distant for many members to attend without spending more than a day's time.

We have had three meetings of the enlarged Board — expanded further this year by appointment of nine "at large" Directors to round out geographical representation and broaden our collective expertise. Attendance has been good, but the inability of some directors to attend emphasizes the difficulty of having well-attended national membership meetings as once were attempted. It is a personal financial burden, as well as time-consuming, for Board members to attend these important (to NARP) semi-annual meetings — April in Washington and October in Chicago.

In the October News, we expect to give details on the next set of annual regional membership meetings. This should provide reasonable advance notice.

As for proxy voting (permitted under the by-laws), we ask that persons interested in standing for election to the Board notify the Washington office by mid-October. Then, members will know who, in addition to the present Board members, will be submitted

to a vote in the membership meetings. Voting may be in person at the regional meeting, or by any personal letter or card listing choices for Director positions mailed to the director in charge of that regional meeting, and received by the director before the day of the meeting.

NARP's leadership structure can be changed as events and problems make advisable. We will discuss other aspects of this subject in the near future. In the meantime, we will welcome comments or suggestions.

Florida Rail Passenger Conference

Representatives of regional, state, and national transportation organizations met in Gainesville, Florida the weekend of August 7 and 8 for a conference on "Rail Passenger Service in the Southeast" — sponsored by the University of Florida Student Body. Addressing the assembly of officials, students, and concerned citizens at the opening session were two friends of the railroad passenger, Florida Congressmen Bill Chapell Jr. and Don Fuqua.

Also addressing the conference were representatives of the United Transportation Union, Florida DOT, Amtrak, the University of Florida Student Body, founding members of the South East Transportation Coalition (SETC), and NARP Assistant Director Tom Crikelair. Coordinating the conference was Mr. O.F. Hernandez-Campos of Gainesville.

Topics discussed included: new Florida intra-state service; reinstatement of the New Orleans-Jacksonville "Gulf Wind"; and possible routing of the "Floridian" through Atlanta, Macon, and possibly Savannah.

Official formation of the "South East Transportation Coalition" took place in Gainesville, Florida on Aug. 7. Rail passenger activists from NARP Region V met to draw up a list of charter resolutions and to elect an initial slate of officers. Members resolved to promote more and better rail passenger service in the Southeast and, among other things, to support NARP in its Washington activities and to work for expanded NARP membership. Elected officers are: W.O. Jones (Savannah, Ga.), President; Steven T. Evans (Gautier, Miss.) Vice-President; and Henry DiVenuto (Macon, Ga.), Secretary/Treasurer. DiVenuto is also managing editor of "Track Four," the SETC's monthly newsletter. For information and/or subscription to "Track Four," write Henry DiVenuto, 2918 Houston Avenue, Macon, Ga. 31206.

"FLORIDIAN" SCHEDULE CHANGED, AUTO-TRAIN ADDED
From October 31, Auto-Train will restore Louisville—Sanford, Fla., service and make it daily by coupling it to Amtrak's Chicago-Miami/St. Petersburg "Floridian", which will be changed to a 2-day-1-night schedule, using A-T's suburban Louisville station to permit elimination of a 1.2-mile backup move. Auto-Train and Amtrak will provide separate on-board services without passenger access between the two sections.

SMOKING RULES CHANGED, CLARIFIED
In an August 11 order amending its March 29 regulations regarding smoking on intercity passenger trains, the ICC said that smoking may be permitted in parlor cars. Under the March 29 regulations, smoking in a parlor car was permitted only on a train which carried a second parlor car designated non-smoking. Smoking may now be permitted in all snack, lounge, sleeping, and parlor cars.
The Commission rejected Amtrak's request that smoking be permitted in dining cars, but clarified that "full service" dining cars are the food service cars where smoking is not to be permitted. The Commission also made it clear that, if a train carries only one dome, smoking is not permitted in it.

Northeast Corridor Fight Continues

Amtrak has been faced since April 1 with an increasingly severe shortage of funds as a result of the continuing actions of Secretary of Transportation William Coleman. As reported earlier, he has been impounding \$3 million of Amtrak's funds every month. Interest charges on late payments to operating railroads stemming from the impoundment have already totaled \$60,000. The Secretary is trying to push Amtrak toward a financial crisis which will force it to hand over control of the Northeast Corridor to the DOT.

The crisis is not far off: Amtrak's first payment to ConRail for the

LATE FLASHES: DOT and the Amtrak Board have reportedly signed an agreement on the Northeast Corridor but the terms agreed to are unclear as we go to press.

On September 1, the Senate passed the Amtrak Authorization, adding \$10 million to permit Amtrak to return to Cleveland Union Terminal, and mandating a study comparing costs of providing coach and first-class services.

Corridor properties comes due October 1. Amtrak has tried since early April to get the Secretary to agree to the Amtrak Board's plan to draw on Amtrak's stock of available loan guarantees to meet the initial down-payment of \$15 million. He refuses to approve this. ConRail, meanwhile, has been expecting to receive these funds from Amtrak and ConRail may have its own financial crisis if Amtrak cannot pay.

The July News reported Senator Magnuson's request to the General Accounting Office to determine whether the Secretary's withholding of Amtrak funds is an illegal impoundment. In a 15-page report issued July 29, the GAO found "that the arrangement between Amtrak and ConRail for purchase of the Northeast Corridor is not legally objectionable," and that "neither the Antideficiency Act nor any other statutory provision provides a legal basis for DOT to deny or withhold operating grant payments to Amtrak because of the purchase agreement."

Resolutions disapproving the Secretary's "deferral of budget authority" were thereupon submitted in the Senate by Senators Hartke and Bayh (both D-Ind.), Beall (R-Md.), Buckley (R-NY), Case (R-NJ), Kennedy (D-Mass.), Magnuson (D-Wash.), Pastore (D-RI), Weicker (R-Ct.), and Williams (D-NJ) and in the House by Rep. Joe Moakley (D-Mass.). The Impoundment Control Act of 1974 provides that if either house of Congress passes a resolution and if funds are not then released, the Secretary can be prosecuted in court.

In submitting the Senate resolution, Sen. Hartke stated: "...The (DOT) has been illegally withholding authorized and appropriated funds for the use of (Amtrak) in an attempt to coerce Amtrak and (Conrail) to rescind a legal agreement by which ConRail sold... the Northeast Corridor to Amtrak. Congress specifically provided for the possibility of just such a sale, if... Amtrak and Conrail could agree to it. Unfortunately, the (DOT) was not interested in following the law and tried to force the parties to renegotiate this sale agreement by illegally impounding funds. It is unfortunate that so much time needs to be spent in restraining the counterproductive policies of the Department of Transportation. ..."

Senate action on the resolution, initially set for August 9, was postponed because of a last-minute request from the Secretary that he be allowed to appear and defend his actions. This took place August 10 before a joint hearing of the Senate Commerce, Appropriations, and Budget Committees.

The Secretary attempted to diffuse and obscure the impoundment issue by raising several unrelated issues. And he insisted, as he had in June to delay the start of the GAO study, that Amtrak and DOT were still negotiating, that they were near to agreeing (i.e. that the Amtrak directors were near to caving in to DOT pressures), and that the Senate resolution would be a premature and unnecessary interference in the orderly progress of negotiations.

Mr. Coleman bought some more time. The Senators, wishing to

act with restraint in so severe a matter as issuing a Congressional reprimand of an Administration Cabinet-member, agreed to hold off action on the resolution, and asked DOT and Amtrak to negotiate with a view towards reaching an agreement by August 23, the close of the convention recess.

As the summer draws to a close, Amtrak's financial situation becomes tighter — not just in the Corridor, but nationwide. The Secretary knows this and has given little indication of willingness



But, Officer, "the Department is still negotiating with Amtrak..." to release the money until his terms are met.

The Secretary wants Amtrak to agree that Government investment in the Corridor, both for the Amtrak purchase and for capital improvements, would take the form not of grants, but of loans to Amtrak. (This would require changes in existing law.) Congress could then ask to be repaid at any time, reclaiming the property for the Government if Amtrak could not pay. If the Congress asked to be repaid, Amtrak would be charged interest on the \$1.8 billion Corridor investment!

The Secretary also wants Amtrak to agree that final decisions on design and reconstruction of the Corridor would lie with DOT. Amtrak could not overrule a DOT decision without taking the Secretary to court and proving that he acted in an "arbitrary and capricious" manner. Amtrak insists that, because it will be responsible for operations both during and after construction, it must have the final say as to how the project is to be implemented. The simple fact is that Amtrak believes in the Corridor project, while some top DOT officials do not.

Secretary Coleman's position can be recognized as an attempt to lay the groundwork for a future dismantling of Amtrak. We have said it before: Amtrak was incorporated by the Congress and the President for the citizens of the U.S. because of a recognized public need. The Secretary claims to be "protecting the public". He apparently feels that he must protect the public from Amtrak, from the Congress, and ultimately from itself. Is it too provincial of NARP to feel that the U.S. deserves to have a Secretary of Transportation who has a more enlightened and judicious attitude towards the law and the need for public transportation than Secretary Coleman's actions would seem to indicate?