



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

Vol. 11, No. 4

April, 1977

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
Wendy Chick, Circulation Manager

Membership dues start at \$15/year (\$7.50 for those under 21 and over 65) and include a subscription to NEWS, published monthly except in November. Any material herein may be reproduced without permission. Credit to the source is requested.

(No. 3 was mailed Apr. 21)

RETURN REQUESTED

WHITE HOUSE SUPPORT

On February 18, NARP's Orren Beaty sent a mailgram to President Carter urging his support for a \$500 million capital budget for Amtrak in FY 1978. Below is the full text of the reply:

The White House, May 5, 1977

Dear Mr. Beaty:

The President has asked me to respond to your mailgram of February 18, 1977, in which you express interest for a strong governmental commitment and investment in Amtrak. I sincerely regret that this response is so belated.

This Administration firmly believes that rail passenger service will continue to play an important role in the Nation's transportation system. We are aware that there have been serious differences in the past between Congress and the Executive

Amtrak Chief Addresses NARP Board

"The 'Starlight' (Los Angeles-Seattle) is our number one train. Our problem there is we haven't got room to haul anyone else."

This was part of the message brought by Amtrak President Paul Reistrup during his second appearance before the NARP Board of Directors, April 23 in Washington, D.C. Reistrup first addressed the Board as a guest speaker two years earlier, just after he came to Amtrak.

The above quote was in response to Region XII Director Al Runte's call for better localized promotion of rail travel on the West Coast. Reistrup questioned the advisability of spending advertising money "...if I get everybody calling up and... (I have to tell them), 'Sorry, but we haven't got room to haul you'..."

A second train needs to be added to the West Coast route, something which Reistrup indicated he'd like to do. He said that Amtrak has been talking with the California DOT about this and about a possible Los Angeles-Santa Barbara corridor service.

Reistrup kept his initial remarks brief and devoted most of his time to fielding questions from the directors, which he did with the same openness and directness that has won him much respect on Capitol Hill.

In the Northeast Corridor, Reistrup hopes to see some speed-ups of Amfleet trains as early as this fall. Metroliner schedule changes would not be likely, he said, until next year, pointing out that Metroliner performances with existing schedules need to be made more reliable first.

Reistrup hopes to replace the missing 12 miles of track east of Albany, New York, with used rail from the Northeast Corridor — resulting in 60 m.p.h. track, at a cost of approximately \$1.5 million.

(continued on p. 4)

Branch concerning Amtrak and we are working to establish a more constructive and effective relationship. The Secretary of Transportation, Brock Adams, has taken the lead in this effort. As a statutory member of Amtrak's Board of Directors, it is his intention to pursue policies which will assure that rail passenger transportation continues to serve an important role.

As you know, over the past several years more than \$1 billion has been appropriated by the Congress for Amtrak's capital program. Much of this investment has yet to be translated into service improvements by Amtrak. This Administration nevertheless has supported a capital budget for Amtrak of \$105 million for FY 1978, an increase of \$25 million over the request by the prior Administration. This amount should be sufficient to meet short-term requirements and will over time provide a basis for further upgrading of Amtrak service.

Meanwhile, the Department intends to review carefully Amtrak's proposals for capital improvements in the future and will make appropriate budget recommendations with due regard to its broader responsibilities for assessing competing transportation needs.

We appreciate your continuing support and encouragement for improved rail passenger transportation service.

Sincerely,
Kurt L. Schmoke
Assistant Director
Domestic Policy Staff

NARP Testifies on Amtrak Appropriations

NARP appeared before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, chaired by John J. McFall (D-Cal.) to testify regarding Amtrak's appropriations for Fiscal Year 1978 (which begins Oct. 1, 1977).

NARP Executive Director Ross Capon told the Committee: "The main concern which I would like to bring to your attention is our belief that priority should be given to adequate funding of Amtrak's capital program, and especially to procurement of new cars for the Eastern long-distance train. . ."

The Carter Administration has suggested \$105 and \$500 million for capital and operating grants respectively. At March hearings before both House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees, Amtrak President Paul Reistrup expressed his willingness to go along with these figures.

"It is our understanding," Capon said, "that the \$25 million difference between the President's \$105 million request and the \$130 million already authorized would be used by Amtrak for those Eastern cars."
(continued on p. 2)

Amtrak Appropriations (cont. from p. 1)

Capon pointed out to the Committee that the longer the needed improvements are put off, the more severely inflation will increase the cost of those improvements, and the longer Amtrak's operating deficits will be burdened with unnecessarily high costs.

In similar testimony delivered before Senator Birch Bayh's (D-Ind.) Appropriations Subcommittee on April 26, Capon added: "We applaud the President's attempt — in his two recent energy addresses — to make the nation more aware of the need to conserve energy. But we would like to see more emphasis on public transportation. . . Merely encouraging people to reduce auto usage will have little effect unless energy-efficient alternatives are conveniently available."

Capon went on to point out that, because of a limited supply of locomotives and passenger cars, Amtrak now lacks sufficient capacity to handle any significant increase in patronage. "The new cars now on order," he cautioned, "will not be enough to dramatically alter the situation."

When the House Appropriations Subcommittee met on April 28 to decide what funding levels to recommend to the full Committee, Chairman McFall attempted to cut Amtrak's capital and operating funding to \$85 million and \$477 million, respectively — \$20 and \$23 million below the President's recommendations.

But the California Congressman's proposed cuts met with firm opposition from other members. In the resulting compromise, the Subcommittee approved \$95 million for capital expenditures and \$490 million for operations.

The Senate Subcommittee is expected to consider the matter in early June.

Amtrak officials may express dismay that the FY 1978 funding levels being discussed by the Administration and the Congress do not include enough money for the purchase of single-level long-haul cars. But over the past months the only audible voice in town

arguing for those cars has been NARP.

In requesting money for the cars in question, Amtrak did little more than offer bottom line dollar figures, along with a few cursory, descriptive sentences in the Five Year Plan.

Amtrak should take heed of what Mr. Schmoke of the White House Staff has told NARP, i.e., that the Department of Transportation "intends to review carefully Amtrak's proposals for capital improvements in the future. . ."

A related message was sent by FRA's Director of Planning and Budget Development, W.H. FitzGerald, to Senator Strom Thurmond of S.C., who wrote to FRA on behalf of NARP member B.E. Ransom. Echoing a complaint made by several Congressional staff members, FitzGerald told Senator Thurmond that Amtrak's President, Mr. Reistrup, had made "no commitment as to probable geographical distribution of either (the single-level cars) or the (bilevel) cars being delivered in 1977/78. . ."

Amtrak has plans and proposals for the distribution of this equipment, but Amtrak management has apparently never seen fit to make this information available to the Administration or to Congress.

Mr. FitzGerald makes it clear that the Administration either cannot or will not approve an increase over the \$105 million already recommended — until Amtrak provides the necessary detailed justifications for such increased investment. For he states in his letter: ". . . the General Accounting Office, in 1976, recommended detailed market analyses as a prerequisite to Amtrak requests for capital grants to buy additional equipment. Pending completion of these studies, we support the project mix in the \$105 million 1978 capital grant request."

This, to be sure, is not the first time that Amtrak has heard from NARP staff about the Corporation's insufficient efforts to justify the single-level car program. We have received assurances, however, that full and detailed justifications are now being put together.

Ten Years of Progress

by Orren Beaty

The first two-day meeting of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Railroad Passengers was held in Washington in late April, marking the organization's 10th anniversary.

Directors heard a talk by Amtrak President Paul H. Reistrup (see separate story). The anniversary was marked with a reception well-attended by congressional staff people, newspaper and radio reporters, and representatives of the Administration and Amtrak.

Among those present were a former NARP Executive Director, Woodruff (Woody) Price, now special assistant to Secretary of Transportation Brock Adams; Amtrak Director Charlie Luna; Amtrak vice presidents Ed Edell and Bruce Pike; Rep. Nick Rahall (D-WV); Washington representatives of railroad labor unions; National Geographic book editor Merrill Windsor, who directed preparation of the Society's recent book, *Railroads: The Great American Adventure*; researchers for the book; and Anthony Haswell of Chicago, who founded the Association and has been widely credited with being one of the driving forces which helped preserve a national rail passenger system.

In 1967, when Tony Haswell filed incorporation papers and set up an office in Chicago, railroad passenger service in the United States was disappearing at an alarming rate.

Directors who came to town early had the opportunity to walk by the offices of their senators and representatives to put in a good word for continuing support for Amtrak and for a balanced national transportation system which tries to meet projected energy problems by increased emphasis on energy-efficient railroads. They also attended a meeting of the Amtrak Board of Directors, the second "open" meeting since the Federal "sunshine" law became effective.

They heard reports of communications between NARP and Secy. Adams; Dr. James Schlesinger, the President's energy adviser and soon-to-be Secretary of the new Dept. of Energy; and the Presidential Personnel Office, which is evaluating possible appointments to fill long-standing vacancies on the Amtrak

Board. They also heard a report of membership gains through an aggressive mail solicitation campaign.

In 10 years, NARP has gone from a small, privately-financed organization to a broad-based, membership-financed association, with popularly-elected Directors and Board-directed policy.

Special certificates of appreciation were presented to Tony Haswell, as the founder, and Mrs. Dorothy D. Spivack of New Jersey, one of a small number of special supporters who have helped NARP through difficult financial times.

Plans for NARP's future course of action were discussed and charted, and officers were elected in accordance with the by-

An Arizona state senator, Sue Dye of Tucson, was elected president of the newly organized Rail Passenger Association of the Southwest (RPAS). Among the directors chosen at the first RPAS meeting, in Albuquerque March 26, was NARP Board Member Charles Montooth.

The group passed resolutions calling for: daily operation of the now-thrice-weekly Los Angeles-New Orleans "Sunset Ltd."; restoration of rail passenger service between southwestern cities and Denver and Dallas/Fort Worth; and the appointment by President Carter of Ronald Sheck, a professor at the University of New Mexico, to the Amtrak Board of Directors.

laws: George Tyson of Baltimore as Secretary, and Joseph F. Horning, Jr., of Washington, D.C., as Treasurer, filling jobs held for many years by one of the NARP pioneers, Charles W. Schoeneman of Reston, Va., who asked that he not be re-elected. Other officers remain the same: Ross Capon as Executive Director will continue to direct the day-to-day operation of the organization; Orren Beaty as President; and the following Executive Committee members will continue to serve: Peter B. Bell; Raymond Hannon; Lorena F. Lemons; Edwin P. Patton; Thomas C. Southerland; James M.S. Ullman; and Rogers E.M. Whitaker.

Director Peter B. Bell of the District of Columbia, one of the early supporters of NARP, entertained the directors at his home with a reception as the final event.

Resolutions Approved by the NARP Board

I. In the final analysis, efficient freight and rail passenger service in the U.S. depends upon the full restoration of the nation's tracks, roadbeds, and signal facilities to maximum speed and capacity standards. Accordingly, the National Association of Railroad Passengers calls upon Congress and the Administration to assist the railroad industry in carrying out such rehabilitation, especially in view of increasing energy shortages of the future.

II. Because of its limited supply of locomotives and passenger cars, Amtrak lacks the capacity to meet any measurable increase in demand resulting from energy scarcity. NARP asks the Carter Administration to recommend and Congress to approve sufficient capital funding to allow Amtrak to expand its fleet to meet the impending shift from private motor vehicles to rail transportation.

III. NARP calls upon Amtrak to delegate significant marketing activities to the respective regions, the better to reaffirm Amtrak's uniqueness as the mode of travel that best preserves and restores the beauty, diversity, and sense of community of the American scene.

IV. We urge Amtrak to increase its overall efficiency in order to reduce its cost per passenger mile. This should include tightening its administration of contracts with the railroads, making the most productive use of existing labor contracts, and negotiating new agreements where appropriate.

V. As one of the nation's fastest growing industries, tourism stands to suffer most from the absence of balanced transportation in the U.S. Amtrak can make an important contribution to the tourist industry, and NARP calls upon Congress and the Administration to provide adequate support to enable Amtrak to meet this goal.

VI. The manner in which Amtrak assigns fixed costs to its

individual trains distorts the fact that some of these routes actually earn revenues over and above direct expenses. Amtrak must recognize that its fixed costs will remain regardless of the number of trains operated. NARP calls upon Amtrak, in its legally mandated reports to Congress, to separate fixed costs from direct operating costs to show the true economic potential of individual trains.

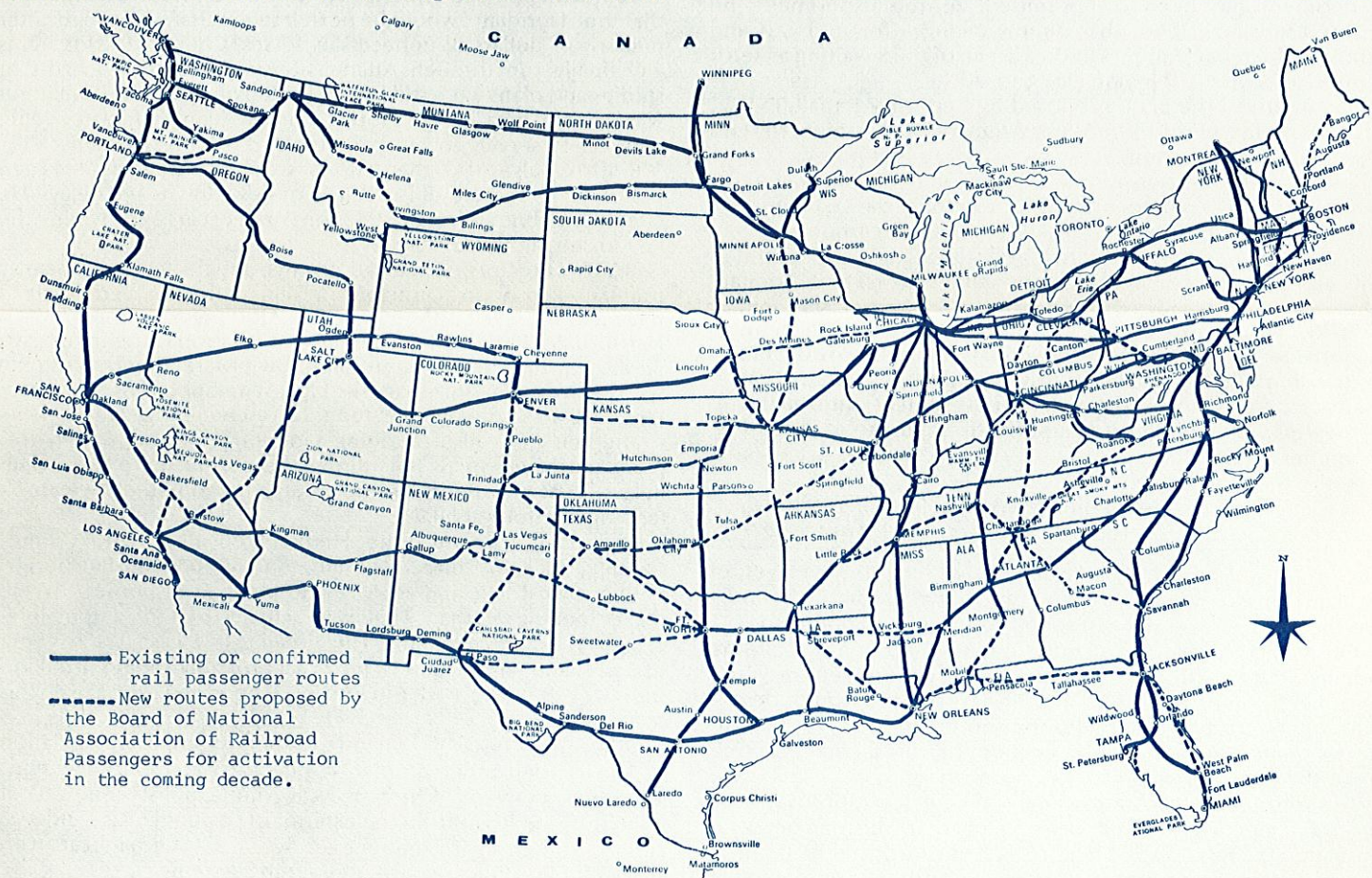
VII. In order to reduce overall costs per passenger mile and in light of the relationship between fixed and direct operating costs, NARP urges Amtrak to increase the frequency of service over appropriate existing routes, thereby making more efficient use of fixed facilities, while providing more convenient service to the public.

VIII. Amtrak has embarked upon a program of renovating existing cars, converting from steam to all-electric heating and air-conditioning systems. NARP commends Amtrak for this forward step and encourages it to extend this program to include all structurally sound and restorable rolling stock.

IX. NARP calls upon Amtrak to emphasize and retain center city services and station facilities, and we congratulate the Amtrak Board of Directors on its latest decision to do so in St. Louis. Also, we support the establishment of supplementary suburban stations in those metropolitan areas where they are justified.

X. NARP urges Amtrak to emphasize logical connections between trains in setting its schedules, and in particular urges a rescheduling of the St. Louis-Laredo "Inter-American" to give it good East Coast connections with the "National Limited" at St. Louis.

After a six-month study directed by Atlanta Board member John Martin, the NARP Board approved a plan for expanded rail passenger service. (See map below.) The committee will continue to meet, and welcomes comments. Send them to John R. Martin, P.O. Drawer 1734, Atlanta, GA 30301.



Sen. Byrd Fights for Passenger Trains

Senate Majority Leader Robert Byrd (D-WV) is lending the full weight of his office to advance the argument for the continued need for rail passenger service. In addition to making a pro-rail statement about the nation generally and the Northeast Corridor in particular (see box), Byrd used the occasion of Amtrak's appearance before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on

"I believe that we should begin immediately to assist the railroad industry to rebuild and revitalize our rail system for both passenger and freight transportation. This action may require rethinking the priorities established by the previous administration. . .

"It is also vital that the administration begin the massive rehabilitation of the Northeast corridor, which Congress has required to be completed within 5 years of (February, 1976). Not only would this undertaking provide many needed jobs, but it would provide vastly improved, energy-efficient transportation for the 20 percent of the Nation's population who live on 2 percent of our land in the crowded urban megalopolis from Boston to Washington. . ."

—Senate Majority Leader Robert C. Byrd

Transportation to present his case for the continuation of the "Mountaineer". The train was designated by the Secretary of Transportation in 1974 as an "experimental" service to operate between Norfolk and Cincinnati. (Amtrak ran it through to Chicago, combining it west of Ashland, Ky., with the "James Whitcomb Riley".) It was to run for two years after its March 25, 1975, inauguration, after which the Secretary of Transportation was to decide whether ridership warranted termination of the service or not.

The Senator, citing rundown equipment, no local promotion, and unreliable performance, argued that the so-called experiment has been compromised. A true experiment, he insisted, must be more than simply taking a few old cars and running them back and forth on a piece of track waiting to see if someone happens to come along to ride.

He endorsed the plan, proposed by Rep. Nick Rahall (D-WV) along with the other three West Virginia Congressmen, to send the train to Washington, D.C., instead of to Norfolk, Va.

Secretary Adams postponed his decision a few times, the first delay, thirty days, compensating for the thirty days early in 1977 when Amtrak cancelled the run due to weather troubles.

On May 1, Amtrak rescheduled the "Riley" and ended through-car service on the "Mountaineer" west of Tri-State

"Government exists to provide services citizens cannot provide for themselves. Individuals cannot provide rail transportation, and most private railroads won't. That leaves, in this case, the federal government, and in this newspaper's opinion it is a perfectly valid use of our tax money."

—Bluefield, W.Va., *Telegraph*, editorial, April 3, 1977

Station (near Ashland, Ky.). Passengers wishing to travel west of Ashland must now wait in the night at Tri-State for about 4¼ hours westbound or 5¼ hours eastbound to make the connection.

On May 3, Adams, who could only say "yes" or "no" to the original routing, said "no". He said that the existing service would end by June 2, and that the 30-day period would permit passengers to find alternate transportation and Amtrak to develop and schedule a more economical replacement train to serve the same general area.

This referred to the Amtrak Board of Directors' approval, at its first open meeting March 30, of a scheme to run the train between Tri-State Station and Washington via Petersburg and Richmond, Va. if Adams dropped the old routing. The attractiveness of

running two sides of the triangle (Lynchburg-Petersburg-Washington) stemmed from the high rates which Southern, a "non-Amtrak" railroad, required for a direct run over its tracks through Charlottesville, and high ridership which, it was believed, could be expected on the Richmond-Washington segment.

But the day schedule under consideration, to give convenient connecting times in New York and Philadelphia, would duplicate or come close to the times of existing Richmond-Washington services. And the circuitous routing would likely depress ridership between the NY-Washington corridor and Roanoke and West Virginia.

NARP suggests that the best way to augment Richmond service is simply to run another train to Richmond, picking the times solely on the basis of filling obvious gaps in the existing Washington-Richmond schedule pattern.

And the best way to link Roanoke and West Virginia with Washington is directly, using Southern Washington-Lynchburg. This would also give almost half of the "Piedmont's" route the fair test for which NARP fought unsuccessfully last year. A first step might be to use Chessie (including the trackage rights over Southern) and N&W Washington-Charlottesville-Waynesboro-Roanoke. Hopefully, pressure would quickly build in bypassed Lynchburg to force Amtrak and Southern to play ball.

In any event, there was some question that Amtrak would be ready with an alternative by June 2, and a temporary cessation of service to Roanoke, Bluefield, and Williamson was possible.

Reistrup Addresses NARP (cont. from p. 1)

The original track was removed by Penn Central's William Moore, with the consent of former Amtrak President Roger Lewis. This has meant a costly detour adding 45 minutes to the Albany-Boston segment of the "Lake Shore Limited."

Commenting briefly on current efforts to restructure the "Mountaineer" (see related item this issue), Reistrup indicated that the "Floridian" would be next. It seems that, at long last, after millions of dollars of unnecessary losses, Chicago-Florida trains will finally run through Atlanta. Reistrup told the Board that studies and plans were still being worked on: Amtrak is looking at ways to send the Chicago-Florida train via Atlanta while providing connecting service to Montgomery and Mobile, Alabama.

Reistrup also said that efforts were being made to keep passengers informed of the causes of slow-downs and delays. He cited the public address systems on Amfleet cars as providing the key to solving this problem.

NARP Directors asked about two neglected, yet heavily populated corridors. Director Jim Ullman (Region I) emphasized the need to develop the "Inland Route" (New York-Boston via Hartford, Springfield, and Worcester). Reistrup responded: "We agree, Jim, and that came from our own Marketing Department . . . They've told us that that's the biggest untapped corridor in the United States. And in the June 12 rescheduling, we hope to strengthen it. We also are doing a lot of track work up there this year, which will help. But during the period there'll be some delays." The way things are now, Reistrup admitted, "we aren't tapping Hartford at all."

Region IV Director John Heffner repeated NARP's long-standing call for direct Washington-Cumberland-Pittsburgh-Youngstown-Cleveland service. Reistrup's response: "Well, we're looking at that. That was actually part of a (possible) Broadway-National scheme. The difficulty is — cash. We're going to start (national operations) next year probably about \$30 million short. . . ." "But where we can lose less," he added, "we can do this sort of thing."

Other items discussed included supervision and investigation of service personnel problems; needed track improvements, especially between Chicago and Minneapolis; removal of scratch-prone lexan from the exterior of passenger car windows, and experiments with refitting good quality long-haul cars with all-electric heating and air-conditioning systems.