Second Class Postage Paid
At Washington, D.C.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

NEWS

Vol. 15, No. 1 January, 1981

417 New Jersey Avenue, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003
202/546-1550
News Hotline (except during business hours), 202/546-1551
OFFICERS: John R. Martin, *President;* **Samuel E. Stokes, Jr.,** *Vice-President;* **George Tyson,** *Secretary;* **Joseph F. Horning, Jr.,** *Treasurer;* **STAFF: Ross Capon,** *Executive Director;* **Barry Williams,** *Assistant Director;* **Kay Stortz,** *Membership Director*

Membership dues start at $15/year ($7.50 for those under 21 and over 65) of which $4.00 is for the subscription to NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS NEWS, published monthly except in November.

(Vol. 14, No. 11, was mailed Dec. 10)

RETURN REQUESTED

ANTI-RAIL REPORT

Roads, Roads, Roads

President-elect Reagan's transportation task force put Amtrak, operating subsidies for urban *rail* transit, and construction of new urban rail transit systems (apparently including light rail) at the top of its list of candidates for "major reductions" in the budget for Fiscal Year 1981 which began Oct. 1.

Drew Lewis, Secretary-designate of Transportation and a member of the task force, appeared to endorse the report's cut-Amtrak-back-to-a-few-corridors recommendation at his Jan. 7 confirmation hearing before the Senate Commerce Committee. But he also told of the congressman he talked with who urged Amtrak cutbacks "but not in my district," a hint that Lewis understands how intense the pro-Amtrak pressures will become as soon as specific cutbacks are proposed.

The report anticipates further expansion of and adequate maintenance for the non-rail modes, and prompt contraction of Amtrak and Conrail services. It would allow the balance of the railroad industry to "twist in the winds" of public policies maintaining substantial, though reduced, subsidies to non-rail modes.

This is a blueprint for increasing dependency on oil, the price of which is rapidly escalating. It certainly does not constitute "getting big government off the backs of the people." The report seeks to reconcile its high-risk policy with Reagan economics primarily by adopting a narrow, anti-rail definition of subsidy that excludes federal "banking services" and the "opportunity cost of Federal capital" for which former Secretary Coleman says the non-rail modes do not pay.

Other rail-related items targetted for immediate funding cuts: Northeast Corridor Program; U.S. Railway Association (to which Congress gave the job of monitoring Conrail and releasing federal funds to it because DOT was too anti-rail); rail (freight) loan guarantees for aiding weak railroads; and research and development.

The only hit-list items which don't directly involve rail are "Staff reductions in Office of the Secretary and Assistant Secretaries" and "Federal aid highways (other than Interstate and Primary)." The latter, however, is partly offset by a proposal to establish a new federal program to assure proper maintenance of interstate highways.

The Good News

Aspects of the report which look sensible or at least represent improvements over current policy:

—Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) "capital support to upgrade established rail systems is generally worthwhile, and should be continued at a modest level." The report's only positive words for rail, though we'd like to know what "modest" means to the authors.

—More of the UMTA "formula funds . . . should be allocated on

WHAT NARP TOLD THE PRESIDENT-ELECT

"We urge you to consider a departure from your predecessors' policies. Focus on continuing to improve the efficiency of existing Amtrak services and assist states to improve several 'emerging' rail passenger corridors instead of trying to push massive service cuts through Congress.

"We think such a policy is justified by growing Amtrak ridership and sharply increased passenger satisfaction, the strong public support which Amtrak has enjoyed, the continuing positive impact of energy prices on rail's competitive position, and the opportunities to cut costs without cutting services. . . .

"As Monday-morning quarterbacks, we can easily observe that, if a President had taken this advice at any time during the past ten years, taxpayers and travelers alike would be better off now."

—NARP President John R. Martin, in a Dec. 15 letter to President-elect Reagan (Send NARP a s.a.s.e. for full text)

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Thanks to a new agreement with labor, Feb. 1 will see extension of the NY-Albany "Washington Irving" to Schenectady. Also then, the Chicago-New Orleans "Panama Ltd." will gain lounge space and will, at the request of New Orleans Mayor Ernest Morial, be renamed the "City of New Orleans" amid great fanfare.

There's a normally reliable Ogden connection from the eastbound "San Francisco Zephyr" to the limo that goes to the Salt Lake City-Denver domeliner "Rio Grande Zephyr" which provides a stunning tour of the Rockies. SFZ arrival and limo departure are both shown as 6:30 AM, but there's 45 minutes of slack in the SFZ schedule west of Ogden that's only needed when there's a storm on the Great Salt Lake, and the limo will hold until 6:40 AM if notified by Amtrak.

A safe connection to the RGZ can be made from the "Desert Wind" from LA and Las Vegas, and the westbound RGZ connects safely with "Desert Wind," SFZ, and the Boise-Portland-Seattle "Pioneer."

Conversion of the Chicago-LA "Southwest Ltd." to Superliner and Heritage cars with electric climate control was completed Dec. 4, relieving Chicago of its last steam-heated train. Amtrak plans to convert the LA-Seattle "Coast Starlight" to Superliner in stages between Jan. 15-29, and the LA-New Orleans "Sunset" between Feb. 20-27. During the first week of Jan., Amtrak launched its first 3 Superliner lounge cars on the Chicago-Oakland "San Francisco Zephyr." The NY-FL "Silver Meteor" is to get Heritage cars in Feb.

Restoration of Chicago Union Station, necessitated by a serious fire last summer, is nearing completion.

the basis of transit ridership" as opposed to area population. "This change was in the 1980 proposed legislation" killed by the lame-duck Congress in December, and would tend to help the rail transit cities. (Rail = high ridership! Think about that.)

—"Disposition (and repair?) of Washington's Union Station will be a problem requiring more time than it warrants. The Secretary should develop a joint position with the Secretary of Interior and handle the issue quickly." We hope the outcome will be a facility convenient for the passenger, preferably including intercity bus but definitely including relaying the tracks back to the old building according to the plan that began to develop during the last part of the Ford Administration and which would have been implemented under President Carter but for now-departed House Public Works Chairman Harold T. Johnson (D-CA).

—"The (Interstate Highway) system is nearly 95% complete. Most of the remaining 5% should not be completed. Some of the yet-to-be built portions would be extremely expensive; and some of the short sections in urban areas are too expensive and too disruptive to be worth building." This is not as heroic as it sounds, since many of the segments are dying of their own incredible fiscal weight. As *The Washington Post's* Jan. 3 editorial noted, "the 1,547-mile remainder . . . will cost more to build than did the first 41,000" (which, according to the Federal Highway Administration, has cost $78.1 billion since the system was approved in 1956). Furthermore, *Traffic World* reports that the task force members "were about evenly divided on the proposition that the Interstate System not be completed."

—Since the Highway Trust Fund's "current rate of expenditures exceeds its collections . . . the tax structure, currently 4¢/gallon, (should) be modified appropriately so that the Fund remains solvent and each class of beneficiaries pays the share of costs incurred on its behalf." This means the federal gas tax would rise, and it should mean a massive increase in user charges imposed on large trucks.

—"The barge operators that use the inland waterways system have not been paying their share of the costs of providing them with navigable waterways . . . Future charges should . . . properly align costs imposed by users with fees paid by them." As we've noted before, this would help some private railroads maintain their tracks properly by reducing subsidized competition that hurts their freight business.

—The report takes note of the steadily growing balances in the Airport Development Assistance Program (ADAP) trust fund and observes that the ADAP fund, originally intended for construction to increase capacity at the nation's airports, might be reduced in scope and diverted to **cover "more funding of FAA operations and of the en-route navigation systems.** The Senate bill introduced by Howard Cannon, D-NV, (see Apr., 1980, *News*, p. 4) proposed that the 72 largest airports be dropped from ADAP. This 'defederalization' is a good start."

—"general aviation, especially its jet and turbojet aircraft, is putting an increasing burden on the airport and airways system without paying its share of the costs." Increased payments from general aviation, plus reduction in scope of the ADAP might permit reducing the tax rate on airline tickets, now at 8%. On the other hand, the report urges prompt appointment of a "Blue Ribbon Commission" to study "the reliability and future capabilities of, as well as the future needs for, the FAA's national enroute navigation system." Its conclusions could lead to higher ticket taxes again.

—The report recommends that take-off and landing slots at a handful of congested airports be auctioned off, a move that could end up increasing the related air fares.

—Existing "Buy America provisions . . . may no longer be warranted" and Section 13(c) of the basic UMTA legislation, which "imposes extremely restrictive labor provisions on all recipients of UMTA funds" should be modified "so that efficient operations . . . are encouraged."

The Bad News

—"**Amtrak.** The losses of this federally financed rail passenger system continue to escalate despite, or because of, increasing patronage. The present loss level is some $800 million a year, and losses in excess of $1 billion are likely within two years. By any standard, these losses are exorbitant in relation to the national purpose served by Amtrak. Many of the routes have been forced into the system by political pressures from Congress. Quick action to reduce this taxpayer subsidy sharply is strongly recommended and is possible because Congress must complete action on the next authorization by May 15, 1981.

"Most of the losses take place on sparsely used long-distance routes. It is possible to establish financial criteria, such as a maximum acceptable loss per passenger mile, that would enable the system to be rationalized quickly. Once established, these criteria should be rigidly followed. This will require congressional action, including revision of labor protection

SPARSELY USED? In FY '80, long-haul trains averaged 174.9 passenger-miles-per-trainmile (Congressional standard = 150). Oct. '80 long-haul psgr-miles up 22% (vs. 13% for entire system) from Oct. '79.

provisions now in the Amtrak statutes. If Amtrak has a long-term role, it is in densely populated corridors, such as Washington to New York and Boston, and possibly Los Angeles to San Diego. It may be possible to continue some money-losing routes if states and local areas are willing to cover the losses. Amtrak should not be permitted to use its subsidized status to engage in 'price wars' or other unfair rate competition with private-sector carriers, especially the intercity bus lines."

REGIONAL MEETING CORRECTION; MORE CANDIDATES

The Feb. 21 Kelso, WA, meeting is at Peter's Restaurant, two blocks NE of the station. Richard H. Divine, 7121 SW 28th Ave., Portland 97219, replaces George Starr as a candidate. New Region 12 candidates: Jack B. Kemp, 908 South Bay Front, Balboa Island, CA 92662; Randy Schlotthauer, 1611 W. Flower, Fullerton, CA 92633.

—Conrail's new management "should be encouraged to" reduce the size of the system "promptly."

—"Past federal support of new fixed rail systems has been largely a wasted effort. New rail starts should be discouraged." NARP agrees new "heavy" rail transit systems are probably inappropriate but supports commuter rail "starts," and regrets that the task force did not echo the kind words for light rail in the 1980 "Republican Position Statement on A Transit Policy" issued by the Republican National Committee (July *News*, p. 2). Hopefully, this is a hard rhetorical line which will simply encourage aspiring rail cities to develop lower-cost rail plans that the administration will endorse.

—"Operating subsidies for (urban) rail systems discourage local efforts at good management. Where possible, they should be eliminated." The report, however, goes on to praise UMTA's program for purchasing transit buses and recommends expanding that program "to include some bus maintenance in order to avoid the growing practice of deferring maintenance and simply applying for new capital funds." What is puzzling and disappointing are the failure to recognize that the all-capital-no-operating funds disincentive to good maintenance also applies to rail transit, and the absence of a recommendation to fund rail maintenance parallel to the bus maintenance recommendation.

To his credit, Drew Lewis, at his confirmation hearing, did not draw this rail/bus distinction, and acknowledged that immediate elimination of operating subsidies "would be virtually impossible

DEJA VU AT THE LEWIS CONFIRMATION HEARING

Many of the questions posed to Drew Lewis suggested that Congress hasn't changed much. The bipartisan emphasis was on maintaining or establishing subsidies (rarely labeled as such)—for the automobile industry, heavy transcontinental trucks, waterways, airports, and general aviation. No one expressed concern about Amtrak—but they never do until faced with constituent reaction to a specific plan for service cuts.

Lewis himself is a successful businessman who has specialized in saving weak companies. He has been active in the Pennsylvania Republican Party as a fund-raiser and he ran for governor in 1974. Last year, he became deputy chairman of the Republican National Committee, where he was "Reagan's man," and of the Reagan-Bush Committee. He has a farm in Schwenksville where he and his wife raise fowl and livestock. Since 1972, he served as a trustee of the Reading—including over four years of close contact with rail freight and commuter service. He testified, for example, that Reading ridership dropped 5% immediately after a 10% fare increase but that some riders returned later.

without shutting down the bulk of the major mass transit systems." New York City alone, for example, is expected to get $200 million in federal operating subsidies this fiscal year.

—"The overall level of the (UMTA grant) program can be reduced significantly."

—Although the text of the report simply says the Northeast

Corridor Program "should be examined for its overall benefits relative to its costs, and for its management structure," the inclusion of the NEC on the summary hit-list for immediate funding cuts suggests that the task force has already decided NEC is not worth continuing.

—As for FRA's rail freight assistance program, "which has some $1.5 billion available for assistance to weak (but not dying) railroads, a freeze should be put on these funds, with the entire program put through a careful benefit/cost analysis. It is possible that it should be dropped."

—The report is silent on opening up the Highway Trust Fund to nonhighway purposes, though we presume the task force would not oppose continuing the "interstate transfer" provision that allows states to exchange earmarked Highway Trust funds for general revenue monies that can be used for transit. (How about expanding that to include Amtrak services?)

—"To facilitate the use of the interstate system in an economically efficient way, uniform truck size and weight limits should apply throughout the system. States wishing to allow larger trucks should be permitted to do so provided they pay for the added capital and maintenance costs." This looks like a gift to transcontinental truckers who are now barred from running 80,000-pound trucks—the maximum weight permitted on the interstates—because six states bordering the Mississippi have not raised their limits to the federal maximum. *Traffic World* reported: "The task force apparently agreed that those states below the federal limit should update to that level. . . ." States would be free to set a higher, but not a lower, limit. Railroads would suffer accordingly—unless weight-limit actions are postponed until user charges are significantly increased for big trucks.

—"Maintenance of the Interstate System is lagging, and portions of the system, some now 20 years old, should be upgraded to modern standards. The Task Force agrees that there is a federal responsibility to see that the Interstate System is properly maintained."

The Highway Trust Fund deficit rose 1500% from $100 million in FY 1979 to $1.6 billion in FY 1980 ($7.6 billion collected, $9.2 billion disbursed). Outgoing Secretary Goldschmidt says interstate maintenance needs total $3 billion/year of which only $1 billion is spent now (Post, Dec. 31). Thus it is doubtful whether politically feasible user taxes could pay the full costs.

—Although acknowledging "good arguments on both sides" of continuing the federally imposed national highway speed limit of 55 mph, the report says "most motorists ignore it to a degree. Data relating the existence of the speed limit to reduced fatalities are unclear. . . . On balance, the Task Force favors returning authority to set limits to the states." NARP expects this would hurt the competitive position of public transport, and increase highway fatalities. To quote B.J. Smith, a 17-year veteran of the Arizona State Highway Patrol who swears by the 55 mph limit, "When the speed limit was 70, it was slaughter. We have the same number of accidents now—just not as much blood." (*LA Times*, Oct. 2)

Lewis endorsed returning authority to the states, though he felt 55 mph was appropriate for his home state of Pennsylvania.

The Four Major Policy Principles . . .

. . . by which the Task Force "agreed to be guided" and which it "strongly urged" the Secretary to follow were:

"1. The nation's transportation system should, as much as possible, be provided through the competitive forces of the private sector, or, if the private sector is inappropriate, by state or local governments. Direct federal financing of transportation investments or operations should be limited to those few cases where there is a clear and widely accepted requirement for concerted action in an area of high national priority, and where the private sector or state and local governments are obviously incapable of adequately meeting this requirement.

"2. When federal expenditures are used to finance transportation investments or operations, these expenditures should be recovered from the beneficiaries in a manner that is appropriate to the costs incurred on their behalf, unless widely accepted national policy directs otherwise.

"3. Economic regulation of interstate transportation should be held to a minimum. A particular effort is needed to eliminate restrictions on intermodal ownership.

"4. All federal transportation programs, including those designed to enhance safety, environmental protection and efficient energy use, should be subjected to benefit/cost tests to assure that they benefit the nation as a whole. These programs should also be examined to assure that they are positive contributors to the nation's productivity."

Unfortunately, the principles do not clarify the de facto subsidy to rail's competition which results from using the "trust fund" approach to fund road, air and water facilities. As President Ford's Secretary of Transportation, William T. Coleman, put it in his Jan., 1977, "Study of Federal Aid to Rail Transportation,"

"A critical difference between the rail and pipeline industries' private sector investments in rights-of-way and the public financing of highway, air and water transportation facilities is that such investments represent fixed obligations for rails and pipelines whereas they are transformed into variable costs for highway and airway users (allowing) trucking companies and airlines to finance their right-of-way costs as they are needed and used. During slack periods their right-of-way user payments fall off; in good periods, their payments rise. Railroads and pipelines are not permitted that luxury, however. Amortization of right-of-way investments for these carriers require fixed annual payments to finance systems that must be built to handle peak traffic loads; these charges have to be met in bad business years as well as in prosperous years. The risk of interest default is thus much higher for rails and pipelines—barges, motor carriers and airlines are spared this debt burden. . . .

"Thus motor carriers, airlines and water carriers have their business risks reduced when the Federal Government in effect serves as their banker in arranging for the financing of investment in their respective rights-of-way. Highway, airport/airway and waterway projects have been charged with very little, or none, of the opportunity cost of Federal capital, whereas the railroads and pipelines customarily have been required to raise money on commercial terms (allowing for periodic government loan guarantee programs for bankrupt and financially distressed railroads)." (p. IV-13)

One might add that the need for such loan programs resulted from the fundamental anti-rail bias of the system which the Coleman report documents.

The anti-rail bias of the trust fund approach, even where users of trust-funded modes pay their full costs, can also be illustrated at the personal level. How many times have you taken a trip by road or air when you would have used a modern train had it been available? You contributed unwillingly to trust funds on each of those trips. Yet when you ask for good trains, you are told highways pay for themselves so why can't the railroads!

In the Real World . . .

It seems doubtful that even the Task Force's modest goal—user charges that cover a higher percentage of the costs—will be achieved. It is possible, however, that highway interests will be more successful than are public transit/rail advocates in avoiding the sacrifices prescribed by the report. Therefore, we may need to argue that implementation of any transit funding cuts must be postponed at least until the same date as implementation of measures to insure that highway users will be paying a substantially increased portion of their actual costs. Otherwise, the pro-highway impact of the report would be even more devastating.

We must remind public officials that federal intervention in support of non-rail modes has been so massive and longstanding that it is not enough to get a modest increase in the percentage of total costs covered by user charges on non-rail modes (while reducing transit and Amtrak operating subsidies).

FIGHTING PENNSYLVANIA CUTBACKS

On Mar. 1, SEPTA plans to eliminate Pottstown-Reading-Pottsville and Quakertown-Bethlehem passenger service, and end through service to Philadelphia from points north of Norristown and Lansdale. This means outright elimination of passenger service over 70 route miles of track while laying the foundation for cutting 39 additional miles. The Keystone Association of Railroad Passengers (KARP) has established a Passenger Defense Fund to fight these abandonments and to force service improvements. Contributions may be made out and sent to PassFund, PO Box 2362, Lehigh Valley, PA 18001.

An efficient transport system is a balanced one. Absent the imposition of politically impossible charges on the non-rail modes, the only way to prevent our highway-tilted imbalance from worsening is with aggressive federal support for rail freight and passenger services.

Righting that imbalance becomes more important as more of our citizens are priced out of the automobile. One observer estimates that many people are now paying total automobile costs of 40¢/mile and would pay 80¢ if charged for traffic control, police, snowplowing, air/noise pollution, and congestion. Big cities will begin to charge for an increasing portion of those costs. With public officials who don't believe there's an energy shortage, the price argument may be the most useful.

The report, blind to the true costs of the automobile, does not serve the interests of the average citizen or of national security.

WE'D LIKE TO MEET YOU!

To balance the more frequent visits which we make to regional meetings in the East, and in response to a longstanding concern of NARP Member Richard L. Day of Moscow, ID, NARP President John R. Martin, who serves part-time without pay, and NARP staffers Ross Capon and Barry Williams will be traveling on western trains as shown below.

This is to give you a chance to meet us, either by riding a short segment or by visiting on the platforms at stations where the public timetable shows both arrival and departure times. We'll be available where the trains are scheduled to pass between 8 AM and 10 PM local time; also at Phoenix (7:46 AM on Mar. 2 and 18) and Boise (6:35 AM on Apr. 1). We'll try to keep the conductor informed as to where we are on the train.

Invite local reporters and/or public officials to join you as appropriate. Please let us know in advance if there's a local issue you'd like us to help plug, or if you want to be alerted in the unlikely event we're not on the trains as shown below.

JACK MARTIN, PRESIDENT: Tues., Feb. 24, dp Chicago 6:50 PM (San Francisco Zephyr: Denver, Cheyenne, Reno); Thurs., Feb. 26, ar Oakland 3:40 PM; Fri., Feb. 27, dp Oakland 8:55 AM (Coast Starlight: San Jose, San Luis Obispo), ar LA 8:02 PM; Jack will speak Feb. 28 at the Region 12 meeting; Sun., Mar. 1, dp LA 10:30 PM (Sunset Ltd.; Phoenix, Tucson); Mon., Mar. 2, ar El Paso 4:20 PM; Jack will speak that night to a meeting of Rail Passengers Association of the Southwest.

BARRY WILLIAMS, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: Sat., Mar. 14, dp Chicago 4:30 PM (Southwest Ltd.: La Junta, Albuquerque); Mon., Mar. 16, ar LA 8:05 AM, dp 8:30 AM (San Diegan #574), ar San Diego 11:15 AM (if train from Chicago delayed, use first connecting San Diegan); Tues., Mar. 17, dp San Diego 1:40 PM (San Diegan #579), ar LA 4:25 PM, dp 10:30 PM (Sunset Ltd.: Phoenix, Tucson, El Paso); Thurs., Mar. 19, ar San Antonio 5:18 AM; Fri., Mar. 20, dp San Antonio Amtrak station 8:30 AM via bus, W. Commerce St. & MP RR 9:00 AM (Inter-American: Temple, Ft. Worth, Dallas); Sat., Mar. 21, ar St L 8 AM.

ROSS CAPON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Sun., Mar. 29, lv Washington 9:05 PM (Cardinal: Huntington, Cincinnati); Mon., Mar. 30, ar Chicago 5:50 PM, dp 6:50 PM (SFZ: Denver, Cheyenne); Tues., Mar. 31, ar Ogden 11 PM, dp 11:40 PM (Pioneer: Boise); Wed., Apr. 1, ar Portland 4:55 PM. Meet with OreARP, 7:30 PM at Rm. 208, Union Sta.; Thurs., Apr. 2, dp P'land 9:30 AM (Mt. Rainier), ar Seattle 1:20 PM, dp 4:30 PM (Empire Builder: Havre, Minot, St. Paul); Sat., Apr. 4, ar Chi 6:04 PM, dp 7:30 (B'way for Wash.).

(Look for our blue-and-silver NARP lapel pin!)

NARP Board Resolutions

At its Oct. 9-11 meeting in Detroit, the NARP Board of Directors approved resolutions:

—urging VIA, Amtrak, and New York DOT to establish through NY-Toronto service as soon as possible, and to see that information clerks, travel agents, etc., are aware of existing international rail passenger services. (In an Oct. letter to NARP, VIA President J. Frank Roberts said "VIA and Amtrak have opened discussions on the possibility of through train service between Toronto and New York City, hopefully for some time in 1981." A Jan. 8 Amtrak release said "negotiations are currently under way" on extending the "Niagara Rainbow" to Toronto.);

—urging states formerly served by "trains such as the National Ltd." (discontinued last year though heavily patronized) to fund service restoration under Sec. 403(b), and urging Congress to change the law so that multi-state 403(b) trains would become 100% Amtrak funded after meeting the ridership criteria now in the law; and

—establishing a committee (chaired by Charles Dunn, 1131 Catalonia Ave., Coral Gables, FL 33134) "to investigate the possibility of a name change or modification with the intent being to beter present the concerns and interests of our organization to the public and elected officials." The committee is to "report back to the Board on its findings and suggestions, including any necessary modifications to the by-laws" at the next board meeting (late April). ■

AMTRAK: SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS

As the 1980 appropriations hearings made clear, Amtrak needs more money to make it through FY '81 which ends this Sept. 30. In spite of opposition from the Carter/Goldschmidt DOT, the Senate Appropriations Committee voted 14-4 on Dec. 3 for $78.9 million for Amtrak. The full Senate voted 46-43 against an Armstrong amendment to delete the Amtrak funding, but the money —along with all other Senate "ornaments" to the continuing resolution—was dropped in return for the House dropping its pay raise provisions.

Please let your legislators know you are aware of Amtrak's need for supplemental appropriations. Seek their support.

Sen. Mark Andrews (R-ND) is the new Appropriations Transportation Subcommittee chairman; Sen. John C. Danforth (R-MO) now chairs the Commerce Subcommittee on Surface Transportation. ■

International Rail Officials Visit *(continued from December News)*

—Although France is well-known for the new 180 mph "Paris-South-East" line now under construction, Fernand F. Nouvion, former Director of Rolling Stock Engineering with the French Railways (SNCF), emphasized that "most times . . . you probably cannot justify the cost of new lines. . . . Upgrading of older lines can be much more profitable than people think. I want to stress this point especially with you ladies and gentlemen of the newspapers, magazines, and television. I realize that everyone likes to write and read about exciting new things like 'bullet trains' and new lines. It is harder to get excited about lower cost investments that merely renew older facilities.

"One thing we have learned in France is that relatively low-cost improvements of existing facilities can produce big improvements in service to passengers. You need to find better ways to convince the public that improving existing lines is justified. . . .

"(We have concentrated) on a very important principle, which is: It sometimes is more important to reduce slow-downs (slow orders) than to increase maximum speed. This principle will appeal to the public, after they hear and understand it, because they frequently observe this situation elsewhere in life as well as on the railroad. In addition, the public likes the fact that the cost of reducing slow-downs can be less than the cost of building new lines. . . .

"In France, we concentrate a lot of attention on designing bogies (trucks) because they are possibly the most critical element in high-speed trains. I think we are willing to pay more for good bogies than you Americans. **We also concentrate on the proper fastening of the rails to the cross-ties** so that the track can resist the hammering of the bogies. You seem to give less attention to good fastening. . . .

"My recommendation is this: Please study carefully where slow-downs are required now. Be sure to measure the bogie forces against the rail. You may discover that you can increase speeds significantly if you adopt better bogies. . . ."

—Joseph C. Blumstein, SNCF's General Manager, USA and Canada, emphasized the economical aspects of the 180 mph line: to avoid the high cost of construction in dense urban areas, the fast trains will use existing tracks to enter Lyon and for 25 miles into Paris; since the line will be passenger only, it is designed by "the same standards as a modern highway, with grades as steep as 3.5%," but freight service will be improved by reducing passenger congestion on the parallel existing line; the steeper grades, the avoidance of tunnels, and the construction of only eight major bridges has permitted a low construction cost of "about $3.5 million per mile of double-track electrified line; i.e. less than the cost of a limited-access 4-lane highway." The Paris-Lyon run will be cut 56 miles from 318 to 262; new route-mileage will total 242 including connections towards Dijon and at Macon for international services. The southern 170 miles are to open to revenue service next Oct. (test trains are now running) and the northern 72 miles by Oct., 1983, at which time Paris-Lyon will be two hours. SNCF's brochure on the route says, "by offering 2d class passengers journey times comparable with those of air travel but for approximately one third of the cost, the TGV (high-speed train) will bring high speed travel within the reach of all levels of society." ■