

Midwest Gets Amtrak Investment Boost

\$25 Million Committed

Amtrak on January 28 announced a \$25-million commitment to the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MRRI; Sept. '98 News), an incremental approach to bring fast trains to a nine-state area. The announcement came at a Chicago conference co-sponsored by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), High Speed Ground Transportation Association, and Chicago-based Environmental Law and Policy Center.

US Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater presented a symbolic check for \$200,000 to Wisconsin Governor and Amtrak Board Chairman Tommy G. Thompson for a study of the impact of a new, high-speed, turbine-powered locomotive (Dec. '98 News) on the Chicago Hub Corridor.

The Amtrak funding is to be divided into several areas:

- **Demonstration trains**—Amtrak will spend \$5 million for a demonstration in 2000 of “modern, premium trains and technology.” This would involve equipment capable of 110 mph, consistent with the goals of the MRRI.
- **St. Louis intermodal station**—Amtrak will contribute \$2 million toward a new facility near the 20-year-old “temporary” trailers (Oct. '98 News). It would serve the light rail line.
- **Kansas City Union Station**—Amtrak will contribute \$2 million toward its relocation into this historic facility, undergoing renovation as a science museum (June '97 News). Since 1985, Amtrak has been in an adjacent, low-visibility facility (which former Amtrak President Thomas M. Downs often said made the company the proverbial “troll under the bridge”).
- **Milwaukee**—Amtrak will contribute \$1 million toward an effort to modernize the 1965 station, called “shabby” and “outdated” by the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* (January 15).
- **Grand Crossing**—Amtrak committed \$5 million for this important, time-saving connection (see box at right).
- **Chicago Union Station**—Amtrak will allocate \$2 million

(continued on page 2)

AT THE JANUARY 28 CHICAGO CONFERENCE

“The Northeast Corridor is only the beginning. There’s a commitment in this Administration to make high-speed rail available to all...Amtrak is strong and growing stronger.”

—US Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater

“People like trains. If France can have high-speed trains, and Germany can, and Sweden can, and Japan can, why can’t the United States?”

—Amtrak Board Chairman and Wisconsin Governor Tommy G. Thompson

CHICAGO-CHAMPAIGN SPEED-UP COMING

Amtrak’s Midwest investment package includes \$5 million for a track connection on Chicago’s south side. It would take 20 minutes off the runs of the *City of New Orleans* and *Illini* between Union Station and points on the Illinois Central (IC) main line (black lines on map).

Before Amtrak, inter-city trains used several different stations in Chicago. IC had a fast, direct run to Central Station on the lakefront. Amtrak consolidated its trains into Union Station in 1971—except IC-line trains were diverted in 1972. Since then, IC-line trains have used an elevated connection south of the Loop called the St. Charles Air Line.

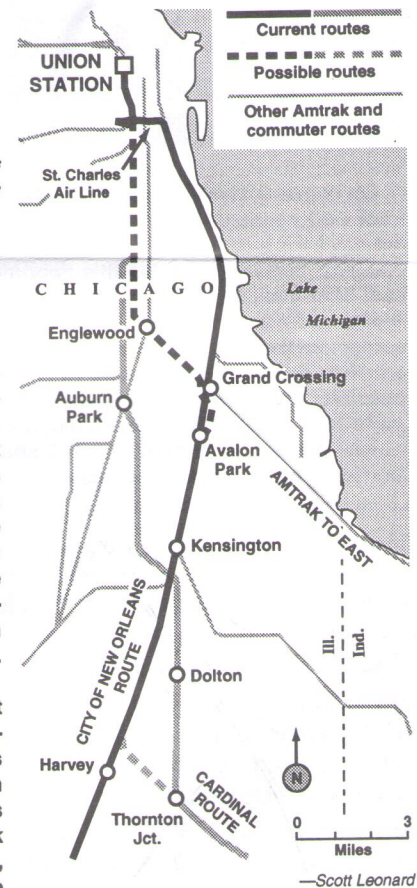
Even that does not lead directly to Union Station. Northbound trains must pass over the Union Station south-end tracks until they reach a track connection further west, then back down onto the same station approach used by Metra’s Aurora commuter trains and Amtrak trains like the *California Zephyr*.

Today the St. Charles Air Line has little use except for the two daily Amtrak-IC line trains. The City of Chicago wants to remove it to facilitate development south of the Loop.

Amtrak IC-line trains would instead use a “Grand Crossing connection,” much of which was once used by the Nickel Plate line for its trains from the east to reach La Salle St. Station. Northbound Amtrak trains would leave the IC near Avalon Park, join the former Nickel Plate line, pass over the IC, under the Chicago Skyway, and then turn west up a new ramp leading to a Conrail line (Amtrak route, Union Station-Hammond-Whiting, IN). [Nickel Plate trains went under the Conrail line and then turned west.]

The Grand Crossing plan also would help Amtrak trains serving Indianapolis, Cincinnati, and Washington (via Charleston, WV). Since 1993, these trains have used an approach to Chicago (thick grey lines on map) controlled by several railroads, experiencing many delays due to busy freight traffic and many cross-lines. In the plan, these trains would continue west from Thornton Jct. along the Grand Trunk Western, and enter the IC on an existing connection (used sometimes for detour, but needing major improvement). They would then follow the same route as Amtrak’s IC-line trains to reach Union Station more quickly and reliably.

As of press time there is no estimated completion date.



—Scott Leonard

AT LAST, WORK TO BEGIN ON PORTLAND LINE



—Ron Palmquist

On January 11, VIP's met at Portland, ME, to break ground for track work needed for Boston-Portland Amtrak service. Above from left are Acting Amtrak Northeast Corridor President Stan Bagley ("acting" dropped from his title February 11); TrainRiders/Northeast Chairman, NARP Director, and Master of Ceremonies Wayne Davis; and Maine Governor Angus S. King, Jr. (l). A December 4 agreement between Guilford Rail Systems, Amtrak, and the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority makes construction possible. It allows 79 mph operation but lets the Surface Transportation Board (STB) resolve a dispute over rail weight. The STB wants opening statements April 2 and FRA's analysis May 24. Service is expected to start next year or possibly late this year.

Midwest Investments

(from page 1)

for capital upgrades and \$1 million for an operating capacity analysis in preparation for high-speed service.

- **Milwaukee-Madison**—Amtrak will provide \$2.2 million for preliminary design and engineering, to go with \$1 million from the state to study a Madison station and \$500,000 from the FRA to upgrade Milwaukee-Chicago grade crossings.

- **Chicago-Detroit**—Amtrak will provide \$1.5 million for preliminary design and engineering.

- **Plus...**\$3.3 million more from Amtrak for MRR1 additional analysis and design.

Another TEA-21 Corridor

Secretary Slater expanded the "Chicago Hub" high-speed rail corridor to include Chicago-Gary-Indianapolis-Cincinnati. This designation makes the route eligible for TEA-21 grade crossing improvement funds (and planning funds, if the Administration and Congress ever provide them).

The Chicago Hub corridor originally was Chicago to Detroit, Milwaukee, and St. Louis. TEA-21 last year extended from Milwaukee to Minneapolis/St. Paul. Slater made other designations in the South last fall (Jan. News).

NARP members in the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative area should tell local officials and newspapers they favor the increased train service it would bring. All NARP members should urge their US Representative and two Senators to support it.

The Amtrak investment announced January 28 and the publicity it brought were helpful next steps. NARP looks forward to more planning, including ways to make the MRR1 plan more intermodal—e.g., connecting it to important airports like Chicago-O'Hare and Milwaukee-Mitchell.

Clinton Budget and NARP Testimony

In February 10 testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, NARP Executive Director Ross B. Capon strongly supported President Clinton's fiscal 2000 request of \$571 million for Amtrak—consistent with Amtrak's Strategic Business Plan and the Administration's own year-old promise. Capon endorsed Clinton's request to let Amtrak spend these funds on maintenance of equipment (as this year) and maintenance of way. Amtrak says it otherwise would run short of cash before fiscal 2000 ends.

Capon urged full funding of the \$99 million in high-speed rail (HSR) authorizations. Clinton's request is for \$12 million in regular funds for technology work, \$5.25 million in hazard-elimination funds mandated by TEA-21, and \$35 million—\$15 million for hazard elimination improvements, \$20 million for "Next Generation" technology work—in "revenue-aligned budget authority" (RABA) opposed by key Hill leaders, including a leading pro-rail senator, John H. Chafee (R-RI).

RABA refers to gasoline-tax revenues over those projected in the TEA-21 transportation law. Capon supported the new RABA proposal, but his written testimony said NARP has "no illusions about the difficulty of making this happen, although the hazard-elimination program certainly benefits highways."

Capon told Chairman Frank Wolf (R-VA) that federal programs favor maximum state spending on highways and aviation, but not rail. Federal high-speed rail *planning* funds—not in Clinton's budget—would help change that since they would go to states and generate state matching funds. The law requires a 50% state match, higher than for other modes. ■

2000 TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Compared with Previous Years
Appropriations (\$ millions)

	1997 Enacted	1998 Enacted	1999 Enacted	2000 Clinton Request	Change, Clinton vs. 1999
Administration					
Federal Highway	19,894	23,187	27,367	28,549	+ 4%
Federal Aviation	8,561	9,080	9,754	10,131	+ 4%
Federal Transit	4,382	4,844	5,388	6,088	+ 13%
Federal Railroad	1,050	748	778	746	- 4%
* Amtrak + N.E. Corr.	843	594	609	571	- 6%

*Also in Federal Railroad Administration total.

Intercity Passenger Rail Categories

Amtrak:	1997	1998	1999	2000	Change
Operations (A)	365	344	(B)	(B)	—
Capital	223	0	609	571	- 6%
Northeast Corr.	255	238	(B)	(B)	—
Penn Sta./Farley	0	12 (C)	—	—	—
High Speed Rail	25	20	24	47 (D)	+ 96%
SUBTOTAL	867	614	609	618	+ 1%
"TRA money" (E)	—	1,092	1,092	—	—
RAIL TOTAL	867	1,706	1,722	618	—

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, Amtrak and the Administration propose to make both maintenance of equipment and maintenance of way eligible, as is already done for transit.

C) TEA-21 in 1998 completed the federal commitment to the Farley project.

D) Includes \$12 million in general-fund appropriations (half the current level), and \$35 million from excess federal gas tax revenues. Under TEA-21, the latter goes to highways.

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

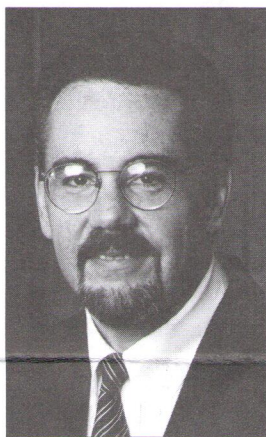
Amtrak Board Picks Warrington As CEO

The Amtrak board decided to drop the "Acting" from the title of Acting President and CEO George D. Warrington. The December 21 Union Station news conference announcing this decision was notable for the unanimity and enthusiasm board members expressed about the decision. Amtrak's sixth CEO is the first to be promoted from within.

Board chair and Wisconsin Gov. Tommy Thompson (R) said, "I also served with [Warrington's predecessors] Claytor and Downs. I think George is going to be the star of them all." Meridian Mayor John Robert Smith (R), who chaired the selection committee, said the competition was tough but the decision was not. Gov. Michael Dukakis (D) said he was satisfied they picked "the right guy. I'm much more optimistic about Amtrak's future than I was last June."

Deputy DOT Secretary Mort Downey cited Warrington's role as coalition- and consensus-builder, and gave him credit for full funding of Amtrak in President Clinton's fiscal 2000 budget.

Gov. Linwood Holton (R) praised Warrington's ability to work with the freight railroads. Answering a question, Warrington said, "In the face of all the problems Union Pacific has had, CEO Dick Davidson and his people have been extraordinarily responsive in working to get our trains over the road."



George Warrington

NARP President John R. Martin wrote to board members in September urging Warrington's selection (Oct. '98 News).

Warrington said his appointment was "a genuine honor...the proudest day of my life except for when my son was born. I want to thank the workers of this railroad. The turnaround Amtrak is experiencing is due in large part to them." He also gave special thanks to Congress and the Administration, governors, mayors, local officials, labor leaders and organizations, business partners and NARP.

He continued, "We will enhance and expand corridors nationwide...We are doing the first market-based study...introducing service standards to enhance quality and consistency of service on all our trains. We can no longer exist only with a survivor mentality, focused on cost-cutting and being apologists for mediocrity. Our future depends upon growth...identifying and attracting new customers."

On travel-agent commissions [Dec. News], Warrington said, "We are fundamentally convinced we made the right decision. Ticket sales are up, commissions are down and ridership continues to grow." [In mid-February, Warrington told NARP this still accurately reflects his views.]

Asked later by NARP about the long-distance trains, Warrington said: "The issue is not whether we have long-distance trains but what we need to do to insure they survive. We need to find the market potential and squeeze as much out as we can...continue improving service, develop mail and express, do the things we're doing. We need to identify what we must do from a market point of view to strengthen them and build a solid foundation for their future." ■

NARP REGIONAL MEETINGS

NOTE—No elections of NARP board members this year. Information on regions not shown will follow.

Region 1 (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT): Sat., Mar. 13; 11:30-5; Providence, RI; Garden Room, Biltmore Hotel (8 min. walk from train station); \$26 (includes lunch) by Mar. 8 to Steven Musen, P.O. Box 8645, Warwick, RI 02888; speakers—Ross Capon (NARP Executive Director), Dr. William Ankner (director Rhode Island DOT), Chris Riley (Manager—Community Relations, Amtrak High Speed Rail); contact—Steven Musen, 401/467-8700.

Region 2 (NY): Met in Albany Feb. 27.

Region 4 (DC, MD, VA, WV): Sat., Mar. 13; Baltimore, MD; 12:30; Baltimore Streetcar Museum, 1905 Falls Rd.; \$10; speakers—Sandy Brown (Amtrak Government Affairs vice president), Drew Galloway (Amtrak Northeast Corridor transportation planning), Steve Roberts (VRE); contact—Ken Briers, 202/775-3397.

Region 5 (AL, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN): Sat., Mar. 6; Meridian, MS; Meridian Intermodal Transportation Center (Amtrak station), 1901 Front St.; fee varies depending on how much of the program you attend; speakers—John R. Martin (NARP President), Gil Carmichael (Amtrak Reform Council chairman), John Robert Smith (Mayor of Meridian, Amtrak board member), Deborah Wetter (Amtrak

Gulf Coast Region general manager); other events Fri., Sun.; contact—Louis Bangma, 318/473-0300.

Region 7 (IL, MN, ND, WI): Sat., Mar. 27; 9-3; Racine, WI; Infusino, 3201 Rapids Dr.; \$20 (includes lunch) by Mar. 17; speakers to discuss Midwest Regional Rail Initiative and extending Metra to Racine; contact—Pat Robbins, 608/238-5749.

Region 8 (AK, ID, MT, OR, WA): Sat., Mar. 20; Portland, OR; 11:30-5; Cheatham Hall, World Forestry Center (adjacent to Zoo light rail station); \$18 (early registration, includes lunch); speaker—Amtrak West President Gil Mallory; contact—Dan McFarling, 503/642-4077.

Region 10 (CO, IA, NE, SD, UT, WY): Sat., Mar. 6; Omaha, NE; 10-3; Cascio's Restaurant, 1650 S. 10th St.; no fee (but must RSVP by Mar. 3 and eat lunch on-site); speakers to discuss Midwest Regional Rail Initiative and efforts to get a new *Pioneer*, optional post-meeting tour of UP passenger fleet; contact—Dan Lutz, 402/472-0025.

Region 12 (CA, HI, NV): Sat., Mar. 20; Riverside, CA; 10:30 (tour), 1 pm (lunch); (tour) Riverside Downtown Metrolink Station (4066 Vine St.), (lunch/meeting) Riverside Spaghetti Factory (Vine St. & Mission Inn Blvd., 3 blocks from Metrolink station); \$27 (\$31 postmarked after Mar. 10), include self-addressed, stamped #9 or #10 envelope; feature—Amtrak Riverside reservations center tour; contact—Ed Von Nordeck, 909/787-8350.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

California corridors: The new Sacramento-Bakersfield *San Joaquin* starts February 21 (with a corridor timetable change). It is the fifth frequency south of Stockton. New southbound train 702 departs Sacramento 6:20 am, northbound 703 arrives 11:15 pm (connects with *Coast Starlight* northbound only). This is the first Sacramento-Stockton Amtrak service.

The corridor becomes "reserved-only." Trains 712 and 717 are "expresses" skipping Denair, Madera, Corcoran, Wasco; all *San Joaquins* skip Berkeley (still served by Capitols). Bakersfield-Las Vegas Thruway bus frequency increases to two.

Also February 21, a sixth Capitol route frequency is added between Sacramento and Oakland (with corridor timetable change).

Stations: Amtrak moved into a new facility at San Antonio, TX, January 15, vacating a temporary trailer it was forced into in November 1996. The new station is adjacent to the former Southern Pacific station, with same tracks and platforms. The old station is being

redeveloped by its owner (the local transit agency).

Amtrak moved into a beautifully renovated waiting area and ticket office February 9 in an old REA space in Charlottesville (VA) Union Station, the rest of which is gutted and awaiting redevelopment.

Checked baggage... is no longer accepted at Alexandria, VA, for the *Silver Star*.

Amtrak Thruway Buses: A state grant for Thruway service between Bethlehem, Allentown, and 30th St. Station in Philadelphia ending December 31 was not renewed due to low ridership. A new bus operator has taken over the Thruway route and reduced frequencies.

Thruway service on an existing bus schedule began January 1: Indianapolis-Crawfordsville-Danville-Champaign-Farmer City-Bloomington-Peoria-Galesburg-Moline-Davenport. Some (but not all) Amtrak connections can be made at Indianapolis, Bloomington, Galesburg, some with lengthy layovers—in Champaign, the bus stops only at the bus station (Amtrak station nearby).

The Fargo-Winnipeg Thruway, which began October 25 using an existing bus schedule, ends February 28. The bus company is dropping the route altogether.

MORE ON WHEELS OF PROGRESS

New or corrected items from last month's column:

- Apr. 1999—Amtrak's *Southwest Chief* begins serving Williams Jct., AZ, with bus connection to the Grand Canyon Railroad at Williams.
- Sept. 2000—Portland (OR) central city streetcar line (2.5 mi.), generally along 10th & 11th Aves., using five Skoda (Czech) streetcars.
- Sometime 2000—Amtrak's Newport News trains begin serving Richmond Main Street Station.
- Sometime 2000—restoration of passenger service over the Florida East Coast route.
- Because more advance work than anticipated is needed, 100-mph operation on any part of the Chicago-Detroit line is unlikely this year.

RAILROAD HISTORY TEXTBOOK AVAILABLE

NARP member Rudolph Daniels, who teaches Railroad History to railroad employees at Western Iowa Tech Community College in Sioux City, has published a textbook on the topic. *Trains Across the Continent* covers the political, economic, technological, and social aspects of railroad history in the US and Canada.

The 170-page book has many illustrations and diagrams and is a useful overview of the subject. It's \$35 (Iowa residents add \$2.10 sales tax), plus \$4 shipping and handling for one copy (\$2 for each additional copy), from Rudolph Daniels, 3422 Davis Ave., Sioux City, IA 51106, 712/276-3185.



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