



News from the

National Association of Railroad Passengers

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California's Capitol Corridor Ridership Skyrockets

The Capitol Corridor linking Sacramento and the Bay Area is now the nation's fourth-ranked intercity rail passenger corridor, after the Northeast, San Diegan (now renamed Pacific Surfliner), and Empire Corridors. Fiscal 1999 ridership was 543,600, up 17.5% from 1998. In the first half of 2000 (October-April), ridership jumped another 36.2% (45% in April). Ridership for the 12 months ending in April was 643,000.

The keys were added frequencies—sixth and seventh Oakland-Sacramento trains in February, 1999, and 2000, respectively (plus a fourth San Jose train in 2000). “When we

got to that sixth frequency...it was as if a magic line was crossed, where it became the beginnings of an effective transportation option—and not just a chance to ride a train.”

That's how Eugene K. Skoropowski explained the ridership explosion to the *Sacramento Bee* (May 9). He is a long-time NARP board member who on August 9, 1999, became Managing Director of the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority. He addressed the NARP Board on April 28. Though he is a Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) employee, he reports to a separate 16-member board composed of elected officials from the six transportation agencies in the eight counties served by the corridor.

Having the service managed locally, rather than at the state level, has increased lobbying clout. One example of that clout: Governor Davis' initial budget proposal in January included no money for the Capitol Corridor, but his final revised plan has \$50 million (\$25 million in state funds, \$25 million expected from Amtrak's capital program).

Only eight BART employees work full-time on the corridor, but they can call on the resources of BART as needed. For example, just one of those eight does marketing, but the big BART Marketing Department provides support.

Skoropowski emphasized three partnerships: with Union Pacific, which controls track capacity and trip times; Amtrak, for operations and maintenance, customer service, station services, marketing, telephone information and ticket sales; the state, for policy and funding. He said Union Pacific has responded favorably to his efforts to emphasize the positives



Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg (center) accepting the George Falcon Golden Spike Award from NARP Executive Director Ross B. Capon (left) and President John R. Martin (right).

(continued on page 3)

NARP Salutes Lautenberg's Senate Career

NARP gave Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ) the George Falcon Golden Spike Award at its annual Washington reception, April 27. President John R. Martin said, “The nation as a whole is better for Senator Lautenberg's 18 years of service [and] his dedication and support of passenger rail.”

In accepting the award—the first time it has gone twice to the same person—Lautenberg expressed appreciation for the Association's hard work, and underlined the importance of enacting his High Speed Rail Investment Act, which he said “will ensure that we have a sound national passenger rail service.” Noting that S.1900 had 40 co-sponsors, Lautenberg said, “We need a few more to convince the doubters that this bill will pass.” [It had 44 as of May 26.]

He said that, in spite of the sophistication of our air system, airplanes “can't get started on time. Just let it rain or let there be a little bit of snow, and Amtrak looks like it's the greatest

thing, man's salvation. It's pretty comfortable compared to sitting in an airplane. I think that people are so discouraged, so annoyed by the [air] congestion and the delays and the fact that we just declared we are going to spend \$2 billion more per year for aviation as a mandate, as an entitlement. So we're spending about \$10 billion a year in improving the aviation system, about \$30 billion on the highways, and we're going to scrape along and spend \$500 million on railroads. That's way, way behind where we should have been, when you look at [other countries].”

The text on the award notes “Lautenberg is responsible for the greatest U.S. rail passenger project of the last fifty years, Boston-New Haven electrification. He also has been a consistent leader in seeing that both New Jersey and the entire nation received a much stronger passenger rail system than would have been possible without his efforts.” ■



Sen. George V. Voinovich (left) accepting the George Falcon Golden Spike Award from NARP President John R. Martin.

Voinovich Honored for Flexibility Work

NARP honored Senator George V. Voinovich (R-OH) for his hard work aimed at securing for states the right to spend their federal transportation dollars on intercity passenger rail. NARP President John R. Martin presented him the George Falcon Golden Spike Award at NARP's annual reception, April 27. Voinovich chairs the Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure. The flexibility challenge got bigger after the death of the chairman of the full committee, John Chafee (R-RI), a strong supporter of "passenger rail flexibility."

Voinovich worked hard on the issue this year. He wrote to all Republican Governors, urging them to press the issue with the Senate leadership. He worked tirelessly with the new chairman, Bob Smith (R-NH); first to get him to co-sponsor the bill, then to urge him to have the bill brought to the floor. Voinovich worked to convince many Senators to support the bill and stood firm in defending it from the highway lobby.

In accepting the award, Voinovich said the country has a chance "to sit down, hopefully on a bipartisan basis, and figure out what our energy policy should be. One of the things that should be on the table is rail passenger travel...if you talk about the environment, if you talk about less reliance on gasoline and, quite frankly, less wear and tear on people."

He said some Senators "don't want to give the states flexibility. Of course there are people that lobby and say all that money is going to the Highway Trust Fund, the only thing that can be done is to use it for highways. My attitude is that we ought to give the governors, the states, and the state legislators the option to go ahead and to use that money in the best way possible to deal with their transportation problems."

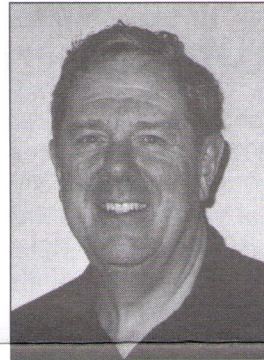
Voinovich noted that some Senators worried that flexibility would mean "all of this money would go to rail transit." He said there are strong, state-level forces that make that outcome unlikely. ■

New Vice Presidents Chosen

The NARP Board of Directors in April approved changing the by-laws to provide for four vice-presidents. Goals included bringing the association closer to the members, helping the growing association bring more regional focus to the increasing opportunities facing us, and providing a better process for selecting the association's next president.

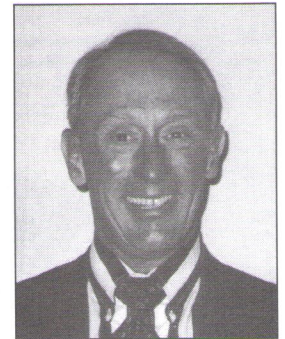
The board elected these people, all veteran board members, to the four positions:

- **Ken Burbach**, of Middleton, WI, retired in 1996 as a District Representative for the Bureau of National Affairs, Inc. Since then, he has devoted most of his time to travel and rail issues. In 1994, he became president of ProRail, the Madison chapter of Wisconsin Association of Railroad Passengers. In 1995, he served on the Dane County committee to evaluate commuter rail.



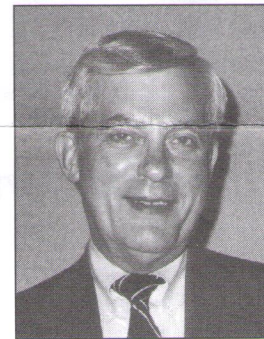
Ken Burbach

- **George Chilson**, of Sedona, AZ, has had a 35-year career in private industry, with special emphasis on marketing management. For the last 20 of those years, he has run his own businesses in the multi-housing and hospitality industries. A lifelong, frequent rider of long-distance trains, he joined the NARP Board in 1998. In the past two years, he has worked extensively on restoring Amtrak service to Phoenix.



George Chilson

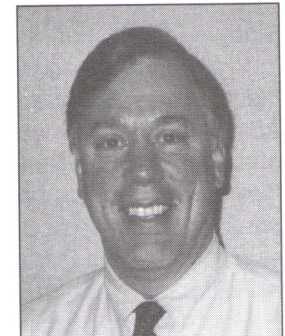
- **Wayne Davis**, of Yarmouth, Maine, retired from a 29-year banking career in 1989. That year, he helped found the Portland, ME-based TrainRiders/Northeast. He has served ever since as its full-time, volunteer chairman. He has served on the NARP Board's Executive Committee since 1992.



Wayne Davis

- **Alan M. Yorker** of Decatur, GA, recently retired from a 25-year practice of marriage and family therapy. He helped found the Georgia Association of Railroad Passengers in 1979 and has been its president since 1994.

He has co-chaired the Metropolitan Atlanta Chamber of Commerce Passenger Rail Task Force since its creation in 1990. He is a founding member and first chairman of Georgians for Transportation Alternatives, a non-profit, civic group. On May 16, he was elected chairman again. Yorker has served on the NARP Board's Executive Committee since 1996. ■



Alan M. Yorker

in their relationship. UP moved quickly to correct track conditions that required a 10 mph speed limit over several miles of mostly single-track railroad, causing on-time performance to plummet from 95.5% in January to 72% in March.

One reason for UP's responsiveness is knowledge that it will benefit from state-funded investments—more track capacity for passenger trains benefits freight trains also. The state has earmarked \$23 million in the corridor this year to increase double track between San Jose and Fremont.

Another \$140 million—including some \$20 million to double the five-mile single track Yolo Causeway between Davis and Sacramento—is earmarked for three-to-five years from now. From now through 2010, at least \$855 million is planned to complete the double-tracking, improve some stations, buy rolling stock and fund some of the improvements needed to extend service to Reno. [Reno now has four Capitol Corridor buses daily plus the *California Zephyr*.]

Most immediately, the corridor lacks capacity for the expected ridership. A fifth train set is needed and should arrive within a year, as one train set each is released from southern California to the San Joaquin and Capitol Corridors.

Business plan development included six public meetings, two of which were on board trains, to maximize customer participation. Plans for next year call for nine or ten Sacramento-Oakland frequencies, with six continuing to San Jose (vs. four today), three to Roseville (vs. one today).

Given the vigor and enthusiasm Skoropowski brings to his work, Florida's loss was California's gain. He was project

director for the Florida Overland eXpress, which Gov. Jeb Bush killed shortly after taking office (Apr. '99 News). When Skoropowski arrived in Sacramento, the Authority was poised to end service to Colfax and haul Union Pacific before the Surface Transportation Board out of frustration at the inability to agree on capital investments and how many trains those investments would allow. He asked for time.

He quickly proved that UP would respond positively to a constructive partnership that protected UP's ability to operate and grow its freight business. He also found that the single Colfax round-trip—carrying an average of 1.6 passengers per day—cost \$400,000 a year. So, *without increasing costs*, the seventh Sacramento and fourth San Jose trains were added, the Colfax train was replaced with a Colfax-Auburn bus, and Auburn got a better evening train time plus bus connections to all the other *Capitols*. These changes made the service more useful, and more cost-effective.

When passenger revenue goes above budget, the state allows the Authority to keep the extra funds and invest it in further improvements, including minor capital (like information kiosks and signs). The Authority shares extra revenue with Amtrak, as an incentive to provide the best service possible and build a strong, mutually beneficial partnership.

This corridor has been a major source of delays for the *California Zephyr* and *Coast Starlight*, which thus should benefit from the improvements described above. ■

"CINCINNATI UNION TERMINAL"

The Cincinnati Railroad Club last fall published "Cincinnati Union Terminal, the Design and Construction of an Art Deco Masterpiece." Opened in 1933, the terminal replaced five smaller stations downtown. It is one of the most impressive railroad stations ever built, noted for its passenger amenities and artwork. Most of it is now used for a museum complex.

The book, edited by the Club's Publications Committee, is a very handsome, hard-cover, 176-page work with many period photos (and color plates of the famous murals, several of which ended up at the airport in Kentucky when the concourse was razed after Amtrak moved out in 1972). The text is adapted from two pieces written by *Railway Age* and the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce when the station opened. The book sells for \$47.35 (including sales tax and shipping), payable to the Cincinnati Railroad Club, P.O. Box 14698, Cincinnati, OH 45250-0698.

[Ed. note—Amtrak returned to Union Terminal in 1991 (using the former men's lounge). Since the release of a proposed Midwest Regional Rail Initiative in 1998 that included a Chicago-Cincinnati line, and since that line's federal designation as a high-speed corridor in 1999, local officials have been making plans for a permanent intermodal facility. News accounts say officials are leaning toward a site just west of the central riverfront, though Union Terminal earlier had been in consideration.]

BURCH SAFETY AWARD GOES TO AMTRAK CHEF



The seventh annual Dr. Gary Burch Memorial Safety Award was presented this year to Allan Thomas, of Hammond, LA, a chef on Amtrak's *City of New Orleans*. The award was established by the Burch Family to recognize railroad employees judged to have done the most to improve passenger safety, and to honor the memory of Dr. Burch, who died in a 1991 train derailment.

The presentation (above) was at NARP's annual Washington reception, April 27—from left to right are President John R. Martin, Bette Burch, Thomas, Dorothy Meyers (Thomas' mother), Karen Reynolds (Thomas' sister), Jim Brzesinski (Amtrak Service Manager), David White (*City of New Orleans* Product Line Director).

Thomas was recognized for leading the last two Amtrak employee safety fairs in New Orleans (including working at them as a chef). On his own time, he participates in the *City of New Orleans* product line safety committee. He put together a safety manual used by all Amtrak Gulf Coast employees. He and the committee conducted an accident drill with emergency response agencies in Jackson, MS, and community outreach events in schools in Memphis, TN, and Greenwood, MS.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Amtrak May 21 Timetable Changes

Northeast Corridor—The January 31 timetable remains in effect into July, in anticipation of more Acela service then.

Texas Eagle—As stated here last month, the *Texas Eagle* began daily Chicago-San Antonio service May 21, the first since 1993. However, as a condition for operating the daily train, Amtrak had to agree with Union Pacific to run on two routes in northeastern Texas to match UP's fleeting of freight trains there.

The northbound *Eagle* serves Longview and Marshall as before. However, the southbound *Eagle* skips these two stations, running an alternate route between Texarkana and Mineola. A southbound stop has been set up at Gilmer (20 miles northwest of Longview) to connect with buses for Longview and Marshall, plus the Shreveport and Houston buses. They still connect with the northbound train at Longview.

NARP has urged Amtrak to go back to the former

pattern as soon as UP will allow it, and to resist railroad requests for this type of operation elsewhere.

Michigan—One Chicago-Pontiac round-trip (trains 352-353) was cut back to Detroit to accommodate RoadRailer express business. This is the train that could be extended to Buffalo and New York in the fall.

Another round-trip (trains 350-355) is to be diverted from Dearborn to Toledo in the summer, but for now continues to serve Detroit and Pontiac. When that happens, the Pontiac line will have only one daily round-trip left (trains 351-354).

Manhattan Limited—Now to be known as the *Skyline Connection*, is postponed into the summer as a New York-Chicago train, possibly on a schedule different from that in the May 21 timetable. It will connect with Michigan trains 350-355 at Toledo.

Hiawathas—The extension of a Chicago-Milwaukee round-trip to Fond du Lac is postponed into the summer.

Transit—Kenosha (WI) Transit's downtown streetcar circulator begins June 17.

HOUSE APPROVES 2001 FUNDING BILL

The House on May 12 approved a fiscal 2001 transportation appropriations bill, H.R.4475, with \$521 million for Amtrak. That level—\$468 million below the amount authorized for Amtrak—is what the Administration requested in general funds. This is 9% below the current level, and coincides with Amtrak's so-called "glidepath," the barebones minimum needed to keep the existing system going short-term.

The bill had a rail flexibility provision. States would have been allowed to spend funds from two major TEA-21 programs (congestion mitigation and air quality improvement [CMAQ]; surface transportation) on intercity passenger rail. Transportation Appropriations Chairman Frank R. Wolf (R-VA) is a strong supporter of flexibility, but Transportation and Infrastructure

Chairman Bud Shuster (R-PA) raised a point of order against this provision, and it was dropped.

Shuster also insisted on dropping another Wolf rail initiative—raising from 90 to 100% the federal funding share for projects that eliminate grade-crossing hazards. Wolf expressed his disappointment, calling the unobligated national balance of \$142 million "a disgrace...[this money is] just lying out there for States to use for rail crossings to save lives." Wolf said he wanted a one-year period to "flush out" that balance.

The Clinton Administration's proposal for a \$468-million passenger-rail program funded from gas-tax revenues in excess of projected levels would have faced a similar point of order, since no law authorizes it. The House bill does not accommodate this proposal.



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