



Wheels of Progress

St. Louis Gets A Real Station!



—W. David Randall

They mean interim for real this time—the second “temporary” station in St. Louis opened on December 20. This facility, seen here from trackside, is a vast improvement over the “AmShack” that Amtrak has used since leaving St. Louis Union Station in 1978. The new building will become the Train and Engine Crew Building after the city’s intermodal transportation center is ready. Current plans call for the center to open in 2006.

The “Amtrak 21” Republican House Members

Back on February 12, 2004, Rep. Ernest J. Istook Jr., chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Treasury and Independent Agencies, wrote to those Republican House members who in 2003 had signed a letter urging full funding for Amtrak.

Istook advised them not to sign such a letter in 2004, noting that “any request for Amtrak funding...must and will be weighed against your other requests, and I will consider it as a project request for your district.” [“Other requests” means specific “earmarks” or projects, mostly for highways, that members seek in appropriations bills and which they greatly value.]

Twenty-one Republicans went ahead and signed another pro-Amtrak letter anyway. The May 14 letter included this rejoinder to Istook: “We strongly believe that counting our support for Amtrak’s FY05 budget request as an individual project request sets an unfair, dangerous prece-

dent. Amtrak is a national system that serves and benefits the majority of the constituents represented by Members of this Congress and should therefore not be considered on an individual Member request basis.”

But when the dust cleared on the huge, fiscal 2005 omnibus spending bill, the “Amtrak 21” learned that, indeed, Istook had deleted their highway projects, except for projects that had been jointly requested with members who did not sign the pro-Amtrak letter.

In a December 15 editorial, “Istook Off the Rails,” the *Providence Journal* commented on the misfortune of Rep. Rob Simmons (R-CT): “[Chairman Istook] proceeded to take an ax to the Amtrak supporters’ pet projects. Mr. Simmons’s district lost \$6 million for a new highway, \$89 million for a road widening, and other funding. The scarcity of transportation dollars did not, however, stop Mr. Istook

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Our Annual Review of Rail-Related Projects

Here is our annual list of major rail passenger improvements planned to enter service, and the dates of planned openings (if available). Dates and projects are subject to change. *NARP News* regularly reports actual start-up dates. This year, our time horizon extends well beyond the usual two years. Also, there is a list of “Major Accomplishments in 2004” on page two.

2005

• **Jan. 18**—Wisconsin DOT completes new station near Milwaukee’s Mitchell Field airport, to be served by Amtrak’s *Hiawatha Service* (see *Traveler’s Advisory*, p. 4)

• **Jan. 29**—Renovation of *San Joaquin* station at Fresno.

• **Mar.**—Portland Streetcar extension 5th/Mill (PSU)-RiverPlace (0.6 mi).

• **Early**—completion of rehabbed CTA Blue Line Cermak branch, not long ago at risk of abandonment due to severe infrastructure deterioration

• **Early**—NJT Hudson-Bergen LRT, Weehawken (Lincoln Harbor)-North Bergen (Tonnelles Ave.).

• **Spring**—New Oakland Coliseum Amtrak station for *Capitol Corridor*, direct connection to BART and shuttle to Oakland International Airport.

• **June**—Renovation of station at Kingman, AZ, served by Amtrak’s *Southwest Chief*, as part of a downtown renewal project.

• **August**—Amtrak moves into historic, downtown Greensboro, NC, station. Local transit and intercity bus began using the station in August 2003.

• **Summer**—San Diego Mission Valley (east) extension of Blue light-rail line, Mission San Diego-La Mesa (Orange Line connection), 6.3 miles.

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- **Summer**—MBTA Green Line re-opens beyond North Station; completion of “Super Station” there, serving both Orange and Green Lines.

- **Summer**—New station platforms and crossings at Berkeley, CA.

- **Summer**—Santa Clara VTA Vasona light-rail line, downtown San Jose-Amtrak/commuter station-Campbell/Winchester (5.3 mi).

- **Sept.**—Completion of Reno (NV) trench project, lowering Union Pacific tracks through the downtown Reno entertainment strip. Amtrak returns to previous station.

- **Oct.**—Sacramento RTD light-rail spur to Amtrak station (0.7 mi) and extension Sunrise-Downtown Folsom (7.4 mi.). Service patterns will then be shifted: trains will operate between Amtrak and Sunrise or Folsom (limited service at Folsom) and between Watt/I-80 and Meadowview.

- **Oct.**—Nashville (TN)-Lebanon commuter rail (“Music City Star”), 32 mi.

- **Nov.**—Belen-Albuquerque-Bernalillo commuter rail, using funding approved by the New Mexico legislature in November 2003. It would be first segment of eventual service to Santa Fe.

- **Fall Amtrak timetable change**—Completion of capacity improvements allows one more weekend and three more weekday San Jose-Oakland *Capitol Corridor* frequencies (bringing the total to at least seven daily on that segment).

- **Late**—Chicago area’s Metra commuter railroad extensions, Geneva-Elburn (10 mi.); Orland Park-Manhattan (11 mi).

- **Sometime**—NJT Newark light rail, Broad Street Station-Washington Park-Penn Station.

- **Sometime**—SEPTA restores Philadelphia’s 15/Girard line with historic PCC streetcars (8.2 mi.); last regular service was in 1992. The line has been completed and the cars rebuilt, but the project is now facing neighborhood opposition due to proposed parking restrictions.

- **Sometime**—Fourth Seattle-Portland Talgo (fifth frequency overall), pending completion of certain track projects.

- **Sometime**—San Francisco Muni J/Church light rail line extension along Third St., San Francisco Caltrain to Bayshore Caltrain via Third Street and Bayshore Boulevard.

Major Accomplishments in 2004

- **Jan. 1:** Houston Light Rail’s initial segment opened.

- **Feb. 1:** Double-tracking project on Yolo Causeway near Sacramento, CA completed, eliminating last single-track segment on *Capitol Corridor*.

- **Mar. 13:** Trenton-Camden (NJ) “River Line”—first diesel light rail line in the United States—opened.

- **April 18:** New Orleans Canal Streetcar line re-opened (after abandonment in 1964).

- **June 7:** CalTrain began “Baby Bullet” express service, San Jose-San Francisco, restored all weekend service after two year shutdown.

- **June 26:** Minneapolis “Hiawatha Line” light rail opened first segment; extension to Airport and Mall of America opened Dec. 4.

- **Late July:** Trackwork increased more of the *Downeaster* route to 79 mph service.

- **Oct. 12:** New Oakland (CA) Maintenance Facility, serving *San Joaquins*, *Capitol Corridor*, and *California Zephyr* dedicated.

- **Nov. 1:** Arkansas’s first rail mass transit: Little Rock’s River Rail Streetcar, connecting Little Rock and North Little Rock.

- **Nov. 1:** Pittsfield (MA) Intermodal Terminal opened, replacing “AmShack” bus shelter.

- **Nov. 17:** Amtrak, in cooperation with Metrolink, began second Los Angeles-San Luis Obispo *Pacific Surfliner* frequency.

- **Late Fall:** major progress on stations in North Carolina: Hamlet and Southern Pines received extensive renovations; Kannapolis gained a brand new facility.

- **Dec. 19:** Heavy rail “Tren Urbano” began weekend-only service on 11 mile starter line, downtown San Juan, Puerto Rico to suburban Bayamon; weekday service to begin in March 2005.

- **Dec. 20:** New, temporary, station opens in St. Louis, replacing twenty year old trailers.

- **February**—Georgia’s first commuter rail operation: Atlanta-Lovejoy (eventually extended to Macon).

- **Early**—Some 110 mph running begins in southwest Michigan on Amtrak’s Chicago-Detroit line.

- **Early**—Completion of Baltimore Light Rail Double tracking. All but 2.6 miles of 26 mile system will be double track (short single track portions will remain at Timonium Business Park, Amtrak’s Penn Station, and BWI Airport due to space constraints).

- **Early**—Milwaukee Amtrak station is renovated and made an intermodal terminal.

- **Summer**—All New Jersey Transit commuter rail routes will have either Advanced Civil Speed Enforcement System (ACSES, Amtrak’s system on the Northeast Corridor), Automatic Train Control (ATC), and/or Positive Train Stop (PTS), vastly improving passenger safety.

- **Fall**—Washington, DC “Anacostia Light Rail Demonstration Project,” Pennsylvania Avenue-Anacostia Metro-Bowling Air Force Base (2.5 miles).

- **Late**—Denver “T-REX” Southeast Corridor Light Rail expansion (approved before FasTracks) 19.1 miles, I-25/Broadway to Nine Mile at Parker Road and Lincoln Road (two branches).

- **Sometime**—Trestle at Back Cove in Portland, ME, is completely restored, allowing future northward extension of Boston-Portland *Downeaster* service.

- **Sometime**—Phase 2 Richmond Main St. Station project, bringing in *Regional* trains currently terminating in Richmond. (A longer-term goal of restoring through trains to downtown Richmond involves upgrading 10.4 miles of track south from Main St. to Centralia. Status of this project is unclear.)

- **Sometime**—*Keystone Service* station renovation at Elizabethtown (PA) and new stations at Harrisburg International Airport and Paradise (connecting with Strasburg Railroad).

- **Sometime**—Portland’s Washington County Commuter Rail: Beaverton (Tri Met transfer) to Wilsonville, 14.7 miles.

- **Late**—Greenbush line (Braintree-Hingham-Cohasset-Scituate) MBTA commuter rail. Army Corps of Engineers issued major environmental permit January 3, 2005. Some environmental challenges remain but Massachusetts is

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“something like nine-for-nine in terms of [beating back] challenges to the project,” says Transportation Secretary Daniel A. Gabauskas (*Boston Herald*, Jan. 4).

- **Late**—Amtrak’s Chicago-St. Louis trains to reach 110 mph on the 50-mile segment north from Springfield to Dwight, IL, on track improved with Illinois funds and new signal system (a state-federal-Amtrak project).

2007

(all dates T.B.A., unless noted)

- **Mid**—Charlotte, NC light rail system (to expand on existing heritage system) Uptown – I-485/Pineville (“South Corridor,” 9.6 miles)

- **Late**—Oceanside-Escondido, CA, diesel light-rail service (26 mi).

- **Late**—Sounder commuter rail trains extended from Tacoma to Lakewood, Wash. (9 mi.).

- Rail station on Northeast Corridor at Warwick, RI, serving Providence’s T. F. Green Airport. A bus shuttle will be used between the station and airport terminal until a 0.3-mile people mover is built. The station will serve an extension of MBTA commuter rail from downtown Providence and, later, Amtrak.

- Lancaster, PA, station renovation on Amtrak’s *Keystone Service*.

- Extension of Albuquerque commuter rail, Bernalillo – Santa Fe (See November 2005)

- Major improvements in Salt Lake City: Salt Lake City Intermodal Terminal

opens (at site occupied by Amtrak since 1999), TRAX light-rail branch, Delta Center to Intermodal Terminal (4 blocks), and Salt Lake City commuter rail, Intermodal Terminal-Ogden all enter service.

- Completion of building renovation work at King St. Station, Seattle (used by Amtrak and Sounder). Amtrak passengers will use an on-site temporary facility during construction. Platform and canopy work was completed in 2000.

...And Beyond

- **2008**—Austin (TX) commuter rail: downtown to Leander (32 miles)

- **2009**—Triangle Transit Authority commuter rail service, Raleigh (NC) - downtown Durham

- **2009**—Charlotte (NC) Area Transit System “modern electric streetcar line,” Beatties Ford Road-downtown-Eastland Mall (10 miles).

- **2009**—Two extensions of Los Angeles MTA Gold Line: Little Tokyo-Boyle Heights-East Los Angeles (6 miles) and “Foothill Extension,” Sierra Madra Villa (Pasadena) to Montclair Transportation Center, 24 miles.

- **2009**—Vancouver Airport (Richmond, BC)-downtown Vancouver people mover system (12 miles), private DBOM consortium.

- **2009**—(new) Seattle Monorail “Green Line” (14 miles) and “Central Link” light rail, Downtown - Tukwila (14 miles).

- **2011**—Washington Metrorail, West Falls Church-Reston (Wiehle Avenue), 11.6 miles, first segment in eventual extension to Dulles Airport. ■

Nominees Sought for Martin and Youth Awards

NARP has long sought to improve the quantity, quality and safety of rail passenger service with awards that give special recognition and encouragement to deserving people. Now, we seek your help in finding deserving recipients of two awards. Both honor rail advocates; so far, they have had just one winner each.

Trey Davis, then 18, won the National Rail Passenger Youth Advocacy Award for helping to save the Spartanburg, SC, depot (*NARP News*, August, 1998).

Leif Erik Lange of Sacramento won the John R. Martin Passenger Rail Advocacy Award (*News*, May, 2001). Martin was NARP president from 1979 until his death in 2000. Lange was honored for his key role in laying the foundation for California’s intercity rail program.

Carefully chosen awards are valuable. They encourage recipients to continue excellent work—and they encourage others to work hard as well. They often are a source of media attention.

If you know of someone we should consider for the Martin or Youth awards, please tell us! Write to NARP Awards Committee, 900 Second St., NE, Suite 308, Washington, DC 20002-3557. Include as much relevant material about the candidate as you can, preferably with contact information and press accounts or citations of same. ■

For the latest news, visit our website at <www.narprail.org>. We post a news hotline weekly, usually Friday afternoon.

NARP Tests Phoning System

To improve communications between NARP and its members, and between NARP members and Congress, we are borrowing a page from the Ohio Association of Rail Passengers to reach you by phone on pressing legislative matters.

Elected officials need to hear from those who believe in a strong passenger rail network. We want you to have the best tools possible to make your ideas on these matters known. Phoning is the fastest method for reaching you—and for the first time lets us promptly contact you even if you don’t have a computer.

Please send us your phone number and—if you’ve not already done so—your e-mail address.

We will not share such information with any other organization. If you ever want to be removed from the phone list, simply follow the instructions when you receive an automated message from us, or just contact us directly with your request by phone, e-mail or fax.

More information about the system we are testing is at <<http://databasesystemscomp.com/psivr.htm>>.

Of course, it is good to cultivate relationships with your legislators before a crisis develops. That way, your general views about an issue are known, and legislators will have an advance indication of what your wishes are before receiving a “mid-crisis” message.

A “Happy New Year” letter indicating your strong belief in America’s national intercity passenger rail network is a great idea—and FAX is probably the best way to send it, e-mail second best.

Almost every Hill office publishes a fax number on its web site. Reach those sites via <www.senate.gov> and <www.house.gov>. Legislators vary in their attentiveness to e-mail, and some are even happy to get regular mail in district offices.

Attend your 2005 NARP Regional Meeting!

This is a good way to meet NARP leaders and fellow rail advocates. Often, there are informative outside speakers as well. Below is a listing of dates and meeting times; specifics are on our website and will be detailed in our next mailing.

Region 1 (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT): April 2, New London, CT.

Region 2 (NY): March 12, Schenectady, NY.

Region 3 (DE, NJ, PA): Wilmington, DE date pending.

Region 4 (DC, MD, VA, WV): March 19, Baltimore.

Region 5 (AL, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN): March 5, New Orleans, LA.

Region 6 (IN, MI, OH) and Region 7 (IL, MN, ND, WI): combined meeting, March 19, Chicago, IL.

Region 8 (AK, ID, MT, OR, WA): March 19, Portland, OR.

Region 9 (AR, KS, MO, OK, TX-except El Paso Co.): March 12, Fort Worth, TX.

Region 10 (CO, IA, NE, SD, UT, WY): Date and city pending.

Region 11 (AZ, NM, El Paso Co., TX): Phoenix, date in March to be announced.

Region 12 (CA, HI, NV): April 9, L.A. Metro area.

Amtrak 21

(from page 1)

from earmarking over \$50 million for a new highway in Oklahoma City..."

Anger was not confined to the "victims," as the House leadership reportedly was upset because some of the fingered Republicans—including Rep. Simmons—typically have tight races, and the inability to deliver popular road projects could cost some members their seats in 2006.

The *Washington Post* reported on December 15, "House Speaker J. Dennis Hastert (R-IL), moving to placate 21 angry House Republicans, has promised to seek funds next year for several dozen highway projects that were left out of a recently passed spending bill on [Stoock's] orders." ■

Rail Travel Tips

Tip #6—Avoid Southern California traffic...use mass transit between Los Angeles Union Station (or other downtown points) and LAX International Airport.

While it requires three transfers, using Los Angeles MTA rail service between Union Station and LAX is much cheaper than a cab or shuttle—and could mean the difference between making and missing your flight: Red Line subway Union Station-Metro Center; Blue Line light rail Metro Center-Rosa Parks Transfer Station; Green Line light rail Rosa Parks-Aviation/I-105 station; free LAX Shuttle Bus. Total trip time: just under one hour; cost: \$3.00.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Milwaukee's Mitchell Field Station—Construction delays have pushed back opening of new *Hiawatha Service* station to January 18, could possibly slip one more week due to weather, check NARP Hotline (on our website) for updates.

Name changes no longer allowed—Amtrak no longer permits name changes on ticketed or paid-for reservations, due to a growing fraud problem. Now, as with airlines, a name change requires full ticket reissuance with any applicable fees charged. However, correcting a

misspelled name does not generate the same requirement (unlike with the airlines).

Winston-Salem bus—Due to problems with ticket issuance, Amtrak no longer collect fares for the Greensboro (NC)-Winston-Salem Thruway bus, but issues a zero-value ticket, with passengers paying driver \$2.00, cash only.

Amtrak Improves Service Recovery—Blackout dates no longer apply to Transportation Certificates. These are issued in response to service problems; ignore dates printed on back.



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