



## House Members Press For More, Better Service

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies' annual Amtrak hearing was February 26. The witnesses were Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph Boardman and Amtrak President Alex Kummant.

Chairman John Olver (D-MA) cited record Amtrak ridership, pay recommendations of the Bush-appointed Presidential Emergency Board, and recommendations for major increases in passenger train investment from the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission. He said these should have influenced the Bush 2009 budget, "but instead we get a carbon copy of last year's. It will be extremely difficult to more than double the Bush Administration request to get what Amtrak believes it needs from the federal government. Unfortunately, President Bush has left us other holes to fill regarding airports, infrastructure, highways and transit and housing."

Since he was first elected in 1991, Olver has watched huge passenger train progress overseas, but not here. In frustration, he asked, "What should we do?" Boardman suggested developing a

grade-separated, electrified, Maine-Florida railroad. He added, "We need more trains. People are flying from Atlanta to Charlotte by way of Philadelphia. That makes absolutely no sense; that's part of the air congestion problem. Those people should be on trains...I think we have an obligation to do electrification where it makes the most sense."

Kummant said 100 mph service could win many more riders and an investment of maybe under \$100 million would buy 110 mph speeds for Chicago-St. Louis. "If we got a European train as a demonstration it would sell out." He also mentioned Chicago-Detroit for "less than \$1 billion" including added tracks (see photo), and Los Angeles-Las Vegas.

Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) commented on Amtrak's bad on-time performance in Toledo: "The current system absolutely is not working...How can we treat passenger rail more robustly?...I always hear Detroit-Chicago, what about Pittsburgh-Cleveland-Toledo-Chicago." She talked about involving the governors.

Ranking Member Joe Knollenberg (R-MI) asked Boardman whether "cost-

## National Train Day: Celebrating a Bright Future for Trains

On May 10, 2008, NARP will join Amtrak in celebrating the first annual National Train Day at stations across the country. This is the 139th anniversary of the laying in 1869 of the Golden Spike at Promontory Summit, Utah, which completed America's first transcontinental railroad.

Amtrak created National Train Day to highlight the growing popularity of trains as convenient, energy efficient, environmentally sound ways to travel. The National Train Day spokesman is TV personality Al Roker.

NARP and its members will use the occasion to promote our Vision and Grow Trains Campaign and to urge policy makers to renew their commitment to expanding the U.S. passenger train network.

The reasons Amtrak cites to tout its increasing attractiveness explain why the traveling public deserves more train service in cities large and small.

NARP's Vision, unveiled in 2007, our 40th year, would release trains' untapped potential across the country and meet the public's increasing demand for a sustainable, affordable transportation choice.

"This year's festivities come at a time when sticker shock at the gas pump is creating greater public interest in more passenger train service. This interest was well established even before the current rise in gasoline prices. Polls, referenda, and ridership data on train systems across the country all show that we need more trains," said Ross Capon, Executive Director of NARP.

### Needed: Bridges and Tracks Restored



—David R. Johnson

Looking east towards Chicago's Calumet River Bridge, used by Amtrak's Michigan and most Chicago-East trains, and by heavy Norfolk Southern (NS) freight traffic. For reliable—and expanded—service, the former New York Central bridges and right-of-way at left must be reactivated between Porter, IN, and Chicago. Chicago Skyway is at right.

benefit analysis" alone was enough to show where passenger trains should run. Boardman: "I don't believe

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Amtrak is sponsoring major events in Los Angeles; Chicago; Washington, DC, and New York City. Political leaders are organizing events in several other cities.

NARP and local advocacy organizers are organizing events in these cities: CA: Emeryville and Sacramento; FL: Tampa; NH: Durham; NC: Greensboro; OH: Cincinnati and Toledo; TX: Dallas, Fort Worth and Marshall; WA: Seattle; VA: Charlottesville, Richmond-Main Street Station, Fredericksburg and Williamsburg.

To host your own National Train Day event, find our publicity and organizational materials at [www.narprail.org/trainday](http://www.narprail.org/trainday) where we also will update the list of host cities we know about. Information about Amtrak's events and promotions is at [www.nationaltrainday.com](http://www.nationaltrainday.com) ■

## Kansas, Ohio, Illinois Consider New Routes

Responding to growing citizen pressure for train service, states increasingly are asking Amtrak to study new services.

**Kansas** requested a study of Kansas City-Newton-Oklahoma City service. In a joint Amtrak/Kansas DOT release Mar. 20, Amtrak said "the study will include a connection between the *Southwest Chief* and an extended *Heartland Flyer* at Newton; a further extension of the *Heartland Flyer* to Kansas City; or another new service." And Kansas DOT Secretary Deb Miller said, "Linking the *Southwest Chief* route to the *Heartland Flyer* route at Newton and Kansas City seems to be a logical connection within Amtrak's national system."

**Ohio's** "3-C" Corridor (Cleveland-Columbus-Cincinnati) has the U.S.'s most populous, unserved state capital and has been studied endlessly over the years.

But things are looking up. In a Feb. 26 letter, Gov. Ted Strickland (D) sought Amtrak's help in "evaluating available options to implement reliable" service.

A Mar. 6 joint Amtrak/ORDC release said the study "will be performed by Am-

trak and funded by the state of Ohio" and will identify "the capital needs for rail improvements to the corridor that would not only enable passenger service, but increase capacity for greater freight movement." (See also box at right.)

**Illinois:** In a Jan. 7 release, Amtrak said its Chicago-Quad Cities feasibility report found "the approximate cost of upgrading the railroad infrastructure [for] passenger train speeds is \$14-to-23 million, over the shortest, fastest and least costly of the potential routes," not including trains and stations.

Sen. Richard J. Durbin (D-IL) said, "Last year, we held a meeting that showed us that the Quad Cities are committed to bringing Amtrak back to the area. Today, we have a feasibility study that shows us that adding rail service between the Quad Cities and Chicago will give businesses and tourists a time competitive and convenient alternative to driving."

Rep. Phil Hare (D-IL): "The first passenger...train pulled into the Quad Cities more than 150 years ago. It's time for it to return to this area."

## Approps Hearing

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cost-benefit analysis is adequate to tell us what we need to do to maintain mobility and connectivity. We must look at strategic purpose and the need to connect. One of Amtrak's strongest leverage points is their national network and connections with all commuter trains and buses. We should have a single method of payment" for all the forms of public transportation.

Earlier, Knollenberg complained that Amtrak and FRA "seem to exist in two different worlds," and said he feared that the Administration is using its "mandate for change" (and what he considers Amtrak's failure to change) as a way of meeting its budget targets, while Amtrak is "not taking seriously the need to restructure itself, streamline its workforce and align its services with public need."

Boardman said his review of Northeast Corridor commuter rail operators showed they are paying their share of the costs of using those tracks. But, on other intercity corridors, he said "we have a very uneven level of support among states, especially in my former state of New York" (*Empire Corridor* is 100% Amtrak funded).

Knollenberg asked about the possibility that Amtrak revenues could fall in a re-

cession. Kummant said Amtrak elected to take "a conservative revenue number and to manage costs very hard." He said the alternatives seemed inappropriate: to seek a much bigger operating grant or to propose dramatic cuts.

## Molitoris Gets Key Ohio Post

In late 2007, Gov. Ted Strickland appointed Jolene Molitoris to chair the Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC). She is a veteran passenger train advocate who was Federal Railroad Administrator in the Clinton Administration.

On Mar. 10, Ohio DOT Director James Beasley announced her appointment as his assistant director. Among her responsibilities: "work with the state's upcoming 21st Century Transportation Priorities Task Force," which many expect will greatly change how Ohio addresses transportation. The release starts by noting the governor's "commitment to modernizing the state's *multi-modal* transportation system" (emphasis ours).

The Quad Cities (Davenport and Bettendorf, IA; Rock Island and Moline/East Moline, IL) last had service in 1978, when the Rock Island Lines (which did not join Amtrak) ended service. ■

Pressed by Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA), Boardman said the administration would not request the additional money needed to provide workers the back pay recommended by the Presidential Emergency Board. ■

## Mica Introduces High Speed Rail Bill

Rep. John Mica (R-FL), Ranking Member on the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, on March 14 introduced H.R. 5644 which "seeks to develop high speed rail...between Washington and New York, to be followed by proposals for other high speed corridors around the country... With up to 75% of the nation's aviation delays attributable to New York airspace congestion, a viable high speed corridor in the Northeast would also free up critical airspace and reduce aviation congestion nationwide."

The bill does not include funding but requires U.S. DOT to solicit proposals for developing a Washington-New York high speed rail link ("express service" of not over two hours"), proposals to "include engineering, financing, and development plans." DOT would convene a Commission of state,

local, federal, rail and rail labor stakeholders to evaluate the proposals and report to Congress, which then would "take the necessary action to commence work on the corridor."

The bill, which had 23 co-sponsors when introduced, also "requires a study to examine how to achieve maximum economic utilization of the Northeast Corridor." NARP has said the keys are longer trains (more equipment), affordable fares on Regionals, and rebuilding the catenary (overhead wires) for greater reliability.

At a July 11, 2007, House appropriations hearing, Amtrak President Alex Kummant said an investment of \$7 billion would produce 2:20 service, evidently including five stops (implying 2:00 non-stop service) and also would "improve reliability/capacity for all users" of the corridor.

## The Stevenson Family of Passenger Train Advocates

*"The intercity passenger train must continue to exist if this growing country is to meet its transportation needs. Airplanes are fast and excellent, but already the saturation point has been reached around major airports...The private car is a wonderful convenience, but strangers are fools to drive into large cities they know nothing about. The accident potential on expressways is too great a gamble. So, for many people, the train is essential. And it would lure thousands of new passengers if it were clean, modern and swift..."*

—Titusville (PA) *Herald*, May 19, 1970 editorial, "Passenger Trains Must Continue," endorsing Rail Passenger Service Act which the Senate had passed 78-3

In 1974, when NARP's first large board was named, one of the members was James B. Stevenson, editor and publisher of the Titusville (PA) *Herald*. His brother, William D., was associate publisher. Both strongly believed that the U.S. needed more and better passenger trains, a view expressed regularly in the paper's editorials.

James B.'s son, James H. Stevenson, has served on NARP's board since 1992; he retired to North Carolina after a working career in Cleveland that included several years as a Penn Central manager. His wife, Carolyn, is also a NARP member and strong believer in our cause. He sent us 15 pro-passenger *Herald* editorials which ran from 1959 to 1970. Most documented and lamented the decline of the passenger train. An exception is quoted above, reflecting hopes kindled by passage of the bill that would eventually create Amtrak.

James H. recalls that his Uncle William was even more enthusiastic about trains than his dad, "if you can believe that." William wrote all of the editorials quoted here except the one from April, 1959.

Titusville is in oil country, about 40 miles southeast of Erie. For travel to the East, the Stevensons boarded Pennsylvania Railroad trains at Emporium, where trains from Erie and Buffalo combined.

An April, 1959, editorial, "Stranded in Northwestern Pennsylvania," lamented that the Pennsy was preparing to discontinue "northwestern Pennsylvania's last all-weather transportation link with Harrisburg...and Philadelphia." The editorial attributed "declining business" to seeming railroad efforts "to discourage business...The coach on the trains as recently as mid-winter was in disreputable



James B. Stevenson

condition, and the inhospitality of the conductor was notorious." Also cited: use of "old-fashioned 12-section drawing room sleeper, although roomettes were by far more popular and cars with them were available...Erie, Titusville, Corry, Warren, Kane and all the other towns affected by Pennsy service on these trains should meet with the railroad now in an effort to improve the service before it is too late."

Here are a few of the *Herald's* other train-oriented editorials (bolding ours):

- March, 1960: "To the Rescue," recounting how Pennsy added cars and made extra stops on this line to help motorists and others marooned by a sudden, heavy snow storm.

- March 27, 1965, "Saga of a Train," on the end of Pennsy passenger service between Erie, Harrisburg and the East.

- Sept. 24, 1964, "Demise of the *Pittsburgher*," lamenting loss of the business-oriented overnight service to New York, and lack of "an aggressive campaign of promotion" to increase ridership.

- December 3, 1966, "How Not to Serve the Passengers," reported a ride on the recently-downgraded *Pennsylvania Limited*: "Snack bar coaches may be satisfactory for short runs...But **as the only eating facility on a trip of nine hours, the snack bar is a travesty on the advantages of travel by rail.**"

- August 31, 1967, "The Postal Mess Could Be Compounded," suggesting that a recent decision "to eliminate railway mail cars on passenger trains" would worsen postal service that "has been and

still is in a mess...It is hard to realize that the railway mail car has apparently lost its efficiency...What happens if the divergence of first class mail to other means of transportation doesn't work out satisfactorily and the Post Office Department discovers that the trains it used to depend so heavily upon are no longer running?"

Penn Central's 1970 proposal to end passenger service west of Harrisburg and Buffalo set in motion the process that eventually produced Amtrak.

A March 10, 1970, editorial response to Penn Central's proposal, "Keep the Trains," ended by urging readers "interested in preserving rail passenger trains to join" NARP. It included our address and the Erie address of Dr. George McCallum, NARP's "regional membership chairman for northwestern Pennsylvania," who then was "associate professor at St. Norbert College and a former secretary of the Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority." St. Norbert is in DePere, WI, and McCallum divided his time between Wisconsin and Erie. He served on NARP's board until February, 2008. ■

### Missouri Member Alert

Please ask your state legislators to approve \$10.6 million to lengthen sidings on Union Pacific to improve reliability of Amtrak's St. Louis-Kansas City trains, which share tracks with over 50 freight trains a day. UP is investing heavily in the eastern part of the route; these sidings are in the west.

The recent turn-around in ridership, which had been declining while other Amtrak routes rose, shows how desperate the public is for trains, but that \$10.6 million is still needed.

However, Missouri's House of Representatives passed a state budget on Mar. 28 that reduces Amtrak *operating* assistance. Current annual funding of \$7.4 million would be cut to \$4.5 million, instead of the increase to \$8 million that MoDOT seeks. The present two round trips would be reduced to one. (Operating funds are in addition to the above-referenced capital funding needs).

Contact your state legislators! Go to [http://www.senate.mo.gov/lookup/leg\\_lookup.aspx](http://www.senate.mo.gov/lookup/leg_lookup.aspx) or use the Blue Pages of your phone book.



National Association of  
Railroad Passengers

## NARP NEWS

Vol. 42, No. 4

April 2008

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Postmaster: Send address changes to National Association of Railroad Passengers *NARP News*; 900 Second St., NE, Suite 308; Washington, DC 20002-3557.

(This has news through March 28. Vol. 42, No. 3 was mailed March 19.)

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### TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

**Coast Starlight** continues to run Los Angeles-Sacramento with overnight Portland Thruway Bus, with Amtrak accepting reservations for fully restored service from April 21, while investigating a possible Los Angeles-Klamath Falls, OR full service train and shorter bus ride in case the tracks have not reopened. Union Pacific reports slow but steady progress on rebuilding the railroad at Wicopee, OR, where slides damaged the line at two locations.

**Southwest Chief** regains its Denver-Raton Thruway bus effective April 1. The test switch of transfer to Albuquerque proved unsatisfactory.

**New Haven-Boston Shut Down**—In connection with installation of the new Thames River bridge at New

London, and a track maintenance blitz, no passenger trains will run between New Haven and Providence, June 14 to June 17. For Boston-New York travel, Amtrak offers just a single round-trip, with change of trains at Springfield. NARP has protested lack of alternate service

**Northbound Silver Star** from March 17 to May 8 departs Miami at 9:50 AM, two hours earlier than normal, due to CSX Sanford-Jacksonville trackwork. Scheduled times north of Jacksonville will remain the same to maintain a consistent operating pattern on the CSX, so the train may hold in Jacksonville for up to two hours. On Mondays through Thursdays, April 8 to May 8, the train will skip Tampa and Lakeland (with motorcoach service provided), causing layovers in Jacksonville of up to four hours.

**New Thruway Bus** connects Milwaukee and Houghton, MI, overnight. Serves many points north of Green Bay in Wisconsin and Michigan. Connections to/from *Empire Builder* are possible.

**Purchasing Guest Rewards Points**—Now Available through the Amtrak Guest Rewards website ([www.amtrakguestrewards.com](http://www.amtrakguestrewards.com)). Increments start at 500 points, with an annual cap of 10,000.

**Pacific Surfliner** service will be reduced north of Irvine April 12-May 4 due to bridge maintenance north of Oceanside and grade crossing replacements. Bus service south of Irvine. On Fridays, buses will substitute for trains 595 and 796 between Los Angeles and San Diego.

### Appreciations: NARP Director Ed Leight; Rail Operations Veteran John Tucker

Ed Leight, a NARP Board Member 1992-2002, died Feb. 13; he was 88.

His interest in passenger rail started in the early 1940s when he worked for the Illinois Central at Chicago Union Station. He was responsible for bringing the last minute mail bags to departing passenger trains. This experience, though short, led to a life long love of trains and resulted in his becoming an involved rail advocate.

NARP Director Royce Williams said, "Ed brought his conscientiousness, skills, and ever-present humor to his work as a Board Member of ProRail, Wisconsin Association of Railroad Passengers, and NARP. He served ProRail as Treasurer

and as President for a time. He wrote a regular column for *Badger Rails*, and called in live reports from NARP Washington meetings to the Saturday morning ProRail membership meetings in Madison."

Longtime rail and transit administrator John F. Tucker III, 57, died Feb. 24.

He was a born and bred Philadelphian who worked at SEPTA and was intimately involved in the takeover of Regional Rail operations from Conrail.

John also held positions at Miami Valley Regional Transit Authority (Dayton, Ohio) and New York City Transit Author-

ity. Towards the end of his career, he managed Amtrak's Operations Planning Department in Washington, D.C.

According to NARP Board and Executive Committee Member Eugene Skoropowski, "John Tucker was an incredible repository of train and transit information, a well respected expert in the public transport business, a manager who was exceptionally sensitive to the needs of the traveling public, and someone we in the industry will all dearly miss. Millions of daily riders in many cities are unknowingly the beneficiary of John's caring and expertise." ■