



News from the
**National Association of
 Railroad Passengers**

Vol. 26 No. 2 February, 1992

RETURN REQUESTED

John R. Martin, Pres.; **Eugene Skoropowski, Vice Pres.;** **Robert Glover, Sec.;**
Joseph Horning, Jr., Treas.; **Ross Capon, Exec. Dir.;** **Scott Leonard, Asst., Dir.;**
Jane Colgrove, Membership Dir.; **Harriet Parcels, Transp. Assoc.**

News from the National Association of Railroad Passengers (ISSN 0739-3490), is published monthly except November by NARP, 900 Second Street, NE, Suite 308, Washington, DC 20002, (202) 408-8362. Membership dues are \$20/year (\$10.00 under 21 or over 65) of which \$5 is for a subscription to NARP News. Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC.

Postmaster: send address changes to National Association of Railroad Passengers, 900 Second Street, NE, Suite 308, Washington, DC 20002.

(This has news through February 26. No. 1 was mailed February 4.)

Second Class Postage Paid
 At Washington, D.C.

Amtrak's FY '92 Budget Crisis

Bush's FY '93 Anti-Rail Budget: ISTEA Forgotten Already!

President Asks Less for Amtrak, Transit Than He Sought Last Year

President Bush's proposed FY '93 budget has only \$343 million for Amtrak—47% less than current funding and 29% less than Bush included in his budget a year ago—a “shut-down” budget. The president again requested nothing for the Northeast Corridor Improvement Project (NECIP), whose FY '92 funding is \$205 mill.

For mass transit, he seeks \$3 billion; this is 20% less than current funding, 10% below his own year-ago request, and—

(continued on page 2)

It's Big (\$67 Mill.); It Needs Prompt Attention

Maintenance Affected; Vermont Service Jeopardized

Amtrak's Oct.-Dec. '91 revenues were 3.1% below budget, leading Amtrak to project a \$67 million revenue shortfall for the full fiscal year and to adopt an “ongoing belt-tightening plan” that—if fully implemented—would hurt service quality.

Management salaries for FY92 “will remain frozen,” but the major action under consideration would save \$12 mill. by furloughing “about 1,000 (out of a total work force of 1,250) maintenance shop employees at Amtrak's Beech Grove, IN, heavy maintenance facility . . . for either two-and-a-half or three months. Of this group, about three-quarters will return to work Sep. 14. Others are expected to return by Oct. 1.”

Amtrak also expects to:

- “continue eliminating positions as vacancies occur or

(continued on page 4)

President Bush's FY '93 Transportation Budget Request Compared With Current Appropriations

ADMINISTRATION	FY'93 PROPOSED	FY'92 ENACTED	CHANGE
(Office of the Secretary)	\$ 267	\$ 222	+20%
Nat'l Highway Traffic Safety	306	261	+17%
Federal Highway	19,009	16,414	+16%
Federal Aviation	9,436	8,872	+6%
U.S. Coast Guard	3,718	3,526	+5%
Maritime	312	307	+2%
Federal Transit	3,000	3,767	-20%
Federal Railroad	429	961	-55%
Amtrak & NE Corr. Imp.	343	856	-60%

Note to budget aficionados: Previously, our annual table showing presidential budget requests used “budget authority” (BA) figures. Starting this year, we are using the generally lower “appropriations” figures to give a clearer picture of what the president actually wants to commit in the budget year, free of shaky promises about future-year spending. DOT's annual “Budget in Brief” long has acknowledged the greater significance of the appropriations table by illustrating it—but not the BA or “outlays” tables—with a pie chart.

SWIFT INTRODUCES AMTRAK REAUTHORIZATION

Chairman Al Swift (D-WA) of the House Energy & Commerce Subcomm. on Transportation & Hazardous Materials introduced a two-year Amtrak authorization bill, H.R. 4250, with good funding levels: about \$580 mill. a year for capital and operating grants of \$397 mill. and \$331 mill., respectively, in FY '93 and '94. Chairman Swift said at his Feb. 20 hearing: “There appears to be consensus emerging on all sides that rail passenger service provides concrete benefits to society.”

FOR LATE NEWS, CALL THE NARP HOTLINE

1-900-988-RAIL

UPDATED LATE ON FRIDAYS AND AS NEEDED.

PRESIDENT BUSH'S AMTRAK BUDGET REQUESTS IN PERSPECTIVE
 (\$ Figures are Millions of Dollars—Appropriations)

	FISCAL YEAR '92		FISCAL YEAR '93	'93 REQUEST vs. '92	
	Enacted	Request	Request	Approp.	Request
Operations	\$331	\$180	\$123*	} -43%	-18%
"Mandatory Payments" (Excess RR Retirement & Unemployment)	\$145	\$150	\$146*		
Capital	\$175	\$150	\$74	-58%	-51%
AMTRAK TOTAL	\$651	\$480	\$343	-47%	-29%
Northeast Corridor Improvement Program	\$205	0	0	-100%	-100%
AMTRAK & NECIP TOTAL	\$856	\$480	\$343	-60%	-29%

*These figures reflect Amtrak's estimate of mandatory payments; DOT this year provided no breakdown between such payments and the basic operating grant.

Bush's Budget (continued from page 1)

most remarkably—42% below what is in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act ("ISTEA," Jan. News), the "jobs" law the president signed with a flourish in Dec. and praised again in his State of the Union Address the night before his budget was released.

Perhaps ISTEA just means roads to Bush: he proposed a 16% increase in highway spending. Federal Highway Administrator Thomas Larson told reporters Jan. 29 that Bush's budget included 92% of ISTEA's road money ("98% if you adjust for categories"). The president included only 58% of ISTEA's transit money.

Bush's Amtrak numbers appear to reflect no appreciation for Amtrak's many success stories, most recently the ridership levels on the new Sacramento Bay Area-San Jose Trains (see box). Bush's whole transport budget seems to reflect complete ignorance of the need for energy-efficient transportation and compliance with the Clean Air Act. ■

CALTRANS: "PENT-UP DEMAND" FOR AMTRAK!

"Passengers are returning to the rails in Northern California in record numbers, with traffic so heavy that on some trains passengers stand for an hour. 'It's a boom in the rail passenger business—and I think it is going to get better,' said Cindy McKim, rail division chief for the California DOT. . . . The six Capitols (three each way) were inaugurated less than two months ago and already are carrying about 600 passengers a day. Planners thought it would take a year to reach that number, McKim said. . . . The Capitols are doing well because 'obviously we are meeting a pent-up demand. We are selling comfort, a stress-free trip, not having to deal with traffic on Interstate 80,' she said.

"McKim said she thinks there is a market for six round-trip Capitols a day. . . . The 85-mile Oakland-Sacramento run now takes two hours, but track improvements planned by Caltrans should cut the time in the next few years, McKim said. . . .

"The San Jose-Oakland section does poorly, McKim said, because there are no intermediate stations. Within a year, according to McKim, there should be stops at Great America amusement park and in the Fremont-Union City area and in Hayward, as well as at the Oakland Coliseum, where riders can transfer to BART or take a bus to Oakland International Airport."

—San Francisco Examiner, Feb. 5 news story

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Major Northeast Corridor revisions Apr. 5 include: Boston-to-New York "Fast Mail" becomes mail-only train to Sunnyside Yards due to Postal Service requirements; eastward "Night Owl" gains Hartford-Springfield-Worcester-Boston section, probably with sleeper (if so, westward "Night Owl" would carry two sleepers through Providence); the other eastbound Hartford-Boston train will leave New York at 3:50 PM. There also will be a new Friday-only Washington-Newport News round-trip.

Amtrak finally took positive action on one of NARP's suggestions for improving Metroliner ridership (Jan. '91 News, p. 2), lowering Sat./Sun. fares last Oct. 1.

Also Oct. 1, Amtrak stopped providing "Trak-Pak" snacks and wine to first-class sleeping car passengers, and prohibited use of excursion tickets between the New York area and New England 11a-7p—instead of 1p-8p—F and Su; between the New York area and Baltimore-Washington 11a-7p F only.

On Oct. 27, some "San Diegans" began stopping at Ventura, CA.

Warning! Lease between City of Detroit and owner of Michigan Central Depot property (site of Amtrak stop) expired Jan. 31. Owner is letting Amtrak stay put while negotiations continue; if Dearborn temporarily becomes area's only train stop, a Detroit shuttle-bus connection likely would operate.

On Jan. 6 Amtrak lowered the senior discount age limit from 65 to 62 and converted the discount from 25% off the full one-way fare (often undercut by other special fares and subject to black-out) to 15% off the lowest available fare on trips originating M-Th (including direct connections made F-Su). This discount still unavailable on Auto Train during black-out periods and on Metroliners. Also Jan. 6, Custom Class service was extended to the "Hoosier State" and "Ann Rutledge."

Through-ticket and joint fare agreement between Amtrak and Metro North takes effect Mar. 1, facilitating access to Grand Central Terminal in Manhattan from Empire Corridor points. May this be the first of many such agreements!

"Adirondack"/"Montrealer" round-trip excursion fares were extended to May 21 but see lead story regarding possible "Montrealer" changes; intrastate North Carolina "Carolinian" RT excursion fares offered through May 31.

AMTRAK'S NEWEST DIESELS

Amtrak and General Electric unveiled locomotive 501 at Washington Union Station Dec. 4. It is the first passenger locomotive to be built at GE's Erie, PA plant in many years. A Dash 8, similar to many GE freight locomotives, 501 sports a new paint scheme and is the first of a total pending order of 52 GE locomotives. Of the 52, 20 will be Dash 8s (the first two paid for by California), all of which were delivered ahead of schedule by Dec. 31. The rest will be 22 AMD-103s with a streamlined body and 10 dual-mode (diesel and electric third-rail) AMD-103s (see Dec. '90 News). Longtime Amtrak Board Member Charles Luna tests out the left-hand seat in 501's cab, which was designed to be more comfortable than cabs in present Amtrak locomotives. Because of their excessive height (they don't fit in the tunnel south of Washington Union Station) the Dash 8s will be restricted to the west.



"Wheels of Progress"

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 subject to change. NARP News regularly reports actual startup dates.

1992

- Apr. 3—MARC commuter rail for all Orioles home games, all MARC routes. Feeder buses from/to Baltimore's Penn Station; Camden Station platform adjacent to new stadium.

- April 6—Maryland Mass Transit Admin. Baltimore light rail trunk, Timonium-Camden Station (adjacent to new stadium), 14 mi.—baseball service only, regular service May 15.

- May and June—Virginia Railway Express commuter rail to Washington Union Station: May—Manassas Airport (36 mi.) and —June—Fredericksburg (55 mi.), four rush hour round trips on each line.

- "Spring"—Regular San Francisco Muni J/Church light rail service extended on new line (completed in 1991) from 30th St. to Geneva Ave.—irregular service now. M/Oceanview cut back to St. Francis for track work (bus substitutes).

- "Spring"—San Diego South LRT extension Santa Fe Depot-County Center/Little Italy (Cedar St.)—part of future North-South Line.

- "Mid"—Some Caltrain commuter service extended San Jose-Gilroy (34 miles), funded by Santa Clara Co.

- "Mid"—Extension of remaining Caltrain commuter trains San Jose-Tamien (2.5 miles)—site of intermodal station, connecting with light rail.

- "Mid"—Chicago 5-block subway connection south of the Loop between Howard (13th & Roosevelt) and Dan Ryan (18th & Clark) lines. Will speed up Howard line and improve equipment utilization.

- "Summer"—Ninth "San Diegan," weekends-only (later—as economy improves—daily) would be a system (not 403b) train.

- "Summer"—"Royal Eagle," privately-operated San Antonio (Amtrak Sta.)-Laredo-Monterrey service.

- Aug. 15—Baltimore LRT Camden-Patapsco Ave. extension, 3 mi.

- "Mid-Late"—Limited MARC off-peak commuter service, Camden Line, pending progress on state-funded CTC project on CSX. See also Apr. 3 entry.

- October—Extension of Amtrak's tri-weekly "Sunset Limited" (Los Angeles-New Orleans) to Biloxi, Mobile, Pensacola, Tallahassee, Jacksonville and Miami (with other stops). Restores a crucial route which last had service in April 1971.

- October—Los Angeles Co. Transportation Commission commuter trains: Union Station to Pomona (33 mi.), Moorpark (47 mi.) and Santa Clarita (formerly Saugus, 33 mi.).

- "Fall"—Memphis Area Transit Authority downtown trolley/pedestrian mall project, 2.5 mi, south end at Central (Amtrak) Station.

- "Late"—Raleigh-Charlotte Amtrak round trip (morning west, evening back), under 403b arrangement between North Carolina and Amtrak. Will use Heritage equipment bought and renovated by the state.

- "Late"—Port Authority Transit (Pittsburgh) LRT route 52/Allentown reopens after six-year suspension.

- December—Chicago Southwest Line 9.2 miles above-ground heavy rail (Midway Airport—SE corner of Loop at Van Buren & Wabash; will run clockwise on Loop).

- "Sometime"—New Jersey Transit Atlantic City line commuter service extension into Philadelphia 30th St. Sta.

1993

- June—Los Angeles Red Line subway, Union Station-Wilshire/Alvarado (4.4 mi).

- July 1—St. Louis LRT, Lambert Field-East St. Louis, 18 mi.

- "Mid"—Fourth "San Joaquin" (with Sacramento section).

- "Mid"—Sections of "San Joaquins" operating Stockton-Sacramento.

- Aug. 15—Baltimore LRT extension Patapsco Ave.-Dorsey Rd. (Glen Burnie), 5 mi.

- "Mid-Late"—Limited MARC off-peak commuter service, Brunswick Line, pending progress on state-funded CTC project on CSX. See also Apr. 3, 1992 entry.

- "Late"—New Amtrak station, Oakland-Jack London Square, to replace SP 16th St. Sta. damaged in 1989 earthquake.

- "Late"—Washington Metro Greenbelt-Ft. Totten (Green Line), 8 mi.

- "Late"—Dallas-Irving commuter trains (10 mi.)

- "Sometime"—Tenth "San Diegan."

- "Sometime"—Third "San Diegan" to Santa Barbara, also going to San Luis Obispo.

- "Sometime"—Extension of "San Joaquins" 710 & 711 Bakersfield-Los Angeles via Lancaster and probably Santa Clarita and Glendale, on overnight schedule.

- "Sometime"—With completion of new loop and platforms at San Francisco State College, Muni M/Oceanview light rail service restored from St. Francis; J/Church extended from Geneva Ave., (over former M route).

- "Late"—Boston-Portland ME, service, partly funded by State of Maine.

SPECIAL TRAVELERS' WARNING

Be careful using pay phones, especially at New York Penn Station and major airports. There have been many cases of criminals watching or listening to people using their telephone credit card numbers. These numbers are sold to illegal rings that run up huge bills before the account can be closed. The victim often doesn't suspect anything until the next phone bill. Apparently, neither Amtrak nor New York Telephone is accepting responsibility for security at the Penn Station phones.

Amtrak's FY '92 Crisis *(continued from page 1)*

through furloughs in virtually all Amtrak departments at various locations nationwide. (These are in addition to a 10% management work force reduction in 1991.)" (This will be tough, since Amtrak's responsibilities are constantly expanding.)

- "Adjust train (size) to match ridership demand to reduce maintenance and staffing costs where possible." (We thought Amtrak was already doing this; we hope this isn't a polite way to say "cut train size below demand.")

Finally, "pending further analysis, a minimal number of train frequencies and routes may be modified during FY 92":

- Philadelphia-Harrisburg will lose some trains if Pennsylvania agrees, but this seems unlikely, at least before October.

- St. Louis-Carbondale could end as early as Aug. 1, ending "River Cities" through service between Kansas City-St. Louis and Memphis-New Orleans. Amtrak will consider public comments received by Apr. 30. Write: William S. Norman, Exec. Vice Pres., Amtrak, P.O. Box 2709, Wash., DC 20013-2709.

- Amtrak is seriously considering converting "Montrealer," possibly as early as Apr. 5, into a circuitous daytime Boston-Montreal service via Worcester and Palmer, MA. The Apr. 5 timetable will show no "Montrealer" schedule and advise the reader to consult an Amtrak agent. Willimantic, CT, which just gained service Nov. 1, would be the only stop to lose all service.

The Boston-Montreal train's only Northeast Corridor connection would be "Night Owl," which serves most points—including New York City—at unattractive times. So Customs would not have to deal with "Adirondack" and "Montrealer" simultaneously, the new service would depart Boston early: 8 AM. This would be before the existing "Night Owl" via Providence arrives Boston, so the eastbound "Night Owl" will gain an Inland Route section and passengers bound for Vermont and Montreal will change at Worcester (see Travelers' Advisory).

Such changes to "Montrealer" raise doubts about the long-term survival of Vermont's Amtrak and mainline freight service. First, ridership prospects for the new train are uncertain. The present overnight schedule tends to obscure the fact that today's "Montrealer" is somewhat circuitous (New Haven to Brattleboro via New London) and slow, but the new plan means *more* circuitry and longer travel times—and a daytime schedule to make them more obvious to actual and potential users. Also, for many markets, a forced transfer would replace through service; and there would be unattractive times at cities—including New York and Philadelphia—with big consumer resistance to bad times. A day (approximately 8 hours) would be added to Florida—Vermont/Montreal travel.

By transforming "Montrealer" into a lower-cost service used by few, Amtrak could then invoke exactly the rationale we now hear for discontinuing "River Cities": though costs are low, it carries few people.

Second, Amtrak is the second-largest customer of the marginal Central Vermont Railway. This plan would reduce

NARP Protest to Amtrak

In a Feb. 12 letter to Amtrak, NARP Pres. John R. Martin called restructuring "Montrealer" "premature at best," noting the train's healthy ridership growth during Oct.-Dec., '91.

Citing this strong response to "Montrealer" discount fares instituted last year, Martin suggested more long-distance routes should benefit from similar off-season fares and questioned Amtrak's plans to respond to the immediate budget crisis by reducing advertising and marketing programs.

He also noted a recent labor-saving agreement benefiting "River Cities," and noted that—contrary to past recommendations from local Amtrak station personnel—Amtrak apparently has never advertised the service in African-American publications in St. Louis and Kansas City. Martin suggested continuing the train "while advertising is tried."

In a Feb. 19 letter to Amtrak, Martin urged Amtrak itself to seek additional FY '92 funding needed to avoid Beech Grove furloughs.

sharply Amtrak's payments to CV, therefore jeopardizing CV's ability to continue maintaining its tracks to standards acceptable for Amtrak and mainline service.

Beech Grove Shops

Amtrak views virtually closing Beech Grove starting July 1 as preferable to furloughing a smaller number of employees for a longer time because:

- Congress would have more time to prevent the shut-down;
- Employees would not lose their medical and dental insurance (as happens when furloughs last four months or longer); and
- More cars would be in revenue service during the peak summer travel period.

WHEN THIS HAPPENED SEVEN YEARS AGO

In FY '86, when Amtrak did not learn the size of its federal grant until more than two months into the fiscal year, Amtrak had to take a number of difficult measures including service cuts. "We also tried to cut maintenance costs by extending the time between major overhauls, and I was nervous about doing that, but we were stuck with no money and we tried it. We found that that was a bad mistake, and it cost us more money in the end than it saved, and explains part of the problem we have now with locomotives breaking down on the road.

"So under no circumstances are we going to reduce locomotive or car maintenance. It is not a safety matter, but it sure knocks the dickens out of the service and we are just not going to do that no matter what. I will cut the service before I will do that."

—Amtrak Pres. W. Graham Claytor Jr., Mar. 5, 1987
before the Senate Appropriations Subcomm. on Transp.

Amtrak often says its rolling stock is overworked; postponing heavy and intermediate maintenance on locomotives and cars inevitably means more in-service breakdowns, as the Claytor quotation makes clear (see box). If Congress passes a jobs bill, it is likely to include a provision that would prevent the Beech Grove furloughs, but that's a big "if." **NARP members may wish to ask legislators to press for the relatively small additional FY '92 funding Amtrak would need to avoid these furloughs.** ■