



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

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RETURN REQUESTED

ADAMS TO HEAD DOT

Selection by President-elect Jimmy Carter of Congressman Brock Adams of Seattle, Washington as the next Secretary of Transportation raised hopes among U.S. rail passenger advocates that a new day is dawning.

Adams is widely regarded as one of the most knowledgeable persons in Congress on the nation's railroad problems, had a major role in developing legislation which created Conrail out of the jumble of bankrupt railroads of the Midwest and Northeast, and was "present at the creation" of Amtrak in 1970.

As one who has worked closely with Senator Warren G. Magnuson, chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee which must pass on the nomination, Adams is assured of quick confirmation, once the Senate is organized for work early in January.

NARP, which has advocated a full house cleaning of Ford officials and non-presidential political appointees at the Department of Transportation, was quick to congratulate Adams and to express its support to the next President for his decision.

In sharp contrast with the last two Nixon and Ford appointees to the helm at DOT, Claude S. Brinegar and William T. Coleman, Adams brings a broad understanding of the nation's transportation problems to the job. Since his election to Congress



Rep. Brock Adams

in 1964 he has served on the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee and its Subcommittee on Transportation and Commerce. Except for his decision to serve as chairman of the House Budget Committee during the 94th Congress, he would have been chairman of the Subcommittee.

Service on the Budget panel earned Adams increased respect among his colleagues and gained him new insights into budget

REGIONAL MEETING CORRECTIONS

The Region XI meeting (in San Francisco) will be on Feb. 5, not on Jan. 15 as reported in our last issue.

The Region V meeting (in Atlanta) will start at noon Jan. 15 with a luncheon (Dutch treat), business to commence as soon as lunch is finished, not at 10:30 AM.

problems. Under him, Amtrak can expect to face close scrutiny of its spending programs, capital needs, route modifications, etc.

But, unlike the situation which has prevailed at DOT since Secy. Volpe left at the end of 1972, Amtrak is expected to find an Administration and the Congress willing to help it achieve the goals set for it at the outset. No longer should Amtrak be harassed by the Administration while it seeks to follow policy set by Congress. Reistrup, no doubt taking some satisfaction that he has outlasted Coleman and Undersecretary Barnum, can concentrate on running a nationwide railroad passenger service.

Of special interest to NARP members — and a cause for further encouragement — is the fact that the incoming DOT Secretary's legislative assistant is Woodruff M. (Woody) Price, once executive director of NARP and now widely respected in the railroad field for his staff work with Adams and the subcommittee.

WANTED: FAIR FARES

Amtrak fares policy has been lacking in both logic and foresight.

On Dec. 1, Amtrak announced average fare increases in the East of 3 1/2%, to become effective Dec. 15. (Fare increases averaging 3% for the West, effective Feb. 1, were also announced.) To provide only 15 days notice for an increase would be unfortunate at any time of the year. But December is certainly the worst possible

time to do it, aggravating thousands of people who made travel plans for the holidays before Dec. 1, in some cases forcing changes in those plans.

To make the disaster complete, the new tariffs, which would have been too late without any mishap, were further delayed by the derailment on Chessie tracks (yet again) of the "James Whitcomb Riley" which was carrying the tariffs to Chicago for mailing.

Thus, incredible as it seems, through the first half of December, agents without computer terminals for Amtrak's reservation system had to make phone calls to learn fares for travel after Dec. 15.

Out of deference to the declining quality of Metroliner service (43.3% on time in Oct. vs. 87.4% a year earlier), Metroliner fares were not affected, and Amtrak said that "most end-point to end-point city pair tariffs also will remain the same."

(continued on p. 3)

ICC hearings on South Shore Line's application to discontinue all passenger service will be in January on these dates: Michigan City, 3, 4, 5, 6; South Bend, 7; Gary, 8, 10, 11; Hammond, 12; East Chicago, 13, and Chicago, 14. Hearings will commence at 9:30 AM and 7:30 PM, except there will be no evening session on Jan. 5, 6, and 8. The railroad will present its evidence and be cross-examined starting at the opening hearing.

RSPO Rips DOT Report

In a polite but devastating "Evaluation Report", the ICC's Rail Services Planning Office (RSPO) has torn to shreds the "Secretary of Transportation's Preliminary Classification and Designation of Rail Lines" (Aug. News). (Under Sec. 503(b) of the 4R Act, the Secretary was required to place every rail segment in the nation in one of "at least three categories" to guide the Secretary in setting priorities for distribution of rail rehabilitation funds.)

The RSPO evaluation makes clear that Secretary Coleman's report was based on lack of practical operating knowledge or an anti-rail bias, or both. RSPO incorporated the essential points of NARP's testimony (Sept. News), including some direct quotations.

As the Aug. News reported, DOT failed to set priorities on over 20,000 miles of line within eleven "Corridors of Excess Capacity". This act itself was of questionable legality; most importantly, it left open the possibility that there would be no further public input as priorities are eventually established within those corridors. NARP's comments were directly quoted by RSPO in supporting its own recommendation for continued public involvement.

RSPO complained that DOT approached the report having already concluded that "the essential rail system should be designed to encourage consolidation" in the corridors. Said RSPO: "...it is premature to complicate the designation of a national railroad system with anticipated results of the restructuring studies."

RSPO further challenged DOT's contention that these

The Rail Transportation Improvement Act extended deadlines for completion of these DOT studies mandated by the 4R Act and noted in Sept. News: the "Final 503 Report" with line designations is due at the start of May, 1977, instead of February; the Sec. 504(b) preliminary railroad funding recommendations in August instead of February (thus the 504(d) final recommendations in November); and the section 901 "comprehensive study of the American railway system" in February, 1978, instead of February, 1977.

Unchanged, but not previously reported here, are the deadlines for certain NE Corridor reports also required under the 4R Act. The Secretary and Amtrak must submit to Congress "annual reports on progress achieved and work in progress and planned (including the need for further improvements)". By February, 1978, the Secretary must report on the "financial and operating results of the intercity rail passenger service. . . (and) the rail freight service improved and maintained" under the NE Corridor legislation (Title VII of the 4R Act) and on "the practicability, considering engineering and financial feasibility and market demand, of" establishing 3-hour Boston-New York and 2½-hour New York-Washington service "including appropriate intermediate stops". If the report shows that further improvements beyond those specified under the 4R Act (3:40 Boston-NY and 2:40 NY-Washington with stops) are needed, "the Secretary shall make appropriate recommendations to the Congress." By Feb. 1982, "the Secretary shall submit an updated comprehensive report" on these matters. "Thereafter, if it is practicable, the Secretary shall facilitate the establishment of" the 3-hour and 2½-hour running times noted above.

Corridors represent consolidation opportunities, since the lines would still have to handle local traffic and many are needed to reach certain terminals. In connection with the terminals problem, RSPO noted that DOT failed to consider the effect of passenger trains — especially commuter operations — on the capacity of lines in urban areas connecting different terminals.

RSPO set forth its own, vastly different, definition of consolidation opportunities: "where two lines cross each other at

several points and all of the non-local traffic from one line could be diverted over the other. . . Identifying this is more difficult than assuming that all lines between two cities are candidates for consolidation, but it is precisely this identification which is necessary." (p. 40)

RSPO supported NARP's call for a continuing planning process, urging "a mechanism whereby the designations may be changed. We do not believe it was the intent of Congress that the designations be so inflexible that changes in conditions could not be recognized." (One observer suggested that, had the Secretary's report been issued twenty years ago, the now fast-growing Missouri Pacific would barely have made the map.)

DOT was chastised for basing its designations solely on historic line densities. The law specifies a much broader basis: RSPO echoed a view which NARP has often stated in the context of the Rock Island's Chicago-Omaha line: "During the last five years, traffic density often reflects level of maintenance rather than line essentiality. . . One of the purposes of the entire planning process is to assure that the best routes are retained. To eliminate a route. . . simply because (it) needs rehabilitation would not be consistent with this purpose."

To fulfill the legal requirement that designations should take into account the importance of lines to particular carriers, RSPO recommended discarding DOT's proposed A and B mainline designations and replacing them with System Essential and Carrier Essential designations.

Amtrak reported that, in 1976, 7.5 million passengers (40% of Amtrak's patronage) will travel over routes which have segments classified less than A mainline. RSPO recommended that all intercity passenger routes be considered mainlines, either System-Essential or Carrier-Essential (or A or B mainline, if DOT retains its present classification).

But Amtrak and RSPO both ignored issues relating to passenger potential. It is certainly a difficult problem to identify those segments whose potential merits consideration in this process, but "it is precisely this identification which is necessary" now to maximize the degree of freight-passenger cost sharing which will be possible. In some cases, foresight or the lack of it today may make the difference between getting a new route started or not.

Largely in response to a hard-hitting lobbying effort by the Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers, Amtrak has backed off from its earlier decision to close daytime station ticket offices in Dayton and Columbus. The Dayton office is scheduled to be open for daytime sales through Jan. 15, the Columbus office through May 15.

Beginning Nov. 1, Amtrak eliminated daytime ticket clerk positions in many cities served only by night trains — as part of a cost-cutting effort. OARP argued that closing daytime offices in Dayton and Columbus would not only inconvenience travelers, but would cut significantly into revenues and sales in those two cities.

As part of the same cost-cutting effort, Amtrak has reduced the size of ticketing forces in several large cities. Members are asked to let NARP headquarters know of cases where such cuts have resulted in notable inconvenience and delays.

Communities willing to invest money for station and platform improvements can apply to Amtrak for up to \$50,000 in matching capital funds. With this initial \$1 million program, Amtrak hopes to encourage local commitment to the rail passenger business, while stretching its limited capital funds. Amtrak currently serves over 500 stations.

Communities, developers, and transportation authorities should be encouraged to participate where improvements are needed. NARP members can take the initiative here. Details from Amtrak State and Local Affairs, 955 L'Enfant Plaza, SW, Washington, D.C. 20024.

Wanted: Fair Fares (cont'd. from p. 1)

The off-peak round-trip coach excursion fares have been mishandled by Amtrak twice: First came the decision announced Nov. 12 to eliminate them completely Dec. 17-Jan. 4, directly contradicting the promotional message conspicuously placed throughout the NE Corridor pages of Amtrak's current (Oct. 31) "national train timetables" and in the "New York-Boston/Springfield" folder.

Later, very quietly, so that only ticket agents could hear, it was decreed that, beginning Jan. 7, these excursion fares would not be honored at all on Fridays and Sundays. This contrasts with the policy in effect until Dec. 17, under which they were good on those days except for travel starting between noon and 6 PM.

The claim that "the market will bear" the resulting increase in the cost of week-end travel is belied by the fact that people have been going out of their way to use the discount rate (Amtrak admits that new peak travel patterns have been emerging because of the noon-6 restrictions). To say that fare-sensitive travelers will shift their travel dates ignores the reality of Monday through Friday work weeks. How many excursion-rate travelers will decide instead to drive or to stay home? If Amtrak has so many people boarding the non-restricted Friday and Sunday trains, then Amtrak should increase capacity and move the people, not raise the fares to drive the "excess crowd" away.

It is hard to believe that the marginal cost of adding cars or sections is not covered by capacity crowds paying the discount rates. Also, Amtrak has not shown that its new policy will ultimately result in a net increase in corridor revenues.

With respect to energy conservation, pollution, and congestion, many hope that train service will cut into automobile travel along the heavily traveled and populated northeast route. Amtrak's Friday and Sunday non-peak excursion rates can play a very important role in reducing automobile use in the corridor—and, we think, these benefits have already begun to be realized.

But only begun. The program has only been in effect since Feb. 15 and has only just started to draw increasing numbers of travelers out of their cars.

Amtrak should not be drastically cutting back its excursion fare program, in a lazy man's attempt to generate more income. (After all, the highest income could be generated by charging one infinitely wealthy passenger an infinite fare!)

Amtrak should extend its discount fares to include one-way trips as well. Yet, on the Phila.-Harrisburg line where one-way bargain fares already exist, Amtrak plans to eliminate them, and would already have done so but for a slipup regarding notification of Pennsylvania officials.

The higher-fare hours might be extended on Fridays and Sundays from noon-6 PM to noon-7 PM but certainly no further.

Regardless of the details, Amtrak needs to replace its timid approach to fare changes with a completely new one—intelligently planned, optimistic, and designed to put more, not fewer, people on the trains.

NEW YORK TIMES EDITORIAL, DEC. 10, 1976

On the Right Trak

Amtrak, the national rail passenger service, has issued a host of dull statistics that could add up to an exciting discovery for anyone who hasn't taken a train trip lately.

In the five and one-half years since it took over the private railroads' wornout fleet of dilapidated coaches and wheezing engines, Amtrak reports it has spent or committed \$550 million to buy 492 Amfleet cars; 249 bi-level cars; 205 diesel and 26 electric locomotives and 65 Turboliner cars. As a result, 22,400 passengers daily—78 percent of all passengers on conventional short-distance trains—are again riding in a style to which they were no longer accustomed, unless they happened to

travel by rail abroad.

The spirit of the new trains, which are comfortable and far less subject to breakdown and other delays, appears also to have infected many if not all Amtrak employees—a welcome surprise to a public more accustomed to indifference or even surliness. When trains are sengers of the reasons. Edible food is making a come-sengers of the reasons.

Amtrak still has a long way to go, especially in the area of track improvements to speed up schedules and smooth the ride, as well as courtesy to the paying customers. The coming holiday rush undoubtedly will produce difficulties for trainmen and frustration for some passengers. But there can be no doubt that American rails have undergone a change for the better in recent years and that Amtrak at last is on the right track.

"In 1976 a campaign. . .involving a nationwide railroad operation, could help carry Gerald L. Ford to political derailment as a candidate for election to the Presidency.

"The current campaign is an Administration drive, spearheaded by Transportation Secretary William T. Coleman, Jr., and his deputy, John Barnum, to kill, or at least fatally wound Amtrak. . ."

"Secretary Coleman. . .on January 28 in Savannah, Ga., told a civic group that Amtrak 'would die tomorrow' if he had his way. He called Amtrak a 'foolish waste of taxpayers' money'. . ."

—Traffic World, March 1, 1976

**FROM NEW YORK TIMES EDITORIAL PAGE,
SUNDAY, DEC. 12, 1976**

Coleman vs. Rails

To the Editor:

While Transportation Secretary William T. Coleman may be planning for a "classy transition" to the D.O.T. team to be appointed by President-elect Jimmy Carter [news story Nov. 28], he continues to display his blindness toward many serious transportation problems.

It was at least a bit encouraging that he seems finally to recognize that Congress has a role to play in Federal governmental policies when he conceded to your reporter that his personal ideas for a national transportation policy will amount to nothing without some sort of consensus involving the Congress. But he went right ahead in the interview to resist (as he has all along) Congress's stated policy for a nationwide rail passenger service network.

Secretary Coleman has impeded Amtrak's progress, has sought to restrict its service drastically instead of trying to help make it more efficient, has talked negatively about the service at every opportunity (misusing statistics and ignoring future energy shortage considerations), and now is attempting to impose his shortsighted views on the incoming Secretary of Transportation. We hope he will be ineffectual in this, too.

ORREN BEATY
President, National Association of
Railroad Passengers
Washington, Nov. 30, 1976

Piedmont Post Mortum

Southern Railway's "Piedmont" made its last run between Washington, D.C. and Charlotte, N.C. on Nov. 28. SR's request for permission to discontinue the train was granted by the Interstate Commerce Commission on Nov. 19, despite arguments from NARP that such permission should be denied. In presenting its case, Southern had to prove that "public convenience and necessity" did not require the train and that it represented an "undue burden on interstate commerce."

Attorneys Charles W. Schoeneman and Andrew P. Goldstein represented NARP and cross-examined Southern's witnesses at the initial ICC public hearing in Washington on Sept. 13. NARP Executive Director Ross Capon presented testimony the following day in Charlottesville, and Assistant Director Tom Crikelair testified and re-cross-examined Southern's rebuttal witnesses at the final hearing in Charlotte on the 17th. NARP's position was well represented by public witnesses at each of the 5 hearings along the route.

Despite SR's victory, there were some encouraging developments which may justify optimism about the longterm future of rail passenger service in the region. Whereas, in the past, chambers of commerce uniformly supported SR proposals or remained silent, this time the High Point and Salisbury-Rowan chambers supported NARP's position. Although the Charlotte chamber took no position regarding the "Piedmont," it did send a letter to SR emphasizing the importance of maintaining some passenger service in Charlotte and asking for suggestions about how the Chamber could help develop traffic on the "Southern Crescent."

Thanks in part to press releases and many phone calls from NARP, there was much improved media coverage of the hearings, press, radio, and TV, including supporting editorials in the *Charlotte News* (Sept. 21) and the *Greensboro Daily News* (Sept. 19, Sept. 24).

SR claimed that the "Piedmont" was causing net avoidable losses of \$817,400 per year. After considering NARP's challenges to several of the cost figures involved, the ICC restated SR's proven "net savable amount" to be \$447,238. The ICC report states, however, that the financial burden of trains #5&6 "undoubtedly would be greater than any amount we assign here as the net savable costs on discontinuance."

What killed the "Piedmont"? Reluctance on the part of the ICC to give serious consideration to any factors other than strict dollar losses (factors such as levels of promotion, public need, future energy concerns, etc.) can be cited. But the real reason that the "Piedmont" stopped running cannot be escaped: The "Piedmont" came off because not enough people were riding it. An average ridership of 44 passengers per trip was not enough. The interesting question is, of course, just why was ridership so low?

Southern refused to make any serious effort to promote the train. Under cross-examination, SR's manager of passenger service insisted that there was "no need" to advertise the "Piedmont" in order to inform the public of its existence. Virtually every public witness disagreed.

In response to NARP's charge that Southern reduced train usage by unjustifiably restricting passengers from boarding and alighting at flag-stops, SR's lawyers argued (are you ready for this?) that lifting the restrictions "would achieve no useful purpose in increasing train usage" because in the past year the number of people using the restricted stops had been "minimal."

The Washington-Charlotte "corridor" clearly was not the proper segment over which to develop the maximum market. It can be argued that the fate of the "Piedmont" was decided back in 1975 when SR obtained permission to operate the train only as far as Charlotte instead of through to Atlanta. Others will argue that the first die was cast in the train's demise when the Atlanta-New York schedule-times were changed back in 1971. SR's approach to the "Piedmont," if not to its passenger service in general, appears to have been both consistent and effective. As

the saying goes: "The apple is easier to swallow if you take it one bite at a time."

Rail passenger service along the New Orleans-Atlanta-Washington corridor has been the victim of Southern Railway tokenism. With a new President from Georgia whose entourage is due to travel by train to Washington for the inauguration (via Seaboard Coast Line), one wonders whether SR's renowned team of Washington lobbyists has not miscalculated.

SR should follow one of two future courses: (1) It should give over its passenger service to Amtrak so that the developing Southeast can join the rest of the country in benefiting from the efforts of Amtrak and the federal government to develop a modern and efficient rail passenger system in this country. (Amtrak might then take steps to develop the Atlanta-Washington-New York corridor by adding an Amfleet day-time train, and would surely run the "Crescent" daily to New Orleans.) Or (2) it should begin operating the "Southern Crescent to New Orleans on a daily schedule instead of thrice-weekly — at the same time that Amtrak moves the New Orleans-Los Angeles "Sunset Limited" to a daily schedule (Amtrak hopes to do this next summer) — so that trans-continental passengers are not left dangling in New Orleans four days of the week. The second alternative is unlikely because it would add to Southern's losses. Changes in the existing law (or pressures from a southeast-conscious administration) may be necessary to convince Southern to follow the first.

Coleman: "One More Time"

In a move reminiscent of his impoundment of Amtrak funds during this summer's Northeast Corridor dispute, Secretary of Transportation William T. Coleman, Jr. has apparently decided not to act on an Amtrak request that he release \$223 million of appropriated capital grants for temporary loan payments — disregarding an amendment in the recent Rail Transportation Improvement Act specifically requiring him to make these funds available to Amtrak for this purpose.

If Amtrak pays these loans now, it can significantly reduce the amount of interest it will owe at the end of the year. DOT's refusal to act on the request is costing Amtrak an estimated \$3.5 - 4 million per quarter in lost savings. Since the Carter team will not take over until after second quarter payments have been made, the net drain on Amtrak's available operating funds — as a result of the Secretary's refusal to act — could be as high as \$7 million.

In setting up a program, the Congress usually spells out general policy guidelines and funding levels, leaving it up to the Executive branch to work out spending and administrative details. Occasionally, however, the Congress finds it necessary to address details, telling the Administration precisely what it must do regarding a particular matter. Thus, the latest Amtrak legislation includes a measure stating that capital grants for 1976 through 1978 "... may be used by the Corporation for temporary reduction of outstanding loan balances." As the Conference Report makes clear, this provision "require(s) the Secretary to make appropriated funds available for this purpose."

In his letter to the Conferees prior to passage of the bill, Secretary Coleman characterized this provision as a "hidden subsidy" for Amtrak and said he would recommend a Presidential veto if it was included in the final draft. The Conferees, however, were unswayed, and the provision stayed.

There is, however, as the Secretary might tell you, more than one way to skin a cat. The President signed the bill into law on Oct. 19. On Oct. 21 Amtrak put through a request for \$223 million in unused 1976 and Transitional Quarter capital appropriations to be used for temporary loan payments. Secretary Coleman, continuing his approach of "government as I see fit," has not yet acted on the request. Official word from FRA's Office of Public Affairs is that the request "has been passed on to the Department's legal department for study." No action appears likely until the Coleman forces leave town.