



# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

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## RIDERSHIP SOARS

On precisely those routes earmarked for death by Secretary of Transportation Brock Adams and the House and Senate Commerce Committees, Amtrak ridership is growing rapidly. As of June 3, the "North Coast Hiawatha" (Chicago-Seattle via southern Montana) was 98% sold out for the following two weeks. It was already 88% sold out for 6 weeks and 66% for 13 weeks.

For other threatened trains, the two-week percentages were:

Chicago-Louisville-Nashville- Florida "Floridian"	90%
Chicago-Oklahoma City-Houston/ Dallas "Lone Star"	84%
New York-Washington-Atlanta- New Orleans "Crescent"	80%
New York-Washington-Charleston, SC- Miami "Silver Meteor"	73%
Chicago-St. Louis-Dallas- Laredo "Inter-American"	67%
New York-Indianapolis-St. Louis- Kansas City "Natl Ltd."	66%
Washington-Charleston, WV-Cincinnati- Chicago "Cardinal"	61%
Salt Lake City-Boise-Portland-Seattle "Pioneer"	59%
New York-Raleigh, NC-St. Petersburg "Champion"	56%

These figures refer to the peak loading point of each route. They do not, of course, reflect many sales closer to and on the day of departure. To illustrate how impressive all of the above figures are, the "Cardinal" (shown above as 3rd from the bottom) had standees eastbound on Thursday night, June 7, when NARP Director David A. Schwengel, of West Bend, WI, was aboard.

Five key stations which would be eliminated under the DOT plan experienced the following revenue increases from May 1978 to May 1979:

Little Rock, AR	291%
Ft. Worth, TX	213%
Dallas, TX	90%
Clearwater, FL	65%
St. Petersburg, FL	33%

Average trip lengths of Amtrak passengers are also increasing.

Systemwide, Amtrak's May revenues jumped 29½% from \$27.9 million last year to \$36.1 million this year. The number of attempts to reach Amtrak's toll-free information service jumped 300% from 1.7 million last May to 6.8 million in May, 1979. Unfortunately, Amtrak's limited staffing prevented an increase in the number of

calls actually handled, but 100 new reservation clerk positions have been authorized and Amtrak is now recruiting people.

On June 4 Amtrak discontinued all sales of its USARailpass—for the first time since the pass was first sold in Europe in 1975—because pass holders were frequently stranded due to sold out transcontinental trains.

Ridership on the Los Angeles-San Diego line reached 148,324, breaking the unofficial World War Two record of 125,000, and up

**"As this Memorial Day has indicated, Americans are able to conserve energy if they are determined to do so. For example, Charles Warren, my special representative in California, reports that the use of trains and rapid transit in California was way up."**

**—President Carter, in opening statement  
at May 29 news conference**

68% from the May, 1978, level of 88,151.

Although some of the ridership increases can be attributed to the United Airlines strike, most of its appears related to the gas shortage, as suggested by reported increases in bus ridership and decreases in auto travel.

Greyhound Corporation Chairman Gerald H. Trautman told his annual meeting that "we are now short of buses". Since the start of June, Greyhound has been keeping older buses instead of selling them.

Furthermore, a solid ridership increase trend was established earlier in the fiscal year, before the United strike while the only problem was disquieting news from Iran. For the five-month period October, 1978 through February, 1979 ridership compared with the same period one year earlier rose as follows: New York-Florida 25.3%; "Inter-American" 20.8%; "Floridian" 15.7%; "Pioneer" 15.4% (up 29.6% in February alone); "North Coast Hiawatha" 15.1%; and National Ltd. 9%. (The Amtrak news release showed a decline of 14% for the "Hiawatha" because, as a footnote explains, "North Star" ridership is also included; thus many people have the wrong impression of how the "Hiawatha" itself is doing.)

**Texas and California have gone to federal courts in attempts to block implementation of the DOT plan based on the failure of DOT to prepare an environmental impact statement. DOT merely filed a negative declaration stating "that the reductions will not have a foreseeable significant impact upon the quality of the human environment." This was based on a voluminous "Environmental Impact Assessment" completed in January (before the gas crisis) by DeLeuw, Cather/Parsons, the Washington consulting firm.**



# Blocking the DOT Plan: History and What's Next

Both the Senate and House will get a chance to vote down the DOT plan, in spite of the May expiration of the 90-day deadline for a disapproval resolution which would have sent the plan back to DOT.

Sen. Frank Church (D-ID) and Rep. Albert Gore, Jr., (D-TN) are introducing similar amendments to S.712 and H.R.3996, the Amtrak authorization bills. The amendments would prohibit cutting trains before Oct. 1, 1980, and transfer planning authority to Amtrak. Sen. Church was expected to hold firm in spite of efforts by Amtrak management and possibly the DOT and Senate Commerce Committee leaders to "buy off" the Senator by saving only the "Pioneer".

The full Senate was expected to consider S.712 in late June, while the House probably will take up Amtrak in mid or late July.

In addition, Sen. Lowell P. Weicker, Jr., (R-CT) offered an amendment adding \$100 million for capital improvements in both FY 1980 and 1981. He noted the money would be needed to replace elderly cars even if route cutbacks are implemented.

The Church amendment states, in part: "During (FY '80 the Amtrak Board) shall analyze each of its routes and the passenger trains operating thereon and shall determine, on the basis of that

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## The NARP Board elected John R. Martin of Atlanta as the Association's new president. Details forthcoming.

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analysis those trains and routes which will continue in operation during (FY '81); provided, any reductions in trains, routes or service shall not exceed \$30 million in the aggregate; and, provided further, that the Board's analysis must give weight, among other factors, to the present and future energy needs of the nation, the percentage of increase or decrease in ridership of each train examined, and the potential for each train given a minimum reasonable quality of service in terms of roadbed, track, equipment, on-time performance and scheduling."

**Disapproval Efforts:** When Senate Commerce considered the bill on May 1, Rep. Harrison "Jack" Schmitt (R-NM) led an effort to get a resolution of disapproval reported to the Senate Floor. It was defeated 8-9. Sen. John W. Warner (R-VA) appeared to remain undecided to the last minute; he held NARP's April newsletter ("AMTRAK AND ENERGY") in his hand while asking DOT if they were sure Amtrak couldn't help in the energy crisis. They were sure, and Warner voted no. The other "no" votes were cast by: Cannon, Magnuson, Long, Hollings, Inouye, Stevenson, Ford, and Danforth; voting "yes" were Schmitt, Riegle, Exon, Heflin, Packwood, Goldwater, Kassebaum, and Pressler. Please thank the "yes" voters from your state.

Under its budget process established in 1975, Congress adopts by May 15 a "first budget resolution" establishing revenue and spending targets for broad categories of Government programs. (The second resolution, to be passed by September 15, sets binding levels for those broad categories.)

On May 8, the House voted 196-227 against an amendment to the first budget resolution which would have increased the amount of budget authority by \$83 million. Rep. Dan Glickman (D-KS), sponsor of the amendment, made it clear he had Amtrak in mind and was trying to make up for the House's lack of opportunity to vote on the resolution disapproving the DOT plan, and to influence the forthcoming House Committee action.

The measure lost by a narrow margin considering the short advance notice given and the fact that many representatives saw it as an opportunity to vote for "fiscal responsibility", knowing that trains could still be saved when the Amtrak authorization came up.

On May 15, the full House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee considered H.R.3996. Rep. Albert Gore, Jr., was defeated in two attempts to get the Committee to come to grips with what he called "the political earthquake" represented by the

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**"The Department of Transportation confirmed today that highway travel in the United States was declining for the first time in decades, mostly because of widely reported gasoline shortages. . . .**

**"Traffic fell off from 20% to more than 30% over the Memorial Day weekend on such key intercity highways as the Ohio Turnpike and the John F. Kennedy Memorial Highway between Baltimore and Wilmington, Del. . . .**

**"Significantly, perhaps the greatest decline in traffic growth has been on main rural roads, which normally carry long-distance trips," the (Federal Highway Administration) said."**

—The New York Times, June 6, 1979

gas shortage and increased Amtrak ridership. The Committee voted 7-18 against waiving the rules to permit consideration of the resolution of disapproval and voted 11-24 against Gore's amendment to save certain trains with impressive ridership increases.

Reps. Staggers, Eckhardt, Sharp, Gramm, Shelby, and Marcs voted with Gore both times; on the second vote they were joined by Reps. Dingell, Preyer, Ottinger, and Moffett. If one of these people represents you, please thank him.

## WHAT THE COMMERCE COMMITTEES APPROVED

**Operating Funds:** The House and Senate Commerce committees both passed timid bills which would, if not amended, force discontinuance this Oct. 1 of many Amtrak trains now filled to capacity. (For brevity, this article refers to "House" and "Senate" bills although technically they are only committee bills since, as we write, they have not yet been considered or adopted by the full bodies.)

The bills did make some improvements over the DOT plan. Both bills apparently have saved the Chicago-Los Angeles "Southwest Ltd." and the Chicago-Oakland "San Francisco Zephyr" on their present routes. In addition, the "Lake Shore Ltd." and "Broadway Ltd." would remain on present routes, although New York interests anxious to get direct service to Detroit instead of Cleveland are expected to support a floor amendment directing Amtrak to reroute the Eastern trains. (DOT's plan called for running the "Lake Shore" through Detroit instead of Cleveland and the "Broadway" through Cleveland instead of Fort Wayne; it also called for combining the "Southwest" and the "SF Zephyr" between Chicago, Kansas City, and Ogden, eliminating present stops in Nebraska, Arizona, and New Mexico.)

Even the Administration supported adding the \$18 million which would be required to operate the four trains on their present routes in FY 1980. This came about after Amtrak President Alan S. Boyd, in an April 27 letter to the committees, indicated the reroutings could not be accomplished immediately, except for diverting the "Lake Shore" to Detroit and instituting Ogden-Las Vegas-Los Angeles service. (\$18.3 million includes \$6 million for track connections to get the Las Vegas service started.)

Boyd stated that rerouting the "Broadway" via Cleveland and Alliance, and its Washington section via Cumberland, could not be accomplished before May 1981. "Unfortunately, these two routes, after improvements, will both operate with longer running times and slower average speeds than the present Lake



Shore and Broadway routes." Furthermore, if the "Lake Shore" was diverted before the "Broadway", Cleveland would have no service during the interim.

On the restructuring of Western routes, Boyd wrote that the Kansas City-Denver segment "could be instituted possibly" by May 1980 if via Salina (UP) and "could not be in service before" May 1981 if via La Junta and Colorado Springs. Furthermore, "on this restructured route, Amtrak again would be offering service that is longer in endpoint mileage and overall running time and slower in average speed. I would question whether this is really what we had hoped route restructuring would achieve. . . . Because of the above it is my feeling that Amtrak should be relieved of the absolute statutory deadline for implementing the new routes."

The Commerce Committees responded by adopting the amendments of Sen. J. James Exon (D-NB) and Rep. Lionel Van Deerlin (D-CA) to add funding to keep the "were-to-have-been-restructured" routes unaltered until Amtrak could provide "service which is equivalent or superior to" current service on the routes recommended for restructuring. Given Boyd's views on the restructuring proposals, this wording means that the restructurings may never take place.

Both bills provide for Amtrak to continue to operate commuter trains and to accept commuter tickets—through next March 31 in the Senate version (supported by DOT) and through March 31, 1981 in the House version which also includes \$1.7 million to keep the "Shenandoah" running through to Cincinnati.

Both committees—without Administration support—may have saved the "Montrealer". The Senate bill includes \$5 million which Amtrak is to use for adding routes with its Route and Service Criteria. The train is not mentioned in the bill, but the committee report "encourages the (Amtrak) Board to evaluate trains such as the Montrealer for possible continuation of service."

The House committee report states: "The Committee strongly believes that additional routes beyond those included in the

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**"Faced with a sudden ridership explosion on Amtrak trains, the Carter administration is beginning to have second thoughts about its proposal to eliminate 43% of the nation's rail passenger service next fall.**

**"Administration sources confirmed yesterday White House domestic policy officials, working with the Department of Transportation, have begun a review of the Amtrak proposal. Officials said letters from senators and congressmen have been piling up in the office of Transportation Secretary Brock Adams urging a review of the cuts. . . .**

**"Later this month, DOT and Amtrak officials will sit down to review a new survey of passenger ridership being developed by (Amtrak), which could lead to some changes in the administration plan.**

**"If Amtrak comes up with the figures . . . we don't want to be locked in' to cutting out trains with new-found riders, that may make them potentially viable in the long run,' DOT spokesman Jerry Klingerman said yesterday.**

**"At the same time, Klingerman emphasized that DOT 'remains happy' with the 43% cutback now contemplated and he noted that many of the trains now being crowded . . . are among those that would be continued in any event."**

*—The Washington Post, June 12, 1979*

system recommended by the Secretary are needed to maintain a national intercity rail passenger system." Accordingly, \$35 million is included to save threatened long-distance routes "with or without any restructuring . . . if the short term avoidable loss per passenger mile on such route, as calculated by the Corporation and projected for (FY 1980) is not more than 7¢ per passenger mile" and if Amtrak likewise estimates the route would average at least 150 passenger miles per train mile (PM/TM). AMTRAK would report its estimates within 30 days after the bill becomes law.

At an impromptu news conference held after his subcommittee swiftly approved the bill on May 1, Chairman James J. Florio declared this provision would save the "Montrealer". The sub-

committee evidently expects this clause to save, in addition, one Chicago-Texas train sometimes called a "restructured Inter-American" (presumably serving all Arkansas and major Texas points but not Oklahoma), one NY-Florida train (though a strict reading of the numbers would save both threatened trains on this route), and possibly the "Crescent".

One other basic system train was addressed in the Senate bill—the "Cardinal" (Washington-Charleston, WV-Chicago) was "saved" with the following words in the committee report: "Because of the uncertainties surrounding the rerouting of the Broadway Limited and possible disruptions in service between Washington and Chicago (ed.: disruptions which the committee already forestalled with the \$18 million!), the Committee is also recommending an additional authorization of \$4 million in each fiscal year (or until the rerouting of the Broadway is completed) to maintain alternative train service from Washington to Chicago via Cincinnati."

**Capital Improvements:** The Administration sought \$102 million. The Senate bill would provide \$122 million, thanks to a \$20 million amendment by Sen. Warren G. Magnuson (D-WA), and the House bill would provide \$171 million plus \$18 million for track connections to implement DOT's Broadway/Lake Shore/Southwest/Zephyr reroute plans.

**403(b) Services:** The Senate bill provides \$10 million for the Amtrak share of new services partly supported by states. The House specifies \$25 million for all 403(b) services, which means \$17.5 million for new trains. Furthermore, the House version would reduce the state share in the first year of operation to 20% of solely related costs, and 35¢ in the second year; thereafter the normal 50% would apply for operations but states would pay 20% of all associated capital costs throughout the life of the service.

**Miscellaneous:** The House bill includes \$3 million intended to protect tracks over which passenger service is discontinued and which a railroad plans to downgrade or abandon. Amtrak, after following certain procedures, could buy the tracks or pay the railroad to maintain them in a certain condition. The House bill also includes \$1.5 million for various "Model Programs", including job placement for displaced employees and an Employee Incentive Program entailing distribution of a new class of Amtrak common stock to employees on the basis of length of service and outstanding performance.

The House bill includes several other provisions which reflect the efforts of Chairman Florio and Rep. Edward R. Madigan (R-IL) to improve Amtrak's quality of service. Of particular interest to NARP members are provisions which would require Amtrak to include penalties for poor on-time performance in its agreements with operating railroads; give Amtrak's President authority to direct any conductor on an Amtrak train to report any inadequacy of train operations; and require Amtrak to enter into a uniform contract with the railroads on an industry-wide basis for the operation of special or charter trains, with the ICC to step in if this is not accomplished by January 1, 1981.

The House bill includes, and the Senate Committee considered but deleted, a provision which would require railroads to reimburse Amtrak for their employees' free or reduced rate transportation on Amtrak trains. The Senate bill would eliminate ICC jurisdiction over Amtrak adequacy of service.

Although we have discussed only FY 1980 funding above, the Senate bill also includes some funding for FY 1981 and the House for both FY 1981 and 1982.

After the House and Senate consider—and hopefully improve—these bills a joint conference committee will meet to resolve differences between the two versions; conference reports are normally approved without amendment by both bodies.

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**For \$19, you can subscribe to *Passenger Train Journal* magazine for one year. If you send in your check or money order before July 31, \$1.25 will be contributed to NARP and \$3.75 to the NARP-affiliated regional or state association of your choice. Send \$19 along with your name, address, and preferred state group to PTJ at PO Box 397, Park Forest, IL 60466. PTJ will refund your money if you are not satisfied.**

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# Can the "Whole System" Continue?

When Rep. Florio was arguing against the Gore proposals during House Commerce Committee consideration of the Amtrak authorization, he claimed that, according to Amtrak President Alan S. Boyd, the conservative subcommittee bill stretched Amtrak's equipment to the limit, so there was no point in adding more trains.

Aside from the obvious problem that the Senate committee had already approved an even more conservative bill and some compromise seemed likely, it is most unfortunate that the full committee accepted this indirect message from Boyd because that message is false.

Boyd repeated it in the May issue of the Amtrak employee publication, *Amtrak News*, "While it is true that we will lose some trains on October 1, it is equally true that we could not continue to run the present system, with the equipment we now have, within the existing federal subsidy level."

The Church amendment, of course, would resolve the problem of operating subsidy levels, and the House committee bill contains adequate capital funding. The equipment is the central issue and Mr. Boyd seems to be taking a subjective question and stating his personal view as a fact.

The fact is that if Amtrak were directed to continue the present system through FY '80 it could. By October 1, it is expected that new superliner cars will start in service on long-distance trains; as of May 30, 23 superliner coaches were in service. Old cars converted to reliable electric heating and air-conditioning will go into service on the "Lake Shore Ltd." in Oct. and on the "Broadway Ltd." next May. The best cars replaced by new or converted equipment will be cascaded down to other trains.

No doubt it would be easier to manage Amtrak if lots of trains were cut, and possibly a higher overall standard of service could be achieved faster, but these benefits must be weighed against the hardships the cutbacks would impose on the traveling public, and the costs to Amtrak in terms of lost Congressional support for future authorizations and enormous expenditures to restart passenger trains in the future.

Put bluntly, Amtrak is saying its own short-term p.r. image is more important than the mobility of people in southern Montana, Indianapolis, Oklahoma, Washington state, and the other places where Amtrak service is threatened. There are many people along these routes who might prefer riding coach on Amtrak—even without a diner—to standing on a packed bus or waiting extra days to get an airline reservation. They will be denied this choice if Amtrak management gets its way.

Administration leaders are telling the public that living standards must decline somewhat as a result of the changes the

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**Thanks to a "push" from the gas crisis, the California legislature is expected to pass a \$21 million bill for new rail services. This could fund running the "San Joaquin" to Los Angeles; an overnight Sacramento-San Diego train; extending a "San Diegan" to Santa Barbara; and two new LA commute runs: Oxnard; and San Bernardino or Santa Ana.**

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world is now experiencing. That large numbers of people have forsaken automobiles to swell ridership on Amtrak and the buses suggests the public is getting the message. (Though we at NARP think otherwise, some lifelong automobile devotees probably consider stepping on a train to be a lowering of their living standards.) Amtrak management likewise will have to accept a lower standard than they might like—or, rather, a slower rate of improvement in that standard.

As for Congressional support, one Hill staffer put it this way: "If the Administration and Amtrak's management have their way on these cutbacks, it is reasonable to expect that the same Administration will have increasing difficulty obtaining Congressional support for future legislation. An awful lot of folks on the Hill are bitter that Amtrak has left them out on a limb as they sought to save the very service Amtrak's management ought to be supporting."

Some polls indicate energy has overtaken taxation as the nation's number one concern. This means lots of support for whomever takes the lead in fighting the train cutbacks. But taxes

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**CORRECTION: In April News, the 3,000 hp diesel consumes 2 (not 0.5) gallons per mile, consistent with the other numbers. (We copied a Senate misprint.)**

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are not forgotten, and there is no easier bill to vote against than one which has no impact on one's own constituents. It's a rare opportunity to get good marks from fiscal conservatives without being attacked by those who lose services. Amtrak management should ponder this as they continue to lobby for killing routes.

The argument is often made that killed trains could be revived if needed in the future. This is still used even though all but perhaps two trains are regularly full now. The answer to it is that rail freight volumes also increase during an energy crisis—even now Southern says its piggyback business is growing rapidly, constrained only by the company's ability to make capital investments to buy cars. As freight volumes increase, track capacities are approached, and it becomes increasingly unlikely that a railroad would allow passenger trains to begin operating where they do not already have a foot in the door—at least not at reasonable cost.

Obviously any Administration change of heart will have to come from White House people relatively new to Washington. Such people may still have enough common sense to recognize how dangerous it is for the President to support Amtrak cuts while ridership skyrockets and while he praises people for riding the trains. Most transport bureaucrats who've been in this town longer than the President are wandering in such a fog of anti-rail paranoia and misinformation that they cannot see how badly they now serve their President or the nation.

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## ICC SAVES RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR

**On May 31, the Interstate Commerce Commission denied a request by the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad Company to discontinue its tri-weekly Denver-Salt Lake City "Rio Grande Zephyr" west of Grand Junction. The train must operate at least until May 31, 1980. If the D&RGW still wishes to halt services at that time, it would have to file a new discontinuance application.**

**Overruling arguments by D&RGW that it was losing more than half a million dollars annually on the Grand Junction-Salt Lake City segment, the ICC concluded the railroad had failed to substantiate its alleged losses and said even if the financial data had been adequately documented the deficit "would have a minimal effect on the financial health" of the company.**

**Other facts that weighed heavily in the ICC decision were recent increases in train ridership and revenues, and a lack of comparable transportation alternatives in the area.**

**The ICC further noted that while patronage usually drops after a railroad seeks to discontinue passenger service, ridership on the Zephyr—including the Grand Junction-Salt Lake City segment—continues to grow, a trend established before D&RGW sought to discontinue the service. "Thus, we are convinced that if the Rio Grande made reasonable attempts at promotion, the Zephyr's patronage would continue to increase."**

**D&RGW has until June 30 to appeal the decision.**

**The Office of Rail Public Counsel ("affiliated" with but independent of the ICC) played a major role in opposing the D&RGW, and is expected to become involved in the Conrail proceeding (ICC FD-29021F) to discontinue the Chicago-Valparaiso, IN, commuter trains. The House Appropriations Committee has recommended that this Office not be funded after October 1.**

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