

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

Vol. 26 No. 8  August, 1992

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(This has news through August 7. No. 7 was mailed August 3.)

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Senate Votes Pro-Rail!

LESS SMOKING ON AMTRAK

Amtrak forbids smoking on Trains 10/12 "Fast Mail," 311/312 "Loop," 317/318 "Hoosier State," 370/371/373 "Pere Marquette," 796/797 "Mt. Rainier," several Inland Route trains east of New Haven plus those we noted last month (203, 220, 721-726). Effective Sept. 8, smoking also will be prohibited on trains whose entire runs are confined to these city-pairs: Chicago-Milwaukee, Philadelphia-Harrisburg, New York-Philadelphia and New York-Albany. The next timetable will show all this. NARP has asked Amtrak to ban smoking on unreserved trains when badly overcrowded.

To provide more smoke-free space on other corridor trains, Amtrak on Aug. 5 began testing a mid-coach plexiglass full partition with door—but, unfortunately, no change in air circulation patterns—in coach 21947 on Metroliners.

To test ways to remove smoke from long-distance lounges, "Coast Starlight" lounges will be no-smoking Aug. 4-Oct. 24, one coach will be a "smoker," and the train's coach inventory will be reduced slightly to avoid placing non-smokers in that coach. An above-average one-quarter of "Starlight" coach passengers are smokers; Amtrak is looking at other ways to better accommodate smokers/non-smokers on other long-distance trains near-term and is considering equipment modifications to solve the problem long-term.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

The Amtrak board on June 24 approved postponing the elimination of the "River Cities" (Feb. News, p. 4) at least to Oct. 1993, to evaluate the effect of connecting revenues from "Sunset" extension to Florida beginning in Apr., 1993. Pressure from Sen. John C. Danforth (R-MO) and from the City of St. Louis helped. Thanks to everyone who submitted statements to Amtrak and to NARP member Tony Marchiando of St. Louis for his extra efforts!

(continued on page 4)

Amtrak, NECIP Near Current Levels

The Senate approved a FY '93 DOT appropriations bill with Amtrak and Northeast Corridor Improvement Project (NECIP) funding almost identical to this year's—\$165 million for Amtrak capital vs. \$175 mill. enacted for FY '92; \$204.1 mill. for NECIP vs. \$205. mill.

The Senate acted Aug. 5 after its Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation and the full committee approved those levels July 29 and 30, respectively. Special credit is due Subcommittee Chair Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ) for the funding and for the supportive committee report.

Earlier, the House approved just \$74 mill. for Amtrak capital and zero for NECIP (July News).

The Senate approved no Obey-type amendment, but Lautenberg's subcommittee got nearly \$200 mill. more in outlays—actual dollars to be spent in FY '93—than his House counterpart. Since Obey's approach is "veto bait," highway and aviation interests may prefer the Senate's strategy even though the Senate gave roads and airports slightly less budget authority. Indeed, House-Senate conferees may not even consider the Obey numbers.

The Senate and pre-Obey House transit numbers were \$3.8 billion, same as the FY '92 enacted level.

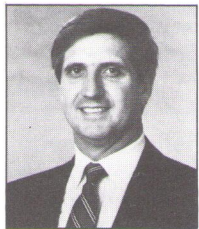
A House-Senate conference committee consisting primarily of members of the appropriations subcommittees will resolve the differences after Congress reconvenes Sept. 8. **Please ask your legislators to work hard for the Senate-passed Amtrak and NECIP numbers!**

The Amtrak authorization bills, H.R. 4250 (passed Apr. 7 by the full Energy and Commerce Committee) and S. 2608 (Mar. and June News respectively), were expected on the floors of the House and Senate before the August recess. ■

NARP board meetings are open! Send a s.a.s.e. for info on the Oct. 16-17 Flagstaff meeting (tours Oct. 15, 18).

Card: Amtrak "Viable Form of Transportation"

We have not previously reported the background of Andrew H. Card Jr., who was confirmed as the nation's 11th Secretary of Transportation Feb. 21 and sworn in Feb. 24, as a result of the Dec. 6 departure of Samuel H. Skinner to become White House Chief-of-Staff.



Andrew H. Card, Jr.

Card, 44, a Brockton, MA native, had served at the White House as Assistant to the President and Deputy Chief-of-Staff under John H. Sununu—where he gained a reputation as the man who "made things work" while controversy swirled around Sununu. Before that, Card was a senior advisor to the Bush/Quayle '88 campaign and member of then President-Elect Bush's transition team.

Card also worked extensively in the Reagan White House. Last year, he had been considered a candidate for President of the Association of American Railroads.

From 1975 to 1983, Card served in the Massachusetts House of Representatives, including six years in the Republican leadership. In 1982, the National Republican Legislators' Assn. named him Legislator of the Year and the Massachusetts Municipal Assn. gave him its Distinguished Legislator Award. Also in 1982, he was a Republican candidate for governor.

He holds a B.S. in Engineering from the U. of South Carolina and attended the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy and Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

At Card's Feb. 7 confirmation hearing before the Senate Commerce Committee, six senators discussed Amtrak (all in a positive light), with three of them making it their first topic.

Chairman Ernest P. Hollings (D-SC) hit hard on the absurdity of Amtrak's then-current plans to virtually close the Beech Grove, IN maintenance facility for the summer.

Conrad Burns (R-MT) urged Card to force Amtrak to develop a "vision. . . . Not everybody likes to fly, not everybody can drive. I don't think Amtrak has been taken far enough. As this nation grows, I think it will be more important."

John F. Kerry (D-MA) said Bush's zero for the Northeast Corridor is "just unacceptable." Card answered that research and development is the first priority and mentioned maglev. Kerry said that's fine for the long-term, but three-hour Boston-New York trains are needed now and can be done soon.

Robert W. Kasten Jr. (R-WI): "All of us are concerned about Amtrak. If we can fund some of the capital, Amtrak can become self-sufficient."

J. James Exon (D-NE): "Nickel-and-diming Amtrak to death does not assure its future."

Trent Lott (R-MS) said he was "inclined" to support the Northeast Corridor to reduce road congestion, but that the New Orleans-Jacksonville gap in the Amtrak system should be closed. (Amtrak plans to close that gap in April 1993.)

Card said, "The deficit forces very difficult decisions. I think Amtrak is a viable form of transportation in America. I want it to be accessible. I want it to be self-sufficient. . . . I will defend the budget the President submitted. I would like to work with the senators in addressing their concerns."

Some Capitol Hill observers believe Card is more pro-Amtrak than any of his recent predecessors; we hope this positively affects pending Amtrak authorization and DOT appropriations bills. ■

Former NARP Director Lettie Gay Carson

"I'm trying to alert the public to think about the need for public transportation. . . . Public transportation is basic to a stable economy."

—Lettie Gay Carson, 1991,

Quoted in *The Philadelphia Inquirer's* Mar. 21 obituary

"She was an inspiration to us all to never let up. She brought such energy and enthusiasm, she wrote countless letters to public officials, traveled to Washington and Harrisburg to press for funding. She fought the good fight for decades."

—SEPTA's Kryra McGrath (from the same obituary)

Lettie Gay Carson, 91, died Mar. 18 at her Newtown, PA, home after a distinguished career as a citizen activist fighting for passenger and freight trains.

A long-time resident of Millerton, NY, Mrs. Carson postponed the demise of both passenger and freight service on the upper Harlem line. Ironically, Metro North today is planning to restore passenger service north four miles from its present Dover Plains terminus to Wassaic, 12 miles below Millerton.

After she and her husband moved to Newtown, PA, in 1980, she organized the Alliance for Public Transportation (APT) to save the Newtown commuter rail service. Due to her efforts to refute SEPTA's electrification cost estimates for the line—including APT's hiring of its own consultant to refute SEPTA figures—"SEPTA officials refused to let her attend some meetings and tried to keep her from seeing its file on the project. . . ."

"Even after the Newtown line closed," wrote *The Philadelphia Inquirer* in its lengthy Mar. 21 obituary, "Mrs. Carson continued to press for better transportation to the fast-growing suburbs. . . . In 1989, SEPTA invited her to join its lobbying group—Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Assn.—to get a dedicated source of state and federal funding. She became the organization's most vocal member, said Kryra McGrath, SEPTA director of project developments and coalition."

Mrs. Carson, who served on the NARP Board 1975-80, willed \$10,000 to NARP, an act of generosity we greatly appreciate.

Interviewed for a feature story on Mrs. Carson in the Jan. 20, 1980, *Poughkeepsie Journal*, Patricia Howe, then Dutchess County's representative on the permanent citizens advisory committee to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, said: "She is very nice to work with and extremely thorough. Always met deadlines and always completed what she set out to do. . . . Here is a 79-year-old woman who is far-sighted and ahead of her younger cohorts."

Of the Carsons' plans to move to Pennsylvania, Howe said, "The thing that worries me, is who is going to pick up where Lettie left off? I don't know anyone like her." ■



Lettie Gay Carson

NARP FACT SHEETS

Send NARP \$2 and a s.a.s.e. for a two-page fact sheet on transportation subsidies and a one-pager (prepared for Earth Day) on the intercity passenger train.

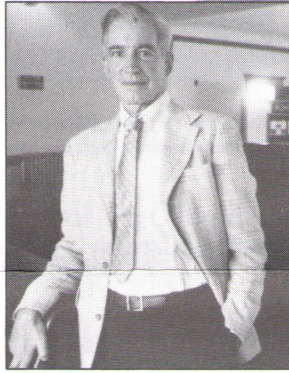
Samuel E. Stokes, Jr.: An Appreciation

Sam Stokes, of Alstead, NH, was a retired professor of French who worked endlessly to distribute to the media and to political leaders information about the benefits of passenger rail service and the costs of over-reliance on roads.

I first met Sam in the early 1970s when I worked for the Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation and Construction; I know first-hand how important it can be to those working inside government for change to know that active, supportive people like Sam are working just as hard outside.

The Keene Sentinel celebrated his work in a July 21, 1989 editorial, concluding: "Someday, and it may not be too far in the future, we expect a lot of people are going to wish they'd listened to Sam Stokes" (Aug. '89 *NARP News*). Amtrak gave Sam its first—and, thus far, only—Consumer Advocate Award in Oct., 1990 (Dec. '90 *News*). The NARP Board honored Sam by naming him "Director Emeritus" in May 1992.

Besides sending information packets to everyone he could think of who might help change



Amtrak photo

Sam Stokes in the Bellows Falls, VT station.

transportation policies, he often visited Washington to meet with staff people; his follow-up reports to the NARP office were particularly helpful.

Sam was an active NARP board member, our first vice-president and our most generous individual financial contributor since NARP Founder Anthony Haswell.

Lou Gehrig's disease—which destroys the muscles and leaves the brain untouched—began to take its toll in 1989. On Dec. 10, 1991, Sam resigned his NARP positions. His letter of resignation, written laboriously by his own hand, stated: "As long as I breathe, I'll strive to educate."

And he did. Right up until the end, he continued to mail out information packets—the last one to NARP arrived two days after his death—and to call me frequently to report on his latest efforts.

He was only 70 when he died. The vigor we recall from only a few years ago—and the fight that he put up as he gradually lost even the ability to speak—make us feel his loss even more intensely.

Contributions in his name may be sent to Natural Resources Defense Council, 1350 New York Ave., NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20005. R.C.

900/988-RAIL NARP HOTLINE TIP: To avoid overcharges, please hang up right after we thank you for calling.

TRAINS IN DOWNTOWN RICHMOND?

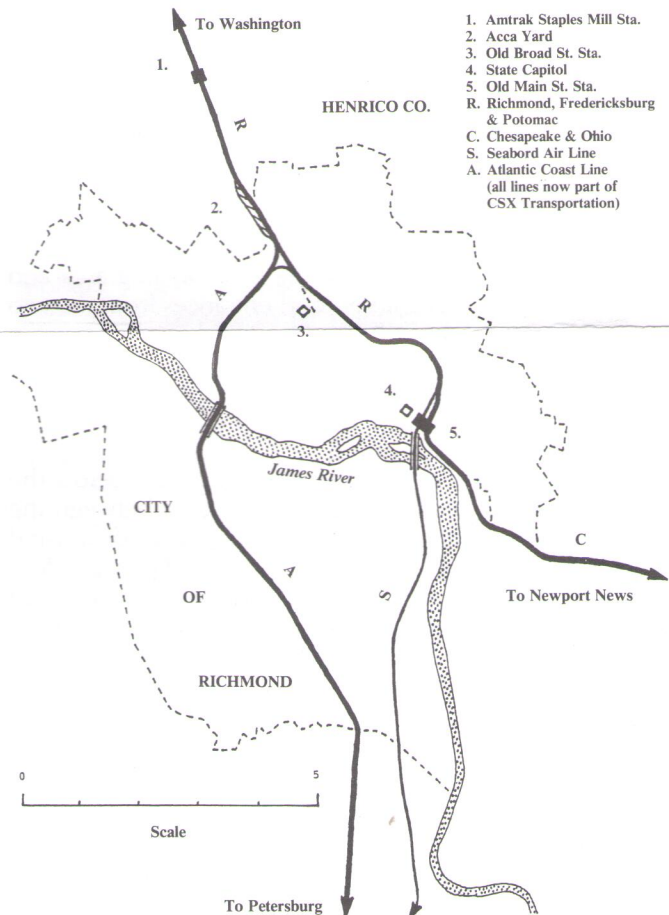
Since 1975, Amtrak's "Richmond" station has been at Staples Mill Rd. in Henrico County, outside the city limits and unserved by local transit. This was cheaper for Amtrak, partly because Florida trains could use a freight belt line west of Richmond instead of slow terminal tracks downtown.

Today, however, with the Northeast Corridor effectively extended to Richmond, the idea of restoring a downtown station is gaining credibility. As early as 1980, NARP asked the city to support reopening Main St. Station downtown to serve Newport News trains (which pass the station) and those terminating at Richmond. The Richmond Metro Chamber of Commerce and Central Richmond Assn. were also early supporters.

A state-initiated task force has been studying a downtown terminal since 1990. In March, the City Council approved a plan to use some street maintenance money (under ISTEA flexibility provisions) toward the local 20% match on a \$2 million federal grant for a new intermodal station downtown. That plan has gotten state approval, and the federal funding application is pending now. The new station, to be completed in 1994, would be either in the old Main St. Station, or immediately behind it facing Broad St.—only six blocks from the State Capitol. Besides Amtrak, the station would include intercity buses and a transfer hub for local buses.

Operational issues must be worked out with Amtrak and CSX, which owns the tracks. The run between Acca Yard and Main St. for Newport News trains is now quite slow and ideally should be addressed in planning for the new station. Florida trains would serve only Staples Mill, but returning those trains to downtown would be a desirable long-term goal (requiring upgrading the line

marked "S"; this joins the "A" line Amtrak now uses at Centralia, about 11 mi. below Main St. Sta.).



1. Amtrak Staples Mill Sta.
2. Acca Yard
3. Old Broad St. Sta.
4. State Capitol
5. Old Main St. Sta.
- R. Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac
- C. Chesapeake & Ohio
- S. Seaboard Air Line
- A. Atlantic Coast Line
(all lines now part of CSX Transportation)

A Grander New York Entrance for Amtrak?

"America lost a monument of irreplaceable grandeur when the Pennsylvania Railroad demolished New York City's Pennsylvania Station three decades ago. Its replacement is confined to a nondescript space under Madison Square Garden on the same site. But now Amtrak is contemplating a brilliant redemption: Move the station across the street to the General Post Office."

—The New York Times, May 14 editorial

An intriguing Amtrak proposal came to light this spring, largely a product of capacity problems at New York's Pennsylvania Station resulting from Amtrak's consolidation of New York operations there last year plus the continuing expansion of commuter rail there. *New York* magazine (cover date: May 18) broke the story; *The Times* ran a story May 13.

Amtrak would convert the General Post Office—immediately west of and across Eighth Ave. from Penn Station—into an intercity passenger facility. The Postal Service plans to vacate much of the building next year and—just as at Washington Union Station—there is plenty of space for private development.

The GPO—more formally, the James A. Farley Post Office—stands directly over the west ends of the intercity platforms. Completed in 1913, it was designed by McKim, Mead and White—the firm that did old Penn Station, the Hotel Pennsylvania (now the Ramada Penta, directly across Seventh Ave.), the Washington Arch and many other landmarks.

The GPO has an impressive facade of granite Corinthian columns along Eighth Ave., topped by the inscription attributed to Herodotus: "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from swift completion of their appointed rounds." A 1932 annex covers the west half of the block.

Use of the GPO would restore to intercity travel some of the splendor lost when the 1910 Penn Station was razed in 1963-66—its Roman Doric glory destroyed to make way for high-rise offices and the new Madison Square Garden—and when Amtrak's Empire Service moved on Apr. 7, 1991, from the Beaux-Arts Grand Central Terminal.

Amtrak would retain the GPO's exterior and most of the interior. Amtrak would remove later construction at the bottom of a large interior courtyard, which would be converted to a glass-topped atrium and used for the main waiting area and retail space. It would have street-level entrances from the two Eighth Ave. corners of the building. The grand exterior staircase would still lead up to the ornate lobby, which would be used either for a postal station (as now), or as a lobby for other development (as is being done in Washington with the old City Post Office next to Union Station).

Direct access to tracks 5-16 (the intercity tracks) below the atrium would be installed. A loading dock area between the older half of the building and the annex would provide taxi and automobile drop-off access. Access to the IND Eighth Ave. subway and commuter rail services in the present Penn Station could be accomplished by widening and extending a mezzanine located below the subway but above the Amtrak platforms. This essentially would be an extension of the current LIRR concourse below 33rd St. Access to the IRT Seventh Ave. subway would be along the LIRR concourse. The proposed 42nd St. light rail line, which would terminate at the nearby Javits Center, could be extended to the GPO at street level.

The project would cost \$100 million, and Amtrak would look to the private developers seeking retail space to help. Some of that cost could be offset by money Amtrak planned to spend on modernizing certain Penn Station facilities.



—NARP Photo by Scott Leonard
The General Post Office in Manhattan—Eighth Ave. facade across from Penn Station/Madison Square Garden.

Track Capacity

The GPO project would not affect track capacity. Train congestion is already a problem. Future addition of NJT Morris & Essex commuter lines and more trains to Boston will make things worse. Some solutions:

- Use Penn Station primarily for run-throughs; that's what it was designed for! LIRR/NJT run-throughs could reduce congestion and grow the commuter rail market if equipment could run on both overhead catenary and third rail. [Through-ticketing now would be a good start!] New York-Washington Metroliners could run through to Boston.
- The Centralized Electrification and Traffic Control program will provide more track assignment flexibility. If Amtrak moves to the GPO, some Empire trains may use an old mail track that is under the GPO but not under Penn Station.
- Divert some LIRR traffic from Long Island City in Queens, through the 63rd St. tunnel under the East River and into Grand Central. This is under study but would require significant funding for building needed track connections. ■

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY (from page 1)

August Amtrak Changes

- **Aug. 3—Train 600 departs Harrisburg 5:35a, train 602 6:35a, same as before Apr. 5.**
- **Aug. 17—Southbound "Silver Meteor" leaves New York at 6:30p (2:55 later than now, to arrive Florida terminals about 3:25 later), confirming what already has been happening all too often. The April timetable required turning the train in New York in 4:35, leaving no margin for frequent late arrivals north, thanks to rolling stock failures, removal of some double-tracking and vulnerability of CSX signals to thunderstorms. (The signal wires eventually may be put underground.)**
- **Aug. 17—Certain Empire Corridor changes due to Metro North track work. Send 29¢ s.a.s.e. to NARP for folder.**

Transit/Commuter Rail

Southside Boston area commuter rail lines are enjoying a July 18-Sept. 7 trial of Sun. service (Framingham is getting Sat. also). Since the 1950s, only northside lines have had seven-day service; southside lines other than Framingham: six-day service.

Financially troubled SEPTA has public hearings Aug. 31-Sept. 2 (details: 215/580-7842) on commuter rail reductions including ending Coatesville/Parkesburg service—Amtrak service would remain—and weekend service on five lines.