

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

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Molitoris, Carmichael Address NARP Board

Amtrak Board Approves 55 More New Superliners

The Amtrak Board took another key step in enhancing long-distance train service and economic performance when, at the Sept. 15 meeting, the Board approved acquisition of 55 new double-deck Superliner cars—beyond the 140 now on order. Amtrak is arranging financing.

The new order—10 diners, 10 lounges, and 35 “transition sleeper/crew” cars—permits:

- retiring the last of the ex-Santa Fe “Hi-Levels” (built 1956, 1964) except for 21 coaches built in 1956;
- restoring the “Desert Wind’s” diner into Los Angeles, the “California Zephyr’s” lounge across the Sierras into Oakland and the “Eagle’s” lounge (planned to run Chicago-Houston);
- increasing saleable sleeper space by (a) eliminating the need for money-handling employees to occupy lockable rooms in regular sleepers, and (b) providing passenger-standard dorm rooms which will improve employee morale and have the potential to be sold as revenue space.

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Present and Former Federal Rail Administrators

“...Candidate Clinton and President Clinton have consistently emphasized the fact that rail passenger service and rail freight service provide a critical connection and a direct correlation to economic vitality in this country.”

—Federal Railroad Administrator Jolene Molitoris

The NARP Board, at its recent Chicago meeting, heard presentations both by Federal Railroad Administrator Jolene Molitoris and by Gilbert E. Carmichael, her predecessor who served during the Bush Administration (1989-93) and who now serves Morrison Knudsen Corporation as Senior VP—MK International Group.

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LATE FLASH! DOWNS SUCCEEDS CLAYTOR

The Amtrak Board announced Nov. 30 that Thomas M. Downs, 50, will become Chairman and President Dec. 7, succeeding W. Graham Claytor Jr., 81. Downs, since March, 1990, has been Commissioner of New Jersey DOT and Chairman of New Jersey Transit Corp. He has negotiated with Amtrak both from Trenton and—on funding the Union Station parking garage—when he served the District of Columbia as DOT Director and, later, City Administrator (1981-88). In Oct., he told NARP that Amtrak “has to be lean and have good management” but “cannot coast on the myth of 100% farebox coverage” which no other mode achieves.



—photo by John A. Ross

Federal Railroad Administrator Jolene Molitoris with NARP President Jack Martin, who is presenting her a “thank-you” plate donated by NARP Director Ned S. Williams of Dandridge, TN, after her October 23 talk at Chicago.

High Speed Update

The Clinton high-speed initiative (May and June News) led to committee approval of bills on both sides of Capitol Hill this year—H.R. 1919 July 27; S. 839 Nov. 9—and floor action is possible as soon as shortly after Congress reconvenes Jan. 25. **Please ask your representative to vote for H.R. 1919 and your senators to vote for S. 839.**

The House Energy and Commerce and Senate Commerce Committees worked to address concerns of rail labor and the freight railroads.

One key issue is the House bill's "Davis-Bacon" provision—the requirement applied to most federally-funded transportation projects, including Amtrak, that union rates be paid for construction work. Republicans traditionally oppose this and will get a chance to vote on an "anti-Davis-Bacon" amendment, which likely will be defeated.

The real question is whether enough Republicans will agree with Rep. Fred Upton (R-MI) that the high-speed rail program should not be "held hostage" to the long-standing Davis-Bacon controversy, since Davis-Bacon is not likely to have a big impact on costs of improving existing lines.

As the Senate dealt with labor-related questions, NARP said, in a Sept. 21 letter to Senate Commerce Chairman Ernest F. Hollings (D-SC): "If mandating Amtrak as the operator would improve significantly the chances of" getting the authorization passed this year, "we would urge you to do this. Amtrak already operates the likely candidate corridors...and planning in such states as Michigan and New York assumes Amtrak will continue to be the operator."

H.R. 1919 is silent on liability, about which the railroads have been quite vocal. S. 839 requires a state to provide liability coverage of \$500 million per accident or incident before any financial assistance can be provided under the law (including, for example, raising a 20 mph speed limit to 30 mph). Again, a bill cannot become law without the Senate passing S. 839 first; a House-Senate conference committee would address all of the differences between the two bills.

NEW YORK: On Nov. 9, Gov. Mario M. Cuomo (D) released a proposal for high-speed rail and maglev. He would upgrade Amtrak's Empire Corridor to 125 mph (current top speed 110 mph east of Schenectady, 79 mph west) and Schenectady-Rouses Point to 79 mph, in phases 1995-99 for \$992 mill.—less than \$2.3 mill. a mile. New York-Buffalo travel times would drop from eight to six hours; NY-Albany from 2:30 to two hours.

He also proposed a NY-Albany maglev line (with future Albany-Boston leg) serving Stewart Airport near Newburgh and mostly using NY State Thruway right-of-way. A maglev test track at the airport would be built 1994-96, and the line itself 2003-05. The \$6.7 billion estimate is about \$43 mill. a mile, possibly including a Hudson tunnel to bring it into Manhattan. NY-Albany would be about one hour. (The maglev proposal got much editorial criticism. Also, Congress this year killed a proposal to earmark \$22 mill. in defense conversion funds for test track construction.)

The rail plan is the best news from Albany in years. Though it assumes more federal funding than is likely to be available soon, state officials say plans like theirs need to be floated before the federal government will put rail passenger funding on an equal footing with highways and aviation. Meanwhile, work can be done in phases and benefit the travelling public. ■

New Hampshire Coming Around

Once, state Transportation Commissioner Charles O'Leary said he would "rather die" than support trains, referring to the proposed Boston-Portland, ME service. More lately, several press reports (including an Aug. 29 AP story in the *Boston Globe*) indicate the feeling isn't universal in the Granite State, with Gov. Stephen Merrill (R) showing some support.

On-line communities definitely are supportive, with three offering material aid for stations:

- Exeter—In September, 94% of voters at a town meeting approved spending \$135,000 to renovate the old B & M station.
- Durham—The old B & M station is now owned by the University of New Hampshire, which is interested in providing space there for weekend stops.
- Dover—A downtown site has been selected near where the old station once stood, with money approved from a discretionary bonding fund. ■

HOW TO BE A NARP DIRECTOR

To become one of NARP's 70 regional directors, send your name, address, home and office telephone numbers, and candidate's statement/resume (for distribution to members) *not to exceed 75 words* to "NARP Candidate" at our office address (*not P.O. box*), postmarked by Jan. 4, 1994, or hand carried or FAXed to our office by Jan. 7. Please include nothing else in the envelope! Regional directors serve two-year terms. Board meetings: Rockville, MD, Apr. 21-23, 1994 and Apr. 1995; Portland, ME, Oct. 27-29, 1994; Seattle, WA, Oct. 1995.

BADGERS WANT MORE AMTRAK!

In August, Wisconsin Governor [and Amtrak board member] Tommy Thompson (R) signed a budget authorizing \$50 million in state bonding for infrastructure improvements to allow Amtrak to reach Madison and Green Bay for the first time. Thompson initially had opposed the bonds, saying that Amtrak can ill afford expansion at this time, and instead proposed \$600,000 in the budget for further studies. However, pro-rail elements of the legislature led by Rep. Spencer Black (D-Madison) fought for the money, arguing that the bonding authority would not expire and still would be available when Amtrak was ready to expand. Thompson's threat to veto the bonds was averted when a compromise was reached, whereby the bonds would be repaid from the general fund, rather than the "transportation" fund.

Last spring, state Rep. Becky Young (D-Madison) polled her constituents on various issues. Over 900 responded, and the results were mentioned in Young's constituent newsletter. They were in favor (49% vs. 33%) of spending \$51 million from the state transportation fund on a controversial project to widen 18 miles of US 12 (Middleton-Sauk City, between Madison and Wisconsin Dells) to four lanes. But when asked if Amtrak service to Milwaukee costing \$32.6 million should be done *instead* of the highway project, 52% said yes and only 34% remained in favor of US 12.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Amtrak...

...on Nov. 4 reduced service on 3 routes ("Pioneer," "Texas Eagle," "River Cities") as described here in Oct. The "Pioneer" lost its Portland connection to the "Starlight" due to 30-minute later "Zephyr/Wind/Pioneer" Chicago departure (allows more time for breakfast into Denver, 8:10a arrival). In response to NARP's request, the "Eagle" began handling checked baggage at Houston in late Nov.

Pennsylvania committed \$500,000 to fund the threatened commuter-oriented "403(d)" trains. A financial analysis will determine whether additional funds are required to maintain service through June 30, 1994, the end of the state's fiscal year, but PennDOT officials say the state is committed to maintaining the service at least that long.

As a result, Nov. 1 saw Philadelphia-Harrisburg service grow from 46 weekly trips in each direction to 52. New York-Harrisburg went from 21 weekly trips in each direction to 26 east and 27 west. This reflects better crew and equipment utilization and projected revenue growth from the service improvements, which also should reduce some NY-Phila. standee problems.

Harrisburg schedules have many adjustments. Key changes: from Phila.—add 8:20a Sa, 11:15a M-F, 12:45p Sa-Su; drop 2:15p Sa-Sun, 10:45p F; from Harrisburg—add 1:55p M-Sa.

The new NY-Harrisburg train counts above include the all-reserved "Broadway Ltd." only Sa/Su west and Su east, when passengers now may ride locally between Harrisburg-Lancaster-Paoli as well as between those points and Trenton/Newark/NY. (Other days, this train no longer handles any people whose entire trips are within the NY-Harrisburg segment.) "Pennsylvanian" and "Keystone State Express" NY-Harrisburg schedules got only minor adjustments. New through services depart Harrisburg for NY—6:50a (daily, but Sa-Su is replacement for 7:20a "Big Apple") and 11a Su-F; depart NY for Harrisburg—12:35p M-F, 3:35p Su, 6:29p M-F. New trips use diesels west of Phila. due to shortage of electrics.

Between Oct. 26 and Nov. 15 (depending on when caretakers could be hired), Amtrak closed ticket offices at Amsterdam, NY; Southern Pines, NC; Delray Beach, FL; Youngstown, OH; Hattiesburg and McComb, MS; Fort Wayne, IN; Centralia, Mattoon and Chillicothe, IL; Malta, MT; Cheyenne, WY; Pocatello, ID. (Devils Lake, ND, remained opened as city considered paying ticket-agent costs.) Trains and Thruway buses continue to stop, and, as at most previously unstaffed stations, caretakers generally open waiting rooms one-half

hour to one hour before trains' scheduled departures.

The Burlington, IA station was so badly damaged by floods that only the platform area is now used by Amtrak. The Burlington ticket agent, with sales and checked baggage duties, was moved to Mt. Pleasant. Flood damage killed service to W. Quincy, MO; the "Illinois Zephyr's" new permanent terminal is Quincy, IL.

Watch out! As of Oct. 25, the westbound "Broadway" runs two hours earlier than before. (Sept. *News* did not cover this.) We did note that the three-hours-earlier northbound "Adirondack" has a better Montreal arrival at the cost of worse connections from the south; we failed to note improvement of connections at Montreal with VIA Rail trains for Ottawa, Quebec and the Maritimes. Because of the later schedule, the southbound "Meteor" no longer handles checked baggage at Alexandria.

The ICE's last Washington-New York trips will be Dec. 15, not 17. Top USA revenue-service speed: 135 mph, same as X2000.

Amtrak hopes to carry out its Detroit-Pontiac extension in mid-January.

Effective Feb. 1, the "Southwest Chief" will serve Fullerton, CA, instead of Pomona and Pasadena. (The Los Angeles-Pasadena "Blue" light rail line is to be built mostly on the vacated Santa Fe right-of-way, using former location of tracks 1 and 2 at LAUPT.)

The Battle Creek-Flint Thruway bus (connecting with trains 351, 354) was extended to Lapeer and Port Huron in May; allows many new same-day connections at Chicago.

On Oct. 31, the penalty for buying a ticket aboard an Amtrak train when the ticket office where you boarded was open rose to \$7 (from \$5).

On Oct. 6, Amtrak expanded its senior fare program, making it valid every day of the week (except on trips originating on peak holiday-related travel days—for Christmas/New Year's this year those days are Dec. 24, 29; Jan. 2). For travelers aged 62 or more, the senior fare is 15% off the lowest available rail fare.

Transit

The Chicago Transit Auth. Southwest Line (heavy rail, 9.2 mi., above ground) opened Oct. 31 Midway Airport-SE corner of Loop at Van Buren & Wabash—runs clockwise on Loop. Does not run "owl" hours.

Washington Metro on Dec. 11 opens Green Line Fort Totten (DC, connects with Red Line)-Greenbelt (MD, connects with MARC) segment, plus three intermediate stations, isolated from existing U St.-Anacostia Green Line segment.

"A FORMIDABLE ALTERNATIVE TO THE CAR..."

...is how *Bicycle Blueprint* describes good coordination between bicycles and mass transit services. This 160-page, 20-chapter book, with 100 photos and illustrations, is offered by Transportation Alternatives as a plan for the City of New York to reduce the use of automobiles, and therefore the bad side-effects of that use. Its recommendations would be valid in many other cities. It costs \$15 (\$20 overseas) and can be had by writing T.A. at 92 St. Marks Pl., New York, NY 10009.

NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING: ADVANCE NOTICE

All NARP members are invited to our Board meeting at Portland, ME, Oct. 27-29, 1994, to coincide with restoration of the Boston-Portland rail passenger service, previously discontinued Jan. 4, 1965. Board sessions are always open but this time a session with special speakers will be designed with the general membership in mind, and rail tours will be planned. To help in our advance planning, we would appreciate hearing from you if you are interested.

Molitoris, Carmichael... (continued from page 1)

"We Stand Together..."

Molitoris, who delivered an enthusiastic address Oct. 23, called her new job "exciting" and claimed she has more access to the secretary than did her predecessors.

Praising the outcome of the House-Senate conference (Oct. News) in terms of Amtrak and Northeast Corridor capital funding, she added that it "provides the beginning of capital investment to start attacking the problem of capital depreciation which [Amtrak] has suffered for almost 10 years...[We] are focusing a lot of energy and resources on Amtrak's future."

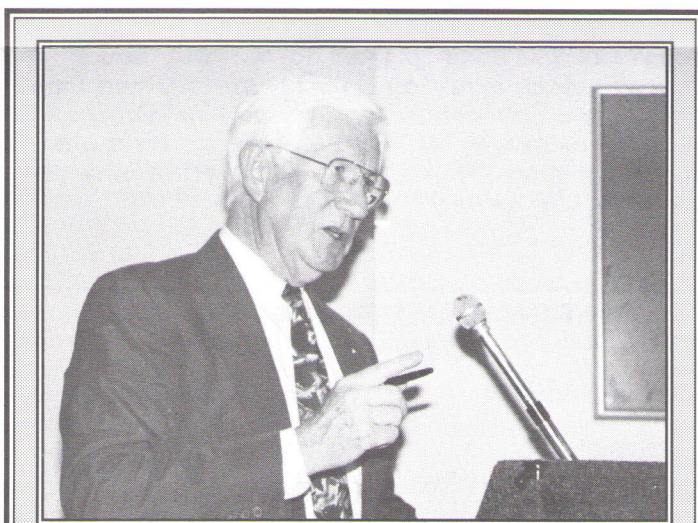
She noted the relationship between Amtrak's big revenue-to-cost ratio increases in the 1980's and the relatively high federal capital support that preceded the increase, which she contrasted with low capital funding during much of the 1980s.

Expressing frustration at the modest size of the FRA, Molitoris said the federal government "can tell us they're [expanding rail programs], but then they say, 'Let's cut 40 [full-time equivalent positions at FRA],' And I said to the Secretary, 'Highway has all these regional offices. Transit has all these regional offices. They know the [metropolitan planning organizations]. They're their friends. Where's rail?'"

Molitoris made a plea for NARP support for the Clinton high-speed corridor initiative (HR 1919/S. 839, May News). "This is the first time that a president has ever initiated legislation, both authorizing it and suggesting appropriations levels, to start a new rail program in this country. I think that this is an opportunity for Amtrak," she added, saying that the incremental infrastructure investment made under this program would benefit Amtrak services using the same route.

"One of my requests to you today is to coalesce as a strong national agency and come out with one message all the time," she said, "and that is, 'We stand together for rail transportation.' There are a lot of us, perhaps, who have elements of the industry that are particularly important to us. But we're too small...to be divided...[tell your legislators] why high speed rail is important to you and your constituents. It's important that they understand that this is not the initiative of rail fans, or rail buffs...."

"I believe you will see the new president, the new board, and the Secretary and myself going to Congress, sometime, probably in 18 months, with a proposal for the healthiest, best Amtrak we've ever had."



—photo by John A. Ross

Ex-FRA Chief Gilbert E. Carmichael speaking to the NARP Board of Directors at Chicago, October 22.

But she talked in ominous terms about future budget targets federal agencies will have to meet: "We're already planning five years out. In 1996-97, we really hurt."

"Our Money is Peanuts"

Carmichael said MK "has bet a lot of the company's assets on the renaissance of rail service." MK holds an order from Amtrak for 50 Viewliner sleepers (Dec. '92 News, p. 4).

The mainline freight railroad network is in the best shape ever, Carmichael said, and the companies are profitable. "I love to kid [ex-DOT Secretary] Sam Skinner. He loved aviation. When he moved over to be Chief of Staff at the White House, I said, 'Well, you bragged about your airlines while you were here. Your airlines are all basket cases and my railroads are making money.'"

Pointing out the great leaps made in intermodal container service, Carmichael said Amtrak stands to benefit from development of a fast rail freight network. "The only problem we've got," he said, "is the 150,000 public grade crossings [on the main lines] the cities, counties, states and highway departments have allowed or built over the tracks. They [government officials] are talking about a highway system of national significance. And I say to them, 'We have a railway system of national significance, too—please get your streets and highways off my damn railroads!'"

Carmichael encouraged NARP leaders to get to know the Federal Highway Administration division engineers who are located in every state. He said Federal Highway Administrator Rodney Slater recently told an American Public Transit Assn. audience in New Orleans that he had instructed each of his division engineers to think multimodally. "They have got to quit just building lanes," Carmichael said, adding that NARP can help teach them about alternatives. "A highway engineer doesn't think anything about spending \$100 million to rebuild an interchange," he said. "Our [rail] money is peanuts to their kind of thinking. Once they understand the logical process for creating grade-separated, high-speed intercity corridors, they will lead the way." ■

New Superliners... (continued from page 1)

Meanwhile, the first of the 140 "Superliner II" cars left Bombardier's Barre, VT, plant Aug. 23; three more sleepers and one transition car have been released since then. Of 140 ordered April 22, 1991 (May '91 News), 49 sleepers and 12 transition cars will come first. (Sleeper "Alabama" was inspected by the NARP board in Chicago Oct. 21-22 and got favorable reviews.)

For crew training purposes, new cars are to run at least several weeks on each route, starting with the "Southwest Chief," but the first capacity increase made possible by the new cars is a second Los Angeles-Miami sleeper on the "Sunset Ltd." (first trips Dec. 12 from Los Angeles, Dec. 17 from Miami).

Later, Bombardier will deliver: 30 diners and 25 lounges (both up 10 from the original order); 6 all-bedroom "deluxe" sleepers for Auto Train; 38 coaches; and, finally, 35 transition sleeper/crew cars. The only big difference between the first 12 and last 35 transition cars is the addition in the 35 of a handicapped-accessible room so the car could run as a revenue sleeper in compliance with the ADA.

The additional diners and lounges will delay arrival of the first coaches a few months, but the good news here is that, as a result, *all* of the new coaches will have "new-design," user-friendly seats (June News, p. 2).

Amtrak hopes later to get new Superliner coaches to replace the 21 Hi-Levels. Amtrak believes such an order would be more cost effective than rebuilding the old coaches. ■