



## NARP Supports Full Funding for Amtrak in '05

NARP supported Amtrak's \$1.798-billion funding request for 2005 in a March 19 statement to the House Transportation/Treasury Appropriations Subcommittee. NARP Executive Director Ross B. Capon's statement also supported "efforts to make the federal government a true funding partner with states to permit development of high speed rail corridors, for which many states already have well-advanced plans."

NARP emphasized that the Administration's request of \$900 million would force a shutdown (see table).

In presenting this table, Capon noted that Amtrak has taken on no new

commercial debt since David Gunn's May, 2002, arrival, and has no plans to. "The cost of debt service peaks in Fiscal 2005 and declines thereafter. Most of the environmental portion of Amtrak's capital budget involves work that Amtrak is legally obligated to undertake, so could not be set aside in favor of fleet or infrastructure work that otherwise would be considered more vital to the system's continued, viable operation."

Capon wrote, "Amtrak's ridership reports starting around May, 2003, show strong increases—a further sign both that Gunn is succeeding in stabilizing the railroad, and that people want the service."

### Support for National Network

"We reiterate our strong belief that funding Amtrak's national network is a

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**President Bush's \$900 million would leave just \$46 million for basic capital needs, after subtracting operating and mandated expenses:**

(\$ millions)

Operating	570
Debt service	262
Environmental Capital	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>854</b>

## At Last, A Start-up Date for Georgia Commuter Rail

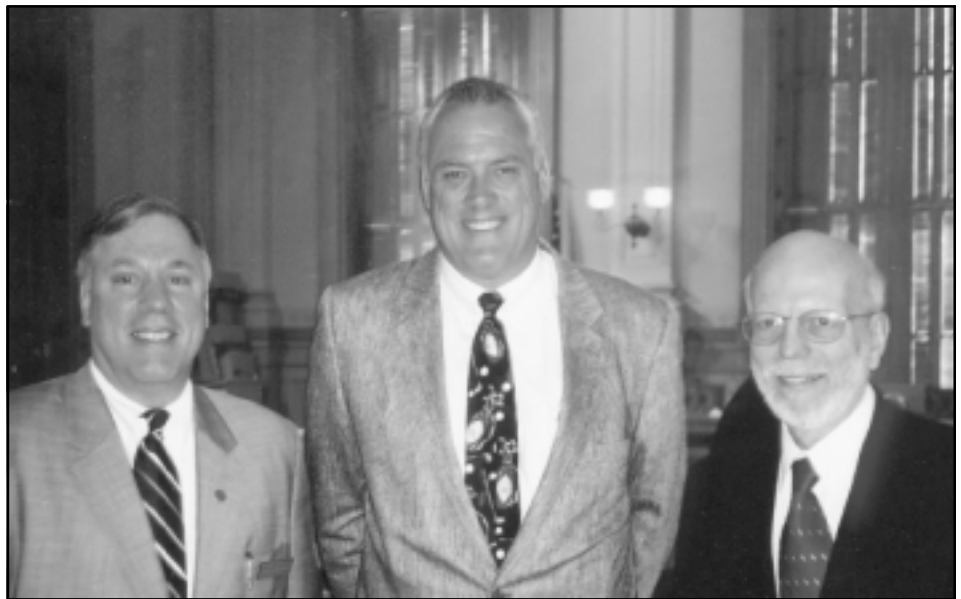
With the setting of February 1, 2006 as the target for inauguration of Atlanta-Lovejoy commuter rail service (on Norfolk Southern's ex-Central of Georgia Macon route), Georgia's long-awaited passenger rail program finally seems underway. Moreover, a Norfolk Southern official said at an April 14 Georgia DOT presentation that the target date was conservative and service might begin a good bit sooner.

Also at that event, the state DOT gave official resolutions of appreciation to these U.S. Representatives (the first two of which were present)—Lewis (D.), Scott (D.), Collins (R.), Isakson (R.), and Majette (D.). Similar resolutions went to the mayors of five communities along the route—Atlanta, East Point, Forest Park, Morrow, and Lovejoy—who have pledged to provide the operating grant the service will require for the first five years.

The only private citizen to get a certificate for his work supporting the development of commuter rail was NARP President Alan M. Yorker.

Besides the resolutions, each honoree received a ceremonial rail spike with a small train carrying a gold nugget in the

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—Richard E. Hodges

NARP President Alan M. Yorker (left), Georgians for Better Transportation Executive Director Mike Kenn (center), and NARP Executive Director Ross B. Capon, following Capon's presentation on "Why Rail?" in the Georgia State Capitol. GBT and Georgia Association of Railroad Passengers co-sponsored the March 25 session, which was intended to strengthen support for rail among Georgia officials. To become GBT executive director, Kenn recently left his elected position as Fulton County

(Atlanta) Commission Chair. In opening comments before Yorker introduced Capon, Kenn emphasized that GBT's advocacy now is multimodal, though in the past GBT had been known strictly for highway advocacy. Attendees included state representatives, their staff members, members of the Georgia DOT board, GBT Chairman Wayne Shackelford, who previously served for many years as Georgia DOT Commissioner, and *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* columnist Joey Ledford.

## Funding

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federal responsibility and that implementation of any 'reform' which requires a multiplicity of states to provide operating grants is tantamount to shutting down the system...

"We do not believe a 'route closing commission' could shed any significant new light. The system is already so skeletal that deletion of any surviving route would mean wholesale elimination of service to major cities and states. Indeed, as we have testified previously, we favor an expansion of the network...

"The large subsidy-per-passenger figures sometimes cited for given Amtrak long-distance routes include 'fully allocated' costs. These are misleading because they often are interpreted to mean that discontinuance of a given route would reduce Amtrak's operating grant requirement by the product of the number of passengers times the fully allocated loss per passenger.

"Using [2002] *Silver Star* figures...the math would be \$189 times 252,240" or \$47.7 million. Clearly, nowhere near that amount would be saved by eliminating the

train—even in the third or subsequent years, after labor protection costs have fallen.

Capon's statement continued, "The product does not produce an avoidable cost, since many allocated costs will not disappear but simply get re-allocated to surviving routes [such as a share of the Amtrak president's salary]. Also, a high proportion of long-distance-train passengers make connections with other trains, so discontinuing one train negatively impacts revenues on other trains.

## Rail Titles "Hang in There"

Rail provisions remain in both Senate and House transportation bills. They fall short of our hopes—though it is good that the Carper-Hollings rail provisions were part of the Senate discussion right up to the day of final Senate passage and that key rail provisions are still alive.

The House bill, "Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users" ("TEA-LU"; H.R.3550), was passed on April 2. It has funds for the Alaska Railroad and a "Swift Act" (high-speed rail) reauthorization that

"This helps explain why 'FRA-defined train contribution' figures were developed, by Federal Railroad Administration working with Amtrak when they were implementing the agreements under which DOT approves funds before Amtrak gets them. **In the case of the *Silver Star*, the FRA defined contribution is actually positive: \$12 per passenger or 2 cents per passenger-mile.** (Measures stated in terms of passenger-mile are normally used in intercity travel statistics because they take into account the dramatic variations in trip lengths.)" n

is expanded both as to purpose and to dollar amount. The authorization is for \$100 million per year (\$70 million for corridor development including infrastructure and rolling stock acquisition; \$100 million for technology), but these are not guaranteed funds, and are dependent on the appropriations process.

The Senate bill (S.1072) has \$350 million/year for smaller ("Class II and III") freight railroads, and another \$350 million/year for rail relocation projects. Again, these are just authorized funds. The Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RIF) Program is reformed so that more railroads will find it attractive. Finally, a serious effort was beat back which would have eliminated such flexibility as already exists to use gas-tax funds for certain railroad projects (notably commuter rail in congested corridors).

Of course, it is far from clear which if any of these good provisions will survive in conference, or indeed if Congress will be able to pass any bill given disagreements with the White House over funding levels—a veto has been threatened for any highway/transit bill that exceeds \$256 billion; the House bill is \$275 billion and the Senate \$318 billion. n

## Communicating with Capitol Hill

A one-page fax is the best way to send your message to your legislators, unless you have a personal relationship with a staff member who has time to read and answer e-mails.

Begin your message either with thanks for something the legislator has done that you like, or with your specific request. The request can be backed up with a brief justification of your request—including, where possible, what's in it for the legislator.

In any event, stay positive! Hostile communication is not productive. If you know your legislator will not agree with you, try to move him or her an inch or two towards your position.

If you can't fax—or you have one of the few legislators who do not publish a fax number—make a phone call. If you don't know the name of the relevant staffer, give your subject and you will be told which staffer handles it.

You may get the staffer's voice-mail. Be sure to leave a substantive message, such as, "Please vote and work for passage of Amtrak's funding

request," or "Please vote against anti-Amtrak amendments on the DOT appropriations (or authorization) bill."

Staff likely will not have time to return your call in a timely manner to be useful, but *will* get your message. Do leave your name and number, and repeat the number slowly.

If you do talk to a "live person," offer to follow up with a fax.

When using fax or phone, include your regular mailing address so it is clear that you are a constituent.

If you must use regular mail, send it to a district office. Due to security treatment, regular mail is very slow to reach Capitol Hill.

Finally, be alert for "town hall" meetings where legislators come to hear what is on their constituents' minds.

After NARP's Ross Capon gave the above summary at the Region 2 meeting in Schenectady, the press secretary to Rep. Michael McNulty (D.-N.Y.) volunteered that Capon's comments on this topic were "100% correct."

## Georgia

(from page 1)

gondola.

The state may purchase used equipment from Chicago very soon.

The event opened with an announcement that this was to be the kickoff of the state's passenger-rail program, which would include high-speed rail lines to Charlotte and Birmingham, "Intercity rail" lines to Savannah, Jesup, and Brunswick, and seven Atlanta commuter rail lines. n

# NARP Statement on Rail Security

*The following section on passenger rail security appeared as part of NARP Executive Director Ross B. Capon's statement for the record on fiscal 2005 funding to the House Transportation/Treasury Appropriations Subcommittee, March 19:*

We agree that rail security has been underfunded but we believe that great care must be given before deciding what security investments would be appropriate. The most obvious categories from our viewpoint are infrastructure—especially bridges, tunnels, stations and yards—and training for front-line personnel.

**Infrastructure:** Issues in the Northeast Corridor are well-known. At stations nationwide, especially major ones, items for consideration include: an increased police presence with K-9 units, video surveillance at key points of entry and exit, vapor detectors, coordinated plans for first responders in case of an event.

There is also a federal interest in the security level of the nation's vast, privately owned railroad system...important both to Amtrak's national network and to freight transportation. For example, loss of major Mississippi River bridges, especially south of Memphis where the number of crossings is small, could wreak havoc with freight commerce.

**Personnel:** Our understanding is that Israel, the U.K., and Germany are nations where training front line staff has actually

deterred bombers and saved lives. This has been a sensitive issue in the U.S. Their approach needs to be studied to see what aspects of this work could usefully be transferred. This does not mean "pre-boarding" interviews; that is not feasible for reasons discussed below. But Amtrak's on-board employees in many cases have several hours or more of intermittent contact with passengers and thus the possibility—with the right training—of identifying potential wrongdoers.

**What is not realistic:** Many Americans begin their thinking about rail passenger security by citing baggage (and shoe!) X-ray procedures they experience at airports but obviously not at train stations. Amtrak (and most commuter railroads) have two extremes: places like New York's Pennsylvania Station where passenger volumes and proximity to commuter trains would make anything approaching airline-style security both impractical and largely ineffective.

Conversely, many small stations have such small passenger volumes as to make any security equipment seem wasteful. As Mesa Airlines CEO Jonathan Ornstein recently noted (in a March 9 *Washington Post* report about holes in security at small airports), "When there are more TSA people than passengers, you have to ask yourself, does that make sense?" n

## TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

**More April 26 Amtrak timetable changes**—Amtrak will greatly reduce the number of overnight trains that allow on-board smoking in a special room designed for that purpose.

The new policy will be to allow on-board smoking only in smoking rooms in lounge cars on the Auto Train, *Crescent*, *Silver Star*, and *Silver Meteor*.

Smoking will be eliminated on all other trains that currently permit it—the *Lake Shore Limited*, and the several trains with smoking rooms in Superliner coaches.

The last northbound Downeaster (train 687) leaves Boston at 10:20

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## ON THE RECORD—MINETA AND LONG-DISTANCE TRAINS

[When asked if Amtrak should cut any long-distance routes] "We have to look at that but it's very political. If we say we will eliminate the XYZ Express, Congress comes back and shoves it down our throats."

—Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta at House appropriations hearing, March 5.

"Answering a reporter's question about the future of Amtrak, Mineta said there is room for a national passenger train system in general—and, specifically, the *Cardinal*—if Congress passes the reform bill that the Bush administration proposed last year."

—Huntington (W.Va.) News-Dispatch, March 30.

## MECHANICAL DEPARTMENT INCREASING ITS CAPABILITIES

This year, Amtrak's Mechanical Department is readying shops and materials for tasks new to Amtrak—heavy overhaul of F59 diesels in use on the West Coast and remanufacture of Superliner I sleepers.

Also, at Wilmington, Amtrak is starting its first light overhaul work on the new high-horsepower HHP-8 electric locomotives. This, for example, will eliminate over-the-road shipment to Hornell, N.Y., of these locomotives' trucks [heavy wheel sets] just to change wheels.

Amtrak continues ongoing heavy overhauls on its veteran, workhorse AEM7 electrics, as well as on a variety of diesels. ("Heavy overhaul" involves more work than "light overhaul". "Remanufacture" is a complete teardown, replacement of most renewable parts, and structural repairs. See Feb. News, p. 2, for more on plans for this year.)

In fiscal 2003, Amtrak remanufactured six cars, and gave four-year light overhauls to over 150 Amfleet cars and scores of Superliners.

For the latest news, visit our weekly Hotline at <[www.narprail.org](http://www.narprail.org)>.

## RAIL ATLAS AVAILABLE

The Johns Hopkins University Press of Baltimore published in 2003 volume I of *A Railroad Atlas of the United States in 1946* by Richard C. Carpenter. The 328-page book has over 200 four-color maps, mainly on a 1:250,000 scale, and costs \$65.

This volume covers the Mid-Atlantic States (Pa., N.J., Del., Md., Va., W.Va., D.C.). The publisher says, "When completed, the series will provide a comprehensive atlas of the U.S. railroad system at its post-World War II high point."

Information: 800/537-5487, <<http://www.press.jhu.edu>>

## TRAVELERS' ADVISORY (from page 3)

pm (not 11:15 pm) in an attempt to increase ridership. However, Train-Riders/Northeast is concerned the earlier hour will miss the end of many events and actually suppress ridership. At the request of the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority, the trains will be unreserved.

Amtrak will increase the number of Acela Express train sets in service from 14 to 15. This will permit replacement of two weekday New York-Washington Metroliner round trips. On Sundays, it will permit addition of two New York-Washington Acela round trips and one New York-Boston round trip.

Some time is added to all trains west of Albany for summer track work; Amsterdam, N.Y., temporarily loses some service to accommodate this.

The timetable shows restoration of *Lake Shore Limited* Boston-Chicago through-cars; actual restoration occurs May 7 westbound and May 8 eastbound.

Elyria and Sandusky, O., will be served both by the *Capitol Limited* and *Lake Shore Limited*. Bryan, O., will be served by the *Lake Shore* (not *Capitol*).

The *Cardinal* runs as a separate train from New York on Sundays, but at 8:55 am (earlier than during the week).

Washington-Newport News weekday train 77 runs a half-hour earlier; weekend train 75 one hour earlier; and

train 76 one hour later—making better day trips to downtown Richmond from north.

State-funded improvements allow faster Raleigh-Charlotte times, up to 10 minutes (depending on the train).

Due to previous track projects, Capitol Corridor trains will run up to ten minutes faster north of Oakland.

Limited Pacific Surfliner weekend service begins at San Diego-Old Town, Cal.

**Meteor correction**—Amtrak, at the request of CSX, has changed its plan to accommodate a major CSX track work project (Mar. News). From April 26 to June 23, Amtrak will cancel the *Silver Meteor* altogether and run its equipment as part of the *Silver Star* (on the *Star's* route and on a revised schedule).

**Cardinal and Three Rivers meals**—More good news. Two entrees from menus used on trains with full dining cars will replace Acela Express First Class meals. NARP and Amtrak had heard from customers that Acela portions are too small (having been designed for much shorter trips than on overnight trains).

The new meals will be packaged in kit form but will be identical to comparable full-dining-car items—and, still more good news—will be sold to coach passengers for the same price coach passengers pay on full diners. (Amtrak no longer buys the Stouffers meals referred to in March News as for coach passengers.)

Amtrak is looking at ways to make similar menu improvements on two other

routes (*Palmetto*, *Carolinian*) which do not have sleeping cars but do have long runs (*Palmetto* is overnight).

**Stations**—The *California Zephyr* began serving a temporary station a block east of the previous station at Reno, Nev., to accommodate a grade-crossing elimination project (to be done in fall 2005).

Amtrak's Cascades began serving Oregon City, Ore., April 16.

**Pacific Surfliners**—A rail replacement project will for bus substitutions for southbound train 774 (north of Goleta) on March 27-31, April 13-16, April 23-May 1; and for northbound train 775 (north of Santa Barbara) on March 26-30, April 12-15, April 22-30.

**Rail 2 Rail**—Coaster and Amtrak began a six-month trial, April 1, of cross-honoring tickets, similar to the program on two Metrolink lines.

**Lewis and Clark Explorer train**—This year's operating dates are Friday-Monday, May 28-September 20. Like last year, it will run from Linnton (8 mi. from Portland Union Station, shuttle available) to Astoria. Reservations and ticketing available through Amtrak.

**Transit**—The Memphis Area Transit Authority opened the Madison Ave. trolley line (2 mi., Main St. to Cleveland St.), March 15. The new east-west line joins the existing north-south Main/Riverfront line.

The New Orleans Regional Transit Authority opened the Canal streetcar line on April 18.



## National Association of Railroad Passengers

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