



## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

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# NARP: 'Privatization' = No Trains

COMMENTS FROM REP. LEHMAN

"I just have the same frustration I have every year—that you have no Amtrak funding and no adequate funding for mass transit. . . .Deja vu all over again. I have no strong problems with any part of your budget except Amtrak and mass transit."

—Rep. William Lehman (D-FL), Chairman, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation; comment to Transportation Sec. Elizabeth Dole at Feb. 19 subcommittee hearing



"[After several years of seeing your proposal] soundly rejected by the Congress and the American people, this proposal [to end Amtrak funding and sell the Northeast Corridor] is a waste of our time and your time. The Corridor sale is 'surrealistic.' I use the word 'surrealistic,' but perhaps 'absurd' would be a better word."

—Rep. William Lehman (D-FL); comment to Federal Railroad Administrator John Riley at Mar 11 subcommittee hearing

"The United States is the last place in the world you would expect to find profitable passenger trains," NARP Exec. Dir. Ross Capon testified at a House hearing Apr. 9, "since we have the industrialized world's lowest gasoline tax and our local rail feeder services are not well developed. . . ."

Capon continued: "'Privatization' is a smokescreen for shutting down the system. . . .It's one thing for someone to buy some airplanes and pay some fees to use the publicly-owned traffic control system and to land at publicly-owned airports—quite another to imagine a private entrepreneur taking on the tremendous combination of systems that comprises Amtrak's Northeast Corridor (NEC).

"In the NEC, Amtrak is both carrier and infrastructure, owning the trains and most of the tracks, stations, and traffic control systems, and employing the people who work on them. Amtrak is the rail equivalent of airlines, the federal air traffic control system, and the various airport authorities all put together.

"Furthermore, the nature of railroading is such that the costs are all easily measured. We're all experts on the costs of rail service, while it's easy to see the benefits of roads and airways.

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### SENATOR BROCK ADAMS ON AMTRAK

"I share your support [of Amtrak] and will work hard to fight the administration's proposal for a 'fire sale' of Amtrak's assets and the abandonment of the government's commitment to maintain a national passenger railroad system.

"As a former Secretary of Transportation, I am aware of the importance of a good passenger rail system. I have supported public transportation in the past and I will continue to do so in the future. Only through a balanced investment in our highway, railroad and aviation systems can we develop a sound national transportation infrastructure."

—Sen. Brock Adams (D-WA) in Feb. 9 letter to NARP Dir. James Hamre

## NARP Fights to Restore Pittsburgh's Train Shed

A hazardous situation threatening the safety of Amtrak passengers and employees was created at Pittsburgh recently, when part of the station's shed was demolished to permit a new expressway, Interstate 579, to pass overhead. Sections of train platform which were once protected from the weather are now exposed to rain, snow, and ice. And that's not all. On the night of Dec. 27, 1986, "pranksters" dropped pieces of concrete from the overpass onto an Amtrak platform, narrowly missing the "Broadway Limited's" assistant conductor. Police were unable to apprehend the individuals.

Last year, even before the concrete-throwing incident, NARP protested the situation to the Pennsylvania Dept. of

(continued on page 3)

## Faster in Florida

Amtrak trains are gaining speed in Florida, thanks to the relaxation of municipal speed restrictions—and the rewiring of grade crossing signal circuits.

Florida law gives the state the power to set local train speed limits, and since 1982, Amtrak and CSX Railroad have jointly petitioned the state to raise passenger and freight speeds in all communities on CSX's Jacksonville-Miami and Jacksonville-Tampa mainlines. To our knowledge, Florida, California, and Washington are the only state governments which have such authority. In other states, a myriad of local governments control train speeds.

To date, Florida has granted nearly all of the railroads' requests, and in some cases, speed limit increases have been dramatic. For instance, a 2-mile segment of track within Tampa, once restricted to 25 mph passenger, is now authorized for 79 mph!



—Photo by Barry Williams

Amtrak's "Silver Meteor" thunders north across CSX Railroad's St. Johns River bridge at Sanford, FL. Passenger (and freight) trains are getting faster in Florida, thanks to cooperative state-Amtrak-CSX effort.

But state permission is only the first step toward faster trains; faster speeds often require the lengthening of crossing circuits, so that highway warning lights and gates activate sufficiently in advance of a train's passage. It's important that freight speeds be raised in conjunction with passenger speeds; otherwise, the resulting disparity in passenger/freight speeds makes it difficult to time signals for both types of train. Signals which activate too early for slow freights cause motorists to develop a dangerous disregard—which can prove fatal at passenger train time. An added benefit of raising freight speeds: the freight railroad may help Amtrak pay for the circuit modifications, as in Florida, where CSX and Amtrak have split the \$463,000 expense equally.

As a result of this cooperative Florida-Amtrak-CSX effort, Amtrak has been able to shave 18 minutes off its Miami-Auburndale schedules, and 9 minutes off its Tampa-Auburndale schedules, since 1982. [If the Miami-Tampa "Silver Palm" were still alive, its schedule would now be nearly :30 faster than it was at the outset!]

Amtrak estimates that state-approved speed increases between Auburndale and Jacksonville will yield an additional time-savings of 5 minutes via Ocala and 10 minutes via Orlando, but they will only be realized if circuit modifications are funded.

The New York-Miami/Tampa "Silver Star" and "Silver Meteor" will attract more riders—and cost less to operate—with faster schedules. Carl Sloan, Asst. Director of Contract Operations, Amtrak, and Jim Rankin, Administrator of Rail Program Development, Florida Dept. of Transportation, deserve special recognition for this important project and the tangible results to date. ■

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### PORTLAND TROLLEYS BOOST ECONOMY!

"Downtown retailers, many of whom opposed [MAX, Portland's (OR) trolley system], have reported substantial sales increases since MAX started running. Mark Urdahl, operations manager of the Association for Portland Progress, said Christmas sales were up at least 20 percent over last year's. And the Galleria, a retail atrium at the downtown terminus, reports a 50 percent increase in seasonal sales.

"MAX also appears to have had a salutary effect on nearby properties. According to [Greg Baldwin, a local architect], within eight months of announcing plans for the [rail] system, 80 percent of the parcels available for development or redevelopment along its 30-block downtown sector had been optioned. He estimates that by the time operations began [on Sep. 5, 1986], the value of private construction either underway or complete, exceeded the system's capital costs by five to seven times.

". . . At the east terminus in Gresham, where work began on a 300,000-square-foot shopping center earlier this month, Fujitsu chose a nearby site for a new microchip plant specifically because of its access to MAX."

—New York Times, Dec. 28, 1986

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### COMMUTER & TRANSIT NEWS

Baltimore's heavy rail transit line (Dec. '83 News) will reach Milepost 14 on July 19, when the Mass Transit Administration of Maryland (MTA) opens a 6-mile extension from Reisterstown Plaza northward to Owings Mills. The new \$180 million segment has 3 stations and is all at-grade or aerial. MTA now has money to design the line's next extension: a 3-mile link between the downtown terminus (Charles Center) and Johns Hopkins Univ. Hospital. Meanwhile, Maryland Rail Commuter (MARC) has received all 4 AEM7 electric locomotives.

Boston will have a "new" Orange Line on May 2. A \$743 million project, begun in late 1979, has moved the heavy rail transit line from an old elevated structure to a new subgrade "cut" nearby. In the same cut: Amtrak's relocated Northeast Corridor. (During the 7 years of construction, Amtrak has been detouring over Conrail's parallel Dorchester Branch.) This project includes a new Back Bay Station, to be used by Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) commuter and transit trains, and Amtrak intercity trains.

Pittsburgh's \$545 million light rail modernization project will be completed May 24. The project, begun in late 1981, has moved trolleys into a new downtown subway and onto a different Monongahela River bridge, and has rebuilt miles of surface tracks south of the river. 55 new trolleys have been acquired, and 45 old cars have been rebuilt (May '82 News).

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## Trolleys Return to Sacramento

Sacramento celebrated the revival of rail transit on Mar. 12, when Sacramento Regional Transit (RT) opened the first half of its new 18-mile light rail trolley system (Aug. '84 News). The event came 40 years and 2 months after the city's original streetcar system was scrapped in 1947, following 4 years of ownership by the infamous National City Lines.

Opening on Mar. 12 was a 9-mile line running northeast from downtown to McClellan Air Force Base (North Highlands). On Nov. 9, RT plans to open the remaining 9-mile line between downtown and east-suburban Rancho Cordova.

Although the project is behind schedule and \$45 million over budget, it remains quite a success story. Its total cost of \$176 million for 18.3 miles works out to \$9.6 million per mile—making it the cheapest new rail transit system built in the U.S. in modern times, other than San Diego's. Incidentally, the cost of new urban expressway now averages \$25 million per mile, according to the Congressional Budget Office. Like Portland (Dec. '86 News), most of Sacramento's light rail funding came from the cancellation



—Photo by Michael Williamson/Sacramento Bee

Trolley crosses Sacramento's Capitol Mall. Sacramento became the nation's 11th light rail city on Mar. 12, with the opening of a line between downtown and McClellan AFB. Other U.S. cities with light rail transit: Boston, Newark, Philadelphia, Buffalo, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, New Orleans, San Diego, San Francisco, and Portland.

and "trade-in" of an unwanted Interstate highway.

After one month of operation, ridership is close to projections: about 10,000 per weekday. Trolleys run daily between 6 AM and 10 PM, every 15 minutes on weekdays before 6 PM, and every 30 minutes on weekends. The Siemens-Duewag trolleys (17 of 26 have been delivered as of mid-April), have a top speed of 50 mph and a passenger capacity of 64 seated/175 standing. Fare collection is by ticket vending machines/roving inspectors.

Among those attending the Mar. 12 inaugural ceremonies was former California transportation secretary Adriana Gianturco, who played a major role in Sacramento's rail revival. ■

### MORE SENATORS COSPONSOR S. RES. 93

Since our last report (Jan. News, p. 4), these senators have become cosponsors of Frank Lautenberg's Senate Resolution 93: Paul Simon (D-IL), Albert Gore (D-TN), John Kerry (D-MA), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Kent Conrad (D-ND), Harry Reid (D-NV), Christopher Dodd (D-CT), Wyche Fowler (D-GA), Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), Quentin Burdick (D-ND), Brock Adams (D-WA), Jay Rockefeller (D-WV), and the late Edward Zorinsky (D-NE).

The resolution supports "funding for Amtrak at a level that will enable it to continue to operate a national railway system and to continue the progress that has been made to improve its financial performances and service levels"; and also directs DOT and FRA to work with Amtrak to try to further reduce Amtrak's dependence on public funds "without adversely affecting service" and to "insure that safety is given the highest priority possible" in the provision of Amtrak service.

### PITTSBURGH SHED (continued from page 1)

Transportation (DOT) in letters dated Oct. 23 and Dec. 31, and to the Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission (PUC) in letters dated Oct. 28 and Dec. 31.

In his Dec. 3 reply to NARP, then-DOT Sec. Thomas Larson explained that the shed desecration was sanctioned by an early-1970s agreement between DOT and Penn Central Railroad, and "No other stipulations [such as shed restoration] were included in the agreement." Larson's letter indicated no concern whatsoever over the situation, let alone offer any remedies.

NARP Asst. Director Barry Williams responded to Larson by writing, "[We are] frankly appalled by your indifference to the problem. . . what's relevant is not how this came about, but, rather, what is good public policy. As the state's secretary of transportation, you must surely recognize that this agreement [with Penn Central] has a serious flaw which poses a hazard to travellers, as well as an inconvenience. . . Please show some concern for the safety and welfare of Pittsburgh rail travellers by restoring the city's train shed."

On Feb. 18, 1987, Larson's successor, Howard Yeruslim, wrote to NARP, "we recognize and share your concern for promoting passenger safety [at the Pittsburgh station]. . . [We are] currently reviewing the situation to determine how to best proceed in correcting it. We will be contacting Amtrak to solicit their input and assistance in the hope of jointly resolving the problem in an equitable manner. We will keep you informed as we proceed in resolving this issue." ■

## PRIVATIZATION (continued from page 1)

"But the benefits of rail and the costs of roads are no less real, and this will become more apparent in the future, given rail's relative efficiency in using land and oil, two valuable resources in limited supply."

This was the first Amtrak hearing of the newly-created Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism and Hazardous Materials chaired by Rep. Thomas A. Luken (D-OH); topic: "The Administration's Proposal to Sell Amtrak." Luken showed impressive support for Amtrak. He spoke firsthand of the dangers of entrusting public transportation to the private sector: "My background is in city government. I know from my experience in Cincinnati that, when things were going well, private transit operators did just fine. But as soon as things got tough, they cut and ran. We almost lost our public transit system—and would have if the city hadn't stepped in."

Indeed, Federal Railroad Administrator John H. Riley seemed more uneasy at this hearing than ever before, particularly when Luken grilled him about a Dec. letter from DOT Undersecretary James Burnley to the Office of Management and Budget attacking the sale—a letter mentioned in Capon's statement but about which Riley claimed to know nothing.

Frustrated by the absurdity of the administration's proposal, Rep. Jim Slattery (D-KS) said bluntly to FRA's Riley: "It seems to me the administration is trying to have its cake and eat it, too. You never really want to come head to head with the real choice. You continue to duck the fundamental question. You're not ready to say that this is about shutting down the [Amtrak] system. That's really what this is all about."

Rep. Bob Whittaker (R-KS), the subcommittee's ranking Republican, spoke favorably of Amtrak, remarking that "I've always been a strong supporter." He asked Riley how much DOT had originally recommended for Amtrak. The answer, by now well known on Capitol Hill: "\$478 million" (not zero!). However, Whittaker did express skepticism of

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### WELCOME BACK, ERIC AND DON!

Eric von Schilgen and Don Skinner recently returned to their jobs in Amtrak's Sales Dept. Both men were seriously injured in the Jan. 4 "Colonial" accident.

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### AMTRAK'S NEW WASHINGTON SHOPS

Amtrak formally opened its new, \$43 million Washington (DC) Maintenance Base, located in Ivy City Yard just north of Union Station, on Sep. 25, 1986. The complex features locomotive and car repair shops, a commissary, car-washer, and wheel-truing shop, and replaces an outdated facility built in 1906.

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### PENNSYLVANIA STATION BOOK

"The Late, Great Pennsylvania Station," by Lorraine Diehl, is an informative and well-illustrated book about New York's monumental Pennsylvania Station, whose demolition in 1963 spurred this nation's landmark preservation movement. The softback books are available from Viking Penguin Inc. (attn: Evelyn deFrees), 40 W. 23rd Street, New York, NY 10010 (deFrees' tel: 212-337-5426). Please send a check as prepayment for \$12.95 per book + \$1.50 shipping.

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the claim that privatization talk is a "smokescreen" and seemed hopeful that the Dole Commission would come up with some surprises for those who find subsidy-free trains in the U.S. "counter-intuitive."

Rep. James J. Florio (D-NJ), a frequent train rider and staunch Amtrak proponent who chaired the predecessor subcommittee since early 1979, is the 2nd-ranking Democrat on the new subcommittee. His questions Apr. 9 reflected continuing support for Amtrak and concern that future cost-cutting measures not come strictly at the expense of labor.

The first two witnesses who testified were Reps. Thomas Carper (D-DE) and Nicholas Mavroules (D-MA) both Amtrak supporters. Among the other witnesses: NARP At-Large Director Eugene Skoropowski, in his role as Executive Asst. Treasurer of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority.

Capon said Amtrak is fundamentally on the right track. He quoted from "Minding the Public's Business," a 1986 report by the Economic Council of Canada, a conservative Canadian "think tank": "VIA Rail Canada Inc. was created mostly because of concerns over subsidies to rail-passenger services; yet payments to cover VIA's operating losses have continued to mount. Revenue per passenger-mile has not kept pace with the growth in cost per passenger-mile, which almost doubled between 1980 and 1985. It is interesting that, by contrast, Amtrak has had considerable success in bringing its costs under control. Amtrak's revenue-to-cost ratio increased considerably between 1980 and 1985."

Capon also said: "The approximately \$600 million annual Amtrak subsidy must be seen in the light of the more than \$13 billion a year from non-user sources which is spent on our highways. Although most of this is not federal money, it is strongly encouraged by federal policies. Also, railroad passengers paid over \$2 billion in federal passenger ticket taxes from 1942 to 1962 and the money simply went into the Treasury while the government spent nothing on railroads and invested heavily in the competing modes, laying the groundwork for today's 'imbalance' problems." ■

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### HERITAGE'S MOORE VS. HERITAGE'S MOORE

Stephen Moore, a Heritage Foundation "economic policy analyst," told Rep. Luken's subcommittee Apr. 9, "although privatizing all of Amtrak at the present time may be infeasible, the Northeast Corridor (NEC) route may very well be capable of surviving independently."

What about the rest of Amtrak? Only a few months earlier, Moore said in a Heritage Foundation report the NEC "is the political heart of the coalition to retain federal subsidies for the entire system."

Moore sang a very different tune to the subcommittee, however: "Let me lay one common fear immediately to rest: to privatize one segment of [Amtrak] would in no way endanger the continued public support of Amtrak's western long distance routes. Since all of Amtrak's lines lose money, shedding any single line can only improve Amtrak's balance sheet."

An analysis of roll call votes on Amtrak shows Moore got it right the first time. His Apr. 9 testimony looks like an effort to get those most concerned with non-NEC services to overlook the dangerous threat to those services that NEC privatization would pose if it was feasible (which it isn't).

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