

News from the

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HUTCHISON AT NARP REGION 9 MEETING



—Mary Irving

Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX, left) and NARP President John R. Martin (right) appeared at the NARP Region 9 membership meeting in Fort Worth on March 25. Hutchison, who chairs the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine, announced that the *Texas Eagle* would change to daily service, May 21. Martin discussed NARP's vision for a nationwide passenger rail network and gave an update on efforts to get Amtrak to seek adequate facilities in Fort Worth (Sept. '99 News).

Martin commented afterwards on how impressed he was by all the careful listening Hutchison did (as in the photo)—contrary to the stereotype of politicians who mostly talk. Other speakers included Fort Worth Mayor Kenneth Barr, Marshall Mayor Audrey Kariel (both members of the Amtrak Mayors Advisory Council), Don Saunders (vice president of Amtrak Intercity's new Western Region), Tom Till (Amtrak Reform Council Executive Director).

STATUS OF PRO-RAIL BILLS

S.1144, the "flexibility" bill granting states the choice to spend some federal transportation money on intercity passenger rail investment, has been on "hold" by two Senators. It has 36 sponsors. The most recent are Chafee (R-RI), Smith (R-NH), Crapo (R-ID).

S.1900, the High Speed Rail Investment Act that provides \$10 billion through tax-free bonds, has 40 sponsors. The most recent (those signing up from February 9 to April 4) are Bryan (D-NV), Durbin (D-IL), Edwards (D-NC), Wyden (D-OR), Lieberman (D-CT), Warner (R-VA), Dorgan (D-ND), Breaux (D-LA), Helms (R-NC), Landrieu (D-LA).

H.R.3700, the House counterpart to S.1900, now has 45 sponsors.

More are needed for all three bills, so keep trying!

California's High-Speed Plans

The California High-Speed Rail Authority released a Draft Business Plan—*Building a High-Speed Train System for California*—for a 700-mile, \$25-billion system that could be operable by 2016. This draft, released in January, follows a 1996 feasibility study by a predecessor agency (Dec. '96 News). The nine-member Authority was created by state legislation in 1996 to develop a plan for the construction, operation, and financing of a statewide, high-speed rail system.

The plan envisions service exceeding 200 mph on parts of its route, but using lower speeds in other places (such as cities and terminal areas). Maglev is not ruled out. Tracks (or guideways) would be completely grade-separated, but could share rights-of-way with other modes (like interstate highways or existing rail services).

Unlike European high-speed trains—but like the cancelled Florida Overland eXpress (Apr. '99 News)—the California high-speed trains would not operate on the same tracks as existing rail services. This is to allow operation of lighter equipment. The plan leaves open the possibility of future technology and/or future Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) rules allowing the two types of equipment to run on the same track.

Several route options were examined and will be examined further. The route identified as having the highest return on investment (shown on map in black, p. 2) begins in the south at San Diego (near Qualcomm Stadium, not downtown) north to Escondido, Ontario Airport, and Los Angeles Union Station. Top speeds on the center portion of this segment would be 150-200 mph. The next segment runs north to Santa Clarita, crosses over the mountains on the "Grapevine" (along I-5) to Bakersfield, then at over 200 mph, west of SR 99, to a junction point between Fresno and Merced.

(continued on page 2)

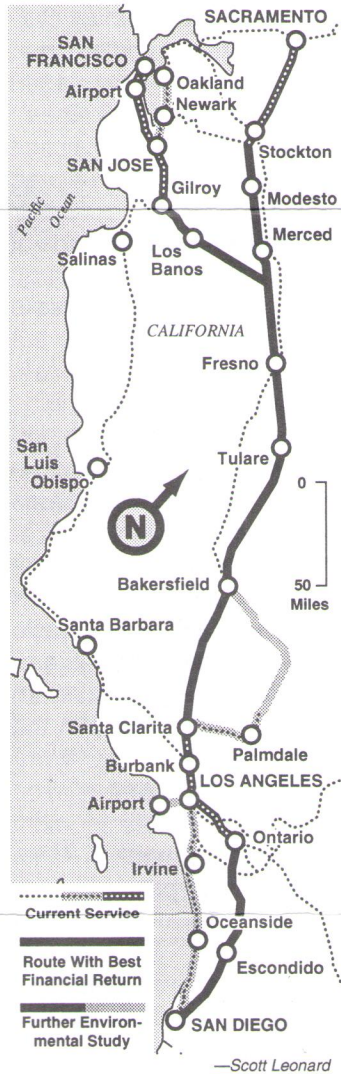
AMTRAK FUNDS CALIFORNIA STUDY

Amtrak West is funding and managing a consensus-based, \$5-million, statewide, integrated, rail-corridor planning project for California, identifying five, ten and 20-year needs and goals, in partnership with Caltrans, freight and commuter railroads, elected officials, corridor task forces, and others. A five-year draft plan will be done by June. The final project will be done this fall. It will be a blueprint for incremental development of the state's passenger rail corridors. More at <<http://www.amtrakwest.com/califuture/index.htm>>. Comments or questions: California Passenger Rail Study, Amtrak West Government Affairs, 530 Water St., 5th fl., Oakland, CA 94607, 510/238-4360.

California High-Speed Study (from page 1)

The route splits into two branches at the junction. One branch continues north to Merced, Modesto, Stockton, and Sacramento; the second crosses Pacheco Pass to Gilroy, San Jose, San Francisco International Airport, and downtown San Francisco (with speeds dropping as the route follows the Caltrain right-of-way north of Gilroy). Intra-branch (Sacramento-Stockton-San Jose-San Francisco) service also is planned, though on a route longer than that examined in 1996 over the Altamont Pass (between Stockton and Newark).

Other segments (in gray on map) will continue to be studied as part of the "environmental clearance process," because of the important markets they serve—Oakland/East Bay, Palmdale, Los Angeles International Airport, and Orange County (*San Diegan* route).



Assuming just the first group of routes is built, the plan allows for 86 trains in each direction on weekdays over all or part of the route, falling into five types of service ranging from express to local. The fastest express travel times would be 2:30 for Los Angeles-San Francisco, 2:09 for Sacramento-Los Angeles, 1:00 for Los Angeles-San Diego. Fresno would be halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco, about 1:15 either way. The services would yield annual operating surpluses over \$300 million.

Much of the plan explores current and future intercity travel demand for all modes. Today, over 154 million annual intercity trips (i.e., not commuter trips within a given region) are made along the system's route, with over 42 million of these trips over 150 miles in length. More than 88% of the intercity trips were by car,

though airlines had over a third of the longer trips. By comparison, in 2020, there will be 215 million intercity trips; 61 million over 150 miles. The plan projects that high-speed rail can capture 15% of the total intercity market and 35% of the over 150-mile market with 32 million passengers annually. The strongest market for the trains in terms of ridership and revenues will be between the Los Angeles and Bay Areas.

Going forward, the plan recommends a phased-funding approach. It calls for \$25 million in state funds in the next two fiscal years to continue environmental and engineering studies. [Gov. Gray Davis included \$5 million for that in his April 5 announcement, see box.] If the project then is still deemed viable, another \$350 million over 3-4 years would be needed

"We find that a high-speed train system is a smart investment in the state's future mobility. It will yield solid financial returns to the state and provide dramatic transportation benefits to all Californians. It is a system that can be operated without public subsidy. The public's investment should be limited to that which is necessary to ensure the construction of the basic system."

—Building a High-Speed Train System for California

for further environmental and design work. For remaining funds, the most likely source would require voter approval of a quarter-cent sales tax increase—a tough sell. Federal funds could help—if federal policy outgrows its anti-rail bias.

The plan also supports continued investment in the state's existing rail services, noting that such investment would make them more effective feeders to the high-speed system. It also would make them more effective "trunk" lines—vital if the all-new system is not built or is greatly delayed.

More information: California High-Speed Rail Authority, 925 L St., Ste. 1425, Sacramento, CA 95814, 916/324-1541, <www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov>.

CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR PROPOSES RAIL FUNDS

Gov. Gray Davis (D) on April 5 proposed a \$5.3-billion, one-time funding campaign to ease transportation congestion—subject to legislative approval—using the San Jose railroad station as a backdrop for his announcement. Over half of that, nearly \$3 billion, is for items related to intercity rail or rail transit. In the Bay Area, rail-related projects get a whopping 82% of the identified projects.

The numerous projects include:

- \$25 million (of \$50 million needed) for more trains and track improvements on the Capitol Corridor (Sacramento-Oakland-San Jose);
- \$50 million in *San Joaquin* line track and signal improvements (including some double-tracking);
- \$100 million for triple-tracking on the *San Diegan* route between East Los Angeles and Fullerton;
- \$95 million for double-tracking along the *San Diegan* route south of Fullerton.
- \$30 million for additional *San Diegan* equipment;
- \$245 million toward a \$1.5-billion "Alameda East" corridor, with many grade separations for freight and passenger lines east of Los Angeles;
- \$174 million in Caltrain improvements, including express service north of San Jose and added service south of there;
- \$5 million (of \$25 million needed over the next two years) for further study of San Francisco-Los Angeles high-speed rail.
- \$725 million toward extending BART from Fremont to San Jose (of \$4 billion needed);
- \$147 million toward a Muni Third St. (light-rail) Metro in San Francisco linking the Caltrain station with Market St. and Chinatown, and rebuilding the Ocean Ave. (K/Ingleside) line.

Report on Northeast Needs

In fulfillment of a Congressional directive, Amtrak in February sent to Congress a 25-year plan for anticipated capital investments on the South End of the Northeast Corridor (Washington-New York, including East River tunnels and Sunnyside Yard in Queens).

Amtrak owns all of this former Pennsylvania Railroad artery, and 60% of all Amtrak trips involve the South End. Non-Amtrak operations also are numerous, with commuter and freight railroads accounting for 48% of all train movements.

South End capital needs over the next 25 years are great. About \$2.0 billion of the \$3.8-billion, 23-year Northeast Corridor Improvement Project (NECIP) went to the South End. Yet that was not enough to make up for deferred investment during the years the South End was controlled by the Penn Central (which was bankrupt after 1970). Many NECIP investments made 20 or so years ago (before big drops in funding in the 1980's) have reached the end of their useful lives.

The result is a South End that is safe to operate, but at a deteriorating level of service and without ability to meet projected traffic demands. Metroliners that routinely ran between Washington and New York in 2:45 now take three hours as a direct result of capacity constraints and congestion, for which investment has been inadequate.

Demands on the South End will increase as Amtrak tries to run Acela Express service at speeds higher than the 125 mph for Metroliners, and as traffic continues to grow (see box).

The new plan is divided into two time periods. The Short Term Plan runs from fiscal 2001 through 2005. It involves high-priority "life safety," mandatory, and operational reliability investments. Life safety includes improvements to the New York Penn Station tunnels (the cost of which is to be shared with commuter railroads also using the tunnels) and pre-engineering work for improving the Baltimore and Washington

NARP CALLS FOR *CARDINAL* REROUTE

NARP has urged Amtrak to consider changing the route within Chicago of Amtrak's *Cardinal* and *Kentucky Cardinal*. The trains now use many different railroads and cross several railroads at-grade, so the published schedule is painfully slow and operations unpredictable (Jul. '93 *News*). For the 29-mile run between Chicago and the nearest stop (Dyer, IN), the timetable calls for 1:09 southbound, a 25.2 mph average, and 1:50 northbound for a 15.8 mph average.

In a March 30 letter to Amtrak President George Warrington, NARP asked Amtrak to consider routing the *Cardinal* onto the Illinois Central at Harvey, IL, now—rather than after—completion of the longer-range Grand Crossing connection (Feb. '99 *News*). That connection would improve the run between Union Station and the Illinois Central to Champaign/New Orleans. Based on the experience of Amtrak's *City of New Orleans* and *Illini*, the Harvey reroute should improve the *Cardinals'* operation promptly.

The *Cardinals* link Chicago daily with Indianapolis and the Louisville area, and tri-weekly with Cincinnati, West Virginia, Virginia and Washington, DC.

PAST AND PROJECTED NORTHEAST CORRIDOR TRAFFIC LEVELS

Daily revenue trains

	Just East of Trenton			Just East of New Carrollton		
	1975	1995	2015	1975	1995	2015
Amtrak	89	93	130	56	75	100
Commuter	30	83	110	4	42	48
Freight	43	1	6	23	6	10
Total	162	177	246	83	123	158

tunnels. The Long Term Plan runs from fiscal 2006 to 2025 and has more to do with accommodating traffic increases while maintaining operational reliability.

The plan is also divided into three areas to help determine benefits and cost responsibilities for various improvements—High-Speed Rail (items keeping all Amtrak trip times competitive and reliable), Shared Benefit (items mainly benefiting one or more South End user), and Commuter Rail and Freight Capacity (items improving Amtrak property mainly for the benefit of the non-Amtrak users).

Total Short Term needs are estimated at \$3.2 billion (average \$638 million a year), with 56% of costs attributable to (and presumably paid by) Amtrak; other users are responsible for 44%. The Long-Term total is \$8.8 billion (annual average \$500 million 2006-15; \$386 million 2016-25), with 48% assigned to Amtrak and 52% to other users. Total cost is \$12.1 billion, with Amtrak covering half.

The total may shock some. However, it covers 25 years, it will be refined as time passes, and non-Amtrak users are to cover half of it. Also, within the intercity arena, S.1900 and H.R.3700 require a 20% state match—a new wrinkle in Northeast Corridor funding. Moreover, without the rail investment, federal spending on Northeast highways and airports would be much larger than with the rail investment. ■

STATE OFFICIALS PRAISE AMTRAK

The following comments by state DOT officials reflect the general improvement in Amtrak/state relations in recent years. They were made at the February 1 breakfast reported in our March lead story:

Illinois DOT Secretary Kirk Brown—"Amtrak has done an outstanding job. Three years ago, we would have said Amtrak was a problem. But they've changed the way they do business. They have done a great job of building credibility with the local communities."

North Carolina Deputy Secretary David King—"We have been so bold as to rename the NEC [Northeast Corridor]. We call it the ACC—that's the Atlantic Coast Corridor. Two-thirds of the people who board our trains [in North Carolina] want to go to the Northeast Corridor. It's not a one-state business that we're about. It's got to be national. Like Illinois, we're pleased at the progress Amtrak has made. What really is missing is [adequate] federal money."

There were also positive comments about Amtrak from Wisconsin and New York officials.

NARP on Amtrak's "Non-Core" Profits

Amtrak says that activities other than running passenger trains improved Amtrak's bottom line by \$149 million in fiscal 1999. Without those profits, Amtrak would have provided less service or the taxpayer would have had to make a bigger contribution.

NARP Executive Director Ross B. Capon underlined this in a letter to Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX), who chairs the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine. This was in response to the Amtrak Reform Council's (ARC) report and its chairman's testimony at her February 23 hearing (Mar. News).

Prominent in the report is a list of 12 Amtrak functions, only two of which are the "core business—intercity rail passenger transportation operator". At the hearing, ARC Chairman Gilbert E. Carmichael claimed that Amtrak has "not been effective in managing the core business," noted "over 12 major functions" that Amtrak performs, and left the clear implication that those two observations were related.

In his letter, Capon noted, "The law encourages Amtrak to engage in profitable 'non-core' activities so that federal (and state) investments in passenger service can be leveraged in the most productive ways possible...A heavy burden should rest on anyone who advocates Amtrak's withdrawal from non-core activities to show that such a change would make financial and service sense...Please look long and hard before seriously considering any proposal to strip Amtrak of its profitable non-core activities."

Those activities include real estate and telecommunications ventures, commuter contract services and equipment leasing. ■

NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND CORRIDOR SUPPORT

The governors of Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont, plus five senators and four representatives, wrote April 4 to President Clinton. They asked him to designate the Boston-Concord-Burlington (VT) rail route as a Federal High Speed Rail Corridor.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Pere Marquette—Chicago-Grand Rapids full cafe service was restored March 2. Business class was added April 10. The automat car formerly used will have some work done and be reassigned elsewhere.

Lake Country Limited—Chicago-Janesville service began April 15. This is item #5 in the Network Growth Strategy article, Mar. News. Due to track conditions, this express-oriented train takes over three hours to run 95 miles; mornings southbound and evenings northbound. The only stop is Glenview (IL); Walworth (WI) is being considered; terminus is outside of Janesville's southeastern limits.

Daily Eagle—The *Texas Eagle* will resume daily service May 21, Chicago-San Antonio. This is item #10 in the Network Growth Strategy article, Mar. News.

Three days a week, the *Eagle* still will send through cars to Los Angeles on the *Sunset Limited*, but the one day a week the *Eagle* runs to Los Angeles alone will be changed. *Eagle* Los Angeles trains will leave Chicago Tuesday, Wednesday (instead of Friday), Thursday, Saturday; will leave Los Angeles Sunday, Tuesday (instead of Monday), Wednesday, Friday.

Thanks to NARP's request, Amtrak will continue to sell the *Empire Builder-to-Eagle* guaranteed connection, even though the May 21 timetable cuts Chicago layover time from 1:55 to 38 minutes. Amtrak notes that *Builder* reliability now is good. To protect the northbound connection, the Springfield-Columbus van continues. Presumably, a southbound van could run where appropriate if the *Builder* is late.

Reservation numbers—Amtrak is running out of six-digit reservation numbers, so since April 8 these numbers consist of both letters and numerals.

Transit—New Jersey Transit's Hudson-Bergen light rail (first segment) opened April 17 with two branches—34th St. (Bayonne)-Exchange Place (Jersey City) and West Side Ave. (Jersey City)-Exchange Place (connect to PATH).



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