



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

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RETURN REQUESTED

Is UMTA Anti-Rail?

NARP, FRA, Sen. Danforth Say Amtrak Remains Safest

"Accidents are uncharacteristic of Amtrak. In the 13 years since its inception, Amtrak's safety record has been one that has inspired public confidence. . . . Even if one includes the recent deaths, traveling by Amtrak is still estimated to be slightly safer than traveling by airplane, and 30 to 50 times safer than traveling by private automobile."

—Opening statement of Sen. John C. Danforth (R-MO), Chairman, Commerce, Science, and Transportation Subcommittee on Surface Transportation, at July 26 hearing on recent Amtrak accidents

Following the July 23 head-on collision of trains 151 and 168 in Queens, NARP was in the public eye as never before. Exec. Dir. Ross Capon and Asst. Dir. Barry Williams were on the phone with reporters almost constantly that week. Capon was interviewed at length on that day's MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour and appeared on CBS News Nightwatch early the next morning. He did 3 interviews for cable TV networks, and was seen on cable during the July 26 hearing. Williams testified July 27 before the Science and Technology Subcommittee on Transportation, Aviation and Materials chaired by Rep. Dan Glickman (D-KS).

NARP was mentioned in the Aug. 6 U.S. News & World Report, and was consulted extensively during preparation of the Aug. 6 Newsweek article on Amtrak safety. The following NARP article, written for and originally published, with minor changes, in the Sunday "Perspective" section of The Arizona Republic July 29, covers the major points we made with the media and in testimony. Federal Railroad Administrator John H. Riley also deserves credit for frequently reminding the public about Amtrak's excellent overall safety record.

Train Travel: Safe and Easily Made Safer

Amtrak, the nation's "quasi-public" intercity rail passenger corporation, has an excellent safety record. Even after the recent accidents, the statistics show that trains, planes, and intercity buses are all far safer than the private automobile.

	Passenger Fatalities Per 10 Billion Passenger-Miles
Motorcycle, 1977	1,445
Automobile, 1976-82	127
Airplane, 1976-82	4
Intercity bus, 1976-82	4
Amtrak, FY '76-FY '84	3*
Amtrak, FY '76-FY '82	1

*Estimate assumes no more passenger fatalities thru Sep. 30.

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NARP and APTA Criticize Proposed "New Starts" Policy

"Once categorized by planners as suitable only for the most densely travelled corridors, urban rail is now appreciated as offering a continuous spectrum of choice from fully segregated metro and regional rail systems through to the streetcar or tram."

—Dr. Vukan R. Vuchic, University of Pennsylvania, in *Railway Gazette International*, Jan. '82

Improving local transit around the U.S. is crucial for:

- enabling those without cars to lead independent lives;
- improving everyone's chances for avoiding automobile accidents;
- improving the nation's economic and energy efficiency, given the alternative of endless new highway construction; and
- improving accessibility to intercity rail passenger stations so that new, fast corridor rail services, whether public or private, will have substantial markets to serve.

As the University of Pennsylvania's Dr. Vukan R. Vuchic notes, "provided large and medium-sized cities have sound transport policies, there will usually be an important role for rail transit" (*Railway Gazette International*, Jan., 1982). Vuchic cited "the natural advantages of guided modes—high reliability, safety, labour productivity and passenger attraction through system identity," and noted that, "if the goal in introducing a transit system is to attract car users by a high level of service, rail modes are often the cheapest option."

It is gratifying to report that local officials in the U.S. are increasingly drawn towards some form of rail transit, often encouraged by visits to successful existing light-rail systems in Europe and North America, notably Edmonton, Calgary, and San Diego, which all began within the past 6 years.

In fact, the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA, part of U.S. DOT) says "the full demand for projects currently

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Starting Aug. 5, Amtrak adds a Chicago-Milwaukee round-trip: "Badger" departs Chicago 11:45 AM; departs Milwaukee 3:15 PM. Don't forget the Sec. 403(b) Chicago-Grand Rapids "Pere Marquette," which also begins Aug. 5 (see June News).

Chicago-Washington economy sleeper ("slumber-coach") was withdrawn in early July after Amtrak decided to scrap a slumbercoach on the site of the "Montrealer"

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earmarked by the Congress exceeds the amount of money available within current authorizations by a factor of approximately four, and the demand for other projects undergoing study exceeds available authorizations by a factor of more than ten."

In response to the big gap between demand for transit funds and existing funding levels, UMTA developed an "Urban Mass Transportation Major Capital Investment Policy" whose apparent goal is to set up an analytical process with a heavy anti-rail bias, thereby creating the illusion that demand for transit funding is not so great after all. The policy appeared in the May 18 Federal

SENATE PUTS UMTA POLICY ON HOLD

"Serious questions have been raised about the new start criteria proposed by the Urban Mass Transportation Administration and the Committee, therefore, directs that UMTA postpone any final action with respect to those guidelines until Congress has had an opportunity to thoroughly review the matter and to hold such hearings as may be deemed appropriate."

—Senate Appropriations Committee, in Report 98-561, filed July 17, accompanying S. 2852, FY '85 DOT appropriations bill

Register (pp. 21284-91) and was to have taken effect that day, but the Senate Appropriations Committee effectively delayed implementation (see box).

The policy consists of a questionable series of mathematical formulae and thresholds which can prevent a system from advancing from one stage to the next in UMTA's 'Major Investments' Development Process. The stages: system planning; alternatives analysis/draft environmental impact statement (EIS); preliminary engineering/final EIS; final design and construction.

UMTA'S USE OF "VOLATILE" PROJECTIONS HURTS RAIL PLANS

"The most questionable aspect of the proposed cost-effectiveness analysis is the extreme volatility of the indices with respect to changing levels of ridership and travel time savings. It is well-established that, even with the most sophisticated and closely controlled projection techniques, . . . forecasting errors of + or - 10% are not uncommon. . . .

"Based on the calculations already done by UMTA for a light rail project, it is considered ineligible, since ridership associated with the project is less than the TSM (Transportation System Management) alternative. However, if the original LRT-related ridership estimate" was adjusted upwards "by as little as 1%, the project would be eligible for further consideration and evaluation; if the original LRT-related ridership estimate was" raised "by only 4%, a recalculation would not only make the project eligible, but would place it among the top five projects in terms of both indices. . . . We believe that project eligibility is clearly defined in statutory terms as a function of broad program goals and objectives. . . . In some circumstances, the qualitative benefits that cannot be reduced to dollar terms or a single index may be of greater importance than the quantitative benefits which form the core of (UMTA's) proposed analysis procedure. . . . The narrow (UMTA-proposed) criteria . . . should not be used to make judgments about 'eligibility' in a way that forces projects to be dismissed totally from further consideration. . . .

"Because of (its) extreme volatility, the entire arithmetic approach to cost-effectiveness, as currently proposed, should be discarded and a different evaluation and ranking framework developed

"The proposed UMTA policy is substantially narrower . . . (than) other approaches both within DOT and within other federal agencies. . . . Some consideration might be given to establishing a broad evaluation framework that could be consistently applied through the Department rather than promoting vastly different approaches between modes."

—APTA Exec. VP Jack R. Gilstrap, in July 17 comments to UMTA

WHAT ARE THE ADMINISTRATION'S VIEWS?

"... Just how much various levels of government should involve themselves in the moving of people . . . was the subject of dispute at a faculty-alumni forum [June 1] at Princeton University. . . .

"'Amtrak fulfills a basic need,' said Robert B. Claytor, chairman and chief executive officer of the Norfolk Southern Corp., [which] handles the Washington-Atlanta-New Orleans portion of Amtrak's Crescent. . . . He said Amtrak is doing a 'good job,' and added, with a laugh, 'My brother would be proud to hear me say that.' . . . Claytor is the younger brother of Graham Claytor, who heads Amtrak. . . .

"Claytor's evaluation was disputed by Ralph L. Stanley, administrator of the Urban Mass Transportation Administration. Stanley was active in both the Ford-Dole and Reagan-Bush campaigns, and reflects the views of the present Administration, which would like drastically to cut back Amtrak.

"Stanley said that outside of certain corridors, like New York-Washington, there ought to be no rail passenger service at all. . . . Stanley clearly felt high-speed trains are not worth any governmental cost: 'If there is a market, there ought to be an interest on the private side. I'm skeptical the market's there.' "

—Newark Star-Ledger, June 3

NARP Executive Director Ross Capon and American Public Transit Association (APTA) Executive Vice-President Jack R. Gilstrap filed comments with UMTA July 17. APTA is the trade association for most transit authorities and many of their suppliers.

NARP accused UMTA of "an apparent bias against the rail mode. . . . This bias derives in part from an apparent insensitivity to opportunities for developing low-cost systems."

NARP challenged UMTA's assertion that rail transit's efficient application is limited to "heavily traveled corridors found in some densely populated cities with large concentrations of employment and retail activities."

NARP quoted Matthew A. Coogan, a Massachusetts state transportation official, who wrote that "the very real superiority of rail services in many instances do not stem so much from capacity in the abstract as geometric configuration in the specific. . . . In any given situation, the optimal mode is best explained in terms of constraints of geographic configuration, and secondarily by volume level."

He noted that "a highly linear Central Business District with several stations needed might be optimally served by rail technology" even with relatively low passenger volumes.

NARP and APTA attacked UMTA for stating that there is no federal interest "in networks which may provide maximum comfort, convenience, amenity and other such benefits." NARP called this "a gratuitous attack on rail, which is commonly associated with superior comfort and thus higher utilization." APTA said that "to deny the importance of financing systems that are competitive in [their qualitative aspects] is to ensure their failure or less than optimum performance, in attracting new riders."

NARP criticized UMTA's dictum that "each segment should be capable of independent justification on its own merits" and questioned whether this takes account of situations where rail "may be most effective if introduced in more than one corridor. . . . It would be interesting to know what highways might [also] fail the [single-corridor] restriction."

NARP also noted with disapproval UMTA's stated willingness to make "case-by-case exceptions" only "where local officials propose to advance more than one low cost busway at the same time."

NARP also questioned whether the single-corridor restriction is consistent with Section 2 of the UMT Act, which requires UMTA "to encourage the planning and establishment of areawide urban mass transportation systems needed for economical and desirable urban development" (emphasis added).

APTA noted that UMTA's single-corridor restriction might mean "that highly cost-effective extension projects would not be eligible for funding consideration," and urged "resolution

of how new systems and extensions are to be treated in a balanced way."

NARP praised UMTA's encouragement of "local supportive policies," notably "value recapture mechanisms which finance the planned transit system," and said "UMTA could perform a useful service by increasing pressure on state and local governments to implement some form of value recapture."

'Value recapture' is the collection of revenue from people other than system riders who benefit from investments in transit. NARP stated: "the taxing of land values created by transit improvements is essential. Many landowners benefit from such improvements just as much as the system's riders. . . . As one observer put it, increased land values 'are the 'invisible earnings' of railways. They greatly exceed the amount railroads receive in subsidy, and their existence makes nonsense of the fashionable current view that looks no further than traffic receipts in assessments of profits and losses' (Henry Law, in letter to the editor, *Modern Railways* (U.K.), Dec. '83)."

NARP also praised UMTA's favorable reference to supportive land use plans, noting that "strong restrictions on station-area development are normally incompatible with economically viable heavy rail transit (that is, all-grade-separated, high-frequency). Too many of Washington's Metrorail stations are remote from developments, and thus handicapped in their ability to attract sufficient ridership [for this type of rail service]. Part of the problem lies in advance planning or the lack thereof: the cost of constructing a building above an operational transit line is high, so the best time to build is before a line goes into service."

NARP noted that "the use of modern traffic circles at inter-sections" (*NARP News*, Feb. '82, p. 3) offered special benefits for "bus and rail transit street operations" but "impetus for action will have to come from outside the traffic engineering profession."

In contrast with NARP's blunt call for an UMTA-led campaign for more funding (see box), APTA—whose members, after all,

"We would like UMTA to consider the possibility that more funding is a key major need, and to pursue this with the same vigor that Secretary Lewis used on the gasoline tax before the President supported same."

—NARP's July 17 Comments to UMTA

depend on UMTA for much of their funding—suggested "differentiating: (a.) . . . oversight of the planning process; and, (b.) the procedures required to support final project funding decisions. . . . A much broader, less restrictive evaluation and review process seems warranted in the former case, while a more rigorous approach could be justified in the latter."

APTA is certainly pushing in the right direction: better to have a sound planning process, which admits the big gap between needs for and availability of transit funds, than to kill legitimate rail plans without even allowing them to enter alternatives analysis.

Whether UMTA is listening is unclear: APTA notes that, "while UMTA is willing to make some modifications in the details of the rating system, it intends to make no changes in the overall structure." Says APTA: "This diminishes the value and usefulness of a formal review and comment process." ■

Transit Funding: A Status Report

On June 7, the House passed HR 5504, the Surface Transportation and Uniform Relocation Assistance Act. It would release to the states over \$5 billion of Interstate highway apportionments. It also would increase authorizations for use of funds already paid into the mass transit account of the highway trust fund. The FY '85 and '86 authorizations would rise by \$400 million each (from \$1.1 to \$1.5 billion/year) and a \$1.5 billion authorization would be established for FY '87.

Meanwhile, Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-NY) was expected to offer an amendment to S. 2527, the Interstate highway funding bill, providing \$2 billion in increased transit authorizations through FY '87 (compared with the House's \$2.3 billion). The

TRANSPORT CHARGES: SANITY IN SWITZERLAND

"In a national referendum on 26 Feb. Swiss voters approved a new road tax for all vehicles using motorways and a tax which would be applied to all heavy trucks using the Swiss road network, including those registered in other countries. . . ."

"Meanwhile research into air pollution and acid rain, which has already caused extensive damage to woodlands in Switzerland with over 20% of trees affected or dying, has found a link with the doubling in road traffic in the last decade and a consequent rise in vehicle exhaust gases. As a result, proposals are being made to reduce speed limits on motorways. . . ."

"A proposal by the management of Swiss Federal Railways (SBB) to raise fares and tariffs by 3% this year to help reduce an anticipated 1984 deficit of over SFr400 million [\$US 173.8 million on 6/29/84] has been vetoed by the SBB board in an endeavor to make rail traffic more attractive in the light of the conservation measures aimed at road transport."

—*Modern Railways* (U.K.), May

floor amendment was necessary because the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee, which has jurisdiction over transit funding (not highways) and is chaired by Jake Garn (R-UT), refused to hold hearings on S. 2554, D'Amato's increased-funding-for-transit package.

BOSTON'S RAIL LINK: STILL POSSIBLE

HR 5504 allows Massachusetts to spend Interstate funds on widening and depressing Boston's Central Artery, but has no provision for the NARP-endorsed railroad connection state officials once considered vital. [On Jan. 21, 1975, *The Christian Science Monitor* reported: "The . . . plan to rebuild the Central Artery through downtown Boston, with new railroad tracks linking North and South Stations, [Mass. Secy. of Transportation Frederick P. Salvucci] considers to be the 'opportunity of the century.' The opportunity, if rejected, 'will not come again,' he said, and would leave the region with 'inadequate railroads, inadequate highways, and an inadequate city.'"]

Today, Massachusetts has the same governor (Michael S. Dukakis) and transportation secretary as in 1975, but the railroad portion of the project has been scrapped, largely because there is no federal program to help fund such a connection (*NARP News*, Apr. '84).

While it's frustrating to see federal officials insist this is a local decision when it is federal policies which leave rail advocates high and dry, it is also true that state officials *could* launch a fight for the rail connection—just as former Mass. Gov. Francis W. Sargent once successfully fought for the right to trade-in federal Interstate project funding for transit dollars.

The long design phase for the Artery project means there is time to get a rail connection included, but this could only happen if Gov. Dukakis gets strong pressure from his own constituents and from New Hampshire and Maine officials, whose states would be major beneficiaries of a rail connection. ■

AL/LA/MS Members: please write, urging your gov. to get continued "Gulf Coast Ltd." state funding: George Wallace, State Capitol, Montgomery 36130; Edwin Edwards, St. Cap., Baton Rouge 70804; Bill Allain, St. Cap., Jackson 39205.

CONFERENCE ON A FASTER EMPIRE SERVICE

Empire State Passengers Assn. and NARP sponsor a Sept. 14 conference on implementing Niagara Falls-Buffalo-New York high speed rail passenger service at the Convention Center in Niagara Falls. Luncheon speaker: Robert Blanchette, High Speed Rail Assn. chairman, CEO of The TGV Co., and former FRA head. Conference participants include government and political leaders and people from Amtrak, VIA, Conrail and the railway equipment industry. Details: George Hamilton Forman, 974 Ellicott Sq. Bldg., Buffalo 14203.

derailment (23 slumbers remain). At no extra fare, passengers can ride the NY-Chicago slumbercoach and change cars in Pittsburgh (or in Phila. the long way round—especially good for avoiding 4 AM wakeup eastbound).

Chicago-Oakland passengers may now travel via Los Angeles on "Southwest Ltd." for the same rail fare (including bargain roundtrip) as on the direct "California Zephyr" route. Similarly, for those traveling between New York City-intermediate points-Charlottesville on the one hand, and San Antonio-intermediate points-Los Angeles on the other hand, the same rail fares now apply via either New Orleans or Chicago.

After a brief hiatus, discount round-trip fares were restored to the Kansas City-New Orleans sleeping car and, from Aug. 1, reduced daytime occupancy room rates became available in that car. "City of New Orleans" keeps its diner and both (KC & Chi) dome cars, but the Chicago-New Orleans slumbercoach and Kansas City-New Orleans sleeper stay only through end of World's Fair (Nov. 11) and the Oct. 28 timetable won't show them.

Trailways moves into the Cleveland Amtrak station Aug. 8. Reported the *Plain Dealer* June 12: "Trailways officials said the move to Amtrak's station . . . could help boost ridership because it would enable passengers to connect from one form of transportation to another under one roof."

Amtrak opened a permanent \$805,000 station at Omaha July 26, replacing a "temporary" trailer facility in use since 1973. Funded by Amtrak, the new station is at same 9th St. location.

Cape Cod Update, etc.: Watch out! Westbound departures from Hyannis are 15 minutes earlier (3 PM M-F; 6 PM Sa/Su/Hol) than shown in June Travelers' Advisory.

Some South Braintree departures are 15 minutes later: 6:15 PM M-F; 9:15 PM Sa/Su. The 9 AM weekend train goes to Falmouth (Hyannis passengers change at Buzzards Bay); similarly, there's a 6:25 PM weekend departure from Falmouth to South Braintree to which passengers from Hyannis (dp. 6:00) change at B.B.

With the exception of Tuesday/Wednesday, when there's no Falmouth service, and Monday/Thursday, when a B.B.-Falmouth bus connects from the 6:15 South Braintree departure, S. Braintree-Hyannis trains have B.B.-Falmouth connecting trains.

Popular same-day rail-boat round-trips include (Sa/Su/Hol) S. Braintree-Falmouth-Martha's Vineyard and (daily) Hyannis harbor cruise. You can also connect to Nantucket Friday nights, return Sunday evenings. Hyannis-based Cape Cod & Hyannis Railroad, Inc., can make reservations on boats with which CC&H connects.

New Haven R.R. last ran NY-Cape Cod service in the summer of 1964; direct Boston-Cape service via South Braintree ended June 30, 1959, exactly 25 years before this year's revival by CC&H.

Train Travel is Safe (continued from page 1)

Between July 5, 1974, and July 9, 1980, no Amtrak passengers died. In more than 13 years of service, Amtrak has experienced 25 passenger fatalities (including one death which occurred after a post-accident operation). Ten, or 40%, of these were on June 10, 1971, less than two months after Amtrak service began. (Similarly, the bus number above would be lower but for a single major disaster—the 1980 collapse of Florida's Sunshine Skyway bridge which sent a Greyhound bus and its 23 occupants to their deaths in Tampa Bay.)

The extraordinary strength of Amtrak's passenger cars is reflected in the stories of two accidents. On June 15, 1982, near Emerson, Iowa, Amtrak's "San Francisco Zephyr" plowed at 76 miles per hour into waist-deep water and hurtled off tracks damaged by floodwaters of Indian Creek. The only person killed was a woman walking between cars at the time of the derailment.

On July 11, 1984, the "Silver Star," while operating at about

60 miles per hour, hit a gasoline tank truck at a grade crossing—perhaps the worst possible type of grade crossing accident. The truck driver and engineer were killed, but not one passenger was even admitted to a hospital!

These two accidents also underline the desperate need for actions by public officials, railroad managements, and all motorists to prevent similar accidents in the future.

RAILROADS: LISTEN TO THE WEATHER!

The National Weather Service had issued a flood alert almost five hours before the "Zephyr's" derailment, but the engineer and the dispatcher were never informed, so the train was running at almost full speed. The Burlington Northern, on whose tracks the "Zephyr" was running, learned its lesson, and now monitors the weather continuously, using electronic scanners tied into the National Weather Service.

The tragedy is that other railroads did not learn the same lesson. Weather advisories had been issued hours before Amtrak's "Capitol Limited" derailed without fatalities in Pennsylvania on May 29, 1984, and eight hours before the "Montrealer" derailed in Vermont on July 7, killing three passengers and two crew members. In both cases, the engineers had never been told about the weather reports.

Consequently, NARP has asked Federal Railroad Administrator John H. Riley to issue regulations requiring railroads to monitor weather conditions continuously, to alert engine crews by radio immediately when relevant emergency information is received, and during flood alerts to make special inspections of tracks known to be at risk in heavy rains.

RESPECT THOSE CROSSINGS!

Death on the railroad comes mainly at grade crossings. The victims almost invariably are motorists and train engineers, not passengers. And the reason the accident occurs is usually the failure of motorists to exercise caution. But there's also the failure of many police departments to deal as forcefully with those who ignore crossing protection devices as with people who run traffic signals.

Thanks largely to pioneering efforts by a few state and local governments, grade crossing safety is improving. Fatalities at all public railroad grade crossings—accidents involving both freight and passenger trains—declined from over 1,100 in 1974 to 580 in 1982. The number of grade crossing accidents declined from almost 12,000 in 1978 to 7,158 in 1982, and fewer than 2% of these involved Amtrak trains.

In Gwinnett County, near Atlanta, crossing accidents used to kill about seven people a year, and there were about five accidents a month. The safety record improved dramatically after flashing lights and gates were installed at almost all of the county's grade crossings—and the police began enforcing an ordinance mandating a \$50 fine for motorists who violate the flashers. There hasn't been a crossing accident in Gwinnett County at least since the start of 1982.

We are urging congressional committees to consider federal legislation that would give other states and localities a strong incentive to implement proven grade-crossing safety practices.

(Here, the article listed our action requests for states and cities. See May NARP News, p. 3. Ed.)

One of Operation Lifesaver's more dramatic recent endeavors was a three-day special-train tour of northern New England last September. The train was provided by Guilford Industries, which owns the railroads whose tracks were used. Americans (including reporters and TV crews) still love to run down to the local train station when a special pulls in, and those who came to see the "Lifesaver Express" were treated to presentations on safety from, among others, New Hampshire Governor John H. Sununu.

Perhaps Southern Pacific and Arizona officials would consider a similar effort here!

WASHINGTON METRORAIL EXTENSION

On Aug. 25, Washington's Red Line, which serves Union Station, will be extended 7 miles northwest from Van Ness St., NW, through Bethesda, MD, to Grosvenor, just outside the Beltway. A further extension through Rockville (intermodal station with Amtrak & commuter rail) to Shady Grove in Gaithersburg is planned for December.