



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

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NARP Asks "Fair Test" For Amtrak

In testimony before the House Subcommittee on Transportation and Commerce, NARP President Orren Beaty asked that intercity rail passenger service be given a "fair test" before any funding cutbacks, such as that proposed by the Ford Administration, are forced upon Amtrak.

Beaty defined the "fair test" as "roughly two to three years of operation of a modern network" with:

- "1. All rollingstock new or rebuilt with reliable electric heating and air-conditioning;
- "2. Management capability to schedule and operate this equipment properly and staff it with friendly personnel;
- "3. All track in good condition;
- "4. An adequate route structure with reasonable service frequencies;
- "5. New cost-effectiveness measures, such as rollingstock more economical to operate and labor agreements which eliminate costs not dictated by actual work requirements."

The hearings, under Subcommittee Chairman Fred Rooney (Pa.), were called to consider the criteria (see box) which Amtrak has proposed to guide its decisions regarding the addition and deletion of routes. The criteria will become effective in March unless Congress rejects them.

NARP generally supported the criteria, and suggested that several routes with no service at present would

measure up better than some currently in operation. Needed services include: Dallas-Houston, Chicago-Florida via Atlanta, New Orleans-Jacksonville, St. Louis-Kansas City, Cleveland-Pittsburgh-Washington, Washington-Richmond-Tidewater area, and Cleveland-Columbus-Dayton-Cincinnati.

A panel of bus and airline interests urged revision of the criteria to force extensive service discontinuances, through a phasing down of Amtrak subsidies so that, in fiscal 1982, no route could be operated where passenger revenues totaled less than 75% of fully allocated costs. The panel included top executives of Greyhound, Trailways, and Eastern, but also William P. Himburg, President of Michigan-based Indian Trails, Inc., who argued that Amtrak's Chicago-Kalamazoo-Flint services have "diverted traffic" from his buses, and that the "depressed" Amtrak fares have "prevented Indian Trails from achieving a reasonable rate of return on the reduced amount of service being provided."

Regarding bus and air companies, Beaty said: "Buses simply do not have the capability of attracting many passengers who would ride trains, and airplanes are not energy-efficient over the short haul. Thus we cannot accept their

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DOT Brass Fight Amtrak With Half-Truths

At a press conference February 9, Secretary of Transportation William T. Coleman, Jr., falsely accused Amtrak President Paul H. Reistrup of playing politics. The Secretary suggested that Reistrup deliberately proposed eliminating routes serving key legislators when assessing the effects of the Administration's proposed \$378 million ceiling on operating losses for Fiscal 1977.

But even an anti-Amtrak study done recently for Continental Trailways and Eastern Airlines, "Amtrak Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow", confirms that Reistrup's list (January News) represents one intellectually honest attempt to predict what would survive the President's proposed meat-ax. According to a chart which ranks the routes

and Chicago-Houston). Without the "Broadway" there would have been no link between the surviving western services and the East.

"If Amtrak can take a 'clunker' like the Southern Pacific's 'Sunset Limited' was in its last days and convert it into the good train it is today, then I know there is hope for the future."

**—Arch M. Campbell, Washington, D.C.,
quoted in February newsletter of the
Dallas-based Southwest Railroad Historical
Society**

"We'll come to grips with him if he continues to play that way."

**—Secretary Coleman, falsely accusing
Amtrak's President of playing politics**

on the basis of fully allocated cost per passenger mile, Reistrup picked the ten best performers, with only two exceptions: numbers 11 and 12 (Metroliners and the NY-Chicago "Broadway") edged out 6 and 7 (Chicago-Oakland

The Secretary, in response to an inevitable question, indicated that it was not his job to suggest changes he would make in Reistrup's list. But the Secretary's comments suggested that his list would have started with the Northeast Corridor and the political routes.

A few minutes later, Undersecretary John Barnum buried the truth even deeper. In discussing what he saw as the brighter side of the meat-ax, he pointed out that the

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Fair Test (continued from page 1)

complaints about government subsidies to Amtrak which are merely redressing the imbalance created largely by the government over the past few decades. . .the user-charge argument for highway construction is hollow because many of us contributed unhappily to the highway trust fund because we had been deprived of alternative means of transport." And Amtrak submitted figures compiled from government sources by the Association of American Railroads indicating that at least one-third of the \$427.8 billion in public highway expenditures made since 1920 were not recovered in user charges.

Mindful of the need to bring economic discipline to AMTRAK, NARP suggested that consideration of incorporating into the criteria fixed deficit-limits per passenger mile might be appropriate after the "fair test," which means up to ten years into the future, depending on how quickly ConRail track rehabilitation programs go forward. NARP also expressed concern that Amtrak has not done enough in labor relations, and cited evidence that unions are willing to respond to reasonable management initiatives: Illinois Central Gulf is operating some "piggy-back" trains with two- and three-man crews, and Missouri Pacific has a tentative agreement to permit freight road crews to do some terminal switching work.

DOT Half-Truths (continued from page 1)

15,000 passengers which he said Amtrak handles annually between Los Angeles-Seattle could easily be accommodated on existing flights which average 40% empty. Energy savings! What Barnum didn't acknowledge is that 15,000 passengers represents only 4% of the 374,710 passengers Amtrak reports handling in 1975 on the "Coast Starlight".

In other words, about 360,000 passengers were handled between various intermediate points, some of which had no airplane service, and without the train a substantial number would have driven rather than used public transportation at all.

The two trains which Barnum used as examples of inefficient long-haul services, "Coast Starlight" and the Chicago-Los Angeles "Southwestern Limited", ranked 3rd and 5th best in the entire Amtrak system, based on fully allocated cost per passenger mile in Fiscal 1975. It therefore appears that the Administration is gunning for the complete elimination of long-haul services.

Half-Truths from the "Competition"

But the half-truthery prize goes to the "independent transportation economists and consultants" who wrote "Amtrak Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow" under the "sponsorship" of Continental Trailways and Eastern Airlines. This was submitted to the House Subcommittee on Transportation and Commerce at its recent Amtrak hearings (see lead story).

An independent study of Amtrak's potential would be

useful. But this one takes the easy, superficial route, "photographing" Amtrak's sordid past and present, ignoring possibilities for improvement, with the text relying for effect on untypical worst examples.

"In those markets where it is believed to be particularly cost efficient, Amtrak's performance is extremely discouraging. Thus, the Northeast Corridor shows (gross) costs as high as 53.33¢ per revenue passenger mile." This figure is over three and one half times the system average, and applies only to the New Haven-Springfield line, where averages are distorted because Hartford is the only city whose commuter rail services are provided solely at Amtrak's expense.

Two charts compare passenger and taxpayer contributions to the cost of operating six "principal routes" — which were chosen on the basis of their relatively poor economic performance: Chicago-Dubuque, whose losses are falsely ascribed 100% to Amtrak though Illinois actually pays 2/3; Vancouver-Seattle, whose poor riding (average 37.5 per trip in December) results from still poorer scheduling; New Haven-Springfield discussed above; Washington-Cumberland, another largely commuter run; Oakland-Florida, hampered by poor track and constant rerouting north of Louisville and, south of there, a circuitous path which avoids the key Atlanta market; and Oakland-Bakersfield. Of course, the report omits such explanatory footnotes.

Its crucial weakness, however, lies in the contorted logic which attempts to show that hopes of attracting passengers back to the rails are futile. Its listing of the four principal reasons for post-World War Two rail ridership decline excludes decline in service quality, and it dismisses the service-decline argument as based solely on the faster withdrawal of first class service in comparison with coach, when in fact the principal aspects of service decline encompassed almost every aspect of the operations.

The statement, "rail service suffers competitive disadvantages which cannot be overcome by presently programmed service improvements," is supported by reference to another superficial document which avoids analysis of opportunities — both planned and possible — for Amtrak to become more cost effective: "An Economic Policy Analysis of the Amtrak Program" by James C. Miller III, who testified before the Rooney Subcommittee on behalf of the Council on Wage and Price Stability, against Amtrak.

The "hopelessness" of NARP's cause is also given a new twist: "the metal-on-metal contact of rail services aggravates the malfunction rate of heating and air-conditioning devices. . .the vibration intrinsic to the movement of train on track creates additional discomfort, the extent of which will depend upon equipment, road bed and trip length." Someone ought to buy the authors a Eurailpass!

What the report calls "the most conclusive refutation of the discouragement/encouragement theory" is the fact that, despite Amtrak's efforts, "at the end of fiscal 1975, traffic stood at levels substantially below 1972." But here we do find an explanatory footnote: "The fiscal year 1975 Amtrak traffic count according to its market research department was 15.9 million. Subsequent to writing the above an Amtrak report to the ICC, Form OCB, was found to contain a higher passenger count." We are not told what that higher count was.

Figures obtained from Amtrak show revenue passengers in 1975 totaled 16.8 million compared with an inflated count in 1972 of 16.6 million (unreliable because Amtrak had not developed its own counting system and was relying on railroad reports which in many instances included pass riders and double-counting where one trip involved more than one railroad's tracks).

But the most accurate indicator is the most flattering to Amtrak: revenue passenger miles for 1975 up 30% over 1972 (3.674 billion vs. 2.837 billion).

Some conclusive refutation!

EDITORIAL

In a perverse way, proponents of railroad passenger service (forget, for the moment, "expanded and improved service," and settle for just existing service) can be grateful to the Ford Administration and DOT Secretary Coleman.

For the Administration's actions and the Secretary's brutally frank statements (statement after statement after statement) have made it absolutely clear that Amtrak has no friends in high policy positions in the Executive Branch.

Consider, for example, the United Press International report of January 28, quoting Mr. Coleman that Amtrak passenger service, which he called a waste of taxpayers' money, "would die tomorrow" if he had his way. This puts the capper on other outlandish statements which have been coming out of the Department almost since Secretary Volpe vacated the office. Undersecretary John Barnum and the staff of secretarial experts are no less negative. They will defend the expenditure every year of billions of dollars for highways, encouraging further waste of decreasing energy supplies, misuse of limited land, and defilement of our air, but they resent any expenditure for rail passenger service.

Congress accepted a lower figure than it had previously approved for vitally necessary improvements to the Northeast rail corridor, in order to get a bill signed. Years of neglect call for immediate action to begin upgrading. But, as evidence of having bargained in bad faith, the Administration then opposed Amtrak's request for \$79 million (already approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee) for immediate use in ordering and later installing rail, ties, et al. during the 1976 work season. It talks pleasantly about the need for time-consuming engineering studies, glossing over the great need for basic track work, without which Amtrak says there will be a steady deterioration of service *this year*.

It is important for our members to contact their Representatives and Senators and urge them to vote and work for:

1. Sufficient funding to keep Amtrak from cutting back service this year or in Fiscal 1977; and
2. Appropriation of enough money (both for Amtrak in the Corridor and the freight-hauling railroads elsewhere) to get started on track rehabilitation this summer. The work has already been authorized by Congress, and the jobs provided can help the unemployment situation *this year* as well.

Don't delay — supplemental appropriations bills are moving right now!

FARES AND SERVICES

INTERCITY: Effective March 1 (March 15 on Southern), for a 2 1/2 month test period, anyone from any country can buy Amtrak's U.S.A. Rail Pass, good for unlimited regular coach travel (14 days for \$150; 21 days, \$200; 30 days, \$250). Children 2 through 11 pay half fare. Holders may upgrade any segments of their trips by paying the difference between coach fare and the desired budget sleeper ("slumbercoach"), Metroliner, or first-class service.

The pass is available at ticket offices; in addition, Amtrak authorized travel agents sell vouchers which may be exchanged for a Pass. Travel must begin within 15 days of purchase, and reservations may not be made prior to purchase. Before each trip, holders must obtain a ticket at a ticket office.

Pass policy after May 15 will depend on "marketing considerations" — the price might be increased or the new provisions withdrawn.

Special coach fares on Florida trains were restored February 15, with some new twists. On trains to and from New York, the same \$99 roundtrip applies (along with \$129 roundtrip Montreal-Miami, valid on both NY-Montreal

routes), but will not be good for travel starting April 8-9 and 15-19. On the "Floridian" to and from Chicago, a special one-way Chicago-Florida fare is offered, \$49.50, as well as discounts of up to 25% on 45-day roundtrip fares between any two points south of and including Nashville, except between stops within Florida.

The above specials — except for the 45-day roundtrips — will be withdrawn June 14. In all cases, children 2 through 11 pay approximately half fare, and the tickets may be upgraded to budget sleeper or first class by paying the fare difference.

COMMUTER: No longer will ICC involvement delay changes (including fare changes) in services subsidized or directly provided by public agencies. The ICC lost jurisdiction (Section 804 of the new "Railroad Revitalization and Regulatory Reform Act of '1976").

Copies of Judge Glennon's superb Amtrak report (December News) are once again available upon request to The Secretary, ICC, Washington, D.C. 20423. Refer to the Initial Decision, served December 10, 1975, in Ex Parte No. 277 (Sub-No. 3). (The first printing was quickly exhausted.)

Another Gripping Chapter In the Menk-Amtrak Affair

Too long have we neglected bringing *NARP News* readers up to date on the latest episode in the stirring story of the love affair Lewis W. Menk, board chairman of Burlington Northern, has carried on for years with rail passenger service.

Menk, interviewed by Ron Snider of the *Washington Star*, sounded a great deal like he did nearly three years ago when he appeared, while still serving as an Amtrak Board member, on the CBS show, "Sixty Minutes."

Use of BN's road for passenger service interferes with freight operations, he said, and forces the line to maintain facilities that it wouldn't otherwise need.

Continuing his views, as reported by the *Star*:

The major problem with passenger service is that it has become a low-volume business since railroads lost the traveling business man to the airlines.

When Congress deemed that we have a need for long-distance rail passenger service, it was a social decision, not an economic one.

Except for commuter trains, rail passenger service is viable only in the major population corridors such as Washington-Boston.

We have to ask, "Where are our priorities?" In my opinion, rail passenger service has a low priority and little use. (End interview.)

Amtrak services on BN have not suffered because of Menk's views — the on-time performance in recent months has been among the best on the railroad passenger system. But the effect on Amtrak's future of a constant airing of such views cannot, we believe, be helpful.

"So many railroads have . . . filled the headlines of the papers with reasons why their track won't qualify for Amtrak trains that (coal shippers) and most of the rest of the country. . . may figure that if the rail lines can't get a handful of passenger cars over the road, how in Heaven's name do they expect to handle several hundred loaded hopper cars weighing 60 tons more."

—Southwest Railroad Historical Society's February newsletter, discussing recent vote of the National Industrial Traffic League in support of coal-slurry pipeline development

Regional Meetings Show "Grass Roots" Enthusiasm

Increased interest in the cause of improved and expanded rail passenger service and its strongest national supporter, the National Association of Railroad Passengers, is viewed as an important result of 12 NARP regional membership meetings held across the country the past few weeks.

NARP members met to elect members of the Board of Directors, to plan expanded regional activity on behalf of rail passenger service, and to make recommendations to the national organization on such matters as legislative policy, membership expansion, and dues structure.

Region I, which includes all of New England, had the biggest meeting from the standpoint of attendance, with an overflow crowd of more than 100 participating at Boston's Back Bay Station. Ohio and Michigan associations of rail passengers held their own separate meetings in Toledo the same day to help swell attendance at the Region VI meeting. The Region XI meeting in San Francisco was another well-attended event.

Many meetings, while not so well attended, report strong interest in NARP and its goals and involvement of local organizations with allied interests.

As a result of elections, about half of NARP's national Board of Directors will be new when the April meeting is held in Washington, D.C.

Up for discussion at that meeting will be recommendations that minimum dues of \$10 a year be increased variously by two to five dollars (although some regions voted against raising dues), but providing also for reduced dues for persons under 21 years of age and those 65 or older, a rate of \$6 being most frequently mentioned. Dues changes have been considered because of NARP's continuing financial difficulties.

In connection with election of Board members, the Executive Committee met in Washington in February and voted to create a limited number of positions of "Director at Large" to strengthen the Board by addition of persons with special interest or abilities or to provide a broader geographical representation. Appointments will be made in time for the At-Large Directors to participate in the April meeting.

Newly elected Directors follow (re-elected Directors indicated by asterisk):

Region I (New England)—James M.S. Ullman*, Meriden, CT; Samuel E. Stokes, Jr.*, Alstead, N.H.; Eugene Skoropowski*, Melrose, Mass.; C.N. Monaghan, St. Albans, Vt.; William Ensing III, Westfield, Mass.; William J. Hennessy, Georgetown, Maine.

Region II (New York) — Oliver Jensen*, Henry Luce III*, and Rogers E.M. Whitaker, all of New York City, and Mrs. Lettie Gay Carson*, Millerton. (A fifth member, if the Directors agree that the region is entitled to one more, is Philo Higley, NYC.)

Region III (New Jersey, Delaware, Eastern Pennsylvania) — Thomas C. Southerland, Jr.*, Princeton, N.J.; Mrs. Dorothy D. Spivack*, Far Hills, N.J.; James F. Farny*, Newark, Del.; Henry F. Harris*, Philadelphia, and Frank Panariello, Wilmington, Del. (Trainmaster of the Wilmington and Western R.R.).

Region IV (D.C., Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia) — Peter B. Bell* and Joseph F. Horning, Jr.*, D.C.; Lorena F. Lemons*, Silver Spring, Md.; Terry Flaherty, Harpers Ferry, W.Va.; and George Tyson, Baltimore.

Region V (Carolinas, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Eastern Louisiana) — John R. Martin*, Atlanta; Edwin P. Patton*, Knoxville, Tenn.; Lee E. McIlvaine*, Jacksonville, Fla.; and Elmer E. Jones, Jr.*, Miami.

Region VI (Michigan, Ohio, Western Pennsylvania) — John DeLora, Grosse Pointe, Mich.; The Rev. Robert

Wickens, Elyria, Ohio; James B. Stevenson*, Youngsville, Pa.; Albert Mladineo, Chagrin Falls, Ohio; and David S. Marshall, Dayton, Ohio.

Region VII (Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin) — Edward H. Bennett, Jr.*, D.W. Downey, and Ron Bordman (Lake Forest), all of Chicago; William H. Bryan*, Alton, Ill.; George E. McCallum*, West DePere, Wisconsin; and Robert G. Moorhead*, Indianapolis.

Region VIII (Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, the Dakotas) — Don Lovegren, Roseville, Minn.; Jack Ecker, Des Moines, Iowa.

Region IX (Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas, Western Louisiana) — James R. Gough*, Houston; M.D. (Dan) Monaghan, Garland, Texas; and R.E. (Doc) Waters, Wichita Falls, Texas.

Region X (Colorado, Wyoming, Utah) — Dr. Jerome G. Alpiner*, Denver, Colorado.

Region XI (Northern California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Northern Nevada, Alaska, Hawaii, and Montana) — Arthur L. Lloyd*, Portola Valley, Cal.; Mrs. Helen R. Nelson*, Saratoga, Cal.; Fred A. Stindt, Redwood City, Cal.; and Paul Phillips, Spokane, Wash.

Region XII (Southern California, Southern Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico) — Charles Montooth*, Scottsdale, Ariz.; Philip K. Reiner-Deutsch*, Los Angeles; and Alfred Runte*, Goleta, Cal.

(Regions are entitled to one Director for each 100 NARP members; the question about an additional Director for Region II rises from the shift of part of Connecticut from that region into Region I and a need to recheck membership totals.)

The Amtrak Criteria

Under the Amtrak Improvement Act of 1975, "The Criteria and Procedures for Making Route and Service Decisions" released by the Amtrak Board last September will become effective March 19 unless either branch of Congress adopts a disapproving resolution.

The criteria provide Amtrak with much flexibility and, in the words of Amtrak Chairman Donald P. Jacobs, place "emphasis on considering all possible ways to economically continue or upgrade service before considering service reductions or discontinuance."

Criteria are divided into three categories: economic, social, and environmental. Those under economic are:

—Financial contribution per revenue passenger mile (computed by subtracting direct or marginal costs from total route revenue and dividing the result by revenue passenger miles);

—Total financial contribution;

—Financial impact on connecting parts of the system;

—Incremental capital investment requirements; and

—Return on Incremental investment.

After these criteria are used in analyzing existing and proposed routes, each will be placed in one of five categories:

—Continue (present economics satisfactory);

—Continue or Add (future economics likely to be good);

—Continue with revised service;

—Social/environmental benefits warrant continuance;

—Social/environmental benefits support discontinuance.