



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

Vol. 18, No. 10  Oct.-Nov., 1984

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(No. 9 was mailed Sep. 28)

RETURN REQUESTED

Chicago-Atlanta-Florida Support

Transit Milestone: Phila. Opens Commuter Rail City Tunnel

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority was preparing to inaugurate on Nov. 10 the nation's biggest improvement in local/intercity rail passenger connections in many decades. Starting that day, the 6-branch, 75-station electrified commuter rail network formerly served out of Philadelphia's Reading Terminal was to become linked via the new center city tunnel to the Penn Center ("Suburban") and 30th Street Stations already served by the ex-Pennsylvania Railroad electric commuter trains, with Reading and Pennsy branches paired so that, for example, trains would run through between Lansdale/Doylestown and Paoli.

Since 30th Street is also the main station used by all Amtrak trains serving Philadelphia, this means a vast expansion in the number of Philadelphia-area points which Amtrak passengers can reach with one change of vehicle.

It also means a vast improvement in downtown distribution for Philadelphia's commuter rail passengers, all of whose trains now serve three major stations—Market East being the underground substitute for Reading Terminal. Finally, travel between "Pennsy" and "Reading" suburbs is much easier and, for many station pairs, involves through trains. *(continued on page 4)*

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Passengers planning to use Miami-Tampa "Silver Palm"—be advised: this train is subject to discontinuance Nov. 25 due to state funding problem. Please consult Amtrak.

New York City-Charlotte "Carolinian" began Oct. 28.

With permission of Santa Fe Railway, Amtrak has re-named Chicago-Los Angeles train "Southwest Chief."

Chicago-San Antonio "Eagle" now serves Arkadelphia, AR; San Diego Metroliner has added Oceanside, CA. Amtrak now serves Wellesley, MA, with Boston-Washington "Bay State."

With closing of World's Fair in New Orleans Nov. 11: "Crescent's" NY-NO slumbercoach will operate NY-Atlanta (rather than reverting to pre-fair Washington-Atlanta pattern), 11-bedroom sleeper has already returned to Auto Train; "City of New Orleans" gives its slumbercoach to NY-Florida "Silver Star," "River Cities" Kansas City-NO sleeper, over NARP's protests, may be withdrawn.

Stations custodialized: West Quincy, MO, on Aug. 31; Detroit Lakes, MN, on Oct. 28 (thus ending baggage service); Indio, CA, scheduled for Nov. 30. Staffing has been

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After hearing testimony from NARP President John R. Martin, Amtrak officials, and others, the Tennessee Legislature's Joint Subcommittee on Transportation decided Oct. 15 to ask Amtrak to indicate the cost of studying the feasibility of establishing a train route through Nashville. State Sen. Stephen I. Cohen, Subcommittee Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee, in an Oct. 23 letter to Amtrak President Clayton, indicated "the interest of the sub-committee is in the provision of Chicago to Florida service through Nashville and Atlanta," and suggested a Cincinnati-Savannah inspection train to be run via Louisville, Nashville, Chattanooga, and Atlanta.

In a separate letter to Clayton, Sen. Cohen, following up on Martin's suggestion of a service improvement that "could be implemented rather quickly," sought cost estimates for extending Amtrak's daytime Chicago-Carbondale "Shawnee" to Memphis, again using the Section 403(b) state/Amtrak cost-sharing provisions.

NARP Member and Tennessee President Sandra Pennington of Nashville worked almost unceasingly for more than three years to generate the interest in the legislature which led to this hearing. She has received strong support from a nucleus of NARP/TARP members.

The witness list included Mike Young, General Chairman, Amtrak Division, Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks; Roy M. Neel, Chief Legislative Assistant to Rep. Albert Gore, Jr. (D-TN); and representatives from Seaboard System Railroad and the Tennessee Departments of Tourist Development and of Transportation. Neel told NARP he was impressed by the level of enthusiasm he found among Sub-Committee members from both political parties.

Louisville and Nashville are the nation's 2nd and 3rd largest metro areas without rail passenger service (Columbus, OH is #1; Oklahoma City is #4), and Nashville is the nation's #1 tour-bus destination.

Amtrak ran a Chicago-Florida train, "The Floridian," through those two cities from Amtrak's birth on May 1, 1971, through September, 1979. Martin's statement outlined these reasons why a revived "Floridian" serving Chicago-Indianapolis-Louisville-Nashville-Chattanooga-Atlanta-Savannah-Florida would be far more economically viable than the former service:

- "Amtrak today is not the railroad it was in 1979. All of its equipment is either new in the last 8 years or totally rebuilt in that period . . . Dependability" has become "a positive feature of Amtrak," and "Amtrak has been accepted in the United States as a useful and attractive method of travel."

- "The growth of the population areas served as well as the

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RPI's 2nd Annual High-Speed Conference

Upbeat Talk, But No Groundbreaking in Sight

Much of the enthusiasm of last year's conference (NARP News, Oct.-Nov. '83), seemed to be back again at the Sep. 27 program, "Realities of High Speed Rail Today," notwithstanding the singular reality that no groundbreaking date has been set for any new projects yet. Railway Progress Institute, the association of railroad/rail transit suppliers, again sponsored the day-long conference, this year at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City Hotel in Arlington, Virginia.

A year ago, we reported that American High Speed Rail Corp. (AHSRC) "hopes to begin [LA-San Diego] construction in late '84 or early '85." Today, construction before 1986 seems unlikely. AHSRC is in the process of trying to raise \$50 million from private investors, an offering which began last summer. After they have done this, they plan to file with the California Public Utilities Commission a request for a certificate of public convenience and necessity. Such a request triggers a one-year process which must be completed before construction begins.

In Florida, the other state some believe most likely to have a groundbreaking, a new state law on high speed rail, heralded by Federal Railroad Administrator John Riley as "a model for cooperation between state and local governments and private enterprise," contains a franchising, planning, and environmental process estimated to result in the award of a franchise no sooner than mid-1989, groundbreaking in late '91, and revenue service in early '95.

RPI Chairman William Hansen (President, A. Stucki Company) noted in his opening remarks to the conference, "Now we've got to begin to move some earth, pour some concrete . . . and move some trains, all of which requires private capital."

Riley said straight private financing will work in some corridors while in others the challenge is to find the right mix of private, state, and local funding.

He explained one reason for his growing optimism about the ability of high-speed rail to attract private investors: "A few months ago," he asked a group of "sophisticated and fundamentally conservative investment advisors" if they thought that high-speed rail projects could compete with other investment opportunities. One-third said "yes," and two-thirds said "no" or "I don't know." But, said Riley, 2 years ago less than 5% would have said yes, and many of those who believed the affirmative answer would not have spoken for fear of being ridiculed.

Riley reaffirmed his view that his job is to be a "thought leader and an analyst," and that significant federal funding for high-speed rail is not in the cards. He noted that a \$175 billion federal deficit will face either Reagan or Mondale, and that new high-speed rail projects would have a very difficult time competing for federal funds with the "enormous needs to prevent deterioration of existing transportation systems," partly because most high-speed rail projects benefit only one state.

He also maintained that the "process of natural selection" which federal funds would thwart actually protects the movement by insuring that the most financially viable projects will progress first.

"We've been concerned," Riley said, "that ridership forecasts are like the testimony of expert witnesses . . . They're going to say what the promoters want them to say." Consequently, FRA hosted a day-long session on forecasting Sep. 20, and FRA and Northwestern University have launched an \$82,000 cooperative research program aimed at summarizing the state of the art in demand forecasting.

As it was last year, however, the bottom line for Riley is overwhelmingly positive on high-speed rail: "I'm convinced it's going to revolutionize our transportation system in our lifetime . . . Virtually all of the world's developed nations have developed or are developing high-speed rail . . . We each have an opportunity to be on the cutting edge of society . . . Nothing that truly changes society is achieved quickly or accomplished easily."

Similar optimism was expressed by the luncheon speaker, David B. Perini, Chairman, President, and Chief Executive Officer of the Perini Corporation, a huge Boston-based construction firm. Perini is part of the 3-way consortium that would build the AHSRC railroad, a project which Perini said his company feels is "necessary, feasible, and doable. Our preliminary estimates corroborated AHSRC's estimates . . . We feel it's absolutely necessary to alleviate congestion and air pollution . . . We all talk to businessmen who rant and rave about the intrusion of the federal government into business, but here's a golden opportunity for the private sector to take the leadership role in a major development for the country."

This past summer, President Reagan signed into law the federal legislation making the Midwest High Speed Rail Compact an official constitutional compact, which provides a basis for getting federal funds. Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania are part of the compact.

High-Speed Projects Roundup

(Our last update was in Oct.-Nov. 1983).

Michigan: To avoid the hostility which developed in California between on-line communities and rail promoters, The High Speed Rail Committee, consisting of business, labor, government, and citizen leaders along the Chicago-Detroit line, was formed last spring. The Committee will encourage the development of high-speed rail and serve as a clearinghouse to facilitate communication between on-line communities and the private rail promoters.

The Committee has already heard presentations from three private consortia, chaired by Bechtel (with British Rail as a subsidiary, contemplating 125 mph HST trains), Bombardier (Canada's LRC manufacturer), and the Swiss Rail Export Group (associated with a German manufacturer). There is a strong feeling among Committee members that a quantum leap over existing Amtrak service is needed in terms of efficiency, frequency, and speed, and some question whether diesel power, as envisioned by all three consortia, would do the job.

It's assumed, however, that the project will be done essentially with private funds and only indirect state support, and it's hoped that the trains would be running by 1992, the year of Chicago's World's Fair.

Michigan DOT has placed a contract with a private firm to recommend a timetable of accomplishment and how best to establish a public/private project. Illinois is going through a similar process.

Nevada: A consultant is now verifying Las Vegas-Los Angeles ridership estimates and it's hoped that contracts to study other aspects of the project—technical assessment, social/economic, financial planning, and environmental—will be under way early

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STATEMENT OF OVERSIGHT, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION		DATE	
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12	12. PROJECT REVIEW		
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28	28. PROJECT ALLIANCE		
29	29. PROJECT UNION		
30	30. PROJECT INTEGRATION		
31	31. PROJECT SYNERGY		
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NARP Board On: Salt Lake City; New England Checked Baggage; On-Board Noise Pollution; New By-Laws Governing NARP Elections

Resolutions: At its Oct. 5-6 meeting in Kansas City, the NARP Board of Directors reaffirmed support for keeping Amtrak's Salt Lake City passenger facilities at the Union Pacific station. The resolution included this language directed at Union Pacific:

"WHEREAS some Amtrak trains waste time at Salt Lake City because of a U.P. policy requiring a switcher on the rear of any occupied passenger train backing up; and

"WHEREAS occupied Amtrak trains on other railroads back up safely every day,

"THEREFORE be it resolved that the NARP Board urges Union Pacific to permit occupied Amtrak trains to back up without having a switcher on the rear."



Since this photo was improperly cropped on last month's front page, perhaps leaving some people with the impression that the difference between the Union Pacific and Rio Grande station locations is not as great as it is, we reprint the photo here. The stations may be within half a mile of each other, as Amtrak has noted, but the U.P. location is adjacent to the city's largest development while the Rio Grande location is in quite a different setting, a warehouse area.

Another Board resolution urged Amtrak, "so long as it offers only one Boston-New York-Washington baggage car, to run that car on daytime trains, preferably" the 8:50 AM from Boston and the 10:30 AM from Washington, to insure that the largest number of passengers—including those connecting with "Silver Meteor," "Crescent," and the westbound "Broadway Ltd."—would travel on the same train as their checked baggage and thus be spared from making extra trip(s) to the station(s).

(The new timetable shows the "Night Owl" as the only Boston-New York train with checked baggage service. Since this train serves New York around 3 AM, the practical effect is the elimination of Boston-New York checked baggage service. Even in the previous timetable, due to mail contract requirements, the only eastbound daytime car on the run left Washington at 6:30 AM, missing all long-distance connections and not well-timed for intra-corridor travel either.)

Finally, the NARP Board resolved to "request that Amtrak ban the playing of radios, tape players, and similar devices on trains unless the devices are operated so as to be inaudible to other passengers, whether or not earphones are used."

By-Laws: As anticipated (June News), the Board approved a new method of electing Regional Directors. Under the new procedure, the NARP office will send to each member a ballot including candidates' resumes, except that, "if each elected director in a region agrees, the Executive Director, at the request of said directors, may authorize (them) to mail the ballot and resumes for their region only."

To simplify mechanics of the mailing from the NARP office, the office will send a single bulletin listing all candidates nationwide (organized by region, of course, and excluding those from any region whose directors opt for a separate mailing). This will enable you to learn about all or most potential Regional Directors, but will also require you to be careful to vote for candidates from your region.

Ballots are to be mailed back to the NARP office and received

HOW TO BECOME A NARP DIRECTOR

In accordance with by-laws changes approved by the NARP Board Oct. 6, anyone wishing to run for the position of Regional Director must "send his name, address, telephone number and a resume of not more than 100 words to the NARP office." This year, the material must be received on or before Dec. 26. Send it to: NARP, 417 New Jersey Ave., SE, Washington, D.C. 20003.

there by the Monday before your region's annual meeting, or you may bring your ballot with you to that meeting.

At each regional meeting, "a committee of non-candidates will be selected to open and tabulate the ballots on the spot in the presence of any NARP members who wish to observe. The committee shall disallow any ballot cast by a person known not to be a member of the Association, any ballot on which the designation of candidates voted for is not clear, and any ballot on which the total number of votes exceeds the maximum allowed. The number of votes received by each candidate will be announced immediately . . . Ballots received after the regional meeting will not be considered. The Chairman of the meeting shall certify the election results, and the total number of ballots counted and disallowed, to the national office." (Quotations are from the actual by-laws.)

RPI's Conference (continued from page 2)

in 1985. The process is now managed by the Las Vegas city manager.

New York/Vermont: A Sep. 19 release from NY DOT, datelined Albany/Montpelier/Montreal, said "preliminary findings of technical staff and consultants to an international study group reveal that a Very High Speed Rail (VHSR) system linking New York and Montreal [via Albany and Burlington] could generate enough revenue to cover its operating and maintenance costs. The findings also show that by the year 2000, the service could carry an estimated 3.5 million passengers annually."

John K. Lussi, Director of NY DOT's Rail Planning Bureau, told the RPI conference that the bulk of the ridership is New York-Albany. He said they hope to do a full feasibility study of the project in early 1985.

New Mexico: The state has awarded a \$157,000 feasibility study contract to Wilbur Smith & Associates for examining ridership potential and economic feasibility and developing an operating and financial plan for Santa Fe-Albuquerque service. The likely alignment would include the ATSF mainline from Albuquerque to a point 45 miles north, construction of 18 miles of new right-of-way, and use of about 2 miles of ATSF's Lamy-Santa Fe branch to access downtown Santa Fe. The study, due to be completed in Feb. '85, will also consider the joint development potential of land surrounding station sites in Albuquerque and Santa Fe, and access directly into Albuquerque International Airport.

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TRAVELERS' ADVISORY (continued from page 1)

increased at Hastings, NE, to permit coverage of all trains and resumption of baggage service (on trial basis).

Amtrak now offers all-reserved shuttle van for passengers connecting between New York's Penn Station and Grand Central Terminal; consult Empire Service timetable for departure times (5 daily round-trips). Under ideal conditions, taxi can be quicker. On an August Monday at around 7 PM, your editor found a cab without a wait and was in GCT concourse 15 minutes after his arriving train had pulled to a stop at Penn—and he did not do any running!

Have a layover between trains in Chicago? Amtrak and Gray Line are offering 3-hour sightseeing tour, with 1:15 PM pick-up and 4:15 PM drop-off at Union Station. Tour includes Univ. of Chicago, Museum of Science & Industry, Water Tower, and swank Michigan Avenue. Cost: \$13.50 adult, \$6.50 children (5-11); ticketing available through Amtrak.

Chicago-Atlanta-Florida Support *(con. from page 1)*

addition of Atlanta . . . would enhance the train's ridership. The train could once again serve Indianapolis . . ."

● "The former Louisville and Nashville track, now part of the Seaboard System, is now in excellent condition in those segments over which the train would operate. Indeed, Seaboard operates a piggyback train from Chicago to Jacksonville in an advertised time of 29 hours. There seems to be no reason that a passenger train could not be operated at least as fast and perhaps slightly faster."

Martin noted that the old "Floridian" had been slowed on the Chicago-Jacksonville segment from 25:10 on May 1, 1971, to 30:55 in the final 1979 timetable; that there were 7 major changes (i.e. 10 hours or more) in the schedules during that 8½-year period; and that the old train never served Atlanta and did not serve Indianapolis after late 1975. ■

WORDS FROM AN OLD FRIEND

"Congressman Gore and his family and I were on that last trip [of the "Floridian" in 1979]. It was a celebration in that the occasion brought together hundreds of middle Tennesseans who had worked so hard to save the train. But it was also a disheartening experience, marking the end of an era of passenger rail service through middle Tennessee, service which had been in existence in some form for more than a century. The demise of the 'Floridian' seemed to us an unnecessary, unfair example of short-sighted damage to a national rail network with so much potential for not only Tennessee but the entire country.

"While the 'Floridian' was gone, the enthusiasm and belief in the role of passenger trains for Tennessee was by no means dead. If my memory serves me correctly, the Tennessee Association of Railroad Passengers (TARP) was born during that last run of the 'Floridian.' Dedicated folks such as Sandra Pennington, Bob Thurmond and John Kennedy of Nashville, Ned Williams of Sevierville, Bill Strong in Memphis, and many others have molded TARP into a vital force for restoring passenger rail service in middle Tennessee . . .

"Ideally, Amtrak should add new service through middle Tennessee as part of its system. We remain convinced that a train with good service and equipment, along the Nashville, Chattanooga, Atlanta, Florida corridor would be a strong addition to the national system.

"However, we must face current facts: budget considerations, and the unwillingness of Amtrak to embrace this route as a necessary part of its permanent system make restoration of service by Amtrak alone extremely unlikely in the near future.

"On the other hand, new service through the so-called '403-B' program is a real possibility. As you know, the 403-B program requires participating states to provide substantial funds for start up and operating costs for these trains . . . Starting service through the 403-B program is a good way to show Amtrak that a train would be a sound, economical addition to the permanent national network."

—Roy M. Neel, Chief Legislative Asst. to Rep. Albert Gore Jr. (D-TN), in Oct. 15 testimony before the Joint Sub-Committee on Transportation of the Tennessee Legislature

RPI's Conference *(continued from page 3)*

The state contemplates the use of off-the-shelf self-propelled electric rail cars, top speeds of between 90 to 100 mph, express travel times under 50 minutes, local service to intermediate points, and Albuquerque-area commuter service all on the same line.

Pennsylvania: Completion date for the big "18-month" Phila.-Harrisburg-Pittsburgh study has been pushed back to the end of 1986, when the state's High Speed Intercity Rail Passenger Commission will cease to exist unless the legislature authorizes an

Illinois Rail meets at Chicago's Midland Hotel Sat., Dec. 1, 9:30-3:30. Chris Napton of the Commuter Rail Service Board, and NARP Pres. John Martin and Exec. Dir. Ross Capon will speak. French TGV film. \$18 includes lunch. To reserve, call Al Broom a.s.a.p. (h) 217/344-3017, (o) 344-1600.

extension. Study phase one, a general overview, is expected at the end of Dec. '84. By Mar., the commissioners likely will direct the consultants to begin detailed study of a specific technology, route, institutional form, and financing instrument. Phase III, engineering and design, would be done in 1986.

Texas: Although the Texas Railroad Transportation Company is apparently no longer active, The TGV Company, promoting French technology in the U.S., is still very interested in a Texas Triangle project and is studying route alternatives, financial prospects, and possible sources of management for such a project. ■

Philadelphia Tunnel *(con. from page 1)*

Market East, incidentally, is much more than a train station: it is a 250-store, 5-story, enclosed shopping mall developed by The Rouse Company. The entire station concourse is part of the mall and has complete climate control.

Historic Reading Terminal, opened by the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad on January 29, 1893, almost 92 years ago, will live on. "Its 8-story head house will be converted into modern offices and the massive clear-span trainshed will be incorporated into a proposed \$400-million convention Center." (*Cinders*, Oct. '84, pub'd by Phila. Chapter, National Rwy. Historical Society, Inc.). There will be direct access between the facilities housed in Reading Terminal and the Market East station.

The service improvements associated with the new tunnel are expected to help continue the revival of the Philadelphia area's commuter rail service. After handling over 120,000 weekday trips in 1979, ridership declined to about 92,000 in 1982, partly as a result of the discontinuance of longer-distance diesel-powered services (*NARP News*, July '82). After a 3½-month strike that ended in early July, 1983, ridership resumed at the low level of 46,000, then climbed to about 72,000 and remained there for several months.

Ridership responded to Sep. 1, 1984 fare improvements and reached 80,000 in October. The improvements included introduction of weekly passes priced below the old 10-ride tickets, and a reduction in the cost of monthly passes, both honored on other transit services in the same fare zone(s). Future ridership growth will be stimulated as well by restoration next year of services cut last summer due to a shortage of engineers. New SEPTA engineer classes will graduate in the spring. ■

369 Crossing-free Miles

History was made Oct. 19 when Amtrak closed the last two grade crossings on the Washington-New Haven segment of its Northeast Corridor (NEC). The crossings, both located near Bowie, MD, were replaced by a single roadway overpass, thus permitting Amtrak to raise maximum train speed at that location from 80 to 120 mph.

As a result, it is now possible to travel by train all the way from Woodbridge, VA, south of Alexandria, to Waterford, CT, near New London—a distance of 369 miles—without encountering a public grade crossing!

Elimination of all grade crossings on the NEC was one of the original goals of the Northeast Corridor Improvement Project (NECIP), which was authorized by the Railroad Revitalization and Regulatory Reform Act of 1976. Prior to NECIP, there were 49 public crossings; 33 have since been closed, with the remaining crossings confined to Rhode Island and easternmost Connecticut. Some New London crossings, located in slow-train-speed territory, will remain per actions of Congress, but the rest remain due to depleted NECIP funds. Rhode Island is considering other sources of funds to eliminate its remaining crossings. ■