



News from the  
**National Association of  
Railroad Passengers**

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## Welcome Capital Corridor!



—MTDB photo

San Diego Trolley Maintenance Facility near the Imperial & 12th stop and some of its LRV fleet.

### San Diego LRT Turns 10

The first all-new light rail system built in the U.S. in decades observed its 10th anniversary July 26. A success from the start, the San Diego Trolley began a boom in interest in light rail that spread new systems to Buffalo ('85), Portland, OR ('86), Sacramento ('87), San Jose ('87) and Los Angeles ('90). New systems are under construction in Baltimore ('92), St. Louis ('93) and Dallas ('96).

The Metropolitan Transit Development Board was formed by state legislation in 1975; a subsidiary, San Diego Trolley, Inc., was formed in 1980 to operate the new system.

San Diego's first line, the 15.9-mi. South Line from the Amtrak/Santa Fe station downtown to the Mexican border, opened July 26, 1981. In 1986, 4.5 mi. of the East Line from downtown to Euclid opened; the other 11.1 mi. of the East Line to El Cajon opened in 1989. The 1.5-mi. East Line exten-

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This fall the California Dept. of Transportation (Caltrans) is expected to ask the California Transportation Commission for \$3 mill. in additional train operating expenses (previously approved by Gov. Pete Wilson, R, and the State Legislature in the 1991-92 state budget) to allow start-up of three Amtrak 403b daily round trips between San Jose, Oakland and Sacramento, with at least one extending to Roseville. That would provide the first local corridor-oriented service between the Bay Area and the state capital in nearly 30 years. The new service would begin sometime in November.

Amtrak and Caltrans have a tentative agreement to operate the service. A final agreement with Southern Pacific (SP), the line's owner, is expected in early Sept. Negotiations with SP have been difficult since SP wants to sell as many of its lines as possible to public agencies rather than accept a capital upgrade program.

This new 129-mile Capital Corridor would be the third major Amtrak corridor in California, after the successful "San Diegan" and "San Joaquin" routes. Morning, mid-day and evening departures are contemplated from both ends of the corridor. Dedicated buses would bring capital-bound passengers from San Francisco to Oakland to meet all trains, and BART connections are already available at Richmond. Other buses are proposed for several places which now have "San Joaquin" feeder buses, and new cities such as Monterey and Reno. All stops presently made by long-distance trains would be made, with more to be considered later.

Amtrak would provide one locomotive for the new service and sufficient Horizon coaches and food service cars. Caltrans would supply other locomotives from the San Jose-San Francisco commuter service; SP now ferries them to Roseville for maintenance. Caltrans also would provide money to repair damaged Amfleet cars to displace the Horizon cars. On-board telephones and "San Joaquin"-style "full meal" food service are planned.

This would be the first step in implementing recommendations in a study mandated by the State Legislature and

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## Consumer Corner #3

● Albany NARP member Dick Silber wrote the Empire State Passengers Assn. and a Lansdale, PA man wrote Amtrak Customer Relations about related incidents at Croton-Harmon, NY (copies of both letters came to NARP). They said Metro North agents at Croton, who also handle Amtrak ticketing, refused to sell tickets for reserved "Empire" trains unless a passenger had first gotten a reservation and reservation number by telephoning Amtrak. These passengers risked missing their trains (which had lots of empty seats) to find a pay phone and do the agents' job for them.

NARP told Amtrak headquarters of the problem and, on Aug. 15, Passenger Services VP Eugene N. Eden told NARP Amtrak was sending a lead clerk to Croton to retrain the agents. (Amtrak pays Metro North to sell Amtrak tickets at Croton and expects the job to be done right!)

● Owensboro, KY NARP member Steve Rocco wrote about a problem with boarding passengers at St. Louis. He and his wife were waiting for the southbound "Eagle," which arrived 90 minutes late at 1:15 AM due to "track work and track conditions" (as it was explained to us later in the day by on-board crew) in Illinois." Upon the train's arrival, passengers waited outside for another 45 minutes while two coaches were cut out of the train, the locomotives re-coupled and power restored. "I really felt sorry for a woman with a screaming baby. By this time, some were already proclaiming they would never ride a train again."

Amtrak's Eden has since told NARP that St. Louis personnel are now instructed—when "Eagle" is very late—to let passengers board *before* the "cut-off" (Chicago-St. Louis) coaches are removed. ■

### TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

**Amtrak has informed officials at Winnemucca, NV, Benson, AZ and Lordsburg, NM that their train service is threatened by lack of passenger facilities and low boardings. All three communities have shown interest in building platforms, the minimum Amtrak has required to keep them in the Apr. '92 timetable.**

**Total Chicago-Milwaukee round trips/week (including the "Empire Builder") will be increased from 44 to 55 (i.e., eight/day, except seven on Sunday), Oct. 27.**

**A new state-funded Amtrak station opened at Ticonderoga, NY Aug. 13, replacing an older shelter locally known as the "fishing shanty." It is on Rte. 74, closer to the Vermont ferry and Ft. Ticonderoga than before.**

**Long Island RR placed its first bi-level commuter coaches since 1972 into service Aug. 19 Hunterspoint Ave.-Jamaica (both in Queens)-Port Jefferson. The cars fit into the East River Tunnels and will be used in direct service to Penn Sta. in Manhattan once rebuilt FL-9 locomotives are available, perhaps next spring.**

**Because of the long scheduled layover of the east-bound "Pioneer" at Denver (3 hr., 40 min.), Amtrak had been offering Grey Line dinner tours to first-class passengers and selling them to coach passengers. However, the package was dropped Sep. 2 because the "Pioneer" was rarely into Denver in time to make the tour this summer. On days it is on time, the diner will stay open at Denver station. Amtrak may revive the package if the train becomes more reliable.**

## Twin Cities High Speed Study: Rail Option Viable

*"The 125 mph option offers the best financial return, the least environmental costs, and the highest economic benefits per dollar invested, which would be relevant to a public sector capital-constrained investment program."*

—"Tri-State High Speed Study: Chicago-Milwaukee-Twin Cities Corridor," released May 30

Most NARP members will applaud this and other conclusions in the study sponsored by the Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota DOTs. Wisconsin Association of Railroad Passengers (WisARP) called the study "the most positive activity for rail service in the midwest in recent years."

The study's endorsement of much-improved *track* on Amtrak's current Chicago-Twin Cities route is all the more remarkable because Minnesota DOT originally had called for a look at magnetic levitation only. But Wisconsin DOT, with WisARP's encouragement, successfully pushed for the study's consideration of two routes and three technologies (rail at 125 and 185 mph; maglev estimated at 300 mph) and for the involvement of Illinois DOT.

### TWIN CITIES HIGH SPEED OPTIONS

	Amtrak Today*	Amtrak Upgrade	TGV	Maglev
Top speed (mph)	80	125	185	300 projected
Travel time	8:30	4:20	3:15	2:15
Frequency (daily round trips)	1	12	18	24
Ridership (mill., year 2000)	—	5.8	7.5	8.5
Capital cost (mill.)	\$0	\$940.0	\$3,002.0	\$5,450.0
Annual operating cost (mill., 1989 \$)	—	\$ 90.9	\$ 101.3	\$ 123.3
Annual revenue (mill., 1989 \$)	—	\$226.6	\$ 336.1	\$ 409.3

\*not in study, shown for comparison

The recommendation of rail looks even smarter now. The study did not evaluate the new Swedish "active tilt" technology (X2000, see Aug. News) but recommends this be part of "a full-scale technology appraisal. . . . It seems probable that the 'tilt' technology could produce financial returns equal to that of the 125 mph option, with nearly the same economic benefits as the 185 mph option. . . . A 'tilt' technology option might well become a preferred alternative of any future feasibility study."

As for where to run, a northerly route through the Fox Valley and central Wisconsin was found to be less cost-effective than one going through or near Madison, La Crosse and Rochester. Amtrak's "Empire Builder" follows the latter path—serving Columbus instead of Madison; Winona and Red Wing instead of Rochester. Amtrak covers the 418 miles in about 8½ hours; top speed: 80 mph.

Capital costs for all three options may require revision. The study says the rail options have been implemented elsewhere so cost estimates should be good, but the study assumes improvement rather than elimination of some grade crossings—impractical unless crossings are negotiated at restricted



speeds. All maglev figures are hypothetical because the technology has not yet been applied anywhere.

As a next step, the three states will conduct a more detailed feasibility study of the three options. Wisconsin and Illinois will also look into nearer-term improvements to Milwaukee-Chicago service. Indeed, service will increase Oct. 27 (see Travelers' Advisory).

For a copy of the report, write John Hartz; Div. of Planning & Budget; Wisconsin DOT; P.O. Box 7913; Madison, WI 53707. ■

### Capital Corridor (from page 1)

released by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission in 1989 to increase rail service between San Jose and Auburn. The study favored gradual improvements to the route, including six corridor round trips by mid-decade and 10 by the year 2000. Ultimate goal: 24 daily round trips on an electrified, 125-mph line.

The study legislation was sponsored by Assemblyman Tom Hannigan of Fairfield. He became interested in the rail corridor several years ago after reading a *Sacramento Bee* account of a Train Riders' Assn. of California meeting, during which a slide show on the corridor was shown.

Caltrans also has plans for service between Sacramento and the San Joaquin Valley. On June 20 the Transportation Commission approved \$838,000 for a track connection in Stockton allowing "San Joaquin" trains access to SP's line to Sacramento. More money will follow for signal and track work and an interim station in Stockton.

#### Funding

The money for rail improvements on the Capital Corridor, the "San Joaquin" route and other lines comes from the \$3 bill. in rail bonds approved by California voters in Propositions 108 and 116 (June '90 News). That funding was in trouble this year, however, when Gov. Wilson released a 1991-92 budget providing for sale of only \$585 mill. in bonds. Although interest on general obligation bonds is generally paid from the general fund, Wilson proposed using existing transit funds instead.

However, on June 11 the Legislature's Budget Conference Committee decided to transfer money from the State Highway Account to the general fund as a loan to service rail bond debt, and that \$1.3 bill. in rail bonds should be sold in 1992. Wilson vetoed the highway fund transfer, but agreed to pay for the rail bonds from the general fund at the \$1.3 bill. level. That also means the transit money Wilson had originally earmarked for debt service can go instead to actual transit projects. ■

### Trolley (from page 1)

sion to Bayside opened in 1990. Thirty-nine more miles of routes are planned. The fleet consists of 71 Siemens/Duewag U2 light rail vehicles; 75 more are on order, to be built at a new Duewag plant in Sacramento which opened this month.

An innovative European-style honor system of fare collection was implemented. Self-serve ticket machines are located at all stops, and tickets are checked at random aboard the cars. San Diego Trolley's compliance rate has been consistently estimated at 99%.

The current rail average weekday ridership is 60,000—up from 42,000 in 1989—and last year 15.5 mill. people were carried. Farebox cost recovery in 1990 was 93.2%—very high for any type of transit system and over twice the rate of San Diego buses. In 1990, the trolley's on time performance was 99%! ■

### NEW RIVER IMPROVEMENT



—Photo by Barry Williams

The National Park Service and CSX Transportation are close to completing the sale of the Thurmond, WV station used by Amtrak's "Cardinal." That's good news for passengers using Thurmond to reach the scenic New River Gorge. The unpainted, wood-frame building has deteriorated greatly since this 1984 photo was made. The waiting room is boarded up and CSX uses an adjacent trailer.

The Park Service is spending \$23 million to buy several buildings in Thurmond to develop the town as a gateway to the New River and as a historical tourist site, with emphasis on its railroad past. The former Chesapeake & Ohio station, over 100 years old, is part of that project and will be restored to its early 1900's condition. The waiting room is to be renovated and reopened to Amtrak passengers.

## NARP to Sue on Boston Rail Link

The NARP executive committee voted 9-1 Sept. 9 to bring an action in the U.S. District Court in Massachusetts because of the failure by state and federal officials to observe or enforce federal laws requiring inclusion of a North Station-South Station railroad link in Boston's Central Artery Project or at least more serious consideration of the link. NARP filed notice in May of our intent to institute such a suit.

Your letters to legislators have helped. Responding to your efforts, Massachusetts Asst. Sec. of Transportation and Development Stanley H. Durlacher wrote to some legislators in July saying the state "fully supports the concept of a . . . railroad link and is committed to beginning the process of investigating its feasibility." Since he rejects including the link in the Central Artery, however, he means a separate all-rail tunnel in "the Congress St. Corridor" (Apr. News, p. 2 map) which is unlikely to be funded this century.

Due to key unresolved issues with the House highway/transit reauthorization, there is still time to write. The new England Sierra Club wrote in early Sept. to the House and Senate committees, supporting the rail link. The Club has made extending Amtrak to New Hampshire and Maine a priority for 1991-92.

Special contributions are welcome—to "NARP", with "Boston Legal Fund" on the memo line. For a copy of Durlacher's letter, send NARP \$2 and an s.a.s.e. ■



## “So This is Marshall”

Thus was titled a column on the deplorable state of the ex-Texas & Pacific depot which appeared in the Marshall, TX *News Messenger* of Feb. 24, 1982. Formerly a busy hub for passenger trains of Missouri Pacific Lines' vast regional network, the once-elegant 1912 depot now only serves Amtrak's "Texas Eagle." But no one may enter. Its first floor entrances are boarded up; upper story windows are jagged with broken glass.

Nevertheless, local citizens, heartened by other depot efforts in faraway places like Kissimmee, Wisconsin Dells and Olympia, formed a group, Marshall Depot, Inc., to take over the building and restore it. Progress is already being made. The city arranged a lease with the owner, Union Pacific, last Nov. 13 and has since agreed to cover insurance costs. An official Texas Historical Marker was installed on the depot Apr. 13. A fence has been erected around the building and \$20,000 raised to replace the roof (work to begin soon). Marshall Depot, Inc. and Amtrak officials met Apr. 16 to discuss Amtrak leasing space for a waiting room and agent. Marshall presently has no Amtrak agent (Longview has, 27 miles west), but combination of a safe, clean waiting room, Amtrak agent and checked baggage service would go a long way to tap the Shreveport market, 43 miles east. A museum is planned for the rest of the building.

Much work lies ahead; if you want to help Marshall Depot, Inc., write them at P.O. Box 520; Marshall, TX 75671. ■



—Photo by Hugh D. Hall

Marshall, TX depot site before renovation effort. Amtrak's "Texas Eagle" stops on track on other side of building.

## Transit Backers Flex Muscles: Victory in PA, Plans for Others

Thanks largely to good organizing by transit interests in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, public transportation in Pennsylvania for the first time has a dedicated capital funding source, under a law signed Aug. 6 by Gov. Robert P. Casey (D) as part of the state's 1992 budget. The American Public Transit Assn. (APTA) is organizing to develop similar coalitions in cities across the nation, using Philadelphia as an example.

Under the new Pennsylvania law, the state's 38 transit agencies will divide about \$200 mill. from a new Public Transportation Assistance Fund drawn from various sales tax increases on tires, magazines, car rentals and other items.

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority will get about \$140 mill.—money badly needed to restore deteriorating rail lines. Port Authority of Allegheny County of Pittsburgh will get about \$46 mill., much of which will go to more busways.

Casey also approved \$240 mill. in general fund operating support, up \$6 mill. from 1991.

Keystone ARP (KARP) officials were among 1000 participants in a June 18 "lobby day" in Harrisburg sponsored by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Area Coalition for Transportation (ACT) and the Southwestern Pennsylvania Transit Coalition to rally for the dedicated funding. KARP Exec. Dir. and NARP Dir. Larry Joyce of Enola, PA said KARP welcomes the dedicated funding but considers it a "stopgap measure." Karp prefers a funding source related to transportation, such as the state gasoline tax, but the state constitution forbids spending gas tax revenue on non-highway programs.

ACT was organized largely at the initiative of SEPTA General Manager Louis J. Gambaccini and includes a broad array of community activists and corporate leaders united in support of adequate funding for public transportation in the Philadelphia area. Gambaccini chairs APTA's Committee on Advocacy and Coalition Building.

Organizing efforts already are underway in many other cities; for information on how you can help, contact your local transit authority or Peggy Glenn at APTA, 1201 New York Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20005 or 202/898-4106. You also may ask Ms. Glenn for APTA's new Local Organizing Kit. ■



—Photo by Hugh D. Hall

Large plywood sign in a Marshall storefront window advertising depot effort.

### NARP EQUIPMENT COMMITTEE

The NARP Board of Directors created an Equipment Committee to collect suggestions Amtrak should consider seriously as it designs new rolling stock. Send your ideas for new Viewliners (single-level long-distance cars) to the committee chairman, John H. Kirkwood, at Rail Ventures Inc., 650 4th St., Oakland, CA 94607.

The committee has already submitted suggestions on the forthcoming Superliner order but is still interested in receiving Superliner comments as well—both for the new cars and because the committee will be encouraging Amtrak to retrofit certain new features into existing Superliners.

Send NARP a s.a.s.e. and \$1 for a copy of the committee's earlier "Superliner" letter to Amtrak; notes published elsewhere were not based on the final version.