



Equip Trains for Growth, NARP Tells Congress

"Our key requests for intercity passenger trains for FY 2011 are Amtrak's [full] budget request; \$4 billion in capital grants for states, with an appropriate portion designated for rolling stock acquisition; funding needed to restore service..."

This is from a statement (www.bit.ly/2011funds) that NARP Pres. Ross Capon filed March 22 with the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies.

Amtrak's request is \$2.6 billion, including \$446 million for fleet (Mar. News). Pres. Boardman added the \$446 million



to Amtrak's request in a Mar. 22 letter to Capitol Hill (www.bit.ly/equipreq). NARP's statement highlighted that figure.

Noting that the fleet strategy assumes annual ridership growth of only 2%, NARP said, "We think that is too conservative, given the need to increase capacity on existing routes and to add routes, but we appreciate Amtrak's emphasis on their plan's 'scalability,' that is, the fact that car acquisitions can be increased if the market calls for it and funding is available."

The lines NARP advocated restoring are New Orleans-Florida (dropped in

2005), Salt Lake City-Portland OR (1997) and Chicago-Pacific Northwest via southern North Dakota and southern Montana (1979). Amtrak's reauthorization law mandates consideration of all three.

NARP's statement began by thanking Chair John Olver (D-MA) for "the positive role that you and your subcommittee have played in providing significantly increased funding for intercity passenger trains. In the 2010 appropriations process, we particularly appreciate your leadership in getting the House to pass \$4 billion for capital grants to states, and in securing enactment of \$2.5 billion."

NARP emphasized the importance of passenger trains for mobility and quality

(continued on p. 2)

Mostly Upbeat Report on Overnight Trains

Amtrak Product Development Chief Brian Rosenwald discussed potential improvements to the company's overnight trains at a Mar. 20 NARP membership meeting at Washington Union Station.

• Amtrak's executive committee and

board of directors unanimously approved the plan for **daily service along the Los Angeles-New Orleans line** which now runs tri-weekly. Amtrak is negotiating with Union Pacific, which owns the tracks. Service could begin as early as the October

timetable change. San Antonio dwell time should be cut to 75-90 minutes. As we reported last June, a full-service Los Angeles-Chicago train would connect in San Antonio with a coach-and-lounge train serving New Orleans, Houston and intermediate points.

• As required by law, Amtrak is doing performance improvement plans for five long-distance

trains a year. This year's focus is on *California Zephyr*, *Capitol Ltd.*, *Cardinal*, *Sunset Ltd.* and *Texas Eagle*.



Amtrak's Brian Rosenwald

Photo by Ross Capon

• The knowledge and ideas of front-line employees are being incorporated into route evaluations.

• Rosenwald said Amtrak is **considering restoring the *Desert Wind***, which—until 1997—linked Los Angeles and Las Vegas NV with the *Zephyr*

at Salt Lake City; the *Zephyr* carried Chicago-Denver-Los Angeles through-cars.

• **For the *Cardinal*, Amtrak is looking at daily service.** Among other changes under consideration are restoring Superliners (thereby ending through service to/from New York-Baltimore points), adding a dome car to the existing train

(continued on p. 2)



Record flooding in Rhode Island forced the closure of the Northeast Corridor between New Haven and Boston between April 1st and 4th (see photo on p. 3). *Acela* service over this segment was terminated. To serve Boston, Amtrak to its credit ran three *Northeast Regional* round-trips on the Inland Route (Worcester-Springfield-Hartford). Here, *Regional* 1163 heads west through Spencer, Mass., west of Worcester, on Apr. 4. Regular service resumed that evening. Photo by Jeff Turner

'Highway' Funds Going to Trains : More Needed

A provision of the Recovery Act that represents a key step forward gives state depts. of transportation discretion to use some of its \$27.5 billion in "highway" funds for freight and passenger railroad projects.

Ten states have taken advantage so far, making additional railroad infrastructure investments. Texas at \$2.25 billion has spent the most, followed by Pennsylvania (\$1.03 billion) and Ohio (\$936 million). Also:

Kansas awarded \$348 million for new sidings and bridges on various short lines.

Ohio spent \$20 million to raise tunnel clearances on a portion of CSX's National Gateway line (Youngstown-Akron-Fostoria); \$26.3 million to relocate Norfolk Southern lines in Mahoning, \$7.7

million to upgrade two 100+ year old bridges and the Gould Tunnel on Ohio-owned part of the Panhandle (Columbus-Pittsburgh) Line.

Oregon invested \$6.9 million to improve passenger speeds & reduce freight interference at North Portland Jct., \$2.5 million to repair unsafe rail tunnels in Coos, Lane and Douglas counties.

Pennsylvania: relocate, retrofit a rail bridge between Pittsburgh and Millvale.

Texas spent \$14.1 million to restore, upgrade a rail line at San Angelo Jct., \$1.2 million to reduce crossing delays in El Paso

Washington will improve freight rail access to the Port of Vancouver.

Thank your governor for using this flexibility, if he or she did. If not, urge the governor to do so next time. ■

Cross-Subsidy to Roads Continues

President Obama on March 18 signed H.R. 2847 (the "HIRE Act"), making it Public Law 111-147. It transferred \$19.5 billion of general funds to the Highway Trust Fund (HTF).

Like similar previous transfers (\$8 billion in 2008, \$7 billion in 2009), these general funds—paid in part by private railroads—can only be spent on the same purposes as gasoline-tax revenues.

NARP and the OneRail Coalition have urged that states be able to invest HTF funds in railroad projects—passenger and freight—to the extent that the money came from general funds. ■

Overnight

from page 1

for scenic views (especially of the New River Gorge), and sending the train to St. Louis instead of Chicago. Rosenwald called tri-weekly service "terrible."

- Regional food selections are being developed for many trains.

- The 'diner-lite' cars—modified Amfleet lounges used for months to provide meal service on the *Lake Shore Ltd.*—now are in more appropriate use as café cars. Rosenwald said using these cars for full meal service had been "unfair" to employees and riders. Regular dining cars were restored to the *Lake Shore* Dec. 14, 2009.

- The *Coast Starlight's* Pacific Parlour cars have been redesigned. They offer an alternative meal service for sleeping car passengers. China is back—and under consideration for other routes to

reduce waste and improve customer satisfaction.

- The state of Arizona has expressed strong interest in returning the *Sunset* to downtown Phoenix, or at least establishing a reliable bus connection at Maricopa.

- For the *Capitol Limited*, an earlier Chicago departure is under consideration. This presumably would break connections with important trains from the West.

Addressing reports that the *Southwest Chief* might be rerouted off the current Newton-Albuquerque route through western Kansas and southeastern Colorado because freight traffic there is light, Rosenwald said Amtrak would rather stay where it is, though 79 mph running is problematic. Amtrak is discussing this with BNSF Railway. ■

Equip for Growth

from page 1

of life for older people who are less able to drive safely, and said people in their teens and twenties are "greatly attracted to a less car-dependent lifestyle."

"Amtrak gained riders for six straight years—from 2002 to 2008...While Amtrak and transit ridership fell in 2009, due in part to the recession and lower gasoline prices, [Amtrak]...still was 5% above the 2007 level...This all suggests that many people did not return to their pre-2008 driving habits, and that more people are looking at total driving costs..."

[In the first half of FY 2010, October-March, Amtrak ridership was up 4.3% from the year-earlier period; long-distance trains were up 5.2%.]

NARP cited a February poll by Kelton Research for HNTB Corp. showing 88% are "open to high-speed rail for long-distance travel." The poll cited 83% support for increasing the share of federal funding that goes to public transit and high-speed rail infrastructure. ■

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IN MEMORIAM

Murrell Hogue Jr.



Murrell Hogue Jr., 70, longtime NARP member, passenger train activist and former Texarkana Amtrak agent died Feb. 3 in Commerce, TX.

NARP Board Member Bill Pollard of Arkansas said Murrell's "opinionated support for passenger rail, and his encyclopedic knowledge of railroad history will be missed."

At the Feb. 6 memorial service, people were invited to honor Murrell by making a gift to NARP in his memory.

Amtrak's Chicago 'Town Hall': Encouraging Words

President & CEO Joseph Boardman requested, and *TRAINS* Magazine hosted, a 'town hall' forum on the present and future of the passenger railroad near Chicago's Union Station on March 6.

Encouraged by a special Amtrak fare discount, about 250 people from across the country showed up to hear from and ask questions of Boardman, Chairman Tom Carper, Police Chief John



Pres. Boardman (left) addresses the town hall as *TRAINS* editor Jim Wrinn listens. Photo by Mike Yuhus / *TRAINS*

O'Connor, Vice President—Marketing & Product Development Emmett Fremaux, and Chris Jagodzinski, General Manager—East (Transportation Dept.).

NARP Vice Chair David Randall said, "Many attendees were thrilled that Amtrak senior management took the time to visit the Midwest and hear concerns of Amtrak's most loyal riders and supporters. We haven't had this much attention since Paul Reisturp was CEO [in the 1970s]."

Other NARP members were present, including these Council members: Vice Chair John DeLora, Midwest Division Leader Dwight Phillips, Illinois Coordinator Gordon McCoy and Rick Harnish.

Boardman signaled support for system improvement, but was short on specifics.

"This country builds stuff, including Amtrak, then walks away from it and doesn't give it the support it needs," he observed, adding, "I want to do real stuff."

In response to a question, officials said Amtrak would look at splitting the *Lake Shore Ltd.* into Boston and New York sections at Toledo instead of Albany, with the New York section running via Akron-Pittsburgh-Altoona-Harrisburg-Philadelphia. As columnist Don Phillips put it, "They mentioned this at the same time they said they would operate no new long-distance routes. Train reroutes can have the effect of creating a new service."

Otherwise, officials focused on improving existing services. He said efforts to improve overnight trains would continue.

Jagodzinski gave a detailed Power-Point presentation on Amtrak's fleet strategy. "We don't want 60-year-old equipment," he emphasized. "The passengers don't want it, and we don't want to maintain it." He reiterated that the 60-year-old Heritage diners and baggage cars will be the first to be replaced, within the next five years. Referring to the Horizon cars

used for many state-supported Midwestern daytime runs, he said "a 'commuter car' turned into an intercity car is not a recipe for success."

No specifics were offered in response to questions about new rolling stock to replace the Horizon cars which Amtrak's fleet strategy acknowledges are not appropriate for harsh Midwest winters.

Amtrak's months-old restrictive photography policy got vigorous questioning. O'Connor defended the policy, saying that some with malicious intent have photographed rail and transit systems.

He said Amtrak is exploring a program, patterned after one on BNSF Railway, that allows taking pictures from 'public' parts of a station if the individual submits to a background check and registers to be in a group that reports safety and security issues.

After the forum, attendees were led on a tour of three newly-rehabilitated Superliners—diner, sleeper, and transition/crew sleeper—and a rebuilt P40 locomotive that were parked in Union Station.

Boardman has promised that this will be the first of many such exchanges. NARP welcomes the further involvement of advocates as Amtrak continues to plan and prepare for growth. ■

*Amtrak's release about the forum is at www.bit.ly/atkcchi. See also *TRAINS Magazine* at www.trains.com/trn.*

Hudson River Tunnels: More Questions

The Institute for Rational Urban Mobility (IRUM) wrote Homeland Security Security Secretary Janet Napolitano Dec. 22 questioning New Jersey Transit's ability to safely and quickly evacuate the planned "deep cavern" terminal in an emergency.

The concerns of fire protection consultant Jake Pauls, one of the experts who reviewed IRUM's letter, also were reported in a Feb. 28 story by *Asbury Park Press* transportation writer Larry Higgs.

NJT Exec. Dir. James Weinstein, who was named by Gov. Christie (R), met Mar. 22 with NARP Pres. Ross Capon, Vice Chair Al Papp Jr. and other NARP members. Weinstein said the tunnels were proceeding as planned but did promise to review certain issues, including those relating to evacuation. ■



Floodwaters, 16 inches deep in spots, cover Amtrak's Northeast Corridor line passing through Rhode Island's Great Swamp, four miles south of the Kingston station, on April 1. Photo by Richard Neff, Jr. Amtrak



George Chilson, Chairman; James Churchill, John DeLora, Albert L. Papp, Jr., Arthur Poole, David Randall, Robert J. Stewart, Vice Chairs; Nicholas Noe, Secretary; Kenneth T. Clifford, Treasurer

Ross B. Capon, President & CEO; Sean Jeans-Gail, Communications Director; Tiffanie H. Childs, Coordinator of Resource Development; Malcolm M. Kenton, Transportation Assistant

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OUR MISSION: A MODERN, CUSTOMER-FOCUSED NATIONAL PASSENGER TRAIN NETWORK THAT PROVIDES A TRAVEL CHOICE AMERICANS WANT.

More Train Day Celebrations

The following will take place on Saturday, May 8, in addition to the ones listed in the March News:

Crawfordsville, IN—From 5 to 6:30

PM, the city will host a gala celebration featuring local band The Cold War Unicorns, free grilled supper, and a reception in the Amtrak station. A free pair of tickets from Crawfordsville to Chicago will be

given away.

Laupahoe, HI—The Laupahoe Train Museum, on the eastern coast of the Big Island, will celebrate with music, food and activities. The Hawaii Consolidated Railway ran across the island until tidal waves destroyed it in 1949.

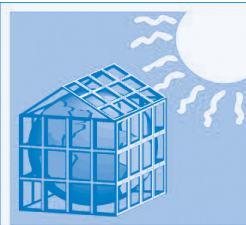
Williams, AZ—The Grand Canyon Railway will roll out its historic steam locomotives for hourly short runs, plus exhibits and many kids' activities.

There will be over 80 events nationwide. See www.nationaltrainday.com.

New Approach to Climate Change on Capitol Hill

With support fading for "cap-and-trade" as a way to reduce planet-warming emissions, Sens. Kerry (D-MA), Lieberman (I-CT) and Graham (R-SC) may introduce a bill on Earth Day (Apr. 22) that charts a new course.

It appears that their package may treat transportation separately, and include what the oil industry terms a "linked fee" to be imposed at the oil refineries. This would have big implications for transportation. It apparently would increase the pump price of gasoline 15-20 cents a gallon in the early years. This has sparked controversy. It



would make a later gasoline tax increase virtually impossible.

The railroads—like the rest of us, already cross-subsidizing highways via general-fund bailouts of the Highway Trust Fund (HTF; page 2 box)—oppose paying still more into that fund.

Environmentalists do not want K-G-L fees going into business-as-usual HTF spending. NARP co-signed a Transportation for America letter to K-G-L supporting substantial investment in transportation that reduces oil use and greenhouse gas emissions. ■

Amtrak Spokesman Cliff Black Retires



After 29 years as the "voice of Amtrak," R. Clifford Black IV retired at the end of March. He will be missed.

He was superb at his job—the quint-essential "straight

shooter" whose accuracy reporters could rely on even when the truth was less than flattering to Amtrak.

Cliff and wife Jeanine, who is leaving Washington's Metro and who previously worked for Bombardier, are heading for a well-earned retirement at a lovely home they have purchased in Winona MN, with a view of Lake Winona—and of the *Empire Builder's* route.

They will visit children and grandchildren in Washington DC and San Diego, wherever the weather is best! ■



Transit: Good News and Bad

St. Louis citizens by a 26-point margin (63-37%) on Apr. 6 "approved a half-cent sales tax increase to stabilize and eventually expand the region's ailing transit network." This will restore bus lines that had been defunded and prevent dramatic cuts that would have begun in June.

Elsewhere, the news is not so good. In a March 31 release announcing its report, *Impacts of the Recession on Public Transportation Agencies*, the American Public Transportation Association said, "since January 1, 2009, 84% of public transit systems have raised fares, cut service or are considering either of those

actions. Fifty nine percent of public transit systems reported that they have already cut service or raised fares." The full report is at www.bit.ly/transitcuts. Meanwhile, Clayton County (GA) commissioners voted 4-1 to end local bus service. ■

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY
Midday North Carolina train starts June 5: A third Raleigh-Charlotte round trip will use rehabilitated Heritage equipment, like the current *Piedmont*. Go to www.bytrain.org for the schedule.