

News from the

National Association of Railroad Passengers

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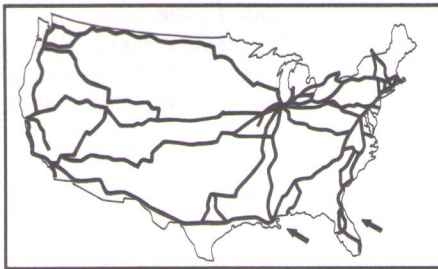
(This has news through March 22. Vol. 27 No. 2 was mailed 1st class Feb. 16-17.

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Clinton Proposes Rail Money

"Sunset" to Florida—New Orleans-Jacksonville Gap Closed

Amtrak's thrice-weekly Los Angeles-New Orleans "Sunset Ltd." extends to Miami via Coastal Alabama and Mississippi and the Florida Panhandle, starting with trips leaving Los Angeles Apr. 2 and Miami Apr. 4. The trans-continental "Sunset Ltd." will be:



- Mobile's first east-west Amtrak service (except for the state-supported New Orleans-Mobile "Gulf Coast Ltd." that ran from Apr. 29,

1984, to Jan. 6, 1985);

- the first-ever Amtrak service for Tallahassee, Florida's capital, and Pensacola; and

- perhaps the first-ever transcontinental *train*, as distinct from various individual through cars that once existed.

The transcontinental "Sunset" offers much more than the private railroads' New Orleans-Jacksonville "Gulf Wind" that ended with Amtrak's May, 1971, startup. The new "Sunset" will run through to Miami and Los Angeles and dedicated connecting buses will link Tampa/St. Petersburg with "Sunset" points north/west of Winter Haven and Dallas with "Sunset" points east of Houston (the latter starting with trips from Miami May 2, Dallas May 4).

Also, "Sunset" will connect Florida points with Amtrak's New York-Mobile "Gulf Breeze"—NB, a 1:14 connection at Atmore, AL; SB, an 8-hour layover in Mobile, from which "Sunset" departs at 2a. (Diehard rail travelers may like to know they can travel Atlanta-Florida without going through Washington!)

The "Gulf Wind" had one advantage: it served Mobile and Tallahassee at decent hours in both directions. The new "Sunset" also is hampered by an unattractive 11:10p Miami arrival,

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\$188 Mill. for Amtrak, \$1.3 Bill. for High-Speed Rail

For passenger rail, President Clinton's economic program, "A Vision of Change for America," is worlds ahead of anything any White House has previously issued.

As released Feb. 17, the program has a "stimulus" package of supplemental spending for this year and a long-term "investment" program covering the five years FY '94-98.

However, as Congress seeks to provide for more deficit reduction than did the president, his rail and transit funding may be at risk. This is doubly true since, while many have criticized the package for not cutting the deficit enough, others are attacking some of the ways the plan does cut the deficit. (Clinton himself has said his plan has too big an increase in the fuel tax barge operators pay.) Just to maintain Clinton's proposed deficit reduction levels, obviously, offsets must be found for any Clinton-proposed savings Congress decides to forego.

The Stimulus Package (FY '93 Supplemental) ...

...totals \$16.2 bill., of which \$4.2 bill. is for transportation. This includes \$188 million for Amtrak capital, \$750 mill. for transit, \$2.97 bill. for highways and \$250 mill. for airports.

If the package is enacted soon with the Amtrak money, Amtrak could recall many maintenance workers furloughed last year. ("Capital" funds can be used for overhauls only where the cost of the work exceeds 50% of the net book value—Heritage cars, Amfleet 1's, some F40 locomotives and a few Superliners.)

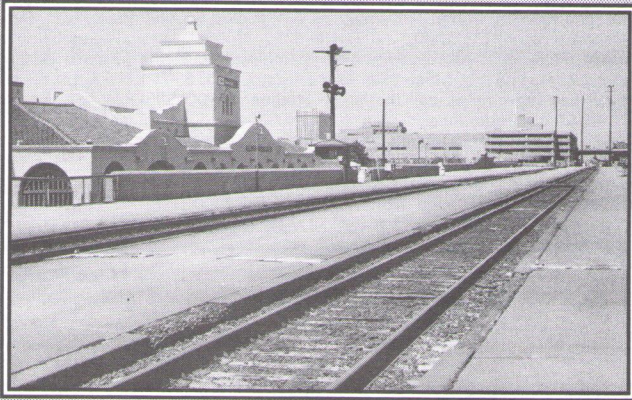
The \$188 mill. also could pay for station, maintenance facility and track improvements, locomotive purchases and exercise of Amtrak's option to buy more new Superliners from Bombardier (Feb. News and John Martin's Feb. 10 letter to NARP members).

(The fate of Amtrak's request for a \$58 mill. FY '93 operating supplemental remains unclear; prospects do not look good.)

The \$750 mill. for transit (\$488 mill. to the formula program; \$278 mill. to the discretionary bus/bus-related programs) must be spent promptly and is expected to be used largely for vehicle-related projects, especially rail rehabilitation and bus purchases.

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Albuquerque Station Destroyed



—photo by Paul H. Carlson, Albuquerque Museum Collections



—photo by Sanford Fish, Albuquerque Planning Dept.

A fire of undetermined origin completely destroyed the landmark 1902 station at Albuquerque, NM on Jan 4. Amtrak's "Southwest Chief" served the former Santa Fe stop. Service was not interrupted, and Amtrak has set up temporary quarters in an adjacent structure. The city is re-examining plans it had to use the old station as a centerpiece for a proposed intermodal terminal.

Clinton Proposes Rail Money—continued from page 1

The stimulus package fully funds ISTEA highway program levels but provides only 53% of ISTEA transit levels. The White House has responded to criticism of this double-standard by promising to fully fund transit ISTEA levels in future-year budget proposals, including Clinton's FY '94 budget now expected in early April, and by noting that states which really want to spend more on transit could transfer flexible highway funds.

The Five-Year Investment Program ...

... includes \$1.287 billion in budget authority (\$646 mill. in outlays, i.e., cash actually expected to be spent before the end of FY '98) for "investment in magnetic levitation and high-speed rail transportation. Maglev and high-speed rail systems can meet the transportation needs of several of the nation's high-density corridors. These systems could relieve congestion, improve air quality, reduce consumption of petroleum-based fuels and improve safety. The funds could be used for construction of a maglev prototype and/or to support the start-up of private or State/local high-speed rail projects" ("A Vision of Change," p. 42).

Just how to use this money is a subject of discussion within the DOT. There are two questions:

- How much should go to the as-yet-unfunded \$725 mill. ISTEA authorization for developing a maglev prototype?
- How much should go to "incremental" improvements to existing Amtrak services vs. oft-discussed "all-new" projects that would consume far larger sums while providing no service for many years.

NARP has urged that most of the money go to incremental improvements on an 80% federal/20% non-federal basis (80% is the ISTEA standard). This would help provide the "level playing field" for passenger rail which ISTEA did not, while insuring that funds go to states committed to passenger rail. Otherwise, California, which has made substantial passenger rail investments, could be passed over in favor of other states which have made no such investments. That would send *all* states a chilling message: spend state money on passenger rail and the feds will make you look foolish.

An incremental emphasis also would help offset the investment program's lack of increased funding for Amtrak, particularly by reducing operating subsidy requirements on the improved corridors. Answering a question from Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ) at a Feb. 23 hearing, DOT Sec. Federico Peña suggested the administration envisions Amtrak getting FY '93 levels (*excluding* the stimulus add-on) in future years. But that level would preclude additional service and leave Amtrak struggling just to keep its existing services intact. Here is what "Vision" proposes to add to federal spending for other transportation (FY '94-'98 outlays):

- \$7.812 billion for highways, including \$445 mill. for "smart cars and smart roads," \$299 mill. for "alcohol-related highway safety and other transportation capital" and \$495 mill. for public land highways and Indian reservation roads;
- \$2.073 bill. for transit formula capital grants;
- \$1.546 bill. for aviation (\$817 mill. to expand NASA research in support of the aviation industry and improving/expanding the national airspace system; \$505 mill. for air traffic control modernization; \$154 mill. for airport improvements; and \$70 mill. "to develop technologies for short-haul aviation...including commuter aircraft, rotorcraft, and general aviation airplanes"); and—if they can be used—
- \$36 mill. for high-speed rail bonds (tax incentives).

"Level Playing Field" for High-Speed Rail Bonds

"Vision" supports exempting high-speed rail bonds from state bonding caps (as is already true for airport and sea-port bonds). Sen. Bob Graham (D-FL) and Rep. William J. Coyne (D-PA) have introduced bills—S. 438 and HR 928, respectively—which would do this. The bills do not define "high speed" but refer to this definition already in the law: "vehicles reasonably expected to operate at speeds in excess of 150 mph between scheduled stops."

"Vision" proposes to cut \$1.749 billion in "low-priority" transportation programs, which apparently means projects earmarked by the *appropriations* committees (not ISTEA, which was an authorization bill).

Clever Energy Tax and Offsets

"Vision" recommends a gasoline-oriented energy tax which environmentalists support: tax oil at 59.9 cents per million BTU's but gas, coal and nuclear at 25.7 cents. The tax does *not* apply to export coal.

Energy taxes often have been criticized as "regressive," so "Vision" proposes to soften the blow with "increases in transfers under the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) and Food Stamp Programs... since many low-income households are outside of the labor force and the tax system." *continued on page 3*

Freight Railroads, Amtrak Agree on High Speed

The Association of American Railroads (AAR) issued a six-page policy paper on high-speed rail at a Feb. 3 news conference at Amtrak's Union Station headquarters in Washington led by AAR President Edwin L. Harper and Amtrak President W. Graham Claytor Jr. Amtrak is a member of AAR.

Key points in "High-Speed Rail Passenger and Freight Services: Opportunities for Partnership":

- "America's freight railroads are ready to cooperate in the extension and advance of high-speed rail passenger service, as well as in other rail passenger services;"

- there are four distinct types of passenger rail services (see box), which "control the extent to which rail freight and passenger operations can operate over the same right-of-way;"

- "the full costs of changes in existing freight rail operations to accommodate new passenger operations must be borne by the entity sponsoring the new service;" and

- "freight railroads must be indemnified and insured against any and all financial liability arising from accidents affecting passenger services."

The mood of the press conference—and of the report—was upbeat. When a reporter asked Harper if the railroads' motivation in accepting passenger service was better public relations, Harper said, "The important part is letting the public know that the railroads are alive and getting better. We are an important part of the American economy, but we are not getting full use out of our rights of way."

Actually implementing a high-speed project is not a done deal, however. Again, Harper: "We are open to discussing any of a number of proposed routes, but we will have to look at each one milepost by milepost." And Claytor, when asked about average cost of projects: "That is like asking, 'How long is a piece of string?'...There is no average cost. It all depends on the terrain and size of the railroad."

The report names four main negotiating points for any high-speed project:

- resolving the relative difference in speeds between passenger trains travelling 100-150 mph and freight trains, which "constrains the scheduling of freight trains, or requires construction of additional track capacity. Accommodation may not be feasible in all cases."

Clinton Proposes Rail Money—continued from page 2

"Vision" would extend the 2.5 cents per gallon of gasoline tax now going to deficit reduction and which otherwise would expire in 1995. Controversy arose, however, after DOT Sec. Federico Peña on Mar. 3 told the Senate Finance Committee that the Office of Management & Budget approved shifting this revenue back to the Highway Trust Fund, *all* to the highway account and *none* to the transit account although the transit account gets one-fifth (a half-penny) of the other half of the "1990 nickel" and one-fifth (a penny) of the last previous gasoline tax increase—the nickel enacted in 1982. NARP, in a Mar. 3 letter, told Peña: "Reducing the proportion of highway trust fund money available for transit hardly seems consistent with the administration's overall policy on transportation and the environment."

(For somewhat greater detail on Clinton's proposals, send NARP \$3 and an s.a.s.e. "A Vision of Change for America," 150 pages, is \$7.50 from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402-9325, or phone 202/512-2471 with Master or VISA handy. Mention Stock No. 014-001-00397-5. "Summary of the Administration's Revenue Proposals," 74 pages, is \$4.75, Stock No. 048-000-00441-5.) ■

FOUR LEVELS OF SERVICE RECOGNIZED

AAR made the following useful categorizations of levels of passenger rail service in its policy paper (the first three types of service may share tracks with freight operations):

- **Commuter:** Local services with low average speeds and frequent stops. Some are operated by area transit agencies, and some contracted out to Amtrak (or another railroad company) by those agencies.

- **Conventional Intercity:** Most short-distance and all long-distance Amtrak service, primarily operated on rights-of-way owned by freight railroads, with "top speeds ranging from 79 to 90 mph, depending on the availability of cab signals."

- **High-Speed Rail:** "Operates at speeds of 100-150 mph between cities generally fewer than 300 miles apart," i.e., present Washington-New York and planned New York-Boston Amtrak service.

- **Ultra High-Speed Rail:** "Includes the French TGV and Japanese Bullet trains that operate at speeds at or above 150 mph. Ultra high-speed rail requires new rights-of-way entirely dedicated to this kind of service. It also includes transportation systems using magnetic levitation...It is doubtful that the freight railroads have any assets appropriate for the development of ultra high-speed rail passenger services."

—AAR High Speed Policy Paper, Feb. 3.

- improved signal systems, including speed control and cab signals.
- grade separation for both highways and other rail lines, and possibly fencing.
- maintenance requirements.

At the news conference, Claytor emphasized freight railroads would pay the "net" cost of high-speed service, noting that some passenger improvements also would benefit freight.

The AAR policy comes soon after a restrictive policy paper released in Oct. by Conrail on the compatibility of passenger and freight trains (Jan. News, p. 2). Harper was asked about that and said that (Conrail President James A.) Hagen and Conrail fully support the industry policy statement. ■

AMTRAK'S NEW GIFT CERTIFICATES

Now you can give rail travel as a gift. Certificates may be purchased from Amtrak or a travel agent in any amount from \$25 to \$1,000 (in even dollars). Within a year of purchase, they can be exchanged at face value for any Amtrak tickets at an Amtrak ticket office or travel center. The certificates are not transferable, but are refundable to the original purchaser. Certificates may not be purchased with transportation credits.

CHICAGO-FLORIDA LEGISLATION

Rep. Bob Clement (D-TN) on Feb. 24 introduced HR 1090, the Floridian Passenger Rail Service Reestablishment Act, requiring Amtrak—using state and federal funds—to begin Chicago-Florida service via Evansville-Nashville-Chattanooga-Atlanta-Jacksonville by Jan. 1, 1996, and authorizing such new federal funds "as may be necessary" for FY 94-96.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Amtrak's Spring Timetable...

...takes effect May 2 (not Apr. 3) and includes:

- Because of "California Zephyr's" consistent lateness, EB "Lake Shore Ltd." runs 1:00 later, keeps all current connections.
- WB "Lake Shore" runs 1:00 later, losing connections at Chicago to "California Zephyr" and "Empire Builder"; retaining connections to "City of New Orleans," "Texas Eagle," "Southwest Chief." Amtrak says this is forced by later schedule of EB "Lake Shore" (see above) and limited supply of dual-mode FL9 locomotives used into New York. (Trains must be electrically powered in and near Penn Sta.; FL9s can run as regular diesels *and* as electrics taking power from third rail.) Amtrak plans to restore the lost connections in fall '94 when new dual-mode locomotives will permit WB "Lake Shore" to run earlier.
- "Lake Cities" 1:05 hour later WB, 0:50 EB, to preserve connection with "Lake Shore" at Toledo. (This also lets Amtrak advertise "Eagle"-to-Detroit connections more than two hours quicker, i.e., arriving Detroit 9:50p instead of 12:05a.)
- "California Zephyr" (including Seattle and Los Angeles branches) runs 1:00 earlier WB and 0:30 earlier EB, pushing EB "Pioneer's" Seattle departure back from 8a to 7:30a. WB Portland-Seattle times do not change because train is an hour slower (0:12 added Laramie-Rawlins; 0:16 Ogden-Portland; 0:60 instead of 0:30 sitting in Portland).
- "Capitol Ltd." and "Silver Star" (including Chicago-Miami coach) run approx. 0:25 later in both directions.
- Because of "Zephyr" unreliability, Amtrak will *not* ticket travelers from EB "Zephyr" to EB "Capitol Ltd." although the scheduled layover time is 85 minutes.
- To protect connection from "Starlight," EB "Southwest Chief" leaves Los Angeles 30 minutes later, at 9:15p. No dinner served leaving Los Angeles; direct San Diego connection involves 1:38 layover in Los Angeles (0:45 Sa-Su) vs. present 1:08.
- 9a Washington departure to Newport News runs Th-

Fr-Sa instead of Fr only; afternoon return trips run Th-Fr-Sa-Su instead of just Fr, Su.

- (tentative) "Carolinian" gets baggage service (this did not happen Oct. 25, contrary to Dec. Advisory).
- "Night Owls" originating Fr, Sa will have slower schedule (leave Boston 32 mins. earlier) for track work near Newark, NJ as part of Kearny Connection project (to bring New Jersey Transit ex-Lackawanna commuter trains into Manhattan's Penn Sta. by 1995). Also, tie and rail welding work related to the Boston-New York high-speed project will mean some single-track running between New Haven and Kingston.
- Big Northeast Corridor changes, including weekend Metroliners originating on the half-hour.
- Later Su schedule for SB "Adirondack" continues (has been winter-only). NB is 0:30 faster. SB 0:15 faster, originates 0:15 earlier, has except-Su connection with 8:45p; New York-Washington train (vs. present 9:30; Mo-Fr, 10:10 Sa).
- "City of New Orleans" 0:15 faster both ways; originates 0:35 later SB, 0:05 earlier NB. ("Sunset" extension to Miami goes forward as planned in early April—see front page.)

Transit/Commuter

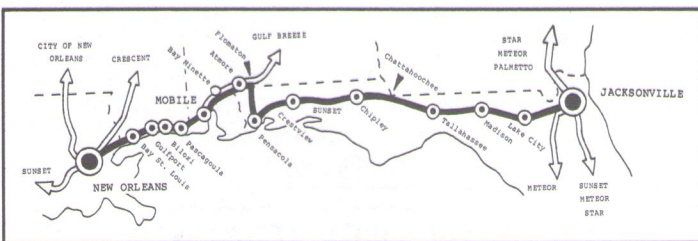
On Nov. 21 the South Shore terminal at South Bend, IN was moved to a new facility at the Michiana Regional Airport, on the city's far northwest side (4477 Terminal Dr., just off W. Lincolnway/US 20). The old station near the west-side Bendix plant is still leased by Amtrak, but no longer used by South Shore except for special trains.

The following openings listed in Feb. *News*' "Wheels of Progress" column have happened:

- Jan. 30—Los Angeles Metro Red Line subway.
- Feb. 21—Chicago CTA Howard-Dan Ryan subway connection.
- Feb. 22—Los Angeles Metrolink commuter rail extension to Montclair.

Gap Closed—continued from page 1

which—along with the EB Mobile stop at 2a—may improve as Amtrak gains experience with the route and tightens the schedule, but the slow schedule is partly a function of the rail line's circuitous routing. The Jacksonville-New Orleans line is 10% longer than Interstate highway (619 miles vs. 565).



Amtrak estimates increasing the new "Sunset" to daily would raise the annual operating subsidy by over \$20 mill. This suggests that daily service for Phoenix and Tucson, if and when it comes, more likely would begin as a daylight train to/from Los Angeles, preferably connecting with the overnight Los Angeles-Bay Area service California would like to operate via Bakersfield—and not competing with today's low air fares. ■

AMTRAK DRAMATICALLY REDUCES SMOKING

Effective May 2, smoking will be prohibited on all Metroliners and other trains with total trip times under 4-1/2 hours including "San Diegans," "New England Expresses," the 180-series New York-Washington trains and trains that operate only New York-Schenectady.

In addition, smoking will be prohibited on:

- New Haven-Washington Metroliners and Santa Barbara-San Diego "San Diegans";
 - New York-Richmond "Virginian";
 - "San Joaquins";
 - all trains between Kansas City-St. Louis-Carbondale and between New York-Albany except "Lake Shore Ltd.'s" long-distance cars (for example, eastbound "Maple Leaf" crews will ask smokers to put cigarettes out when the train reaches Albany);
 - "Capitol Ltd." and "Coast Starlight" sleeping cars;
 - "Capitol Ltd." lounge (train's smoking will be confined to the bathroom lounges in a Heritage coach); and
 - Auto Train's full dome lounge car (train's only smoking will move to dome coach bathroom lounges).
- (Aug. '92 *News* lists other, mostly shorter runs on which smoking already is banned.)