



Lott: "Let's see if we can get a good bill"

Sen. Trent Lott (R-MS) announced he will run for a fourth term. He had planned to retire after three terms but, after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, Lott felt a call to run again.

In answering a reporter's question at a January 18 news conference, he said, "Over the holidays in Mississippi with the people I love the most, my heart was so heavy when I saw again what has happened and how slow the recovery has been. And when people are down and you are in a position maybe to help them, you can't walk away."

He also spoke about S. 1516, the Passenger Rail Improvement and Investment Act. In fact, *The Washington Post* said Lott gave a "13-minute answer to a question about Amtrak." Excerpts follow.

"I think transportation is one of the key parts of the pulse of America. We're mobile. And we the people deserve good service: freight, railroad, airlines..."

"I personally believe we need a national rail passenger system. You can debate Amtrak or whether it's done what all it needs to do, or whether we've got it set up right or not. That's a legitimate debate...But to do nothing or to just squeeze it to death or to underfund it year

Thames River Bridge Contract Awarded



A \$76 million project to replace the Thames River Bridge in Groton, CT was announced January 11 by Amtrak and Cianbro Corporation. The 87 year-old bridge's bascule lift span will be replaced by a 188 foot vertical lift span (artist rendition, l.). The new bridge will be built nearby, then floated into place during a four day railroad shutdown in late 2007. This project will be the largest single capital investment made on the Northeast Corridor since 2000. In addition to working with Amtrak, Cianbro will coordinate marine traffic work windows with the Coast Guard and U.S. Navy.

—Amtrak

after year, to not allow it to make progress and meet its capital needs, is wrong.

"I will ask the leader (Sen. Bill Frist, R-TN), while we're, kind of, getting organized; (that) we're ready to go."

Lott rejected plans put forth by the President to privatize and break up Amtrak: "Part of my goal, hopefully, is to put a little pressure on the administration, because I don't think their proposal has any credibility at all, and (to put pressure) on the House to go ahead and ad-

dress this issue. And then let's get into conference and see if we can get a bill that would be good."

(See also story on page four for more on funding prospects.) ■

Dining Car Conversion Update

As part of efforts to make dining cars more cost-effective (December *News*, lead story), Amtrak as expected ended off-train meal "pre-plating" January 17, once again enabling *Texas Eagle* and *City of New Orleans* crews to mix and match food items to meet passenger requests.

Amtrak postponed to February 15 the introduction of reduced staffing on the *Sunset Limited* and *Capitol Limited*. This was to help insure that Amtrak first "gets it right" on the *Eagle* and *City*.

So far, reviews of the reduced-staff service have been mixed, as Amtrak has experimented with menu items and preparation issues. The original assump-

tion that convection ovens would always be preferable to microwave has not proven correct—it dries out some items. One dinner entrée—beef tenderloin—got terrible reviews and was dropped.

Supervisory and managerial personnel at many levels will have two-day training sessions in early February to facilitate a big riding program on the four trains. These people will support crews and identify issues to facilitate expansion of the new approach—before summer—to all dining cars except on the *Empire Builder* and *Auto Train*. This timing would let Amtrak avoid the usual cost of adding staff for the summer. ■

Wheels of Progress Updates

These events are either corrections or additions to the larger list published in January *NARP News*.

Addition to "Major Accomplishments in 2005"

Oct. 15, Sacramento RTD Light Rail: Sunrise-Folsom (7.4 miles)

Updates on Future Projects

Fall 2007: Completion of St. Louis Intermodal Station facility, ending 30+ years of "temporary" Amtrak facilities in the city. Ground breaking is set for late March 2006.

2009: T.F. Green Airport (Providence) multimodal station. Land is being cleared. Groundbreaking possible late this month. Construction delays may push back the 2008 opening we showed before.

Executive Director Celebrates 30 Years At NARP

NARP Executive Director Ross B. Capon celebrated his 30th anniversary with NARP in 2005. Ross began his career with NARP as the Association's Assistant Director on January 13, 1975 (see excerpt from February 1975 *NARP News* at right). The next year, he was promoted to Executive Director, the position he has held for the past twenty nine years.

He was honored at the NARP Board of Directors Awards Banquet on October 22, 2005 in Minneapolis. Many friends and colleagues of Ross wrote tributes that were read at the event. Here are a sample of those tributes, plus tributes from current NARP staff and NARP President George Chilson.



"I could hardly believe it when I heard that you are celebrating your 30th anniversary at the National Association of Railroad Passengers. What an amazing accomplishment!...Your work has been a vital part of protecting and strengthening our national passenger rail system—a system that benefits individual mobility, economic development, and our environment...

"One of my life rules for success is to surround myself with people smarter than me, which I feel I have done. And you are an invaluable resource to my staff, for which I am incredibly grateful. I look forward to many more years of working together."

—Senator Tom Carper (D-DE)



"I congratulate you on 30 years of service to America's rail passengers. While it always seems that rail supporters like me and my colleagues are facing an uphill battle, you have stayed in the trenches tirelessly and advocated for our cause. I am especially thankful for the testimony that you have provided to my subcommittee. It is always succinct, factual, and timely. I know that my predecessor as subcommittee chair, Rep. Jack Quinn, shares in this appreciation for your service.

"Again, congratulations on this milestone and I look forward to our continued work together to fight for America's passenger rail network."

—Representative Steve LaTourette (R-OH)



"Ross Capon is the voice of passenger railroading in the US, a strong, passionate, articulate, and informed voice! Ross is fearless and tireless in his efforts to be sure that the facts are available for informed decision making by the Congress and amazingly effective in rallying the railroad passengers of America to fight for Amtrak as it should be, a national passenger railroad that we can be proud of...I will always value Ross as a friend and as a person that I respect so much. He is indeed a renaissance railroad man!"

—Jolene Molitoris, FRA Administrator (1993-2000)



"Congratulations on your 30th Anniversary with NARP. Fighting for rail passenger service over that period of time requires a lot of stamina, courage, and dedication—some of your finer qualities....I have yet to meet anyone that can match your honesty and integrity. I think that is why you have been so successful for so long. Also, the fact that Amtrak (and NARP) exist today is a tribute in itself to what you have done.

"I think it is safe to say that virtually every Administration

Massachusetts Rail Expert Ross Capon Joins NARP Staff

Ross Capon, who until recently served as special assistant to the Massachusetts secretary of transportation, has joined the staff of the National Association of Railroad Passengers as assistant director.

Mr. Capon, who was a rail specialist in the secretary's office, is a native of Newton, Massachusetts, and received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in International Affairs at the University of Illinois in 1969.

He started his career as an editorial assistant at *Friends Journal* in Philadelphia in 1969. In 1970, he became legislative secretary for Friends Peace Committee, Philadelphia.

In 1971, Mr. Capon joined the administration of (then) Governor Francis W. Sargent, in the state office of transportation.

He represented Massachusetts on the "Lake Shore Task Force" which is working to protect the interests of the states to be served by Amtrak's forthcoming Boston-Cleveland-Chicago service.

Mr. Capon lives at 6714 Piney Branch Road, Washington.



Within a couple of weeks after coming on board, Ross already had brought about some improved service on Amtrak. Unable to use a credit card on a Boston to Washington dining car, he asked Amtrak why? It seems the diners on some routes lacked imprinters, which print the customer's name and account number on the bill. Amtrak obligingly agreed to begin honoring credit cards immediately and to get imprinters installed.



The article from the February 1975 *NARP News* introducing Ross Capon to NARP members. Other headlines in that issue: "Paul Reistrup Appointed Amtrak President," "Amtrak Orders 35 More Metro-Type Budd Cars; Total on Order is 292" (referring to the purchase of Amfleet I cars), and "Congress Forced to Pay Early Attention to Railroad Problems" (which led to the formation of Conrail from the ashes of the Penn Central bankruptcy).

since Nixon either wanted to cut Amtrak or eliminate it. When you consider that, and all the Amtrak Presidents and all the Amtrak Boards and all the Amtrak lobbyists that you had to deal with over that 30-year span—people who thought they were in charge—your efforts were heroic."

—Tim Gillespie, Amtrak Vice President—
Government Affairs (1980-1998)



"Working with Ross for ten years has been a pleasure. Ross is extraordinarily passionate about three things: his family, his work, and his music. I had no idea when I walked into the NARP office—as a temporary employee—that there was so much to know about trains. But what I do know is that he is a diligent, non-stop advocate for passenger rail and his 30 years

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of service is well appreciated and valued by all who cross paths with him. The passenger rail industry should hope for 30 more years from Ross."

—Tiffanie Childs, NARP Office Manager



"I've been privileged to work with and—more importantly—learn from Ross Capon for the past nine years. When I came to NARP in the summer of 1997 as an eager (perhaps too eager?) intern, Ross listened to me, taught me how things work in this town, and extolled the virtues of patience, perseverance and hard work. We've even enjoyed a train ride or two together! His advice and counsel has not been limited to passenger rail: Ross is an accomplished musician and he and I share a love of classical music. I look forward to continuing to learn and grow from the example that Ross sets for me and the rest of the NARP staff."

—David Johnson, NARP Assistant Director



"Congratulations to Ross on achieving 30 years at NARP! The nation's rail transportation system could not have a more brilliant, astute, political or analytical defender and promoter. After 17 years of watching Ross in action, I continue to marvel at his energy, thoroughness, creativity and complexity. Not to mention that he is the nicest man in Washington!...In a world of increasing narrow-mindedness, mistrust, and black-and-white pronouncements, Ross is one of the few who has not lost the art of nuanced interpretation, be it political, philosophical or technical...few causes could have survived this long without such a devoted, dedicated and patient individual."

—Jane Colgrove, NARP Membership Director (1987-2004)



"There is no one in Washington who is a greater champion of the interests of railroad passengers than Ross Capon. Where others would have gotten discouraged and given up, Ross has stayed true to his vision of a nationwide system of passenger trains of increasing relevance to the American traveling public. This is a vision we all share...It was a great honor for me to work closely with Ross for half of that period, and I congratulate him on reaching this personal milestone."

—Scott Leonard, NARP Assistant Director (1989-2004)



"We who travel by train in America are blessed to have Ross Capon in our camp. I had the pleasure of working for Ross for many years, and know firsthand what a tangible and positive impact this tireless man has made on our nation's transportation policies.

"Great legislative allies like Claiborne Pell, Alan Cranston, Vance Hartke, Mike Mansfield, Mark Andrews, Al Gore, Harley Staggers, Silvio Conte, Adam Benjamin, Al Swift, and Jack Quinn have come and gone over the years, but Ross has been there for the duration and is still going strong. I frankly don't know where Ross gets his energy and tenacity year after year as one President after another tries to torpedo Amtrak. It's a great mystery to me. Perhaps it's a Quaker thing. Directors and members of NARP need to understand what a precious asset Ross is to our cause.

"I feel great appreciation for his friendship, advice, instruction, and good example—and for his decision in 1979 to gamble



The NARP staff congratulates Ross Capon on 30 years of service to passenger rail. From left to right: Kate Warr, Tiffanie Childs, Ross Capon, David Johnson, and Douglas Kidd.

on a Missouri kid fresh out of college and give me the most exciting job of my life. Congratulations, Ross, on reaching Milepost 30!"

—Barry Williams, NARP Assistant Director (1979-1989)



"The knowledge, relationships and credibility that Ross has developed for NARP during his three decades of service are essential to our ability to influence events in the future. These precious assets were earned only after years of hard work, passion tempered by maturity and—most important—honesty and integrity. Ross' ability to handle stress calmly and his determination to soldier on in the face of a seemingly endless stream of challenges are two qualities as unique as they are essential.

"I treasure the relationship we have built since I became president. He is an invaluable partner. I look forward to working with him in the coming years as we strive to make NARP a significantly larger and more powerful force in the fight to bring modern passenger train service to the American people."

—George Chilson, NARP President

NARP's Media Advisory Following the State of the Union Address

In his Jan. 31 address, President Bush said, "Keeping America competitive requires affordable energy. And here we have a serious problem: America is addicted to oil, which is often imported from unstable parts of the world."

From NARP's Feb. 1 advisory: "Addressing this problem requires corrective actions on many fronts. For example, President Bush's FY 2006 budget...should include funding to make intercity passenger rail a more attractive and widely available choice. [This] would give credibility to such statements by Transportation Secretary Mineta as, 'The President and I want to save Amtrak and improve passenger rail service' (St. Louis, March 10, 2005)."

The advisory—at <www.narprail.org> (or send NARP an SASE)—also said the House Ways & Means Committee that day would strip funding provisions from RIDE-21 (H.R. 1631, a high speed rail bill), an action that "reflects the reality that passenger rail needs—but does not currently have—a champion on" that committee.

Transit Ridership Rises; Car Usage Drops

Public transit ridership is on the increase and, surprisingly, car usage has slipped slightly.

The American Public Transit Association released its 2005 Third Quarter Ridership Report (which covers the time period most affected by the major post-Katrina gas price spikes). All modes showed increases: light rail (8.8%); commuter rail (4.6%); heavy rail (4.3%); bus (2.5%); demand response (3.2%), and trolleybus (0.2%).

The use of automobiles during the same time period declined: vehicle miles of travel showed a "highly unusual" decrease of 0.2%.

Initial feedback from APTA member agencies in November shows that ridership continues to increase despite the fact that gas prices are dropping from their post-Katrina highs.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Modified Diner Service implementation—See Story on Page 1 for updated schedule.

Thruway Bus Elimination—Marble Valley Regional Transit District eliminated Rutland-Killington (VT) Thruway bus. Killington Resort now offers a personal taxi service with ski package purchase, or passengers can ride the "Diamond Run Express" which departs from transit center (2 blocks from Amtrak station).

Silver Star Cary stop officially will begin with the Spring timetable change on April 24, due to construction delays at the new platform. The Raleigh-Charlotte *Piedmont* currently stops at Cary, on the north side of the station, but the *Star* uses a different track on the south side.

Guest Rewards redemption changes—On Jan. 1, 2006, coach, business Class and *Acela Express* First Class redemption rates in-

creased 500 points; sleeping car rates unchanged. Guest Rewards members can get special bonus offers by signing up for e-statements at <<http://www.amtrakguestrewards.com>>.

Tidewater VA service modifications—Due to CSX trackwork, Trains 66 and 67 will not operate Washington-Newport News Feb. 6-Mar. 2. Train 94 will leave Newport News two hours earlier Monday-Thursday only at 7:10 a.m. and operate on train #176's timeslot, Washington-Boston.

Acela Express/Metroliner Revenue Management—For sales after Jan. 28 and travel starting Feb. 6, the same train could have up to five different fare levels, based on demand. The previous system had three levels, but each train had a single fare, based on day of the week and time of day. New highest level is about 15% above the existing highest fare, new lowest level about 15% below the existing lowest.

Funding Prospects for Fiscal 2007

The President's budget is released Feb. 6, for the year starting Oct. 1, 2006. News reports suggest his request for Amtrak could be as high as \$900 million (which is still not enough to operate).

Meanwhile, John Boehner's (R-OH) victory in the race for House Majority Leader

could be good for passenger rail. Rep. Steve LaTourette (R-OH), arguably the leading House Republican advocate for Amtrak, was one of 51 public Boehner supporters at a time when Roy Blunt (R-MO) had 101 public commitments.

Thus, hopes for reauthorization were

rising again (see also lead story).

The message to your legislators:

- Fully fund Amtrak's Fiscal 2007 appropriation request;
- (Senate) Pass S. 1516
- (House) Introduce and pass companion legislation to S. 1516. ■



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