TRAINRIDER

THE NEWSLETTER OF TRAINRIDERS/NORTHEAST

Chairman's Update

HALF A LOAF IS NOT ENOUGH

THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE MAINE LEGISLATURE THAT MET IN AUGUSTA to resolve issues not addressed at the time of the regular session adjourned passed a bill that does not suffice to extend Downeaster service north from Portland to Freeport and Brunswick and to Lewiston/ Auburn.

Although Governor Baldacci proposed \$5 million, which would have generated \$15.8 million in matching federal funds for the project, partisan legislators were able to reduce the \$5 million to \$3 million. (During the earlier, regular session of the legislature, they brought it down to \$2 million before rail advocates began making calls and got the figure back up to \$3.5 million.)

It is imperative that the MDOT find the extra \$1 million (\$1$^1/_2$ million is what is needed for track rehabilitation, but \$1 million will suffice). If the state does not pledge another \$1 million for the expansion, the midcoast, western mountain, eastern and down east regions of Maine are likely to be \$12-\$16 million poorer *per year* in economic development dollars.

It is a proven principle of transportation economics that for every dollar invested in passenger rail, six to eleven dollars returns in revenue. Many municipalities across the country, including every stop along the Downeaster's current route, are

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BUSH PASSENGER RAIL REFORM BILL

ON JULY 29 US TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY NORMAN MINETA SUBMITTED THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S PROPOSAL FOR REFORM OF THE NATIONAL PASSENGER RAIL SYSTEM TO CONGRESS. It represents the first comprehensive proposal in thirty years.

"Our nation's current system of intercity passenger rail has failed to deliver on its promise for American travelers," said Secretary Mineta. "Business as usual is a recipe for failure. The Bush administration is proposing a measured, steady, but certain course to lasting reform.

"I believe that our states and localities, in partnership with the federal government, are best suited to decide how and when to operate passenger rail service. As with highways, transit and aviation, local and regional priorities should govern rail transportation planning and investment."

According to Mineta, the proposal would bring investment in passenger rail in line with other transportation modes by creating a system in which states and communities, using capital investments supported by federal funds, operate rail service in their areas.

The proposal would replace subsidy payments to Amtrak after a transition period, with direct federal matches for capital investment to be paid directly to the states. States and multi-state compacts would submit proposals for passenger rail capital investment and train operations to the US DOT. Ultimately, states would be free to choose a provider of their choice, either a private company or a public transit agency.

Under the administration's plan, Amtrak would transition over time into three entities:

(1) **A private passenger rail company** that would operate trains under contract to states and multi-state compacts —just as the current Amtrak operates trains under contract to commuter rail agencies.

(2) **A private rail infrastructure company** that would maintain and operate the infrastructure on the Northeast Corridor under contract to a multistate Northeast Corridor Compact. Title to Amtrak's current tracks, stations and other infrastructure on the Northeast Corridor will be held by the federal government and leased to the Northeast Corridor Compact.

(3) **The National Passenger Rail Corporation**, which would continue as a government corporation that would retain Amtrak's current right to use the tracks of the freight railroads, and the Amtrak corporate name. Both the track-access rights and the Amtrak brand would be provided under contract to states and the multi-state compacts for qualifying passenger rail service they sponsor.

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...BUSH REFORM BILL

(continued from page 1)

Secretary Mineta cited the Cascades rail service, developed by the states of Washington and Oregon, as a model for the support and innovative planning that results when communities and states take the lead in addressing their needs for passenger rail service. The two states have invested some $170 million in developing high-quality passenger rail service from Portland to Seattle. State funds have been used to improve track, purchase new trains and upgrade stations. The states have provided operational subsidies to support the service and have hired Amtrak to run it.

Under the Bush proposal, the transition plan for the Northeast Corridor between Washington, DC, and Boston, Massachusetts—by far Amtrak's busiest route—would relieve the private passenger rail operations company of the need to fund capital investment to maintain the Northeast Corridor. The bill proposes to transfer Amtrak's current property on the corridor to the federal government, which would fund its significant capital backlog over a period of several years, leasing the corridor to a Northeast Corridor Compact composed of corridor states.

During a multi-year transition, Amtrak, followed by the newly created Passenger rail service provider company, would hold the contract for train operations on the corridor. The passenger rail infrastructure company would hold the contract for corridor maintenance and upgrades, signaling and switching during this transition.

At the end of the transition, the Northeast Corridor Compact would take bids from private sector companies and public sector transit agencies for both contracts, introducing competition and bringing Northeast Corridor passenger rail financing and investment in line with the new passenger rail model proposed by the bill. ■

REPUBLICAN SENATORS COUNTER BUSH PLAN

Washington, July 30—REPUBLICAN SENATORS HAVE PROPOSED A SIX-YEAR, $60 BILLION PLAN TO HELP AMTRAK, countering one from the Bush administration that would reduce federal support for passenger rail service.

The plan, by four members of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, would give Amtrak the $2 billion in annual operating subsidies it has requested. The plan also calls for issuing $48 billion in bonds to raise money for repairs and track construction.

Maine's Senator Snowe is one of four Republican senators sponsoring the $60 billion plan to help Amtrak.

"The reason that Amtrak is always coming up short and running to Congress to say, 'We need more money,' is because we have starved them to death," said Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, the bill's author. "Amtrak has been a stepchild in the national transportation system."

The Republican Senators (Hutchison, Trent Lott of Mississippi, Conrad Burns of Montana and Olympia Snowe of Maine) represent states outside Amtrak's busiest corridor, between Boston and Washington. They have adopted the motto, "National or Nothing" to highlight their view that Amtrak must devote more money to improve and expand service throughout the nation.

Under the bill, for every dollar in capital funds spent in the Northeast, four dollars would be spent elsewhere.

The senators acknowledged the challenge in proposing a major spending initiative at a time of federal deficits. "You are talking about real money," Lott said. "But we have to make up our minds in America: Do we want a national rail passenger system or not?"

The administration's six-year plan for Amtrak would end Amtrak's monopoly on

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TRANSPORTATION LABOR: REJECT BUSH PLAN

The following statement was issued July 30 in Washington, DC, by Sonny Hall, President of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO, in response to the Amtrak proposal unveiled by the Bush administration.

"THE WHITE HOUSE PLAN IS A DEATH KNELL FOR PASSENGER RAIL IN THIS COUNTRY, AND THE TRIUMPH OF IDEOLOGY OVER THE NEEDS OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. Asking cash-strapped states to pick up the tab for Amtrak, slicing and dicing the railroad into a number of separate pieces, and opening the door to privatization is no way to run a railroad. Congress must send this train back to the station.

"The widespread problems of privatized rail which, in England for example, led to rampant delays, increased accident rates, and higher fares, explains why the noted Economic Policy Institute (EPI) titled its recent report *Amtrak Privatization: The Route to Failure*. The EPI report noted that many of the British problems grew out of a labyrinth-like carving up of the railroad, a bureaucratic shell game now mirrored in the Bush plan. Amtrak was borne out of the ashes of a defunct network of private passenger railroads, so calling for a privatized Amtrak reflects a gross ignorance of both history and economics.

A PRIVATIZED AMTRAK REFLECTS A GROSS IGNORANCE OF BOTH HISTORY AND ECONOMICS.

"The Bush administration is badly out of touch on this issue. Bipartisan majorities on Capital Hill and large numbers of those surveyed in public opinion polls support federal investment in Amtrak. Slashing service to hundreds of communities and millions of passengers benefits no one in a struggling economy. The White House is taking Amtrak down a track few want it to go.

The Bush plan would further starve

(continued on page 7)

A TROJAN HORSE FROM THE US DOT

Ross Capon, President of the National Association of Railroad Passengers, sent the following comment to Wayne Davis at the end of July.

MOST EXPERTS AGREE THAT THE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM WITH AMTRAK HAS LITTLE TO DO WITH LOSSES INCURRED AS A RESULT OF OPERATING TRAINS AND EVERYTHING TO DO WITH UNDER-FUNDING ITS CAPITAL NEEDS.

The US DOT Inspector General consistently has told Congress that, until a secure source of capital funding is available, rearranging the organizational boxes of those responsible for rail passenger service will mean nothing.

The administration plan not only avoids addressing capital needs but proposes to shift costs—including costs of long-distance trains—to states even though interstate commerce is federal government responsibility. In the unlikely event that every state along a given Amtrak route agreed to support that route, there would be endless bickering over scheduling, which places will be served in the dead of night, and cost allocation.

IT DOES NOT MAKE SENSE TO FOLLOW UP THE REORGANIZATION DAVID GUNN IS JUST COMPLETING WITH ANOTHER ONE.

Amtrak's first Chicago-New York LAKE SHORE LIMITED was to be state supported. It lasted eight months and was dropped in 1972 because states would not pay. It was reinstated in 1975 as part of the national network.

Amtrak CEO and President David L. Gunn has won widespread respect for his work since coming to Amtrak in May, 2002. He deserves the administration's support. It does not make sense to follow up the reorganization he is just completing with another one—particularly one that is so questionable and theoretical.

Dividing the company into a carrier and an infrastructure company runs contrary to how every major U.S. and Canadian freight railroad and the biggest commuter railroads (Long Island; Metro North) are organized—tracks and trains are owned by the same company, normally the dominant user.

Amtrak is the dominant user of the Northeast Corridor portions it owns, if one puts in proper perspective the extremely very short distances over which Long Island and other commuter trains run on the Corridor.

In Japan, the railroads own infrastructure, rolling stock, and real estate. (In establishing these railroads, the government took over much of the debt of the old national railways, and the new companies received infrastructure and rolling stock that was in excellent condition.)

The new DOT plan also raises concerns about prying away from the rail operation the valuable real estate that helps support the operation.

Private freight railroads, who own most of the tracks Amtrak uses, would not allow, and are not required to allow, private rail operators track access on affordable terms.

Operation of Amtrak's long-distance trains is a federal responsibility, which financially beleaguered states are not going to pick up, and which—if they tried—would be the subject of endless debates over scheduling (trains have to be *somewhere* at 2 AM) and cost-sharing.

As for short-distance corridors, states are having difficulty maintaining the service they have now even at current Amtrak funding levels. While some states are interested in increasing their capital investment, particularly if the federal government begins to provide matching amounts, their interest is focused on projects that improve running times and rolling stock.

Moreover, if the long-distance trains disappear, the surviving "network" (three isolated operations) at most would serve 21 states, making doubtful continuation of federal funding for intercity passenger rail. Even if such funding did continue, the cost of running short-distance trains likely would increase due to loss of shared revenues from connecting, long-distance passengers, and loss of cost-sharing opportunities for common stations and other facilities.

The DOT plan is not a solution, but a Trojan Horse that, if implemented, will mean the end of much if not all intercity passenger rail. ■

VERMONT SENATORS VOW TO FIGHT BUSH RAIL PLAN

The Brattleboro Reformer *posted the following by Howard Weiss-Tisman on its website July 30.*

Brattleboro—With the ink still wet on a Bush administration proposal to decrease federal funding of Amtrak and force state governments to manage the nation's rail system, Vermont transportation officials were trying to understand how it could affect service in the state.

Vermont's U.S. senators, however, were clear that the administration is heading down the wrong track.

Charlie Miller, manager of the Agency of Transportation Rail Program, said Vermont's rail service is complicated because the tracks are owned by private companies, while Amtrak runs the service. He also said there are separate rail bills in the House and Senate, and it will be a while before a national agenda is set.

But Senator Patrick Leahy, D-Vt, went straight to the point: "The Bush administration's proposal for Amtrak reflects the White House's lack of a strong commitment to having a national passenger rail system." He added that even Vermont, whose finances are in relatively good shape, would have trouble coming up with the new funds to pay for a national rail system.

Senator James Jeffords, I-Vt, believes the Bush proposal would hurt the nation's passenger rail system. "The senator believes the administration's position is unrealistic in a time when states are struggling with deficits," said press secretary Diane Derby. "They need the federal government's help and instead the federal government is asking states to put out more money, and the states simply can't afford it." ■

FROM THE PORTLAND PRESS HERALD

A plan being floated by the Bush administration to break up Amtrak over the next six years would not make it better: Rail passenger service will always need federal subsidies.

Trying to privatize it and turn portions of its funding over to the states is not the standard that is applied to automobiles, buses, trucks and airplanes. Highways and airports already receive far more government dollars than are charged to their users in tolls and fees.

While some rail freight lines are "profitable," they too benefit from subsidies for trackage, equipment and facilities.

The administration, though, is planning to make states pay more of Amtrak's costs and turn the rail operation into three firms: a private passenger service running under contract with the states; a service to operate and maintain passenger operations in the Northeast Corridor; and a government company keeping the Amtrak name and its rights to use freight tracks.

As Senator Olympia Snowe noted, the plan would turn the current national network into "a patchwork system of different short-haul routes between the biggest American cities." That's not what Congress envisioned when it created the system in 1970.

Both Representative Tom Allen and Senator Susan Collins also expressed serious doubt that states, most of which are trying to cover deficits, could afford any substantial passenger rail subsidies on their own.

What is needed is a clear-eyed estimation of the level of cost for providing passenger rail service that will lure people out of their autos and away from planes.

Rail service can be competitive for short trips (up to 500 miles) where timing is comparable with other forms of transportation. Then rail, with its environmental, safety and convenience advantages, can provide the alternative service that the nation requires.

MEMO

FROM AMTRAK PRESIDENT DAVID GUNN TO HIS BOARD OF DIRECTORS REGARDING THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION PLAN

We have reviewed the administration's proposed Passenger Rail Investment Reform Act of 2003, and I believe you should be aware of its implications. The timelines in the bill start with passage of the legislation and extend for six years.

The board is given six months to prepare a transfer plan. This requires creating three independent companies:

- Residual Amtrak
- Passenger services operating company
- Infrastructure company

Obviously, the plan requires:

- Organization charts
- Staffing levels
- Budgets

Each company would require the creation of separate overhead functions:

- President
- Human Resources
- Labor Relations
- Finance
- CFO
- Controller
- Treasurer
- Payroll
- Legal
- Diversity
- Procurement

At the end of the first year, the transition must be complete and the companies incorporated, which would require articles of incorporation, by-laws, changes in board structure, etc.

Also at the end of the first year you would have to have contracts for service to have been negotiated between the entities. This is a very complex undertaking.

Simultaneously and by the end of year one, a proposal for an interstate compact for service and maintenance of the Northeast Corridor would have to be presented to the eight Northeast states and the District of Columbia. This arrangement would in essence be controlled by the DOT through a new Northeast Corridor Compact Commission. The legislation is vague as to what will occur if the Compact is not formed.

At the beginning of year two, there would be three companies:

- Residual Amtrak
- Passenger Services Corporation
- Infrastructure Corporation

The legislation provides for the federal government to fund capital grants to overcome deferred maintenance in year three to six, but only if the Northeast Corridor Compact is formed.

It is not clear who would advocate for the ongoing funds necessary to run service and the costs for the creation of these new entities. All of this occurs with a $50,000 voluntary severance available to existing Amtrak employees.

I think you can appreciate the enormity of the task you would be given. You will be attempting to run a railroad, which is in serious physical difficulty. There is apparently no attempt to address deferred maintenance until year three. You will be losing skilled hourly workers and a significant portion of your management to the severance arrangements of resignations. At the same time, you will be attempting to fill key existing vacancies and newly created positions in the surviving companies; and you will be continuing to address existing financial control issues while you tear apart the Finance Department.

In essence, you will be responsible for the operation, safety, and reliability of a company whose assets are deteriorating, and whose organization is in turmoil.

There are many other provisions in the proposed legislation concerning:

- Long-distance routes
- Liquidating real estate
- Debt
- Exclusive Rights
- Common Stock
- Preferred Stock

These provisions too are fraught with problems, but I will not bore you with a discussion of these because they are largely irrelevant, given the impracticality of organizing the corporate structures to accomplish the threshold legislative goal of breaking up Amtrak into three separate new entities.

In all my 39 years in the industry, I have never seen anything like this proposed legislation. The closest parallel would be the privatization of British Rail and the separation of their operations and infrastructure maintenance. In that case, it took years to accomplish and it consumed billions of dollars in government funding. We know the results of this endeavor.

You have been given one year and no money. I realize, too, that this is only one of what will be several legislative proposals concerning the future of Amtrak and rail passenger service. I also know that none of this will happen overnight. I am proceeding to carry out the capital and operating budget which you approved.

...HALF A LOAF *(continued from page 1)*

reaping these gains as you read this.

Looked at from a different perspective, towns in New Hampshire and southern Maine now realizing an increase in tourism dollars, real estate values, local bus service and other venues since the train began serving them in December 2001, lost eight years' worth of money they could have earned if the Downeaster had been allowed to begin operating in 1993, which was the agreed-upon start-up date.

Towns currently losing out on their share of the economic pie include not just Freeport, Brunswick, Lewiston, Auburn, and adjacent, smaller villages, but all towns farther north along the *already existing tracks:* Bath, Wiscasset, Rockland, Augusta, Waterville, Newport, Bangor, and others.

A passenger train is an economic tool that pulls in as much as $16 million per year to regions it serves. As of December 2002, Amtrak employed 35 persons in Maine at a combined wage of $1,947 million.

Passenger rail service is increasing Maine's profits while decreasing traffic congestion and automotive emissions (Keep in mind two railroad tracks have the hourly carrying capacity of 16 highway lanes). It brings revenue without sprawl. It must continue on this remarkable path without the delay that will ensue if the MDOT cannot find another $1 million to complete the funding that is needed for expansion of passenger rail.

On September 2, I and TrainRiders' Executive Committee, comprised of Bruce Sleeper, Valerie Lamont and Andrew Highland, met with Governor Baldacci, the Maine Commissioner of Transportation and key members of the NNEPRA (rail authority) to discuss this matter of additional funding for the Downeaster extension to Freeport and Brunswick, as well as ways to decrease the travel time between Portland and Boston, to establish better connections between North and South Stations, and to redirect marketing to attract travelers TO Maine.

—Wayne E. Davis

HIGH-SPEED RAIL LINE COULD FILL TRANSIT GAP

WHEN A BRASH, JUG-EARED CITY COUNCILMAN first proposed spending public money to turn a little used racetrack south of Atlanta into an airport, some taxpayers were livid. Naysayers—most who had never seen an airplane up close, much less ridden in one—were convinced it would be a colossal, money-wasting flop. The year was 1929.

The flat, dusty parcel deep in the sticks cost $94,500, a princely sum at the time. And the councilman, later mayor, was William Berry Hartsfield, the father of the airport that would eventually bear his name.

Despite some strident objections to the idea back then, the benefits of Mayor Hartsfield's prescience are abundantly evident today. The gradual emergence of Hartsfield as one of the nation's largest and busiest airports has generated billions of dollars in jobs and annual revenue for Georgia while providing a gateway to the rest of the world. Moreover, it cemented Atlanta as the undisputed center of regional trade and commerce.

Mayor Hartsfield's uncanny vision lighted the way for successive generations of officials who also understood the necessity of risking short-term political opposition, even in unsparing fiscal climates, to secure the greater interests of the city, region and the state.

That uncommon brand of leadership must be summoned once again—this time to muster support for the creation of a high-speed rail line serving Georgia.

The concept has languished because of a lack of money (and commitment), but it's undeniably the missing link in a transportation chain dominated by auto and air travel, which are strained to the limit.

Booking a flight may still be the best ticket for going long distances, and cars are preferable for relatively short commutes or leisurely family vacations. But for medium-length trips of between 300 and 500 miles, commercial airlines are often prohibitively expensive, and driving isn't always a convenient option.

High-speed rail represents the best opportunity to fill that gap.

While still mostly on the drawing board, high-speed rail is no pipe dream. Transportation experts acknowledge that America cannot possibly lay enough asphalt or build enough new airport runways to keep pace with the nation's ever-increasing transportation demands. Predictably, Georgia's network of local roads and interstate highways system has become a victim of its own success. The preponderance of car travel has contributed to a state of perpetual gridlock in many cities and led to intractable air pollution problems.

The airline industry, meanwhile, struggles. While its executives point to the dropoff in air travel after September 11, the industry's problems are more profound. Its labor costs are high, and the old hub-and-spoke system is antiquated. High-speed rail proponents say trips of 3 hours or less represent the "sweet spot" for a new breed of traveler who wishes to avoid the hassles of flying but still needs to reach his destination in a timely fashion.

In March, U.S. Rep. Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.), eight other members of the Georgia delegation and 17 of their colleagues sent a letter urging the chair of the House Appropriations Committee to earmark $10 million for further study of the Southeast high-speed rail corridor. But its staunchest supporters are business leaders who have formed a coalition of 15 chambers of commerce to press for the development of high-speed rail. To buttress their case, they point to early revenue predictions that show the Southeast high-speed route could eventually be self-sustaining.

None of this can be accomplished on a shoestring. Creating a new patchwork of 10 high-speed rail lines will require more than $100 billion of public tax dollars over 20 years. And, once it is built, participating states would also have to pick up an equitable share of funding to buy equipment and keep the system running.

But the estimates for high-speed rail pale in comparison with the approximately $33 billion in federal subsidies dedicated for highways each year and the $15 billion for airports, not counting the loans and bailouts extended to the airlines since September 11.

Governor Sonny Perdue and members of the state's congressional delegation ought to follow the bold example of the past laid down by Mayor Hartsfield by ensuring that a high-speed rail line is part of Georgia's future.

(Cheers to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution for the above editorial which appeared in its July 27 issue. We applaud the economic and environmental sense behind it—and the italics are ours.) ■

NO CELL PHONES IN MARYLAND "QUIET CARS"

Morning trains to Washington, D.C, on the Maryland Rail Commuter (MARC) Camden and Brunswick lines are the latest ones to be assigned "quiet cars."

MARC began designating so-called quiet cars on some trains last January. Passengers on these cars, usually the last car on a train, are asked to turn off cell phones and pagers and avoid loud conversations.

US DOT FUNDS FOR SEATTLE LIGHT RAIL

After a two-year audit, the US DOT has given a clean bill of health to Seattle's Sound Transit for light rail.

The report concludes that the transit agency has resolved all of the identified issues for a proposed 14-mile line to run between Seattle and the Sea-Tac airport area, and it clears the way for a $500 million Full-Funding Grant Agreement.

Near the end of 2000, engineering estimates for Central Link had grown $1.1 billion beyond estimates and Sound Transit's executive directors had resigned. Although the FTA had previously authorized the grant, concerns raised by then-incoming House of Representatives members prompted the DOT Inspector General to order FTA to delay awarding it.

Although the alignment will stop 10 miles short of Sea-Tac Airport, Sound Transit and airport officials have agreed to a conceptual vision for a light rail station next to the airport's terminal and parking garage that will integrate with the airport's expansion plans.

By June 2005, airport officials expect to be far enough along with their work for Sound Transit to bégin preliminary engineering, environmental review, and final design of the airport extension.

COOL BRITANNIA AT 208 MPH

A EUROSTAR TRAIN SET has now established a new British rail speed record of 208 mph on the high-speed line that connects London with the Channel Tunnel. No passengers were on board.

The record was the result of new track alignment on the British side of the London to Paris route and will cut 20 minutes from the 2 hour, 55 minute running time. The new schedule is expected to begin in September.

While British enthusiasts were delighted with the new record, it falls short of the French TGV, which has attained speeds of more than 300 mph, and the Japanese bullet train, which has nudged 345 mph in speed trials.

(Other trains in the UK breeze along at "only" 100 to 125 mph. Hard to believe that our DOWNEASTER, despite the federal Surface Transportation Board decision—handed down three times, in 1999, in 2001 and again this year—that it may proceed at speeds of up to 80 mph, is still tethered to 59 mph. Something is rotten in Denmark.

OREGONIANS TRY TO SAVE TROUBLED CASCADES SERVICE

WITH STATE LEGISLATORS ON THE VERGE OF DISCONTINUING THE TWICE-DAILY STATE-SUBSIDIZED TRAINS BETWEEN EUGENE AND PORTLAND, rail advocates have risen to say they consider the service a priority. More than 1,300 Oregonians have written to their state legislators to support the $10 million subsidy that keeps the popular route running.

The service started in 1994 with a single round-trip train in addition to Amtrak's Seattle-to-Los Angeles Coast Starlight service.

Oregon transportation officials and rail advocates say that if the Legislature cuts or eliminates the funding, other regional services will buy the Spanish-built Talgo trains that serve the Willamette Valley—but it may take years to re-build the program.

Senator Kurt Schrader, who serves as the Senate's top budget official, said he likes the subsidy idea but that the most the Legislature is likely to come up with is half of the $10 million Governor Ted Kulongoski had called for. That would mean either funding the two trains only for one of the next two years or reducing the service to one round-trip. "It's a good thing, but these are tough times," Schrader said. "We have no general fund for either of them."

WASHINGTON STATE KEEPS ITS PORTION OF CASCADES

THE WASHINGTON PORTION OF THE CASCADES IS IN FINE SHAPE, rail advocates having convinced state legislators to increase funding for both capital and operations over the next several years.

Despite the massive campaign now underway in Oregon for its part of the corridor, the Legislature has passed a preliminary budget with no funding for rail.

The popular rail service, which is something of a national treasure, will continue from Vancouver, BC, to Seattle and from Seattle to Portland, OR, even without funding from Oregon or British Columbia. (It is hoped that with Vancouver having been awarded the 2010 Winter Olympics, Canada will begin investing in intercity rail on their side of the border, allowing more service between Washington State and British Columbia.)

Service on the Cascades is a sellout on many weekends, with highly satisfied customers and good on time performance. "Cascadians" were pleased the Bush administration singled out their train as an affirmative national model, although like most rail advocates they felt the plan was lacking.

They prefer the proposal of the four GOP senators (see *Republican Senators Counter Bush Plan*, page 2). As Lloyd Flem of the Washington Association of Railroad Passengers put it, "The Bush proposal cited no source of funding, essentially eliminated the long-distance trains, and depended upon the goodwill of congressional appropriators, including the profoundly anti-rail Representative Ernest Istook (R-OK)...Like highways, air travel, and commercial waterways, we believe intercity passenger rail is at least in part a federal responsibility."

It is hoped the Oregon Senate will put the $10 million for two years of Portland-Eugene Cascades operation on their budget, which is due "any day." The governor, who supports the funding, has proposed that about $5 million

(continued on page 7)

NEW HAMPSHIRE REPORT

BOTH DOVER AND EXETER TICKET SALES AT THE QUIK-TRAKS SET RECORDS IN JUNE, ONLY TO BREAK THEM AGAIN IN JULY. Durham sales were down due to the University of New Hampshire being in summer session. *(By the time you read this, Durham tickets will be giving Dover and Exeter a run for their money.)*

In the meantime, the Exeter Station Committee added bursts of color to the station via landscaping with flowers and shrubs. Volunteer Rod Hersey did the hard labor. And Don Briselden, Bob Kief and the woodworking and maintenance department of Phillips Exeter Academy crafted and installed a wonderful kiosk.

...AROUND

(continued from page 6)

from an ODOT slush fun be allocated for the trains. This means the legislature only needs to come up with the other five.

In the past, Amtrak has "helped out" in Oregon, particularly when the powerful and greatly respected Mark Hatfield was their US Senator. Washington state actually helps fund the trains across the Columbia River (state border) ten miles to Portland, but it does not assist in service south of Portland. Portland-Eugene is what would disappear without Oregon state funding.

AMTRAK JAVA

Amtrak has made an agreement to offer Green Mountain Coffee on its trains nationwide. The coffee—originally introduced to passengers on Amtrak's Northeast Corridor in 1996—will be served in dining, lounge and café cars. Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Inc., is headquartered in Waterbury, Vermont. ■

...REPUBLICAN SENATORS

(continued from page 2)

intercity passenger rail service, minimize federal subsidies and promote competition among railroad operators.

Lott was critical of that plan. "If after 2 1/2 years, that's all they can come up with, they ought to be ashamed," he said. "It is guaranteed to fail." Congress only has September to consider Amtrak plans before the budget year ends.

The administration has said it will give Amtrak no more than $900 million for the budget year that begins October 1 unless Amtrak is restructured. Amtrak has warned it needs at least $1.8 billion to keep the trains running.

Hutchison said she believes a compromise of about $1.4 billion "will be sufficient for Amtrak." Like the administration plan, Hutchison's bill would replace Amtrak as the owner of 366 miles in the Northeast. Elsewhere in the country, Amtrak runs primarily over tracks owned by freight railroads.

Also like the Bush plan, her bill envisions letting private companies eventually bid to take over some of Amtrak's routes. Hutchison first would give Amtrak a chance to prove it can provide "reasonable on-time performance" (defined as an 80 percent rate of on-time arrivals) on a given route.

The Senate bill would create an independent nonprofit corporation that would issue $48 billion in bonds to raise money for capital projects such as building bypasses around sections of track where freight traffic regularly delays Amtrak trains. The government would give bondholders tax credits, so the corporation would not have to pay interest.

States would be responsible for 20 percent of the cost of rail projects. Hutchison's office estimated the entity would raise $40 billion over six years for rail projects, including money from states. ■

...TRANSPORTATION LABOR

(continued from page 2)

an already anemic railroad and make scapegoats of Amtrak's 20,000 workers. We will not permit this debate to ignore these employees, who make over 20 percent less than those in freight and commuter rail and who have sacrificed for years to keep the trains running. Their needs must not be forgotten as we debate Amtrak's future.

"We call upon Congress to reject this misguided proposal." ■

LEVI STRAUSS HORSE AD WITHDRAWN

Washington, D.C.—The Operation Lifesaver organization, which promotes awareness of safety around railroads, especially at grade crossings and for pedestrians, applauded action taken last month by Levi Strauss & Co. to pull from television its ad in which, in a fantasy, a woman rides her steed down the tracks toward a train before leaping to safety.

The ad was created for Levi Strauss by Bartle Bogle Hergarty.

Operation Lifesaver teamed with its highway and rail safety partners to petition Strauss to remove the ad because it could encourage risky behavior around trains. OL's coalition letter cited figures showing more than 5,000 pedestrians have been killed since 1990 while trespassing on railroad tracks and property.

(Levi Strauss was taken to task a half-dozen years ago for an ad that showed a young lady walking toward the tracks, removing her jeans, and placing them across the rail in front of an oncoming train. Presto! She has a new pair of cut-offs.)

We have lived with the dangers of cars for a hundred years, and every child knows not to cross the street without looking both ways. But fast-moving trains have not been part of the scene for a generation. They may appear novel and romantic to the young—including the youthful contingent at ad agencies.

Abandoned rail tracks used by hikers serve to feed the legend, as who doesn't love biking on them? Some of them lead through beautiful countryside. *(Here we pause for our own commercial: the Downeaster whisks travelers through dazzling countryside on a track that is used so much, it hums all day long.)* More tracks than not are in regular use, but many people—especially the young—do not realize just how fast a train goes.

We thank Operation Lifesaver for its quick thinking and its powers of persuasion.

AMTRAK RIDERSHIP SETS RECORDS

Washington, D.C., Aug. 13—Amtrak reported the best month for ridership in its 32-year history. The record-setting month comes on the heels of Amtrak's strongest April, May, and June ridership totals ever.

Long-distance routes with significant increases include the Texas Eagle (up 49.8%), Sunset Limited (up 39.2%), Silver Meteor (up 30.5%), City of New Orleans (up 21%), Auto Train (up 19.3%) and Empire Builder (up 13.8%).

Ridership increases include the Pacific Surfliners in southern California, Hiawatha service between Chicago and Milwaukee, and regional trains in the Northeast.

The highest increase came on the Pennsylvanian, which had its ridership surge an average of 98% since February 10, when Amtrak truncated the train's route at Pittsburgh on the west (from Chicago) and changed its schedule. The train now operates in a faster daylight time slot between New York and Pittsburgh. ■

AMERICANS DRIVE 2.3 TRILLION MILES

The global passenger car fleet reached 531 million in 2002, with our country claiming one-quarter of the figure.

In 2000, Americans drove 128 million cars 2.3 trillion miles. We consumed more than 8 million barrels of fuel per day. We emitted 302 million tons of carbon. We killed 42,000 drivers and their passengers.

The average car in the U.S. travels 10% more per year than a car in the United Kingdom, 50% more than one in Germany, and almost 200% more than a car in Japan. ■

Community Spirit Opens Wells Station

CULMINATING 10 YEARS OF COOPERATION BETWEEN LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS, the Wells Regional Transportation Center opened in June. The Maine Turnpike Authority, which designed and built the center, turned operation and management over to the Town of Wells and the Wells Chamber of Commerce.

The center is handicapped accessible, offers vending and newspaper machines, and has a 201-space parking lot. It features an ATM machine, pay phones, benches, and a bicycle rack. *It is served by Amtrak, Vermont Transit Bus Lines, taxis, limousines, trolleys and an airport shuttle.* Volunteers organized by the Chamber of Commerce and TrainRiders/Northeast comprise the staff.

It is altogether fitting that Turnpike Authority Chairman Samuel M. Zaitlin offered the following comment:

"This project is proof that governments and private entities can share a vision and work together to make things happen. It requires determined, resourceful and dedicated people—and there were plenty of them involved."

Dignitaries at the **Wells Transportation Center Grand Opening**, from left to right, Daniel Webster, Roland Lavallee, John Melrose, DOT Commissioner David Coles, Doug Volk, Joe Sheehan, Lucien Gosselin, Unknown, Wayne Davis, David McElwain, Sam Zaitlin, Greg Nadeau, Tony Cilluffo, Jon Carter, Harland Goodwin, Barbara Page, Paul Violette, Dick Cole, Brett Mariner, John Englert, Moe Steel, Rep. Ron Collins, Gillian Ramsdell, Darcy Ramsdell.

WANTED—Administrative assistant—TrainRiders/ Northeast. Make your own hours, come in when you please. Answer phones, help the multitudes, maintain semblance of order, be of good cheer. TNE is an equal opportunity non-wage-paying employer. Occasional free sandwich. Strong advocacy for passenger rail a must.

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