

**NEXT ISSUE:  
EVERYTHING  
YOU EVER  
WANTED TO KNOW  
ABOUT THE  
DOWNEASTER  
AND ITS  
OPERATIONS**

**DON'T FORGET  
TO VOTE  
NOVEMBER 2!**

# TRAINRIDER

THE NEWSLETTER OF TRAINRIDERS/NORTHEAST



## Chairman's Comments

Submitted by Wayne E. Davis

Sorry for the delay this quarter, but our long-time printer has closed his shop and we've been trying to find a reasonably priced alternative. My two week search has revealed that our newsletter is going to cost 20%-30% more to produce. With that in mind, I'm asking everyone who receives the newsletter to please bring their membership dues current. We have a number of folks on our list who obviously enjoy our quarterly newsletter, but somehow have not focused on the fact that TrainRiders/Northeast has no means of financial support other than membership dues. Last year at this time we were close to not having enough money to pay our fixed expenses such as rent, phone and computer connections, various insurances and license fees, postal and office supply costs. If it hadn't been for the generosity of one of our Maine/Florida members and another from Maine we'd have been forced to cut back on our activities and maybe even be forced to operate out of someone's garage! Please renew your dues so that we can continue our efforts to keep Amtrak's Downeaster train running and holding bureaucrats at bay who seem

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## AN OLD TRACK FINDS NEW FANS

When a moose was spotted from the Rockland-bound train, word spread quickly, car to car, and passengers turned to scan the marsh on the inland side of the tracks.

Most missed the moose, which moved deeper into the woods. But there were few complaints on the train, only the third passenger trip east of Portland in 30 years, with so much else to see: eagles' nests and osprey, fields of heather and goldenrod, clam diggers silhouetted against distant sand flats.

The train's top attraction may have been the view of what it spared its riders, the August traffic inching east on overloaded Route 1.

The train service was promoted as part of the Maine Lobster Festival, which drew thousands to Rockland. The experiment, planned by the state and operated by Maine Eastern Railroad, was meant to make a case for a permanent service expansion. The \$40 round-trip tickets, which included lobster festival admission, sold out in three weeks. The train will continue to carry passengers on weekends through October.

"People love trains," said Patricia Douglas, spokeswoman for the Northern New England

Passenger Rail Authority. "We could have sold 200 more tickets."

As passengers lined up for the first 7:30 AM departure, one couple stood nearby with a cardboard sign that read, "Need 2 tickets." Their gamble paid off when train officials took pity and allowed them to ride in the dining car.

### One-day Weekend Excursions, Through October 2004

The top speed was 50 mph; the train will go faster when track upgrades are finished. Views ranged from backyard trampolines, clotheslines, and gazebos to wild coastline, with shady woods giving way to sparkling salt marsh. At dozens of road crossings, train-watchers gathered to wave and snap pictures of the twin green-and-yellow locomotives and six vintage cars, which date to the 1940s and 1950s but have been updated with plush seating and climate controls.

Said one passenger, "It's relaxing. Route 1 is a killer. It takes a half-hour to go through one little town. Said another, "When you take the train, you don't have to fight the traffic." Waiting in line to disembark, one man said, "If this was an airplane, everyone would be pushing. Here, everyone's happy."

—Excerpted from The Boston Globe, August 8.

Written by Jenna Russell

## AND NOW THE MAINE VIEWPOINT OF THE ABOVE TRAIN SERVICE

Trains rolled north and south, converging in Brunswick, where Gov. John Baldacci tooted the state's horn in promoting seasonal passenger excursions as a way to push tourism and the economy in Maine. The rides, between Portland and Rockland, were by invitation, and passengers included state, city and town officials and other dignitaries. "It's great to be here with



two trains," said the governor. "It's important to have a balanced transportation system and trains are part of that."

"This day reminds us that Maine is on track for a future of convenient, accessible rail transportation," Sen. Olympia Snowe said in greetings delivered by state Rep. Deborah McNeil of

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**TWO OPINIONS  
WITH WHICH WE AGREE:**

**DON'T KILL AMTRAK**

PRESIDENT BUSH AND SOME OF THE REPUBLICANS IN THE US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ARE DETERMINED TO KILL AMTRAK, the national network of passenger trains. This is a wrong-headed move the Congress as a whole ought to do its best to thwart.

Last week, before going on a long and undeserved vacation, the House Appropriations Committee approved a funding bill without making and change in the so-called "kill Amtrak" funding level approved earlier by a subcommittee headed by Rep. Earnest Istook Jr., a Republican from Oklahoma.

The committee approved \$900 million for Amtrak next year. About \$1.6 billion is needed to keep the operation going for the whole year. Istook was quoted that Amtrak would have to be reformed before the attitude of his committee would change. By that, he evidently means the cancellation of Amtrak's long-distance trains. This would leave four isolated "mini-networks" serving just 21 states, according to the National Association of Railroad Passengers.

For the umpteenth time, passenger rail is a small but important part of the national transportation system, and its subsidy is far less than what the other systems get. The rail network, spotty as it is, should be maintained and expanded as an alternative to air travel, which some people cannot do and which may be interrupted by terrorists. It should not be cut back even more.

—Albany Democrat Herald, July 28

**STILL ALIVE**

AMTRAK OFFICIALS SAY TRAINS WILL STOP BY FEBRUARY if more money is not approved.

Supporters of Amtrak, as happens almost every year, need to contact their congressional representatives to urge them to provide adequate funding to keep passenger rail service alive one more year.

Last week the House Appropriations

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**AMTRAK UPDATES FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN**

Washington—RELEASING THE ANNUAL UPDATE, AMTRAK PRESIDENT DAVID L. GUNN and other railroad industry representatives made recommendations to address the growing needs and challenges of intercity rail service.

The plan has three components dealing with the existing national system, state-initiated intercity corridors and the national freight network. The plan states that Amtrak is making steady progress on the existing system to achieve its goals.

The corridor strategy includes state proposals supported by Amtrak for specific passenger rail corridor development. The freight strategy contains recommendations to protect and upgrade key facilities owned by freight railroads. The corridor and freight recommendations require federal matching investment programs to meet these goals.

"The update to the five-year plan continues the effort we began last year to provide specific and precise details on exactly how every dollar is to be spent to bring the existing Amtrak system up to a state-of-good-repair," said Gunn. "However, states and the freight railroads face serious problems of capacity, congestion and reliability, and there is a growing consensus within the rail industry that we must come together to address these challenges."

To support the existing system, the five-year strategic plan calls for federal funding averaging about \$1.6 billion. The plan holds the line on federal support for operating purposes each year at \$570 million. The majority of federal support is for capital improvements to the existing system and will be used to bring facilities and equipment up to a state-of-good-repair.

Those appearing with Gunn at a news conference were Frank Busalacchi, Wisconsin Transportation Secretary; Karen Rae, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation Director; Gene Skoropowski, General Manager, Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority (California); Patrick Simmons, North Carolina DOT Rail Director; and Ken Uznanski, Washington State Passenger Rail Director.

Passengers want better service, too. Amtrak ridership on these corridors is growing from 17 million in 1999 to a projected 21 million in 2004, while competing for increasingly congested capacity with expanding commuter rail services.

Working with the states, Amtrak evaluated the corridors' readiness for immediate development, with those meeting all of the study's criteria designated as Tier I corridors. Corridors designated as Tier II met more than half the criteria.

The elements of the criteria are a long-term master plan, market revenue forecast, operating expense forecast, infrastructure investment plan, equipment investment host railroad acceptance, agreement to fund a 20% match and agreement to cover any added operating deficit. It was stressed that the tier designations are not a rating of relative importance, but an analysis of the stage of development.

The eight Tier I corridors are Philadelphia-Harrisburg, PA; Raleigh-Charlotte, NC; Chicago, IL—St. Louis, MO; Chicago, IL—Milwaukee—Madison, WI; San Diego—Los Angeles—San Luis Obispo, CA; Bakersfield—Sacramento/Oakland, CA; San Jose—Sacramento, CA; and Eugene—Portland, OR—Seattle, WA.

The four Tier II corridors are Boston, MA—Portland, ME; Washington, DC—Richmond, VA; Chicago, IL—Detroit, MI; and Seattle, WA—Vancouver, BC.

Amtrak recommended the federal government also consider a freight investment-matching program combining federal funds with those of the states and/or the freight railroads for key segments of the freight rail network. The investments would not necessarily be limited to lines on which Amtrak operates, but would be based on a number of factors, such as congestion relief, benefit to local freight shippers and cost-effectiveness.

"This recommendation is a work-in-progress that deserves further study," said Gunn. "However, it is clear that if the railroads are having trouble carrying the

**"...The whole network would be jeopardized if we are underfunded, suffer a major system failure or some other calamity beyond our control."**

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## NARP SUPPORTS AMTRAK'S REVISED FIVE YEAR PLAN

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS ANNOUNCED ITS SUPPORT FOR AMTRAK'S REVISED FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN. This year's plan contains appendices highlighting challenges confronting the rail freight industry, and evaluating the "readiness" of corridors for further development.

NARP Executive Director Ross B. Capon said, "Amtrak has done an important service by quantifying unsustainable rail freight industry trends—growth in ton-miles while track capacity is reduced—and highlighting specific track segments at risk. Also, by identifying eight 'readiness criteria' for short-distance passenger corridor development, and 'Tier I' and 'Tier II' corridors where states have completed all or most of the criteria, Amtrak highlights the need for the federal government to step forward as a funding partner for those states."

It is important to note that this plan does not call for the elimination of any Amtrak rail service. Rather, the plan

identifies track segments where Amtrak service is threatened due to possible track abandonment or downgrading by owning freight railroads. One major segment is the 703-mile BNSF line between Newton and Dodge City, Kansas; La Junta and Trinidad, Colorado; and Albuquerque. This is a vital part of Amtrak's Southwest Chief route, but also serves as a safety valve for the freight network when BNSF's main route via Amarillo, Texas, is blocked. Amtrak President and CEO David L. Gunn noted, "When you don't make your cost of capital, you can't afford to maintain redundancy."

The Corridor development and rail freight issues are related. Following Gunn's presentation, state officials from Washington, North Carolina and California made presentations about what they have already accomplished, and future plans that depend on federal funding. Eugene K. Skoropowski, Managing Director of the Capitol Corridor (Sacra-

mento-Bay Area), noted that state investment in track capacity motivated by passenger concerns also has increased track capacity for freight operations. Conversely, he said that freight railroads in California had invested \$95 million in infrastructure on their passenger corridors.

Bill Schafer of Norfolk Southern endorsed Gunn's statements of concern about the rail freight industry, referring to the "proverbial canary in the coal mine"—that is, Amtrak delays are the most visible sign to people outside the freight railroad's industry of its serious congestion problems.

NARP calls on interested parties to use this information to garner support and grow interest in expanding corridor opportunities and preserving the existing national network system, and calls on Congress and the Bush administration to develop a meaningful transportation policy that addresses the railroad crisis.

—NARP press release

AMTRAK'S REVENUES HAVE BEEN STRONGER THAN EXPECTED, and operating expenses have been lower, so the railroad's financial stability has improved, said its president, David Gunn. But rebuilding efforts on track that the railroad owns have increased delays, as have equipment failures and congestion on freight railroads. Mr. Gunn also said the system runs the risk of "major asset failure" that would be extremely disruptive to service, because it relies on very old bridges and electrical systems, he said.

"We're approaching the moment of truth for Amtrak in many respects, because the physical conditions have to be addressed," he said, singling out four drawbridges in Connecticut and the electrical system that supplies the overhead wires in Penn Station in New York.

Joined by state officials from California, Washington State, Wisconsin, Virginia and North Carolina, Mr. Gunn called on Congress to provide \$3 billion for a five-year demonstration project intended to improve rail service over existing short-haul routes. Under the proposal, the federal government would cover 80 percent of the capital costs and the states 20 percent, to put rail on an equal financial footing with highway projects.

## AMTRAK CHIEF SAYS FINANCES BETTER, DELAYS WORSE

States and others have made many proposals for high-speed rail corridors, many involving new rights-of-way and new equipment. "There have been scores of proposals but they've always been in the tens of billions of dollars and it scares people off," said Eugene Skoropowski, a California official in charge of the rail corridor from the San Francisco area to Sacramento. The new ones would involve relatively modest projects to cut bottlenecks, improve signals and add sidings and double-track in some areas, and would generally involve running trains at less than 80 mph.

At the FRA, Steven W. Kulm, a spokesman, said: "In general we endorse the proposition of changing the funding system to more equate how it is with highways and transit systems." That would mean states choosing the routes and bearing the expense of subsidizing operations, with the federal government contributing to construction expenses. But he added that the

Bush administration had not proposed any percentage division in capital expense. The railroad has increased the pace of capital improvements but has been slowed to some extent by the withered state of the industry that makes passenger rail equipment, and by Amtrak's own ability to deploy equipment and people, Mr. Gunn said.

A side-effect of track work, including replacing rail and installing concrete ties, has been more delays.

In the 12 months that ended Sept. 30, 2003, delay minutes reached just over 3 million, up from about 2.85 million in the previous year and about 2.7 million the year before that, according to Amtrak. Reconstruction work on the tracks owned by the railroad, failures on track owned by Amtrak and problems on the freight rail lines on which Amtrak operates all grew over the period. Outside the Northeast, Amtrak trains operate on lines owned by the freight railroads.

—Excerpted from the New York Times, June 30, by Matthew L. Wald





## AMTRAK BACKING OFF PLAN TO MOVE NYC STATION

Amtrak is apparently backing off from its previous plans to move its New York City operations out of the old Pennsylvania Station and into the newly proposed Farley Post Office building just blocks away. Saying that it does not want to pay any rent, Amtrak has cast a shadow on the development of the new complex that would be named after former NY Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. While alive Moynihan almost single handedly trumpeted the cause for a new station by inserting special funding measures into appropriations that would benefit Amtrak.

Amtrak already owns Penn Station, which is a traveler's nightmare. The once glorious station, which has seen better days, is used by NJ Transit and the Long Island Railroad as well. As the gateway into New York City it is an embarrassment for the railroad. The need for the move into the Farley building, which has also been applauded by preservationists, is long overdue for Amtrak's busiest terminal in the USA. Amtrak's stubborn resistance on this issue is disappointing after years of petitioning Congress and the state of New York for financial support.

The Empire State Development Corporation, which is overseeing the project has accused Amtrak of reneging on the project, saying that Amtrak has not lived up to the bargain spelled out in a 1999 memo. The Development Corporation is now making overtures to NJ Transit to make the move. NJ Transit is headed up by George Warrington, the former CEO of Amtrak who is responsible for brokering the deal five years ago. Amtrak spokesman Cliff Black says that Amtrak pays no rent in Penn Station because it owns the building so why should it pay rent in another space. Development officials note that Amtrak stands to benefit and could easily rent out the space they now occupy at Penn, offsetting any expenditures on the new Farley P. O. space.

Amtrak should come to its senses and stop playing the bluffing game. The bright prospects offered by moving into the architecturally historic and more spacious Farley building will only accrue to Amtrak's long range benefit.

Source: *New York Times*

## A NEW YORK TIMES OP ED FROM JANUARY 1, 1974

I AM A BIT LATE WITH MY RECOMMENDATIONS BUT I HAVE BEEN BUILDING A WHEELBARROW AND THIS HAS TAKEN ALL MY ATTENTION. (It is impossible to buy a good wheelbarrow in stores—if you want one that balances well you must go to work and build it.) Here are my recommendations for 1974:

(1) The rails. Passenger service in the United States should be nationalized. The mouth-to-mouth resuscitation of dying railroads is not going to work, and what the country must have is a sensible rail system designed not for corporate profits but for the transit needs of the people.

Maine, the largest of the New England states, has no passenger service, and the companies are reluctant to restore it because they see no money in it for themselves. Yet the people need the rails and will increasingly need them, now that gas is short. The government should run the passenger trains and pick up the bill for losses where and if the losses occur. We seem able to transport a man to the moon by rocket but unable to transport a man from Bangor to Boston by rail.

### ...Chairman's Comments

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bent on "tinkering" with the train—not being satisfied that our Downeaster—according to Amtrak surveys—has become one of America's favorite trains. We're in the process of attempting to convince state and federal officials that the existing service should be extended from Portland to Freeport

The writer continues with seven more recommendations, in the following order: the movies, the presidency, the tides, the sun, the atom, the mails, and the motor car. All of them hit the bullseye, but this newsletter has space for only one:

(8) The motor car. The internal combustion engine has had its little day; we should return to the incomparable steam engine, which has only a few moving parts, is quiet, does not pollute, and gives one the sense of flying.

The conclusion notes that the country is "headed downhill all the way—trains not running, tides unharnessed, mails overburdened with duplicate copies of seed catalogues ...and movie companies luring youngsters to dirty pictures by putting an X on them. Downhill all the way. You can get your mind off it by building a wheelbarrow, but you can't change the direction without some drastic alterations. I'm afraid of the human race's running out of energy, but I sometimes despair of its ever doing anything in a sensible manner."

Described by the Times as "a Maine countryman, essayist and poet long affiliated with *The New Yorker*," he is (but you have already guessed correctly) E. B. White.

and Brunswick ASAP to connect with the Maine Eastern RR's train service between Brunswick and Rockland. We also continue our push for extensions to Augusta as well as Lewiston/Auburn—all the while beating the drum for continued improvements to the Downeaster service including higher speed and additional daily trips. **Stay with us—nothing can happen without your help.** —W.E.D.

## WHERE JOHN KERRY STANDS ON RAIL

When presidential candidate John Kerry was asked if he would support and fully fund multi-year federal investment in Amtrak that ensures the stability and continuation of Amtrak's national rail passenger operation, he replied: "Yes, I will support a multi-year reauthorization with funding levels equal to or greater than what the Senate proposed for this fiscal year."

When asked if he would oppose legislative proposals designed to break-up and sell-off Amtrak through contracting out or privatization initiatives, he replied: "I will oppose any legislation that would break apart Amtrak or privatize it outright."



## BACKUP OF PASSENGER AND FREIGHT TRAINS IN RICHMOND AND ELSEWHERE

RICHMOND, VA — INCHING ALONG, THE LOCOMOTIVE TOOK A HALF HOUR TO GO EIGHT MILES TO THE NEXT STATION. "I could have ridden my bike," said John Benck, a Richmond-area high school teacher who had just boarded to travel to New York.

Behind the slowdown is a rail yard little known to the public but a familiar headache to rail officials. Each day, more than 50 trains approach CSX Corp.'s Acca Yard, where workers repair locomotives and reroute blocks of freight cars. Many trains slow to a crawl. Others come to a standstill, waiting their turn.

Acca Yard has helped turn Richmond into a rail choke point comparable to highway congestion in the Washington, DC, area. Last year, the yard was among the top five contributors to freight delays in the railroad's north-south corridor.

The problem is not limited to the East. Across the nation, yards and tracks have become congested as the economy has improved, leading to record rail volumes this year. Last month, the U.S. Surface Transportation Board asked CSX and other railroads to explain how they will cope with the expected surge in August (peak shipping season) when holiday goods will join a network already encumbered by a surge of coal, grain, steel and other products.

Acca Yard has no easy solution. It is in the middle of a heavily trafficked route that needs upgrades. The yard, too, is behind the times; it is too small and complicated to handle the extra traffic and workload, said Drew Galloway, senior director of Amtrak's strategic planning department. "It's a busier yard than it ever was, and infrastructure changes were not made," he said. "So there is an awful lot of congestion for Amtrak and CSX."

On average, 40 freight trains chugged through Richmond each day in the first half of 2004, compared to 38 in the year-earlier period. But on busy days, the city could see as many as 65 trains. And many of CSX's trains are getting longer. This year, those hauling general mer-

chandise are pulling an extra five to 10 cars—which can further slow down Acca and other yards.

When train traffic backs up, it causes a ripple effect of delays. CSX's freight trains sometimes have to stop mid-track to relieve crews who have reached the federal maximum they are permitted to work—a 12-hour shift. Until a new crew takes over, the train sits.

As they approach Acca Yard, freight trains slow to speeds of 25 mph or lower. The 18 Amtrak trains that stop in Richmond each day can travel at 40 mph—but only if a slower freight train isn't ahead, a common occurrence, Galloway said.

Even slower are the four daily passenger trains that stop in downtown Richmond at Main Street Station. These trains often travel under 25 mph as they navigate a complicated, weaving route through the yard.

Despite the clog, rail officials and freight customers say CSX's problems are not as severe as those facing Union Pacific Corp. in the West and Midwest. With parts of the system bottlenecked, the nation's largest railroad has been forced to reject some business, including an expedited Los Angeles-Chicago train for United Parcel Service.

John Gibson, a CSX vice president, said the railroad is revamping operations to speed up freight and passenger trains. Under the new plan, CSX will be able to reduce the handling of cars and take them by more direct routes. On a smaller scale are \$15 million in small improvements that could speed up train traffic and ease congestion.

Amtrak officials hope additional tracks will be built so passenger trains can bypass the 140-acre yard. But with the lack of funding for the \$50 million-plus project and resistance from CSX, the passenger train bypass is unlikely to be built anytime soon.

—Excerpted from *The Daily News, Newport News, VA, July 30*

## VERMONT'S TWO AMTRAK TRAINS KEEP GOING—AT LEAST FOR NOW

THE ETHAN ALLEN EXPRESS AND THE VERMONT CONTINUE TO BE WELL WORTH THE EXPENDITURE OF STATE FUNDS, according to a state transportation official and local business leaders. Thanks to a \$2.5 million state subsidy that's \$200,000 more than last year, the two Amtrak trains will keep chugging along—for now.

For years, Amtrak has claimed it has been underfunded by a Congress that has expressed increasing reluctance to appropriate more taxpayer money to subsidize a national rail passenger service that continues to lose money. The Bush administration has made its position clear by proposing to slash Amtrak's budget even further—a move that Amtrak officials and passenger rail advocate say threatens its very existence. It's not surprising then, according to Charlie Miller, director of the rail division of the department of transportation, that Amtrak was looking for a bigger subsidy from the state. In the end, he said both sides agreed on the \$200,000 increase.

The Ethan Allen Express serves the western part of the state with one daily roundtrip between Rutland and New York City. The Vermonter serves the eastern side of the state with daily roundtrip service between St. Albans and Washington, DC, making nine stops in Vermont, including Burlington, Montpelier, White River Junction and Brattleboro. Ridership on both trains has declined from two years ago.

Budget cuts at Amtrak have been felt in Vermont. There are no longer ticket agents at any stations. Amtrak pays for a custodian to open and close the station in downtown Rutland an hour before and after each arrival and departure. And because there are no ticket agents, the Ethan Allen and the Vermonter no longer have a baggage car, which would require an Amtrak employee to be on hand. The state is considering installing automated ticket machines at stations. "We talked about ticket machines and they're still in the process of bidding that work out," Miller said. He added that the state would have to pay for the machines, which would cost about \$40,000 each.

Despite the challenges and expense of

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## ...VERMONT

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keeping Amtrak service. Miller said passenger rail service remains an important component of the state's overall transportation mix. "When you take into consideration that so many of the large population centers are within 300 miles of Vermont, we're able to draw tourists and other travelers to our area then that becomes an economic benefit we wouldn't have," he said.

Thomas Donahue of the Rutland Chamber of Commerce couldn't agree more. "With the lack of an interstate highway on this side of the state, it's important to bring people in here by air passenger service and rail service," he said. "The combination of modes of transportation makes it an accessible community." If there is one thing lacking, Donahue said, it's better marketing of Amtrak service and tourism in general. "I can't point the finger directly at the state," he said. "I think all of us need to do a better job of marketing the Ethan Allen." Asked why the United States has failed to embrace rail passenger service the way Europe and other countries have, Miller speculated that it may well come down to cultural and economic differences and population density. He added that passenger rail transportation won't garner the political support it needs until the price of gasoline climbs to the point where the public demands action.

—The Rutland (VT) Herald, July 26

*ADDENDUM—Charlie Miller was also quoted as saying most people in Europe don't have cars and do have transportation systems that take them anywhere they want to go. We would like to flip that statement over to suggest that some Europeans don't have cars because the transportation system is so well developed that car ownership isn't necessary—although we personally find western Europe clogged with cars, road rage, and chemical fumes.*

*As for the declining ridership, one move would make it increase overnight: the scheduling of five or ten daily roundtrips instead of one. As transportation officials in other technically advanced countries know, people need and are given frequency of choice in every mode of transportation. We Americans are not provided with such options.*

THE FIRST THING A PERSON NOTICES ABOUT ANNE TARBELL is that she looks like a baby boomer but is in fact over 70. She has clear skin, large eyes, a lithe walk, a ready smile and a great laugh.

Part of the handsomeness is due to genetics—her grandfather played tennis until he was 82, her mother skied until she was 92—and part of it derives from her own activities: train host on the DOWNEASTER, skiing teacher for the handicapped, canoe enthusiast, mountain-climber, jewelry-maker, and a maker of hats for "Hats for Hugs," a program that provides hats for oncology patients at Maine Med in Portland.

In addition to doing occasional office chores at the Train-Riders office Tarbell is one of the crew that folds and presses address labels onto issues of this newsletter. According to her, she is just an emergency label-sticker. "I come if they call me," she says.

One day director Wayne Davis kept popping into her office to suggest that she take the host-training course and become a host onboard the DOWNEASTER. No thank you, she would reply. No thank you. No, I don't think so.

No! I don't want to be a host!

Finally, to get rid of him she said, "OK—I'll take the course."

She now catches the 6 AM out of Portland in order to be back home at 12:30, "and have the whole day ahead of me." She does not work daily, of course. No one works the host job, which is a volunteer one, every day. (We doubt if any person in the contiguous 48 states who works for the cause of a national transportation system inclusive of high speed rail works for—gasp!—money.)

A lot of Tarbell's hiking is done with other members of the Maine Outdoor Adventure Club (MOAC). The organization sponsors weekend mountain hikes that start with an easy climb the first weekend and progress to harder ones. She classifies an easy, first-weekend trek as more or less 900 feet, along trail ridges that hikers bush-whack as they go. The last weekend might consist of a "4,000 footer."

She canoed this summer when the club began a 20-day trip at the source of the Androscoggin River in New Hampshire that ended at Popham Beach, Maine. Some paddlers-to-the-sea, many of them from out of state, participated in the whole journey. Others, like Tarbell, came and went as their schedules allowed. Land trust and conservation groups along the way provided shut-

## Our Latest Greatest Profile

tle service for people's cars and gave club members lunch.

At Sunday River and Sugarloaf she works with handicapped adults, and some children, who have MS, brain-damage, are autistic or have other physical impediments. A total of 300 volunteers works with 200 students, each of whom skis with two volunteers. Tarbell uses some of the fleece that she sews into hats for the hospital program into lap robes for skiers who must ski sitting down and don't stay so warm as those who derive more exercise from the sport. A "factory that would get rid of the remnants" of the material gives it to her for the projects. In addition to volunteering for Maine Handicapped Skiing, whose big fund-raiser (for clothes, gear, tickets and so on for the students) is a March skiathon, Tarbell belongs to the 70 Plus Ski Club.

She has skied the Rockies and the Black Hills of South Dakota, among other destinations. She "has been known to sail," and she bicycles with friends—"on my 50-year-old bike," she says. When not in motion, she lives in a wonderful house designed by her architect grandmother.

How did this TrainRiders volunteer become so sportive? "Oh," says Tarbell, "I've skied since I was two-and-a-half." Her grandparents and parents were skiers, as today her children and grandchildren are. As a child in York Harbor, where her grandparents owned a hotel, she and her siblings and cousins played outdoors all day. "We used to run the length of the porch and make all the rocking chairs rock. The goal was to have the first chair still rocking by the time the last one was set into motion," she says, laughing at the memory.

After Tarbell grew out of the porch rocker phase she was put to work arranging flowers, setting tables and acting as a junior social hostess. The hotel was a posh one that had summer guests arriving with chauffeurs in livery and maids in uniform. Symphonies played in the evenings. We try to imagine the young Tarbell controlling her urges to fly through the air and climb flag poles in the midst of the decorum.

It is no surprise to learn that the hotel child went into customer service work, although she was an American Studies major at school, with minors in art education and zoology. She was also trained as a

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## ACELA ADVERTISING YIELDS UNEXPECTED REVENUE

Washington—Amtrak's new ads for Acela Express are paying off. Customer response to the campaign has been so strong that Amtrak has taken the unusual step of selling posters of the award-winning advertising at its online store: [www.amtrak.com.store](http://www.amtrak.com.store)

"You know you're doing something right when your advertising—in and of itself—can generate revenue," said Barbara Richardson, Amtrak vice president of Marketing and Sales. "We are thrilled that consumers like the Acela artwork as much as we do."

The new Acela campaign, launched in September 2003, reflects Amtrak's back-to-basics approach to marketing its products. The ads feature bold, colorful illustrations by world-famous graphic artist Michael Schwab,



best known for his work for clients including Apple, Coke and Nike. Schwab's art deco images evoke the love Americans have for train travel, while simultaneously positioning Amtrak as a modern transportation provider serving the major cities of the Northeast.

Since the ads were released, customers from all over the country have contacted Amtrak to request copies.

There are four full-color posters available for sale: a Boston version, a New York Version, a Washington version and a fourth version featuring all three cities. The set of four posters is available for \$15. Individual posters maybe be purchased for \$5 each.

Posters are 24 x 36 inches and are printed on premium paper.

### ...A MAINE VIEW

(continued from page 1)

Rockland, who works for the senator. "The trains you are riding offer just a glimpse of what I believe will be the long-term benefits of extending the Boston-Portland passenger service north to Freeport and Brunswick, and to Rockland, and to Lewiston and Auburn. Expanded rail service will mean clearer highways, cleaner air and new, improved transportation options for all Mainers."

Baldacci hopes the train service someday will make it to Bangor as well. As he made his way from the observation car (comfortable couch, chairs, lamps, outdoor platform), he commented, "It was nice to go by Wiscasset. Did you see that traffic backup?"

Inside the observation car, a large monitor for a computerized global positioning system showed riders exactly where they were as the train chugged along the track, how fast it was traveling and in what direction. The train passed over rivers and along lakes, ponds and marshes. A herd of cows in a pasture went running when the train whistle blew as it crossed a trestle bridge spanning the St. George River.

The first public excursion departed the Brunswick platform August 5 bound for the 57th Maine Lobster Festival in Rockland, which ran August 4-August 8. One daily trip took place during the latter four days.

Weekend excursions are lined up through mid-October. For information go to [www.MERAL.COM](http://www.MERAL.COM).

—With thanks to Leanne M. Robicheau, the Bangor Daily News, July 26

### ... STILL ALIVE

(continued from page 2)

Committee approved a Transportation/Treasury funding bill for fiscal year 2005 that provides what the National Association of Railroad Passengers calls a "kill-Amtrak funding level."

The \$900 million funding level approved by the committee would require Amtrak to shut down by February, Amtrak officials say. That level is \$418 million (34%) less than this year's. Amtrak president David Gunn insists an appropriation of about \$1.6 billion is needed to properly operate and maintain its system.

"The Bush administration knows \$900 million will not work," said Ross B. Capon, NARP executive director. "At a February 2 briefing, Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta, responding to my question, said 'Gunn is right on the numbers.'"

An inadequate funding level makes

Kansas and much of the midsection of the country particularly vulnerable. A subcommittee that recommended the lower funding level to the full committee is led by Rep. Ernest Istook Jr., R-Okla, who has said "reforms" need to be made before the House attitude on funding Amtrak would change. Capon said Istook hasn't been specific about reforms he wants, but believes it means elimination of Amtrak's long-distance trains like the Southwest Chief that runs through Topeka.

Yes, \$1.6 billion is a lot of money. But remember that the federal government is spending \$32 billion on highways and \$14 billion for aviation. And that doesn't count the amounts spent by state and local governments.

—Topeka Capital Journal, July 28

*\$1.6 billion for railroads (providing they can get that much), \$32 billion for highways, \$14 billion for aviation. America is in trouble and must turn itself around.*

### ... AMTRAK UPDATES (continued from page 2)

business they have today, their ability to meet the growth they are projecting is railroads can earn their cost of capital, they are going to squeeze the network and it will break.

"Meanwhile, we are pouring billions of public money into highways and other transportation modes, yet highways are increasingly congested."

RISKS CONTINUE: Despite Amtrak's accomplishments over the past two years, Gunn warned that substantial risks still exist. "Our progress has been incremental and steady thanks to the hard work of Amtrak employees across the country to rebuild plant and equipment and to improve service to our passengers," he said, "but the whole network would be jeopardized if we are underfunded, suffer a major system failure or some other calamity beyond our control."

—With thanks to Friends of Amtrak and the NARP, June 2



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## WORLD CLASS TRAINS? NOT EVEN CLOSE

ALL OVER EUROPE, IN JAPAN, AND ELSEWHERE, BUSINESS TRAVELERS HAVE THE OPTION OF AVOIDING PLANES AND TAKING SLEEK HIGH-SPEED TRAINS THAT LINK URBAN CENTERS. In France, average train speeds on some corridors exceed 180 mph. With direct links to airports for those continuing on for greater distances or flying overseas, these high-speed trains are vital components of an intelligent transportation system.

This country doesn't come anywhere close to having a world-class rail-transportation system, and on our one existing relatively high-speed train line, passenger traffic is expected to break records this year, as air travel in the Northeast becomes ever more vexing. That's Amtrak's Acela line (top speed about 125 mph on a few stretches) on the Northeast Corridor between Boston and Washington.

Acela, which began service in late 2000, has certainly had its problems, including an inability to achieve maximum speeds and some engineering faults that caused service reductions last year. Also, deteriorating tracks on some

stretches of the corridor caused a 20% increase in delays from 2000 to 2003, though Amtrak says service is now back to normal.

For the Acela, the goal is to market the train more to business travelers, who now make up about 80% of its riders. A simple, easy-to-understand fare structure, similar to the fare structure of low-cost airlines, has been put in place on Acela and also across the Amtrak system.

Energized by the inroads the Acela has made against air travel, Amtrak has become more aggressive in promoting Acela to corporate travel managers, said David Lim, chief of marketing and sales promotions.

"Just as the airlines didn't think of us as competition, neither did the corporations think of us as sort of a viable option," he said of the days before Acela. "With the launch of Acela, we really increased the emphasis on relationships with corporations."

Acela says its fares are 35 to 59 percent below comparable walkup fares on airlines. But the train's greatest strength is the comfort in its two categories of serv-

ice: business and first class. Seats have 42 inches of legroom and all have electrical power outlets, with large fold-down tables for working.

Passengers "feel like they're in control, and they can decide how they spend their time," said Barbara J. Richardson, Amtrak's vice president for marketing. "The hassle factor is low. I think about it as 'You are *always* free to move about the cabin.'"

Train passengers, by the way, sometimes have good reason to move. But except to note that, I will refrain here from reprising the subject of two recent columns: the hellish annoyance on trains caused by braying cellphone louts. Instead, let's conclude with food.

As the status of domestic airline food in general descends from joke to atrocity, Amtrak has been making a major push to upgrade the food on both Acela and on its long-distance trains. Menus are varied and they change frequently. In my opinion, the food in Acela's first-class car is actually pretty good.

—Excerpted from Joe Sharkey's New York Times column, *On The Road*, July 13

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### ...PROFILE

(continued from page 6)

silversmith and took it up as a hobby that has remained constant. "I hammer out bowls, platters, candlesticks," she says, "to give as wedding and other gifts, and I work periodically for a jeweler, Julie

Howison, whose work is sold at the Portland Art Museum, among other places." Tarbell doesn't work for financial compensation but on the barter, and most of all, for the sheer pleasure of working with her hands in the medium of silver.

She was wearing one of Howison's silver pendants when we interviewed her at a

local ice cream shop, where we sipped coffee and she drank skier's coffee mixed with hot chocolate.

If you happen to see a fiftyish-looking host on the train wearing silver jewelry, that will be Anne Tarbell. One more DOWNEASTER champion and Train-Riders volunteer. ■

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# TRAINRIDER

THE NEWSLETTER OF TRAINRIDERS/NORTHEAST



## Chairman's Comments

Submitted by Wayne E. Davis

Sorry for the delay this quarter, but our long-time printer has closed his shop and we've been trying to find a reasonably priced alternative. My two week search has revealed that our newsletter is going to cost 20%-30% more to produce. With that in mind, I'm asking everyone who receives the newsletter to please bring their membership dues current. We have a number of folks on our list who obviously enjoy our quarterly newsletter, but somehow have not focused on the fact that TrainRiders/Northeast has no means of financial support other than membership dues. Last year at this time we were close to not having enough money to pay our fixed expenses such as rent, phone and computer connections, various insurances and license fees, postal and office supply costs. If it hadn't been for the generosity of one of our Maine/Florida members and another from Maine we'd have been forced to cut back on our activities and maybe even be forced to operate out of someone's garage! Please renew your dues so that we can continue our efforts to keep Amtrak's Downeaster train running and holding bureaucrats at bay who seem

continued on page 4

## AN OLD TRACK FINDS NEW FANS

When a moose was spotted from the Rockland-bound train, word spread quickly, car to car, and passengers turned to scan the marsh on the inland side of the tracks.

Most missed the moose, which moved deeper into the woods. But there were few complaints on the train, only the third passenger trip east of Portland in 30 years, with so much else to see: eagles' nests and osprey, fields of heather and goldenrod, clam diggers silhouetted against distant sand flats.

The train's top attraction may have been the view of what it spared its riders, the August traffic inching east on overloaded Route 1.

The train service was promoted as part of the Maine Lobster Festival, which drew thousands to Rockland. The experiment, planned by the state and operated by Maine Eastern Railroad, was meant to make a case for a permanent service expansion. The \$40 round-trip tickets, which included lobster festival admission, sold out in three weeks. The train will continue to carry passengers on weekends through October.

"People love trains," said Patricia Douglas, spokeswoman for the Northern New England

Passenger Rail Authority. "We could have sold 200 more tickets."

As passengers lined up for the first 7:30 AM departure, one couple stood nearby with a cardboard sign that read, "Need 2 tickets." Their gamble paid off when train officials took pity and allowed them to ride in the dining car.

**One-day  
Weekend  
Excursions,  
Through  
October  
2004**

The top speed was 50 mph; the train will go faster when track upgrades are finished. Views ranged from backyard trampolines, clotheslines, and gazebos to wild coastline, with shady woods giving way to sparkling salt marsh. At dozens of road crossings, train-watchers gathered to wave and snap pictures of the twin green-and-yellow locomotives and six vintage cars, which date to the 1940s and 1950s but have been updated with plush seating and climate controls.

Said one passenger, "It's relaxing. Route 1 is a killer. It takes a half-hour to go through one little town. Said another, "When you take the train, you don't have to fight the traffic." Waiting in line to disembark, one man said, "If this was an airplane, everyone would be pushing. Here, everyone's happy."

—Excerpted from The Boston Globe, August 8.

Written by Jenna Russell

## AND NOW THE MAINE VIEWPOINT OF THE ABOVE TRAIN SERVICE

Trains rolled north and south, converging in Brunswick, where Gov. John Baldacci tooted the state's horn in promoting seasonal passenger excursions as a way to push tourism and the economy in Maine. The rides, between Portland and Rockland, were by invitation, and passengers included state, city and town officials and other dignitaries. "It's great to be here with



two trains," said the governor. "It's important to have a balanced transportation system and trains are part of that."

"This day reminds us that Maine is on track for a future of convenient, accessible rail transportation," Sen. Olympia Snowe said in greetings delivered by state Rep. Deborah McNeil of

(continued on page 7)



**TWO OPINIONS  
WITH WHICH WE AGREE:**

## **DON'T KILL AMTRAK**

PRESIDENT BUSH AND SOME OF THE REPUBLICANS IN THE US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ARE DETERMINED TO KILL AMTRAK, the national network of passenger trains. This is a wrong-headed move the Congress as a whole ought to do its best to thwart.

Last week, before going on a long and undeserved vacation, the House Appropriations Committee approved a funding bill without making and change in the so-called "kill Amtrak" funding level approved earlier by a subcommittee headed by Rep. Earnest Istook Jr., a Republican from Oklahoma.

The committee approved \$900 million for Amtrak next year. About \$1.6 billion is needed to keep the operation going for the whole year. Istook was quoted that Amtrak would have to be reformed before the attitude of his committee would change. By that, he evidently means the cancellation of Amtrak's long-distance trains. This would leave four isolated "mini-networks" serving just 21 states, according to the National Association of Railroad Passengers.

For the umpteenth time, passenger rail is a small but important part of the national transportation system, and its subsidy is far less than what the other systems get. The rail network, spotty as it is, should be maintained and expanded as an alternative to air travel, which some people cannot do and which may be interrupted by terrorists. It should not be cut back even more.

—Albany Democrat Herald, July 28

## **STILL ALIVE**

AMTRAK OFFICIALS SAY TRAINS WILL STOP BY FEBRUARY if more money is not approved.

Supporters of Amtrak, as happens almost every year, need to contact their congressional representatives to urge them to provide adequate funding to keep passenger rail service alive one more year.

Last week the House Appropriations

(continued on page 7)

## **AMTRAK UPDATES FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN**

Washington—RELEASING THE ANNUAL UPDATE, AMTRAK PRESIDENT DAVID L. GUNN and other railroad industry representatives made recommendations to address the growing needs and challenges of intercity rail service.

The plan has three components dealing with the existing national system, state-initiated intercity corridors and the national freight network. The plan states that Amtrak is making steady progress on the existing system to achieve its goals.

The corridor strategy includes state proposals supported by Amtrak for specific passenger rail corridor development. The freight strategy contains recommendations to protect and upgrade key facilities owned by freight railroads. The corridor and freight recommendations require federal matching investment programs to meet these goals.

"The update to the five-year plan continues the effort we began last year to provide specific and precise details on exactly how every dollar is to be spent to bring the existing Amtrak system up to a state-of-good-repair," said Gunn. "However, states and the freight railroads face serious problems of capacity, congestion and reliability, and there is a growing consensus within the rail industry that we must come together to address these challenges."

To support the existing system, the five-year strategic plan calls for federal funding averaging about \$1.6 billion. The plan holds the line on federal support for operating purposes each year at \$570 million. The majority of federal support is for capital improvements to the existing system and will be used to bring facilities and equipment up to a state-of-good-repair.

Those appearing with Gunn at a news conference were Frank Busalacchi, Wisconsin Transportation Secretary; Karen Rae, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation Director; Gene Skoropowski, General Manager, Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority (California); Patrick Simmons, North Carolina DOT Rail Director; and Ken Uznanski, Washington State Passenger Rail Director.

Passengers want better service, too. Amtrak ridership on these corridors is growing from 17 million in 1999 to a projected 21 million in 2004, while competing for increasingly congested capacity with expanding commuter rail services.

Working with the states, Amtrak evaluated the corridors' readiness for immediate development, with those meeting all of the study's criteria designated as Tier I corridors. Corridors designated as Tier II met more than half the criteria.

The elements of the criteria are a long-term master plan, market revenue forecast, operating expense forecast, infrastructure investment plan, equipment investment host railroad acceptance, agreement to fund a 20% match and agreement to cover any added operating deficit. It was stressed that the tier designations are not a rating of relative importance, but an analysis of the stage of development.

The eight Tier I corridors are Philadelphia-Harrisburg, PA; Raleigh-Charlotte, NC; Chicago, IL—St. Louis, MO; Chicago, IL—Milwaukee—Madison, WI; San Diego—Los Angeles—San Luis Obispo, CA; Bakersfield—Sacramento/Oakland, CA; San Jose—Sacramento, CA; and Eugene—Portland, OR—Seattle, WA.

The four Tier II corridors are Boston, MA—Portland, ME; Washington, DC—Richmond, VA; Chicago, IL—Detroit, MI; and Seattle, WA—Vancouver, BC.

Amtrak recommended the federal government also consider a freight investment-matching program combining federal funds with those of the states and/or the freight railroads for key segments of the freight rail network. The investments would not necessarily be limited to lines on which Amtrak operates, but would be based on a number of factors, such as congestion relief, benefit to local freight shippers and cost-effectiveness.

"This recommendation is a work-in-progress that deserves further study," said Gunn. "However, it is clear that if the railroads are having trouble carrying the

**"...The whole network would be jeopardized if we are underfunded, suffer a major system failure or some other calamity beyond our control."**

(continued on page 7)



## NARP SUPPORTS AMTRAK'S REVISED FIVE YEAR PLAN

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS ANNOUNCED ITS SUPPORT FOR AMTRAK'S REVISED FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN. This year's plan contains appendices highlighting challenges confronting the rail freight industry, and evaluating the "readiness" of corridors for further development.

NARP Executive Director Ross B. Capon said, "Amtrak has done an important service by quantifying unsustainable rail freight industry trends—growth in ton-miles while track capacity is reduced—and highlighting specific track segments at risk. Also, by identifying eight 'readiness criteria' for short-distance passenger corridor development, and 'Tier I' and 'Tier II' corridors where states have completed all or most of the criteria, Amtrak highlights the need for the federal government to step forward as a funding partner for those states."

It is important to note that this plan does not call for the elimination of any Amtrak rail service. Rather, the plan

identifies track segments where Amtrak service is threatened due to possible track abandonment or downgrading by owning freight railroads. One major segment is the 703-mile BNSF line between Newton and Dodge City, Kansas; La Junta and Trinidad, Colorado; and Albuquerque. This is a vital part of Amtrak's Southwest Chief route, but also serves as a safety valve for the freight network when BNSF's main route via Amarillo, Texas, is blocked. Amtrak President and CEO David L. Gunn noted, "When you don't make your cost of capital, you can't afford to maintain redundancy."

The Corridor development and rail freight issues are related. Following Gunn's presentation, state officials from Washington, North Carolina and California made presentations about what they have already accomplished, and future plans that depend on federal funding. Eugene K. Skoropowski, Managing Director of the Capitol Corridor (Sacra-

mento-Bay Area), noted that state investment in track capacity motivated by passenger concerns also has increased track capacity for freight operations. Conversely, he said that freight railroads in California had invested \$95 million in infrastructure on their passenger corridors.

Bill Schafer of Norfolk Southern endorsed Gunn's statements of concern about the rail freight industry, referring to the "proverbial canary in the coal mine"—that is, Amtrak delays are the most visible sign to people outside the freight railroad's industry of its serious congestion problems.

NARP calls on interested parties to use this information to garner support and grow interest in expanding corridor opportunities and preserving the existing national network system, and calls on Congress and the Bush administration to develop a meaningful transportation policy that addresses the railroad crisis.

—NARP press release

AMTRAK'S REVENUES HAVE BEEN STRONGER THAN EXPECTED, and operating expenses have been lower, so the railroad's financial stability has improved, said its president, David Gunn. But rebuilding efforts on track that the railroad owns have increased delays, as have equipment failures and congestion on freight railroads. Mr. Gunn also said the system runs the risk of "major asset failure" that would be extremely disruptive to service, because it relies on very old bridges and electrical systems, he said.

"We're approaching the moment of truth for Amtrak in many respects, because the physical conditions have to be addressed," he said, singling out four drawbridges in Connecticut and the electrical system that supplies the overhead wires in Penn Station in New York.

Joined by state officials from California, Washington State, Wisconsin, Virginia and North Carolina, Mr. Gunn called on Congress to provide \$3 billion for a five-year demonstration project intended to improve rail service over existing short-haul routes. Under the proposal, the federal government would cover 80 percent of the capital costs and the states 20 percent, to put rail on an equal financial footing with highway projects.

## AMTRAK CHIEF SAYS FINANCES BETTER, DELAYS WORSE

States and others have made many proposals for high-speed rail corridors, many involving new rights-of-way and new equipment. "There have been scores of proposals but they've always been in the tens of billions of dollars and it scares people off," said Eugene Skoropowski, a California official in charge of the rail corridor from the San Francisco area to Sacramento. The new ones would involve relatively modest projects to cut bottlenecks, improve signals and add sidings and double-track in some areas, and would generally involve running trains at less than 80 mph.

At the FRA, Steven W. Kulm, a spokesman, said: "In general we endorse the proposition of changing the funding system to more equate how it is with highways and transit systems." That would mean states choosing the routes and bearing the expense of subsidizing operations, with the federal government contributing to construction expenses. But he added that the

Bush administration had not proposed any percentage division in capital expense. The railroad has increased the pace of capital improvements but has been slowed to some extent by the withered state of the industry that makes passenger rail equipment, and by Amtrak's own ability to deploy equipment and people, Mr. Gunn said.

A side-effect of track work, including replacing rail and installing concrete ties, has been more delays.

In the 12 months that ended Sept. 30, 2003, delay minutes reached just over 3 million, up from about 2.85 million in the previous year and about 2.7 million the year before that, according to Amtrak. Reconstruction work on the tracks owned by the railroad, failures on track owned by Amtrak and problems on the freight rail lines on which Amtrak operates all grew over the period. Outside the Northeast, Amtrak trains operate on lines owned by the freight railroads.

—Excerpted from the New York Times, June 30, by Matthew L. Wald





## AMTRAK BACKING OFF PLAN TO MOVE NYC STATION

Amtrak is apparently backing off from its previous plans to move its New York City operations out of the old Pennsylvania Station and into the newly proposed Farley Post Office building just blocks away. Saying that it does not want to pay any rent, Amtrak has cast a shadow on the development of the new complex that would be named after former NY Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. While alive Moynihan almost single handedly trumpeted the cause for a new station by inserting special funding measures into appropriations that would benefit Amtrak.

Amtrak already owns Penn Station, which is a traveler's nightmare. The once glorious station, which has seen better days, is used by NJ Transit and the Long Island Railroad as well. As the gateway into New York City it is an embarrassment for the railroad. The need for the move into the Farley building, which has also been applauded by preservationists, is long overdue for Amtrak's busiest terminal in the USA. Amtrak's stubborn resistance on this issue is disappointing after years of petitioning Congress and the state of New York for financial support.

The Empire State Development Corporation, which is overseeing the project has accused Amtrak of reneging on the project, saying that Amtrak has not lived up to the bargain spelled out in a 1999 memo. The Development Corporation is now making overtures to NJ Transit to make the move. NJ Transit is headed up by George Warrington, the former CEO of Amtrak who is responsible for brokering the deal five years ago. Amtrak spokesman Cliff Black says that Amtrak pays no rent in Penn Station because it owns the building so why should it pay rent in another space. Development officials note that Amtrak stands to benefit and could easily rent out the space they now occupy at Penn, offsetting any expenditures on the new Farley P. O. space.

Amtrak should come to its senses and stop playing the bluffing game. The bright prospects offered by moving into the architecturally historic and more spacious Farley building will only accrue to Amtrak's long range benefit.

Source: *New York Times*

## A NEW YORK TIMES OP ED FROM JANUARY 1, 1974

I AM A BIT LATE WITH MY RECOMMENDATIONS BUT I HAVE BEEN BUILDING A WHEELBARROW AND THIS HAS TAKEN ALL MY ATTENTION. (It is impossible to buy a good wheelbarrow in stores—if you want one that balances well you must go to work and build it.) Here are my recommendations for 1974:

(1) The rails. Passenger service in the United States should be nationalized. The mouth-to-mouth resuscitation of dying railroads is not going to work, and what the country must have is a sensible rail system designed not for corporate profits but for the transit needs of the people.

Maine, the largest of the New England states, has no passenger service, and the companies are reluctant to restore it because they see no money in it for themselves. Yet the people need the rails and will increasingly need them, now that gas is short. The government should run the passenger trains and pick up the bill for losses where and if the losses occur. We seem able to transport a man to the moon by rocket but unable to transport a man from Bangor to Boston by rail.

### ...Chairman's Comments

(continued from page 1)

bent on "tinkering" with the train—not being satisfied that our Downeaster—according to Amtrak surveys—has become one of America's favorite trains. We're in the process of attempting to convince state and federal officials that the existing service should be extended from Portland to Freeport

The writer continues with seven more recommendations, in the following order: the movies, the presidency, the tides, the sun, the atom, the mails, and the motor car. All of them hit the bullseye, but this newsletter has space for only one:

(8) The motor car. The internal combustion engine has had its little day; we should return to the incomparable steam engine, which has only a few moving parts, is quiet, does not pollute, and gives one the sense of flying.

The conclusion notes that the country is "headed downhill all the way—trains not running, tides unharnessed, mails overburdened with duplicate copies of seed catalogues ...and movie companies luring youngsters to dirty pictures by putting an X on them. Downhill all the way. You can get your mind off it by building a wheelbarrow, but you can't change the direction without some drastic alterations. I'm afraid of the human race's running out of energy, but I sometimes despair of its ever doing anything in a sensible manner."

Described by the Times as "a Maine countryman, essayist and poet long affiliated with *The New Yorker*," he is (but you have already guessed correctly) E. B. White.

and Brunswick ASAP to connect with the Maine Eastern RR's train service between Brunswick and Rockland. We also continue our push for extensions to Augusta as well as Lewiston/Auburn—all the while beating the drum for continued improvements to the Downeaster service including higher speed and additional daily trips. **Stay with us—nothing can happen without your help.** —W.E.D.

## WHERE JOHN KERRY STANDS ON RAIL

When presidential candidate John Kerry was asked if he would support and fully fund multi-year federal investment in Amtrak that ensures the stability and continuation of Amtrak's national rail passenger operation, he replied: "Yes, I will support a multi-year reauthorization with funding levels equal to or greater than what the Senate proposed for this fiscal year."

When asked if he would oppose legislative proposals designed to break-up and sell-off Amtrak through contracting out or privatization initiatives, he replied: "I will oppose any legislation that would break apart Amtrak or privatize it outright."



## BACKUP OF PASSENGER AND FREIGHT TRAINS IN RICHMOND AND ELSEWHERE

RICHMOND, VA — INCHING ALONG, THE LOCOMOTIVE TOOK A HALF HOUR TO GO EIGHT MILES TO THE NEXT STATION. "I could have ridden my bike," said John Benck, a Richmond-area high school teacher who had just boarded to travel to New York.

Behind the slowdown is a rail yard little known to the public but a familiar headache to rail officials. Each day, more than 50 trains approach CSX Corp.'s Acca Yard, where workers repair locomotives and reroute blocks of freight cars. Many trains slow to a crawl. Others come to a standstill, waiting their turn.

Acca Yard has helped turn Richmond into a rail choke point comparable to highway congestion in the Washington, DC, area. Last year, the yard was among the top five contributors to freight delays in the railroad's north-south corridor.

The problem is not limited to the East. Across the nation, yards and tracks have become congested as the economy has improved, leading to record rail volumes this year. Last month, the U.S. Surface Transportation Board asked CSX and other railroads to explain how they will cope with the expected surge in August (peak shipping season) when holiday goods will join a network already encumbered by a surge of coal, grain, steel and other products.

Acca Yard has no easy solution. It is in the middle of a heavily trafficked route that needs upgrades. The yard, too, is behind the times; it is too small and complicated to handle the extra traffic and workload, said Drew Galloway, senior director of Amtrak's strategic planning department. "It's a busier yard than it ever was, and infrastructure changes were not made," he said. "So there is an awful lot of congestion for Amtrak and CSX."

On average, 40 freight trains chugged through Richmond each day in the first half of 2004, compared to 38 in the year-earlier period. But on busy days, the city could see as many as 65 trains. And many of CSX's trains are getting longer. This year, those hauling general mer-

chandise are pulling an extra five to 10 cars—which can further slow down Acca and other yards.

When train traffic backs up, it causes a ripple effect of delays. CSX's freight trains sometimes have to stop mid-track to relieve crews who have reached the federal maximum they are permitted to work—a 12-hour shift. Until a new crew takes over, the train sits.

As they approach Acca Yard, freight trains slow to speeds of 25 mph or lower. The 18 Amtrak trains that stop in Richmond each day can travel at 40 mph—but only if a slower freight train isn't ahead, a common occurrence, Galloway said.

Even slower are the four daily passenger trains that stop in downtown Richmond at Main Street Station. These trains often travel under 25 mph as they navigate a complicated, weaving route through the yard.

Despite the clog, rail officials and freight customers say CSX's problems are not as severe as those facing Union Pacific Corp. in the West and Midwest. With parts of the system bottlenecked, the nation's largest railroad has been forced to reject some business, including an expedited Los Angeles-Chicago train for United Parcel Service.

John Gibson, a CSX vice president, said the railroad is revamping operations to speed up freight and passenger trains. Under the new plan, CSX will be able to reduce the handling of cars and take them by more direct routes. On a smaller scale are \$15 million in small improvements that could speed up train traffic and ease congestion.

Amtrak officials hope additional tracks will be built so passenger trains can bypass the 140-acre yard. But with the lack of funding for the \$50 million-plus project and resistance from CSX, the passenger train bypass is unlikely to be built anytime soon.

—Excerpted from *The Daily News*,  
*Newport News*, VA, July 30

## VERMONT'S TWO AMTRAK TRAINS KEEP GOING—AT LEAST FOR NOW

THE ETHAN ALLEN EXPRESS AND THE VERMONT CONTINUE TO BE WELL WORTH THE EXPENDITURE OF STATE FUNDS, according to a state transportation official and local business leaders. Thanks to a \$2.5 million state subsidy that's \$200,000 more than last year, the two Amtrak trains will keep chugging along—for now.

For years, Amtrak has claimed it has been underfunded by a Congress that has expressed increasing reluctance to appropriate more taxpayer money to subsidize a national rail passenger service that continues to lose money. The Bush administration has made its position clear by proposing to slash Amtrak's budget even further—a move that Amtrak officials and passenger rail advocate say threatens its very existence. It's not surprising then, according to Charlie Miller, director of the rail division of the department of transportation, that Amtrak was looking for a bigger subsidy from the state. In the end, he said both sides agreed on the \$200,000 increase.

The Ethan Allen Express serves the western part of the state with one daily roundtrip between Rutland and New York City. The Vermonter serves the eastern side of the state with daily roundtrip service between St. Albans and Washington, DC, making nine stops in Vermont, including Burlington, Montpelier, White River Junction and Brattleboro. Ridership on both trains has declined from two years ago.

Budget cuts at Amtrak have been felt in Vermont. There are no longer ticket agents at any stations. Amtrak pays for a custodian to open and close the station in downtown Rutland an hour before and after each arrival and departure. And because there are no ticket agents, the Ethan Allen and the Vermonter no longer have a baggage car, which would require an Amtrak employee to be on hand. The state is considering installing automated ticket machines at stations. "We talked about ticket machines and they're still in the process of bidding that work out," Miller said. He added that the state would have to pay for the machines, which would cost about \$40,000 each.

Despite the challenges and expense of

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## ...VERMONT

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keeping Amtrak service. Miller said passenger rail service remains an important component of the state's overall transportation mix. "When you take into consideration that so many of the large population centers are within 300 miles of Vermont, we're able to draw tourists and other travelers to our area then that becomes an economic benefit we wouldn't have," he said.

Thomas Donahue of the Rutland Chamber of Commerce couldn't agree more. "With the lack of an interstate highway on this side of the state, it's important to bring people in here by air passenger service and rail service," he said. "The combination of modes of transportation makes it an accessible community." If there is one thing lacking, Donahue said, it's better marketing of Amtrak service and tourism in general. "I can't point the finger directly at the state," he said. "I think all of us need to do a better job of marketing the Ethan Allen." Asked why the United States has failed to embrace rail passenger service the way Europe and other countries have, Miller speculated that it may well come down to cultural and economic differences and population density. He added that passenger rail transportation won't garner the political support it needs until the price of gasoline climbs to the point where the public demands action.

—The Rutland (VT) Herald, July 26

*ADDENDUM—Charlie Miller was also quoted as saying most people in Europe don't have cars and do have transportation systems that take them anywhere they want to go. We would like to flip that statement over to suggest that some Europeans don't have cars because the transportation system is so well developed that car ownership isn't necessary—although we personally find western Europe clogged with cars, road rage, and chemical fumes.*

*As for the declining ridership, one move would make it increase overnight: the scheduling of five or ten daily roundtrips instead of one. As transportation officials in other technically advanced countries know, people need and are given frequency of choice in every mode of transportation. We Americans are not provided with such options.*

THE FIRST THING A PERSON NOTICES ABOUT ANNE TARBELL is that she looks like a baby boomer but is in fact over 70. She has clear skin, large eyes, a lithe walk, a ready smile and a great laugh.

Part of the handsomeness is due to genetics—her grandfather played tennis until he was 82, her mother skied until she was 92—and part of it derives from her own activities: train host on the DOWNEASTER, skiing teacher for the handicapped, canoe enthusiast, mountain-climber, jewelry-maker, and a maker of hats for "Hats for Hugs," a program that provides hats for oncology patients at Maine Med in Portland.

In addition to doing occasional office chores at the Train-Riders office Tarbell is one of the crew that folds and presses address labels onto issues of this newsletter. According to her, she is just an emergency label-sticker. "I come if they call me," she says.

One day director Wayne Davis kept popping into her office to suggest that she take the host-training course and become a host onboard the DOWNEASTER. No thank you, she would reply. No thank you. No, I don't think so.

No! I don't want to be a host!

Finally, to get rid of him she said, "OK—I'll take the course."

She now catches the 6 AM out of Portland in order to be back home at 12:30, "and have the whole day ahead of me." She does not work daily, of course. No one works the host job, which is a volunteer one, every day. (We doubt if any person in the contiguous 48 states who works for the cause of a national transportation system inclusive of high speed rail works for—gasp!—money.)

A lot of Tarbell's hiking is done with other members of the Maine Outdoor Adventure Club (MOAC). The organization sponsors weekend mountain hikes that start with an easy climb the first weekend and progress to harder ones. She classifies an easy, first-weekend trek as more or less 900 feet, along trail ridges that hikers bush-whack as they go. The last weekend might consist of a "4,000 footer."

She canoed this summer when the club began a 20-day trip at the source of the Androscoggin River in New Hampshire that ended at Popham Beach, Maine. Some paddlers-to-the-sea, many of them from out of state, participated in the whole journey. Others, like Tarbell, came and went as their schedules allowed. Land trust and conservation groups along the way provided shut-

## Our Latest Greatest Profile

tle service for people's cars and gave club members lunch.

At Sunday River and Sugarloaf she works with handicapped adults, and some children, who have MS, brain-damage, are autistic or have other physical impediments. A total of 300 volunteers works with 200 students, each of whom skis with two volunteers. Tarbell uses some of the fleece that she sews into hats for the hospital program into lap robes for skiers who must ski sitting down and don't stay so warm as those who derive more exercise from the sport. A "factory that would get rid of the remnants" of the material gives it to her for the projects. In addition to volunteering for Maine Handicapped Skiing, whose big fund-raiser (for clothes, gear, tickets and so on for the students) is a March skiathon, Tarbell belongs to the 70 Plus Ski Club.

She has skied the Rockies and the Black Hills of South Dakota, among other destinations. She "has been known to sail," and she bicycles with friends—"on my 50-year-old bike," she says. When not in motion, she lives in a wonderful house designed by her architect grandmother.

How did this TrainRiders volunteer become so sportive? "Oh," says Tarbell, "I've skied since I was two-and-a-half." Her grandparents and parents were skiers, as today her children and grandchildren are. As a child in York Harbor, where her grandparents owned a hotel, she and her siblings and cousins played outdoors all day. "We used to run the length of the porch and make all the rocking chairs rock. The goal was to have the first chair still rocking by the time the last one was set into motion," she says, laughing at the memory.

After Tarbell grew out of the porch rocker phase she was put to work arranging flowers, setting tables and acting as a junior social hostess. The hotel was a posh one that had summer guests arriving with chauffeurs in livery and maids in uniform. Symphonies played in the evenings. We try to imagine the young Tarbell controlling her urges to fly through the air and climb flag poles in the midst of the decorum.

It is no surprise to learn that the hotel child went into customer service work, although she was an American Studies major at school, with minors in art education and zoology. She was also trained as a

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## ACELA ADVERTISING YIELDS UNEXPECTED REVENUE

Washington—Amtrak's new ads for Acela Express are paying off. Customer response to the campaign has been so strong that Amtrak has taken the unusual step of selling posters of the award-winning advertising at its online store: [www.amtrak.com.store](http://www.amtrak.com.store)

"You know you're doing something right when your advertising—in and of itself—can generate revenue," said Barbara Richardson, Amtrak vice president of Marketing and Sales. "We are thrilled that consumers like the Acela artwork as much as we do."

The new Acela campaign, launched in September 2003, reflects Amtrak's back-to-basics approach to marketing its products. The ads feature bold, colorful illustrations by world-famous graphic artist Michael Schwab,



best known for his work for clients including Apple, Coke and Nike. Schwab's art deco images evoke the love Americans have for train travel, while simultaneously positioning Amtrak as a modern transportation provider serving the major cities of the Northeast.

Since the ads were released, customers from all over the country have contacted Amtrak to request copies.

There are four full-color posters available for sale: a Boston version, a New York Version, a Washington version and a fourth version featuring all three cities. The set of four posters is available for \$15. Individual posters maybe be purchased for \$5 each.

Posters are 24 x 36 inches and are printed on premium paper.

### ...A MAINE VIEW

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Rockland, who works for the senator. "The trains you are riding offer just a glimpse of what I believe will be the long-term benefits of extending the Boston-Portland passenger service north to Freeport and Brunswick, and to Rockland, and to Lewiston and Auburn. Expanded rail service will mean clearer highways, cleaner air and new, improved transportation options for all Mainers."

Baldacci hopes the train service someday will make it to Bangor as well. As he made his way from the observation car (comfortable couch, chairs, lamps, outdoor platform), he commented, "It was nice to go by Wiscasset. Did you see that traffic backup?"

Inside the observation car, a large monitor for a computerized global positioning system showed riders exactly where they were as the train chugged along the track, how fast it was traveling and in what direction. The train passed over rivers and along lakes, ponds and marshes. A herd of cows in a pasture went running when the train whistle blew as it crossed a trestle bridge spanning the St. George River.

The first public excursion departed the Brunswick platform August 5 bound for the 57th Maine Lobster Festival in Rockland, which ran August 4-August 8. One daily trip took place during the latter four days.

Weekend excursions are lined up through mid-October. For information go to [www.MERAL.COM](http://www.MERAL.COM).

—With thanks to Leanne M. Robicheau, the Bangor Daily News, July 26

### ... STILL ALIVE

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Committee approved a Transportation/Treasury funding bill for fiscal year 2005 that provides what the National Association of Railroad Passengers calls a "kill-Amtrak funding level."

The \$900 million funding level approved by the committee would require Amtrak to shut down by February, Amtrak officials say. That level is \$418 million (34%) less than this year's. Amtrak president David Gunn insists an appropriation of about \$1.6 billion is needed to properly operate and maintain its system.

"The Bush administration knows \$900 million will not work," said Ross B. Capon, NARP executive director. "At a February 2 briefing, Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta, responding to my question, said 'Gunn is right on the numbers.'"

An inadequate funding level makes

Kansas and much of the midsection of the country particularly vulnerable. A subcommittee that recommended the lower funding level to the full committee is led by Rep. Ernest Istook Jr., R-Okla, who has said "reforms" need to be made before the House attitude on funding Amtrak would change. Capon said Istook hasn't been specific about reforms he wants, but believes it means elimination of Amtrak's long-distance trains like the Southwest Chief that runs through Topeka.

Yes, \$1.6 billion is a lot of money. But remember that the federal government is spending \$32 billion on highways and \$14 billion for aviation. And that doesn't count the amounts spent by state and local governments.

—Topeka Capital Journal, July 28

*\$1.6 billion for railroads (providing they can get that much), \$32 billion for highways, \$14 billion for aviation. America is in trouble and must turn itself around.*

### ... AMTRAK UPDATES (continued from page 2)

business they have today, their ability to meet the growth they are projecting is railroads can earn their cost of capital, they are going to squeeze the network and it will break.

"Meanwhile, we are pouring billions of public money into highways and other transportation modes, yet highways are increasingly congested."

RISKS CONTINUE: Despite Amtrak's accomplishments over the past two years, Gunn warned that substantial risks still exist. "Our progress has been incremental and steady thanks to the hard work of Amtrak employees across the country to rebuild plant and equipment and to improve service to our passengers," he said, "but the whole network would be jeopardized if we are underfunded, suffer a major system failure or some other calamity beyond our control."

—With thanks to Friends of Amtrak and the NARP, June 2