



Minneapolis Disaster Highlights Infrastructure Needs

The August 1 rush-hour collapse of the I-35W bridge over the Mississippi River in Minneapolis (resulting in nine fatalities with four people still missing as of press time) has brought new attention to the state of our transportation infrastructure.

Some have taken the opportunity to criticize spending on rail and other public transportation projects as the reason why funds have not been available to maintain highway bridges. This is, at best, a distortion of the truth.

In an August 7 *New York Times* story ("Bridge Collapse Revives Issue of Road Spending"), anti-rail and transit crusaders argued that such projects should be abandoned in favor of more road construction since, by percentages, far fewer people use transit than roads. The article singled out the \$20 million of federal funds being spent on construction of the Northstar Commuter Rail service.

However, in a Letter to the Editor sub-

mitted in response to the article, Anne Canby, President, Surface Transportation Policy Partnership, said, "As a former state DOT head [Delaware], I can tell you

Tell your elected officials—at the federal, state and local level—that **spending on rail and public transportation is not the reason highway infrastructure is in the shape it is in.** What is needed is the political will to make changes to how infrastructure maintenance and construction is paid for.

Go to www.narprail.org and click on Action Alert for ways to contact your elected officials.

most agencies are preoccupied with building new highways, paying less attention to maintaining the existing system or to providing travel options. Blam-

ing transit for inadequate highway maintenance is like blaming the Minnesota victims for driving on the bridge that failed them."

Part of this situation reflects political realities: it is far more attractive for a legislator to secure funding for new projects than maintenance funds for existing infrastructure.

But the overriding problem is the lack of political will to increase the gas tax. The federal gas tax has not been increased in 14 years, nor is it indexed against the rate of inflation and receipts decline as fuel economy improves. Indeed, President Bush signaled his unwillingness to raise it during an Aug. 8 press conference.

The result is a revenue stream that cannot keep up with needs, as illustrated by the impending bankruptcy of the Highway Trust Fund (August News) and the tragic events in Minneapolis. ■

Investing in Freight Rail Infrastructure Through Partnerships

Norfolk Southern Railway is seeking to leverage public funds to expand intermodal rail shipping lanes between the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, and Southeast US along the 'I-81 Crescent Corridor,' with main termini at Memphis and Birmingham to the south, and Harrisburg and Northern New Jersey to the north.

In remarks to the Merrill Lynch Global Transportation Conference in June, outgoing NS Vice Chairman and CFO Henry C. Wolf described the initiative as NS' "most ambitious major corridor initiative to date" and one that will serve truck-dominated markets with currently little or no intermodal service.

The expected public benefits of the Crescent Corridor – including safety, reduced greenhouse-gas emissions, and fewer trucks on Interstate highways – have led NS to call for \$2 billion in public investment; the Commonwealth of Virginia has already committed \$40 million to planned upgrades in its state, which NS indicates will be mainly south of Roanoke

and north of Manassas. New terminals in central Maryland and eastern Tennessee are part of the plan, in addition to targeted track and signal upgrades to increase speed and capacity.

Railroad passengers would directly benefit from one of the core planned investment areas between Birmingham and Atlanta, served by Amtrak's Crescent.

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The Crescent Corridor would pass through Vardo Yard in Hagerstown, MD. This is a rail gateway that saw heavy growth when through freight operations were shifted off Amtrak's Northeast Corridor and would see even more under the proposal.

Make a Difference in Rail Advocacy: Join the NARP Board of Directors

Here is your chance to become a new leader in rail advocacy! Elections for the NARP Board of Directors will be held early in 2008 for the 2008-2010 term.

NARP President George Chilson encourages candidates "with experience on other nonprofit boards, who love grass roots politics, are skilled at teaching, persuading, organizing, writing and public speaking and have enthusiasm and energy."

"Our board is geographically balanced, but we are seeking to make it more representative of the traveling public in terms of gender, age, and ethnicity."

NARP Vice President-Mid Atlantic Jim Churchill has been on the board for over twenty years. "Not being a team player in early life, I belatedly found that there is no better way to learn, share, forward and apply ideas to reach our goals of great train service than by being a NARP director. 'It's bigger'n both of us,' as they say."

Dennis Lytton is a new member of the NARP Board, elected in May 2005. He is a 33 year old advocate from Southern California. Why did he run for the Board? "I'm a NARP board member because I'm passionate about the need for more and better trains. Europe and Japan have good roads, air service, and trains. Don't we deserve a balanced transportation

system too? For so many reasons—environmental, quality of life, etc.—America needs more and better passenger rail."

So, if you have talent, experience and energy, "We Want You!"

Candidates elected will serve a two-year term during which time NARP will hold four board meetings. Directors must attend at least two of these meetings:

- Washington, D.C., April 29 - May 1, 2008 and April 28-30, 2009;
- Portland, OR, Oct. 17-18, 2008

- Oct., 2009 (city and date T.B.A.)

NARP will mail ballots to each NARP member in regions with contested elections in early 2008. Ballots will be tallied and winners announced at regional membership meetings in February and March. The ballots will include instructions on how to vote by mail. While we encourage candidates to attend these meetings and meet the members they will represent, it is not required.

Full directions are given below. ■

How To Run for the NARP Board of Directors

If you have been a NARP member in good standing for at least a year, you can run for the NARP Board of Directors.

New members and those current members seeking re-election need to submit a statement of candidacy. While statements for the printed ballot are limited to 75 words, longer statements will be accepted for publication on the NARP website.

First-time candidates must also submit letters of recommendation from three NARP members in the same Region. If you need assistance, the NARP office will help you make contact with other members.

All statements and letters must be received in the NARP office by the close of business Friday, November 9, 2007.

E-mail your statement to Tiffanie Childs, NARP Office Manager, at <narp@narprail.org>. All electronic submissions will be acknowledged by return e-mail. While we do accept statements by U.S. Mail for the printed ballot, *the supplemental website statements must be sent by E-mail.*

It is the candidates' responsibility to ensure that both their statement and the three letters of recommendation are received in the NARP office prior to the deadline.

Investments

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(Improvements there are in concert with the joint NS-Kansas City Southern project to upgrade the Meridian Speedway, towards Dallas.) While other route segments of major upgrades are not along Amtrak routes, improved system speed and fluidity would indirectly benefit other operations along the NS.

NS appears emboldened by the nascent \$191 million Heartland Corridor project, which is funded nearly two-thirds from public sources at federal, state, and local levels, to improve route capacity between Norfolk, VA and Columbus, OH, mainly through retrofitting tunnels to handle double-stack containers and opening a new intermodal "logistics park" near Columbus.

These projects further a recent paradigm shift among Class I railroads, whose management has historically been hostile to any governmental involvement in their industry that might lead to stricter

regulation. Projects such as the Alameda Corridor, the Union Pacific-Amtrak Capitol Corridor, and other state corridor improvements in California, and the CREATE program in the Chicago area, highlight railroad cooperation with public initiatives in arrangements seen as mutually beneficial.

But the Heartland and Crescent Corridors have been initiated as system-level business strategies from within NS itself. While seeking public investment, NS is pursuing these projects outside of the framework of USDOT's Corridors of the Future program.

According to Robert VanderClute, Senior Vice President of Safety and Operations for the Association of American Railroads, "The immense public benefits of freight railroading, including lower pollution and energy consumption, reduced highway gridlock, and enhanced mobility, safety, and security, would accrue

more quickly if more public-private partnerships for freight railroad infrastructure projects were implemented."

Could this new willingness on the part of the Class Is to embrace public financing also provide a new opening to expand passenger rail service? It's possible, if the public sector steps up to the plate with financing that would mitigate passenger trains' impacts on host railroad operations and the physical plant. Says VanderClute, "PPPs are an acknowledgment that private entities should pay for private benefits and public entities should pay for public benefits," including the capacity to host passenger trains. "An excellent example is the CREATE program, which has a passenger component. That [project] becomes a win-win for both passenger and freight."

In general, according to VanderClute, "Stronger railroads lead to stronger passenger operations as well." ■

Federal Passenger Rail Policy Development Job Opportunity

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is recruiting for a newly created senior executive position—the Director of Passenger and Freight Programs—that will play a significant role in the implementations of future Federal programs involving investment in the rail industry in general, and the Federal Government's role in intercity passenger rail service and Amtrak, in particular.

The FRA is seeking an energetic and innovative individual with excellent executive leadership skills for this position and is actively recruiting qualified applicants from all sources.

Reporting to the Associate Administrator for Railroad Development, this position will provide executive direction for policy analyses that support the Secretary of Transportation and her designee [the FRA Administrator] as a member of Amtrak's Board of Directors, and support development of the Administration's policy on intercity passenger rail service.

The Director will also provide executive direction to FRA's grant programs, including operating and capital grants to Amtrak, the proposed program of grants to States for intercity passenger rail capital improvements, as well as to FRA's innovative finance programs including FRA's Railroad Rehabilitation, and Improvement Financing program of loans and loan guarantees for rail-related capital improvements.

Applications are due in FRA not later than October 31, 2007. The vacancy announcement (FRA-07-65N) can be found on FRA's website [www.fra.dot.gov] and on the Federal employment website, [www.usajobs.gov].

Questions concerning this recruitment should be directed to Nancy Coyle, Human Resources Specialist at FRA. She can be reached at (202) 493-6119 or <Nancy.Coyle@dot.gov>. She is also available to answer questions about the application process.

Amtrak Customer Advisory Committee Has Turned 10!

By Kate Warr, ACAC Administrator

The Amtrak Customer Advisory Committee (ACAC) is celebrating its 10th anniversary. The first ACAC meeting was held in Washington, DC in February 1997. During those 10 years, the ACAC has defined its mission and focused solely on customer service issues. Many thanks are extended to the over 70 members who, through the years, have volunteered their time and energy to improving passenger rail.

Currently, the major projects slated to be presented at the fall national meeting, include Guest Rewards Improvements, Baggage Service Expansion Project and the Accessible Station Project. The Disabled and Senior Task Force (DSTF), which addresses customer service issues for passengers with special needs, is in the process of developing the "ideal accessible station." The goal is to provide a virtual footprint, from the passenger's point of view, to station planners who are undergoing renovation or new construction.

The DSTF has been one of ACAC's most active groups, receiving an Amtrak President's Service and Safety Award in

2004 (December 2004 *NARP News*).

The Baggage Service Expansion Project has taken the first step and determined via station and on-board surveys that passengers do indeed desire checked baggage. The next phase of the project will identify stations that could most easily institute checked baggage.

Guest Rewards Improvements is an ongoing project reviewing Amtrak's affinity program and making suggestions to make the program more customer friendly. This ACAC group also works on issues relevant to the frequent corridor traveler.

In the recent past, ACAC has presented to Amtrak management projects involving, family, safety, student and commuter issues, as well as what passengers need when trains are late. The ACAC continues to present Customer Service Awards to outstanding Amtrak employees. ■

Additional information about the committee is available on Amtrak's website, www.amtrak.com (click on "Inside Amtrak" and then on "Amtrak Customer Advisory Committee"). Contact Kate Warr at acac@amtrak.com.

Historic Rail Agreement Signed in Texas

"Today a tree has been planted." With those words Michael Morris, Transportation Director for the North Central Texas Council of Governments, announced that a passenger rail pact was signed between the Dallas-Fort Worth multi-county regional government agency and the East Texas Council of Governments.

The Memorandum of Understanding was signed at the recently restored Mineola, Texas Amtrak station on Wednesday, August 7 with County judges, transportation officials, civic representatives and rail advocates present to what some of the officials called a historic document.

"Through this effort, we hope to be able to enhance the funding of transportation that affects not only this region, but also the North Central Texas region," said Chad Adams, Ellis County judge. "If (high speed rail) stopped at the county line or region, it would be ineffective."

The memorandum of understanding means that the East Texas and North East Texas regions will coordinate public transportation provisions and plan for transportation systems that connect rail commuters with urban transportation.

During the ceremony, which packed the Mineola train station to standing room only condition, letters of support were acknowledged from county officials and rail advocacy organizations including NARP President George Chilson and Texas Rail

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Michael Morris, Director of Transportation, North Central Texas Council of Governments, speaks. At far left is Celia Boswell, Chairman, East Texas Corridor Council. Seated from left to right: Joel Baker, Smith County Judge, David Cleveland, Exec. Dir., East Texas Council of Governments, Chad Adams, Ellis County Judge; Pres., North Central Texas Council of Governments and Richard Anderson, Harrison County Judge.



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

Talgos Temporarily Removed from Service

Amtrak removed all Talgo trainsets from service on August 2 after cracks were discovered in the carbody supports of the railcars on one of the trains during a routine inspection. Subsequent inspections found cracks on other cars. Talgo maintains the equipment under contract to Amtrak.

Talgo President and CEO Antonio Perez said, "We are acting very conservatively by removing the equipment from service. The safety of passengers has not and will not be compromised."

All Cascades service was cancelled August 3-5. Amtrak quickly brought in replacement Amfleet and Horizon cars from across the country and resumed a limited schedule of Cascades service on August 6. A full replacement schedule (four Seattle-Portland frequencies and both trips south of Portland to Eugene) began on August 9.

Trains 510 and 517, serving Vancouver, British Columbia, have been unaffected by the disruption as they have been using Superliner equipment for about six

months to permit rotating of Talgo equipment in for overhaul. Trains 513 and 516 (Seattle-Bellingham) will be represented by buses during the disruption.

All replacement services are in Amtrak's computer system. Schedules have been lengthened, since Amfleet and Horizon cars do not have the tilting capability of the Talgos. In addition, checked baggage, business class, on board movies and bicycle storage are not available.

The current estimate for returning the Talgos to service is October 28. ■

Texas

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Advocates President John Radovich.

Longview Partnership President Kelly Hall said that "it's much more cost effective to build rail than to build new interstate highways. We need double tracks to make this happen, and that's going to happen with a lot of lobbying efforts."

The East Texas Corridor Council (ETCC) is a regional consensus for capacity investments to secure higher speed rail for the 6.5 million residents along the Interstate 20/Interstate 69 corridor from Dallas/Fort Worth to the Arkansas and Louisiana border connections. Formed in 2004, the ETCC was instrumental in the process. NARP Director Tim Geeslin, acting in the capacity of Strategy Chairman, initiated the dialogue between the two regions which ultimately resulted in the historic ceremony.

Corridor council chair Celia Boswell, well known for her efforts in keeping the Texas Eagle running when it was faced

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Changes elsewhere resulting from Talgo situation—Amfleet and Horizon equipment from Southern California was sent to the Northwest; passengers have been warned about standees on board *Pacific Surfliners*, especially on Del Mar race days.

In the Northeast Corridor, week-end-only trains 133, 134, 159, 192 will not operate through at least Oct. 28 to provide cars for *Cascades* service.

with discontinuance nearly 10 years ago, said that this is the beginning of a new era in transportation for both regions. The councils now look for congressional and state legislative support for passenger rail funding and upgrading of freight rail goods movement between the two Texas regions and beyond.

Announcing the Amtrak®
2008 Wall Calendar Photo Contest

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Will your photo of an Amtrak train be featured on the Amtrak 2008 wall calendar?

Enter Amtrak's 2008 "Picture Our Train" Wall Calendar contest! Go to [www.amtrak.com/photocontest] for more information and complete contest rules.