



A Healthy Ridership Recovery

Amtrak ridership has done quite well starting in June 2003, with double-digit increases (compared to one year earlier) in September, October, and November.

Long-distance train ridership grew more quickly than for the overall system since February—with double-digit growth since March (except July). Those trains' ticket revenues were up 17.4% in November.

The positive trends in recent months bode well for 2004. For October-November, the first two months of fiscal 2004, system ridership and ticket revenues were up 11% and 9%, respectively.

Also, Amtrak set a one-week record for ridership in Thanksgiving week (Tuesday to Monday) of about 595,000 riders, up 5% from last year.

The percentage changes above reflect a gradually strengthening market (as well as a weak August-September 2002 due to the 'yaw damper' problem on the new electric equipment [Aug. '02 News]).

Perhaps most remarkable are the trends for the long-distance trains over

the same period (see box at right).

The impressive trends of the most recent months are masked in the fiscal 2003 figures which end with September, and began in October 2002 with hard times, especially on Acela Express. For that 12-month period, system ridership was up 2.7%, passenger-miles rose 0.6% and ticket revenues fell 5.9%.

Other factors contributing to the weaker showing in the early part of the year included the weak economy and reduced leisure travel.

AMTRAK SYSTEM GROWTH

Fiscal 2003 vs. 2002

	Ridership	Ticket Revenues
May	- 1.7%	- 8.9%
June	+ 6.8%	- 4.2%
July	+ 7.1%	+ 1.1%
August	+ 7.3%	+ 4.8%
September	+ 11.4%	+ 4.2%
October	+ 10.7%	+ 7.0%
November	+ 11.7%	+ 11.4%

LONG-DISTANCE GROWTH

	Ridership	Ticket Revenues
May	+ 16.7%	- 9.6%
June	+ 13.6%	- 8.5%
July	+ 9.4%	- 1.4%
August	+ 14.1%	+ 2.6%
September	+ 22.2%	- 0.7%
October	+ 30.9%	+ 10.1%
November	+ 32.0%	+ 17.4%

Wheels of Progress

Here is our annual list of major rail passenger improvements planned to enter service and the dates of planned openings (if available). Dates and projects subject to change. NARP News regularly reports actual start-up dates.

2004

• **Jan. 1**—Houston METRORail (light rail), along Main St. from downtown to Reliant Park (7.5 mi.).

• **Jan.**—New station at Saratoga Springs, N.Y., built by Capital District Transportation Authority on same site as previous 1956 station.

• **Feb. 1**—Completion of double track on Yolo Causeway, west of Sacramento (4.5 mi.), closing last single-track stretch from Sacramento to Oakland on Capitol Corridor.

• **Feb. 15**—New Jersey Transit (NJT) River Line (diesel light rail, 34 mi.), connecting Trenton Amtrak/NJT station in the

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Bipartisan "ARRIVE-21" Bill is S.1961

The American Railroad Revitalization Investment and Enhancement Act of the 21st Century ("ARRIVE-21") was introduced November 26, becoming S.1961. The bipartisan list of original co-sponsors was Ernest F. Hollings (D.-S.C.), Susan Collins (R.-Me.), Thomas R. Carper (D.-Del.), Arlen Specter (R.-Pa.), James M. Jeffords (I.-Vt.), Frank R. Lautenberg (D.-N.J.), and Joseph R. Biden Jr. (D.-Del.).

Hollings said the bill's introduction shows "that bipartisan support exists for authorizing a strong rail program, however the main obstacle we have faced has been securing funding to live up to the authorized amounts...ARRIVE-21 creates a non-profit Rail Infrastructure Finance Corporation (RIFCO) to issue \$30 billion in tax-credit bonds over six years [to provide] grants to states for capital investment in freight and passenger rail

infrastructure and facilities." RIFCO also could issue grants to Amtrak.

A Hollings fact sheet says "eligible passenger and freight rail projects include planning and environmental review, rail line rehabilitation, upgrades and development, safety and security projects, passenger equipment acquisition, station improvement, and intermodal facilities development...A 20% non-federal match [is] required for all grants and state matches and a portion of the bond proceeds are deposited in a bond repayment fund to repay the principle of the bonds."

The bill also authorizes about \$1.5 billion a year for six years for Amtrak capital and operating expenses not funded through RIFCO capital grants.

The bill authorizes funds for "improved

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—Robert Sunderland

Houston Metro starts light-rail service on January 1. The public (above) views new trains during a "Discover Metro Day" last October, at Reliant Park Station.

Wheels of Progress (from page 1)

north with downtown Camden in the south (with PATCO connection).

- **Feb.**—Renovation of station at Rome, N.Y.; will include local transit.

- **Feb.**—Charlotte heritage trolley is extended, will be run by Charlotte Area Transit System South End-Convention Center-Uptown (9th St.), 1.4 mi. Two cars will be leased from Little Rock (see below) until three new cars are delivered to Charlotte in July.

- **Feb.**—Renovation of Lafayette, La., station. It burned in 1998. The city-parish transit agency is looking for volunteer station helpers.

- **Mar.**—New Orleans Canal streetcar line, abandoned in 1964, is restored from downtown to Cemeteries (with branch along N. Carrollton Ave. to Beauregard Circle), connecting to both existing Riverfront and St. Charles car lines.

- **Mar. 20**—Dedication of renovated station at Tucson, Ariz. Work will be finished in January and an Amtrak waiting room might open before the dedication.

- **Mar.**—Memphis Trolley branch (2 mi.) along Madison Ave., from Main to Cleveland (Medical Center).

- **Mar.**—Renovation of Amtrak/Metrolink station at San Bernardino, Cal.

- **Mar.**—Amtrak Cascades (not buses or *Coast Starlight*) begin stopping at Oregon City, Ore., where there will be a new platform and shelters. Limited parking, but more is available across street at the End of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center. In a later phase, the old station will be moved 1,000 feet to new site.

- **Apr. 3**—Hiawatha Line (light rail) first segment, Warehouse District (downtown Minneapolis)-Fort Snelling.

- **Apr.**—New intermodal terminal at

Pittsfield, Mass.

- **Spring**—San Juan Tren Urbano light metro (10.7 mi.), Sagrada Corazon-Bayamon.

- **Spring**—Caltrain completes its "CTX" construction (begun July 2002), restoring weekend service and allowing for San Jose-San Francisco express service.

- **May 1**—Portland (Ore.) MAX new light-rail branch, Rose Quarter-Expo Center (5.6 mi.). It will be run as new Interstate (Yellow) line from downtown.

- **May 21**—Oregon's *Lewis and Clark Explorer Train* (Portland-Astoria) will run Friday-Monday through September 13. The state DOT is still working on identifying an operator for this year, and on expanding capacity.

- **June**—Sacramento RTD light-rail extension, Mather Field-Sunrise (2.8 mi.).

- **Mid**—NJT Hudson-Bergen light rail extension, Hoboken-Weehawken (Lincoln Harbor).

- **Mid**—Additional Capitol Corridor service east of Sacramento. Now, one round trip serves Roseville, Rocklin, and Auburn. A new trip will go all the way to Auburn; another new trip just to Roseville.

- **Mid**—River Rail heritage trolley, Little Rock-North Little Rock, 2.1 mi.

- **Summer**—SEPTA restores Philadelphia's 15/Girard line with PCC streetcars (8.2 mi.); last regular service was in 1992.

- **Summer**—Santa Clara VTA Tasman East/Capitol light-rail line, I-880/Milpitas-Alum Rock Ave. (East San Jose), 6.4 mi.

- **Summer**—Tourist railroad operating between Brunswick and Rockland, Me., on tracks rebuilt with state funding. It will one day connect with Downeaster trains extended north from Portland.

- **Summer**—Pittsburgh Port Authority Transit completes Stage II Light Rail Transit Reconstruction Program. This includes rebuilding segments of the Overbrook streetcar line that closed in 1993.

- **Fall**—New Oakland Coliseum Amtrak station, direct connection to BART and shuttle to Oakland airport.

- **Fall**—Renovation of San Joaquin station at Fresno.

- **Fall**—New station platforms and crossings at Berkeley, Cal.

- **Fall**—New Amtrak station at Kan- napolis, N.C. (at platform site used since October 2003).

- **Dec.**—Hiawatha Line (light rail) extension Fort Snelling-airport-Mall of America (11.6 mi. from downtown

Minneapolis).

- **Dec.**—New station on Keystone line at Paradise, Pa., (connecting with Strasburg Railroad).

- **Late**—Wisconsin DOT completes new station near Milwaukee's Mitchell Field airport, for Amtrak's Hiawatha trains.

- **Late**—Completion of capacity improvements allows at least three more San Jose-Oakland Capitol Corridor frequencies (bringing the total to at least seven daily on that segment).

- **Late**—Renovation of Hamlet, N.C., station, which was moved to new location in April 2003.

- **Late**—New Oakland Maintenance Facility, serving San Joaquins, Capitol Corridor, and *California Zephyr*.

- **Late**—Dallas DART light rail spur to Victory Station (just northwest of Union Station), for special events only, but part of future Northwest (Yellow) line.

- **Sometime**—Speeds are increased on the 45-mile segment of Amtrak-owned line in southwestern Michigan, in phases from 90 mph (current) to 95 mph and 100 mph. Late in the year, another 20 miles of running at 90 mph may be added. Speeds over 79 mph are possible because of a positive train control system installed in 1999; first revenue operations at 90 mph were in January 2002.

- **Sometime**—San Francisco Muni E historic streetcar line Caltrain-Embarcadero-Fishermans's Wharf (along parts of existing F and N lines).

2005

- **Feb.**—Washington Metro Blue Line extension Addison Rd.-Largo Town Center (Md., 3.1 mi.).

- **Early**—Amtrak moves into historic, downtown Greensboro, N.C., station.

- **Spring**—MBTA opens new Green/Orange line "Super Station" at North Station. Green Line will close west of North Station, May-September 2004, to accommodate work.

- **May**—Sacramento RTD light-rail extension Sunrise-downtown Folsom (7.4 mi.).

- **May**—San Diego Mission Valley (east) extension of Blue light-rail line, Mission San Diego-Orange Line connection (6.3 mi.).

- **June**—Renovation of station at Kingman, Ariz., as part of a downtown renewal project.

- **Mid**—Portland Streetcar extension



—NCDOT

The former Southern Railway station in downtown Greensboro, N.C., will host passenger trains again in early 2005. Local and intercity buses (above) began using the renovated building in 2003.

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5th/Mill (PSU)-RiverPlace (0.6 mi).

- **Mid**—Belen-Albuquerque-Bernalillo commuter rail, using funding approved by the New Mexico legislature in November 2003. It would be first segment of eventual service to Santa Fe. [New Mexico is also considering an Albuquerque-El Paso demonstration train for 2004.]

- **Mid**—New station on Keystone line at airport at Harrisburg, Pa.

- **Summer**—NJT Hudson-Bergen light-rail extension, Weehawken (Lincoln Harbor)-North Bergen (Tonnelles Ave.).

- **Summer**—Milwaukee Amtrak station, renovated as intermodal terminal.

- **Sept.**—Sacramento RTD light-rail spur to Amtrak station (0.7 mi).

- **Late**—Oceanside-Escondido, Cal., diesel light-rail service (26 mi).

- **Late**—Chicago Metra commuter-rail extensions, Geneva-Elburn (10 mi.); Orland Park-Manhattan (11 mi).

- **Late**—Some trains run at 110 mph on Amtrak's southwest Michigan line.

- **Dec.**—Corridor One commuter rail, Harrisburg-Lancaster.

- **Sometime**—Amtrak's Chicago-St. Louis trains run up to 110 mph, Springfield-Dwight, Ill., on track improved with Illinois funds and new signal system (a state-federal-Amtrak project).

- **Sometime**—San Francisco Muni J/Church extension along Third St., Caltrain-Bayshore (Caltrain).

- **Sometime**—Nashville-Lebanon commuter rail (32 mi).

- **Sometime**—Amtrak section of Salt Lake City intermodal terminal, at site occupied by Amtrak since 1999. Greyhound/UTA bus were to move their area in fall 2004. The site will have light-rail and commuter-rail service in 2007.

- **Sometime**—Phase 2 Richmond Main Street Station project, bringing in trains currently terminating in Richmond. Phase 3 in 2007 (trains to south, includes substantial track upgrades 10.4 miles, Main Street Station-Centralia).

- **Sometime**—Renovation of Keystone line stations at Elizabethtown and Lancaster, Pa.

- **Sometime**—NJT Newark light rail, Broad Street Station-Washington Park-Penn Station.

- **Sometime**—Fourth Seattle-Portland Talgo (fifth frequency overall), pending completion of certain track projects. n

GUNN ON FREIGHT RAIL WOES

“The railroad industry...has struggled to maintain a totally private infrastructure in the face of massive government subsidies... The track structure and the capacity to move tonnage is shrinking. And the tonnage is growing...”

Noting that railroading is “a high-fixed-cost/low-variable-cost business,” Gunn continued, “There is enormous competition in the freight railroad business. And the fares and the tariffs that they charge right now do not support—will not support, the physical plant, the capital plant.

“The railroad industry is not generating the capital it needs to maintain itself for the long term. And that is a very serious problem for the nation, because they move 40 percent of the ton miles...If the freight railroads dumped all of this stuff on the highway network, it would be an impossible situation.

“So there has to be a way to level the playing field for the freight railroads. And perhaps one way of doing that is in congested urban areas, where you also have a need for passenger service. [One could develop] a symbiotic relationship and, with the federal and local governments, help rebuild some of those terminals because they're in very tough shape.”

—Amtrak President David L. Gunn, October 2, at the National Press Club

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passenger and freight rail security; [and] emergency passenger safety improvement projects in tunnels, etc.” It also “authorizes a study of new methodologies to determine Amtrak routes and services” and “defines the national passenger rail system based on existing service and high-speed rail corridors.”

It “directs the Federal government to develop a national rail plan and a ‘50-Year Intermodal Blueprint’ to promote an efficient transportation system, creates a new, voluntary state rail planning process, [and] creates a rail cooperative research program through the National Academy of Sciences.” Labor concerns are addressed using provisions developed by leaders of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and included in “RIDE-21,” the House’s rail development bill (see below).

The opportunity exists for negotiations among the Senate’s Amtrak supporters to produce a single authorization bill with broad enough support to command 60 votes, the minimum likely needed to get a bill through the Senate.

If the needed agreements are reached, the most probable vehicle for final passage would be as part of renewal of TEA 21, the big highway/transit law. Currently, highways and transit operate under an extension that expires February 29; but progress may be made in 2004.

A rail passenger bill would be offered on the Senate floor, as an amendment to the Commerce Committee’s portion of TEA-21 renewal. When that committee passed its portion of TEA-21 renewal, a “placeholder” section was included that established a Rail Infrastructure Finance Corporation and authorized Amtrak at \$2 billion annually. (The tax credit portion of the bill was filed as amendment #2220 to the bill.) n

UPDATE ON HOUSE ACTION

The House rail development bill is H.R.2571 (June News), the Railroad Infrastructure Development and Expansion Act (“RIDE-21”). As written, the bill had bond-funding provisions (with both federal tax credits and tax exemptions).

But that meant it was referred to the House Ways and Means Committee, which on October 28 stripped the bond provisions out of

the bill. The bill awaits floor action next year, when a floor amendment restoring the funding provisions is possible.

Our June newsletter had the wrong bill numbers both for RIDE-21 and for the Amtrak reauthorization, with the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee also passed June 25. The Amtrak bill actually is H.R.2572.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

Federal—Amtrak's cancellation of Boston-Washington *Federal* sleeping-car service (Dec. '03 *News*) is extended through January.

Stations—An intermodal facility opened December 18 at Auburn, Cal., used by Capitol Corridor.

Transit—The Port Authority's AirTrain light-rail line to Kennedy Airport opened December 17. It has two branches—to Jamaica (connect with Long Island Rail Road and NYCT's E, J, Z subways) and to Howard Beach (NYCT's A subway). Fare is \$5, payable at Jamaica and Howard Beach (internal airport travel is free); MetroCard accepted.

Sounder commuter rail service begins between Seattle and Everett (33 mi.) on December 22 with one weekday trip (for now).

"There's the freeway," said [Henry] Randolph, a technical writer, as the 49-ton train rumbled over a bridge perched above the Pasadena Freeway. "I don't have to take it anymore. This is like freedom. Freedom from my car."

—Los Angeles Times, July 29, 2003, on opening of the Gold light rail line

CORRECTION—Our September table, "Change in airline and Amtrak" ridership, *did* include Southwest Airlines; the footnote "except Southwest" was wrong.

AMTRAK DISCOUNT CHANGES

Amtrak will make several changes January 6, including reducing from 15% to 10% the discount for rail fares for seniors (age 62 and over). Senior fares do not, and will not, apply on Auto Train.

Amtrak will continue to offer a 50% discount for children (age 2-15, accompanied by an adult) but this will join the senior discount in applying to Metroliners and Acela Expresses on weekends only. (The children's discount now is good weekdays on all Metroliners and selected off-peak Acela Expresses.)

Amtrak will continue to offer 15% discounts for the Disabled and for Mobility-Impaired. The Mobility-Impaired discount does not apply on Auto Train, but—like the Disabled discount—applies on all Metroliners and Acela Expresses.

Amtrak will expand its 10% military furlough discount to cover all weekend Metroliner/Acela Express trains, the first time this discount has been good on any Metroliner/Acela Express trains. The military discount is available to all active members of the U.S. military and to National Guard and Reserves with active-duty orders.

Discounts apply to the rail fare only, not to charges for accommodations or (on Auto Train) vehicles.

SPAM-BLOCKING OVERKILL?

We sent an e-mail message to all members on December 8 (subject, "Veterans Advantage discount"), and got a huge number of bouncebacks—NARP members who had given us their e-mail addresses but who did not get our message.

We changed internet service providers due to a similar problem earlier in 2003, but we now think the problem could be a type of spam-blocking software that some NARP members or their e-mail providers have installed.

Because no software is a perfect judge of what to block, the best kind is one which continues to deliver spam, but puts it in a designated folder that you can check when you want to.

Some anti-spam software tags suspected spam in a message's subject line so you can review it prior to deleting.

You may want to tell your internet service provider that e-mail messages from NARP's domain, <narprail.org>, are not spam and should not be treated as such.

In some cases, it may help to add our main e-mail address, <narp@narprail.org> to your address book.

Meanwhile, we will keep doing what we can to reduce this problem at our end.



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