

*Special Interest
Articles:*

- ❖ **RUN starts an Action Line. We invite all rail passengers to call (510) 923-9333, Ext. 3, or to e-mail railusersnetwork@eu.doramail.com**
- ❖ **RUN Conference a success**
- ❖ **Privatization: What we can learn from the British model**



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**Save the Date:
Annual run conference Nov. 14-16**

The third annual run conference will be held during Nov. 14-16 in Washington, D.C.

Our conference, which will focus on “empowering rail passengers through representation and advocacy,” will provide rail customer advisory committees and advocacy groups an opportunity to network and share their best practices.

Focus on CACS

One of the things that motivated me to participate in the first RUN conference was the effort that the organizers made to reach out to members of advisory committees.

I have served on advisory committees of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA) since 1994. For the last few years, I was trying to find a way of networking with people serving on other advisory committees. I thought it would be informative to share similarities and differences between the organizational structure, the relationship with the policy making board, and the working relationship with management of various committees. I also felt that just as all transit systems face many similar issues of providing urban mass transportation, a means of communicating with peers might provide a way of exchanging ideas and approaches. I found that I came away from both annual

Interactive workshops held throughout the conference will provide participants with new insights and tools to

improve the quality and effectiveness of advisory and advocacy service. Please join us — vital decisions and legislation affecting the entire

conferences with many insights into the workings of a number of advisory boards. Perhaps through the RUN newsletter, a dialogue can be established among committee members that will continue the opportunity to exchange ideas and information between conferences.

Let me get the ball rolling by writing about the origins of the GCRTA Citizens Advisory Board (CAB). The structure and operation of the board will be grist for another installment.

In 1977, GCRTA established a 40-member Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). Members of the CAC were appointed by the GCRTA Board of Trustees upon the recommendation of city council persons, neighborhood groups or by an individual expressing an interest to serve. CAC meetings were held monthly, officers were elected and the chair of the CAC gave a monthly report to the



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Trustees. GCRTA informed the CAC of operating issues (ridership statistics, revenue information, new projects, etc). The CAC could make non-binding recommendations to the Trustees. Committee members were expected to keep a service log on trips that they took and they were encouraged to participate in promotions and events in 1991. In compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), GCRTA established a 25 member ad hoc committee to advise the Authority on accessibility issues and other ADA compliance issues. Committee and subcommittee meetings were held monthly. The members were comprised of persons with disabilities, representatives of agencies serving persons with disabilities and experts in

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2nd Annual Run Conference a Huge Success

The Second Annual Rail User' Network (RUN) Conference took place on December 7th and 8th, 2002, at the Radisson Hotel in Chicago. Building on the success of the first RUN Conference (Philadelphia, 2001), the conference likewise had many interesting and informative components - whether you were there to hear about Amtrak, the various transit agencies throughout the U.S., or even international interest.

The conference opened with welcoming remarks by RUN's Chair Dr. Richard Rudolph. James Coston, Esq., of the Amtrak Reform Council, then described what he sees as the problems facing Amtrak, the political process that brought us to the funding crisis, and the prospects for success under the leadership of David Gunn. Inherent in the discussion was the underlying inequity of rail passenger funding formulas, and how virtually all other modes of travel receive far greater subsidies than Amtrak.

Next spoke Jeffrey Sriver, assistant to the president of the Chicago Transit Authority, the agency which runs all of Chicago's rapid transit, trains and buses. Sriver's talk focused on several expansion projects the CTA is undertaking, including a new proposed "circle line" that would make use of existing lines, as well as some abandoned sections, linking many of the elevated lines and commuter railroads, thus giving customers many new travel options. Coincidentally, a new connection was opening that very day south of the loop at the Roosevelt Road station connecting the Red line (underground) with the elevated station on the Orange and Green lines. Several attendees later visited this new construction and came away very impressed.

Conference participants heard from Joel Ettinger, regional administrator of the Federal Transit Administration, who explained how the FTA funds the various transit systems nationwide, and the methodology by which new start-up systems get funded versus long established transit properties that wish to

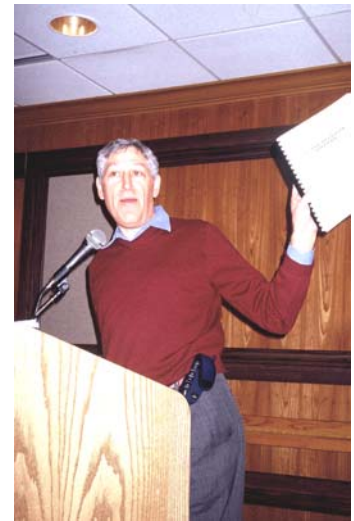
build new lines and expand. Ettinger used the new CTA connection as an example of Federal funding possibilities and practice.

In a completely different vein, the conference next held one of it's "Interactive Workshops," this one on current consumer participation, hosted by Andrew Albert, Chair of the New York City Transit Rider Council. Albert explained how his group is appointed by New York State's Governor, on the recommendation of the City's Mayor, the Public Advocate, and the five Borough Presidents. Albert also explained how they work with the transit agencies (MTA, NYC Transit), how they are advisory, but also hold a non-voting seat on the MTA Board. The Council is funded by the MTA, and this enables them to have a staff, hold various forums, and undertake investigative reports.

The first day concluded with a discussion of the 2003 RUN Conference agenda, including it's location. The consensus was that the conference should be held in the Washington, DC area, allowing participants to visit members of Congress or staff members. The annual election of Directors and Officers was held.

On the second day, the conference heard from David G. Hoffman, Superintendent, Suburban Operations of Burlington Northern Santa Fe. Hoffman explained how METRA trains are routed through several junction points that are shared with Amtrak, and how cooperation between carriers leads to METRA's typical 97% on time performance. He also provided several historical vignettes on customer service, going back to the former Burlington Railroad.

A highlight of the Sunday session was a presentation by Rick Harnish, Executive director of the Midwest High Speed Rail Coalition. Harnish dazzled the group with the hope of a series of high speed rail corridors serving virtually all important cities in the Midwest, many of which are served today by relatively slow trains, often just one or two a day. The prospect of multiple departures allowing a



person to travel to Chicago or Detroit or Cleveland or St. Louis, conduct a day of business, and return home the same day was tantalizing to those from the Midwest, since the only place a traveler can do that with relative ease by rail today is the Northeast or the San Diego Corridor. Harnish revealed some exceptional demand model research, and discussed "next step" plans.

Representing a sister organization, the Parliamentary-created Rail Passengers' Council (RPC) in the United Kingdom, and having traveled 4,000 miles to address the RUN Conference, Chris Irwin portrayed the fifty-five year history of the UK organization, its structure, funding, and both successes and challenges. This was put in the perspective of the current privatized rail system in the UK, which has seemed to place lawyers, consultants and bureaucrats ahead of railroaders and customers, or so the perception has been. The role of RPC in investigating accidents was discussed, as the passengers' surrogate. Irwin also co-chaired an interactive workshop with Dr. Rudolph, focusing on a Passengers' Bill of Rights, and how we can get one for our passengers. The UK, as Irwin explained, has long had one, and what it took to put it into place was discussed. This proved an exciting discussion, and one, which was perhaps, just the opening round.

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RUN Initiates Action Line

To assist in fulfilling the mission of the Rail Users' Network (RUN), Dr. Gloria Sharples presented a proposal for a passenger action line at a recent board meeting. This proposal was approved by RUN's directors and is now operating. Sharples attends to calls and written communications from passenger rail customers with complaints. The purpose of RUN's Action Line is to provide a vehicle that, when used by rail passengers, will result in satisfactory responses from rail operators to rail passengers' legitimate complaints.

The procedure consists of investigating any valid customer complaints that have not been satisfactorily resolved by the appropriate rail carrier. However, this will only occur after the customer has presented the complaint(s) to an appropriate rail advisory group. RUN will intervene

if such an advisory group does not exist, if one exists but does not want to take on the task, or if the advisory group requests RUN's assistance

This service will be especially significant to rail passengers in the following areas. Any work done by RUN's Action Line should: (1) provide another way to receive the views of the rail passenger. These views will be communicated to local advisory and advocacy organizations as well as specific rail operators; (2) assist RUN in representing rail passengers' interests to the industry and to those who regulate or influence it by gathering information. This relevant information will promote better understanding and critical awareness of how to foster exemplary customer service; (3) promote increased accountability to customers; (4) prompt a more reciprocal relationship between rail operators and customers as

well as advisory and advocacy groups; (5) be a valuable medium for information gathering that can be used to determine passengers' most significant expressed needs and desires. (This can also define where research to improve customer service needs to be conducted); (6) influence recommendations from advisory groups and from within the industry to improve customer service; and (7) aid rail operators, advisory and advocacy groups in making better informed decisions concerning customers.

RUN hopes that passenger rail customers will not hesitate to utilize this service. The Action Line numbers and addresses are: Telephone: (510) 923-9333, Ext. 3. Fax: (510) 923-9335.

E-mail: railusersnetwork@eudorama.il.com.
Regular mail: 4841 Shafter Ave., Oakland, CA 94609

Cont. from page 1 CAC's

rehabilitation. GCRTA management and staff sought out subcommittees and appropriate committee members for advice and recommendations on issues varying from Key Station planning to para-transit eligibility and service issues. Therefore the ADA Committee was appointed by and reported to management.

As time went on, management found it cumbersome to inform two separate advisory committees, and after 20

years the CAC was in need of new blood and the ADA Committee felt that many service issues directed to the CAC had disability implications and wanted input. The ADA committee felt that the need to address disability issues in transit was ongoing and would continue beyond the sunset of the committee.

In 1997, a task force of a delegation of members of both committees, staff and management met for over a year to restructure the

committees resulting in the recommendation was made for a new 20 member Citizens Advisory Board to replace the existing committees.

The Trustees approved the recommendation and established the CAB in January of 1999.



**(510) 923-9333
Ext. 3**

RUN'S Action Line provides a vehicle for rail passengers to achieve satisfactory responses from rail operators for rail passengers' legitimate complaints.



Canadian vs. the U.S. -A Travelers Odyssey

The annual trek to visit family during the holiday season began with a phone call to Amtrak and VIA to check out The North America Rail Pass Program. It is one of the most adventurous and affordable ways to travel across Canada and the U.S. All that is needed is time, a little bit of planning to maximize the use of the pass which enables you to travel to as many places as you want in a 30 day period and patience in dealing with Amtrak and VIA employees who may not be familiar with this program. Your best bet is to plan out your itinerary before calling the North American Rail Pass Desk at Amtrak. This can be a challenge even for a seasoned traveler because of the infrequency of service in certain areas of the country. The Boston section of the Lake Shore Limited arrives in Albany long after the two northbound trains leave for Canada. Having taken the Maple Leaf to Toronto the year before, and wanting to check out the new Renaissance equipment on the overnight train from Montreal to Toronto, I chose to ride the Adirondack, which is considered one of the 10 greatest train rides in the world. To get there from Steep Falls, Maine required getting up at 5am in the morning to catch the train in Albany, a 4 1/2 hour journey by car. Fortunately, there is plenty of long term parking outside and inside the new train station.

The trip up on the Adirondack to Montreal was pleasant enough. The train traverses the western shore of Lake Champlain and passes through a number of small towns, which are tourist destinations during the summer. Time was spent viewing the ice and snow covered vistas along the right of way and writing the obligatory Christmas cards to family and friends. The challenge was to find a post office box to drop off the mail before crossing the Canadian border. The train never stopped long enough at any of the stations along the way to look for a mailbox. Fortunately, an Amtrak employee volunteered at the last stop on the American side of the border to take

the mail - he was planning to drop by the post office anyway and volunteered to help out.

The custom agents on either side of the border who jumped on board to check passengers' documents a short time later were friendly and accommodating, but some passengers were singled out for additional scrutiny. However, no one was summarily taken off the train for additional questioning, nor did we lose much time. We arrived 15 minutes early at Montreal's train station. The next four hours were spent making phone calls in VIA's first class passenger lounge, sipping tea and reading Montreal's newspapers. Time was also spent wandering through the cavernous shopping mall, which is connected to the train station.

VIA's overnight train from Montreal to Toronto features the brand new Renaissance class equipment, which was originally destined for Europe's cross channel service. Sleeping accommodations in the standard bedrooms are quite plush. There are separate sink and toilet facilities in an adjoining room, but no private or public shower available for use. One could only wish that the bed was a bit longer to accommodate those of us who are over 6 feet tall. The furniture in the lounge car also seemed to be designed for smaller persons. The service, however, was extraordinary. The attendant greeted each passenger as they entered the lounge, provided complimentary snacks and offered full bar service.

The next morning a continental breakfast was served beginning at 6am, which provided passengers ample time to sit and enjoy their food before arriving in Toronto at 8:20am. The onboard service crew working the Canadian, which operates three days a week from Toronto to Vancouver over Canadian National's northern route, were waiting in anticipation as the train from Montreal pulled into the station. Last minute preparations were being made to prepare the train for departure.



Red cap attendants were busy assisting passengers with luggage while sleeping car attendants were familiarizing passengers with the features of their rooms.

The Canadian departs 9 a.m. sharp without much fanfare, but passengers soon realize they are on a world class land cruise rivaling anything that European railroads might offer. The consist includes 10 sleepers, 3 coaches, 1 dome/ lounge car, a diner, and the Park car at the rear of the train which doubles as a sleeper, lounge and observation car. The onboard service crew is attentive to passenger needs and seemed genuinely interested in making sure that everyone had a good time on the train. Stewards offer free champagne and a breakfast buffet once the train is on the mainline heading west of Toronto. At no time were passengers bombarded with messages over the intercom regarding bathroom habits, walking around without shoes or disciplining children who might decide to run up and down the aisles. It was refreshing to be treated in a respectful way after having been verbally assaulted too many times on Amtrak to remember.

Dining was also a real joy. Mixed salad greens were offered with every meal.

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Cont. Canadian vs US

Vegetarians even had a choice at each meal rather than the standard lasagna fare that is offered up at lunch and dinner on long distance trains back home. Reservations for lunch and dinner are taken and a wait list is created once the dining car is filled. Staff members quietly inform passengers when there is additional seating in the diner.

Perhaps the most memorable part of the trip was how the onboard crew handled a freight derailment that occurred the first night out on the journey. Unknown to passengers who were sleeping, the crew was instructed to head back east to get on the Canadian Pacific mainline, the original route of the Canadian, rather than jettison everyone's travel plans. To reverse direction, one of the engines was taken off and coupled on to the back of the Park car. Other than sleepwalkers or insomniacs few if any passengers were aware of the maneuver until the following morning when we were informed what had happened and that we were running 13 1/2 hours late. The rail fans on-board as well as a tour group of 70 partygoers from England destined for Jasper, Alberta were especially pleased with the diversion as the train wound it way around the north shore of Lake Superior. Although every effort was made over the next several days to make up for lost time, we consistently ran late and eventually had to be put on buses at Kamloops about 100 miles northeast of Vancouver. This was done so that the consist could be cleaned and placed in service heading east. Passengers waiting in Vancouver were also bused to catch the eastbound Canadian from Kamloops.

Onboard service recovery on the Canadian was outstanding. Arrangements were made with local bus and taxi companies to pick up and leave off passengers who would have been otherwise left stranded. The dining car staff remained cheerful and provided two extra meals for first class passengers. The onboard service crew continued to be available to assist passengers and to keep common spaces clean throughout the journey. Passenger disembarking in Vancouver were reminded to stop off at the ticket counter to receive a voucher which would entitle them to a 50 percent discount on their next trip on VIA.

In contrast, the rest of the journey to

San Diego via the Coast Starlight and Pacific Surfliner required a fair amount of human endurance. Fortunately, I had a day lay over in Vancouver to catch a breathe of fresh air and to do some last minute shopping before the outset of the Christmas 2002 holiday. The Amtrak Thruway Connection leaves the Pacific Central Station in Vancouver at 5:45 am and arrives in Seattle at 9am, leaving plenty of time to stand in line to get a boarding pass to head south on what used to be Amtrak's premier train, the Coast Starlight.

The kiddy car and Pacific Parlor Car are all that is left of what use to be a world class overnight land cruise via rail. Service has been severely curtailed to insure uniformity throughout the Amtrak system. The cost of a standard bedroom for one night was more than what was paid for the entire trip across Canada. The menu no longer reflected the regional specialties, which at one point helped distinguish one train from another. Instead, standard Amtrak fare was offered at each sitting.

While passengers were forewarned that the train probably would be running three or four hours late because of a recent snow / ice storm in the Cascades, I hoped time could be made up along the way so that I could catch the last train the following evening leaving Los Angeles for San Diego. It was not until we lost another hour and a half sitting outside of Sacramento without explanation that I realized that one had to be creative if I didn't want to miss the festivities Christmas evening.

Fortunately Amtrak offers an extensive system of Thruway motor coach connections throughout California with direct train/motor coach transfers at train stations serving the Pacific Surfliner route, Capital Corridor, and the San Joaquin trains. Detraining in Sacramento, I caught the next thruway bus to Stockton where I boarded a San Joaquin train headed for Bakersfield. Another thruway bus connection enabled me to get to L.A. five minutes before the last Pacific Surfliner left the station that evening. Another hour was lost when someone pulled the emergency cord just outside of Fullerton's station. The train came to a quick stop and then after an equipment check



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slowly pulled into the station. We then waited for the police to arrive to check for suspicious passengers. Finding none we were eventually allowed to proceed south to San Diego.

The trip back on Amtrak's Southwest Chief and the Lake Shore Limited after dashing off with grandchildren to the San Diego Zoo, Legoland, and other destinations over a ten day period provided valuable time to reflect on what will be needed to convince a greater share of the traveling public in the United States to take a long distance train rather than flying or driving to their favorite destination. The frequency of rail service and the reliability of the equipment are certainly at the top of the list.

Californians can be proud of the investment that the State has made over the past ten years. While cash strapped Amtrak can not provide the same level of service as other countries, unless Congress and other states step up to the plate, it can certainly provide a much higher level of customer service than is usually encountered on long distance trains crisscrossing the nation.

Most travelers are willing to put up with shabby surroundings and equipment failures, but want to be informed when delays occur and want to be treated with the dignity and respect that they deserve as paying customers.

While some progress has been made during the past few years to upgrade customer service, Amtrak officials and employees need to be reminded that their job is more than just moving equipment from one terminal point to another, but rather to provide world class service such as that which exists on VIA's Canadian.



Spotlight on ADA Issues

The Rail Users Network, (RUN) has the goal of better access for all persons to rail passenger, commuter rail and rail transit service. However, we are also looking at access for persons with disabilities. To this end, we have had special segments at our two annual conferences on ADA and accessibility issues. I had the pleasure of chairing the panels on this issue, since I am a consumer of services who happens to have a disability. ADA has helped the cause of making rail passenger and rail transit more accessible to persons with disabilities, but there is a lot of work yet to be done. The letter of the law is very important, but we are also dealing with the spirit of the law and the attitudes of providers of rail services in general. Of course, RUN's focus is on helping advisory

groups function more effectively and this is very important in the area of special advisory groups for persons with disabilities.

In our December 2002 RUN conference, we presented a video on how the Amtrak Customer Advisory Committee's Disabled Senior Task Force (DSTF) lead a workshop for drivers of Amtrak thruway buses in Florida. The DSTF had recommended Amtrak use consumers with disabilities in their training programs and this idea has been accepted. Our December 2002 presentation also featured Mr. Steve Hastalis, ADA Administrative Assistant for Chicago Transit Authority and Mr. Steve Albro, chair of ADA committee, Greater Cleveland RTA Citizen's Advisory Board. We heard how their

respective systems are making it possible for persons with disabilities to access public transit and participate fully in the life of their community.

Access to public rail and other transit and rail passenger service enables persons with disabilities to be part of their community by having the freedom to travel whenever and wherever they wish to. In the same way, access to intercity rail allows persons with disabilities to travel throughout the country. As I said above, accessibility has improved, but we feel more work is necessary such as letting employees and providers of rail services know the needs and abilities of person with disabilities.

Philip Copeland, Member (Board of Directors, RUN)

Privatization- The British Model

After 45 years as a government owned nation entity, British Rail (BR) was put out to pasture by the Railway Act of 1993, which under the Conservative government of John Major, created the structure of the privatization replacing BR. Private railways had been the order of the day from 1829 to 1948 and in 1923, the many small carriers were, for the most part, consolidated into four major carriers, the shadows of which formed the operating regions of British Rail (BR).

However, the 1980 decade saw BR metamorphosed into a business-led railway, first with business sectors overlaid upon the operating regions, and then usurping the regions entirely, vertically integrating the

business sectors by giving them responsibility for maintaining and running the portions of the railway network they used primarily. The business sectors were intercity passenger, London commuter, regional passengers, freight, and parcel express/mail. Included without regional passenger rail were the commuter services serving locations other than London, mostly with public agency sponsorship.

With privatization, BR was broken up into 25 train operating companies more or less along the business sector lines, with five intercity, about ten London commuter, and about ten regional franchises, or TOC's as they are known, one (or several) freight operating companies, an

infrastructure company (Railtrack) which owned and maintained all track, signals, civil structures, and most key stations, and they granted track access to the TOC's for a charge (it allocated schedule "paths" or "opeinklinrating slots"), and three equipment lessors, which were "sold" the entire BR fleet, and leased it back to the TOC's. In addition, hundreds of ancillary companies were formed to take over other BR business activities, such as engineering, real estate, vehicle maintenance, on-board catering, and the like. Of course, specialist law firms and consultants sprang up to service this newly fragmented industry, and government

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Privatization – Cont. from page 6

threw in a regulator, an office of franchising, and a few other pre-existing safety and security agencies.

After a few much publicized and catastrophic accidents, Railtrack was put into “administration” (bankruptcy) by government and was recreated as a not-for-profit firm called Network Rail, whose stock is all owned by the government. The franchising office is now the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA), and is a new, but growing, bureaucracy employing some 500 (more than old BR’s headquarters staff) people. Some TOC’s have gone belly up, others have been replaced, and some have had their franchises extended (or merged with neighboring TOC’s). Several are on bailouts from government (the intent was, when bidding on a franchise, to bid as low a subsidy as possible, or better, a declining subsidy in which the latter years would see payments to government). A few have been profitable and are paying the British government, but in the balance, more subsidy is being paid than under BR, and the coming franchise bids (most are due for rebidding – the franchise periods was franchise-specific) are anything but clear, although the SRA is said to be working on a new plan.

The SRA is now the channel for government money to the industry. The plans were for it to pay for new capital investment, for speed increases, new high-speed lines, new commuter connections across London, etc. However, the SRA has recently said it has almost run out of money, and the financial demands for health, education, war planning, and the like have obviously put rail investment on a back burner for the Blair government. Furthermore, the economy and the feeling that rail industry money consumption is out of control has fueled the normal government restraint in investment.

Perhaps the complex web of companies, doing what one government railway once did (reasonably efficiently), provides a clue as to where some money has gone. If a TOC leases trains from one company, has another maintain them, pays the track owner an access charge, who in turn contracts for track maintenance from one company and signal maintenance from another, and each contract includes a contingency and profit factor, a consultant

and lawyer’s fee, etc, it soon adds up to a “money-go-round”, with precious few pounds Sterling buying rail transportation.

Further, major capital projects tended to soar in unit price since BR days – the upgrading of the West Coast Main Line from London to Glasgow, Manchester, Birmingham, and Liverpool went from \$2 billion to almost \$20 billion, or more than a new high speed line would have cost. The speed was to be raised from 110mph to 140mph, but the money ran out at 125mph. Other projects have been indefinitely suspended or canceled.

Now, what about the customer? Putting freight aside (for it’s also a sad story), the passenger has seen some innovative marketing, lots of new equipment (private financing has helped buy trains the government would not allow BR to buy, and the unit price has come down), and customer service ranging from superb (on Great North Eastern Railway, which runs the East Coast Main Line services from London to Yorkshire, Newcastle and Scotland) to fair (on most) to poor. One commuter line, Chiltern Railways, has done well, been profitable, and provided excellent service to a rapidly growing suburban/interurban area, and been rewarded a second franchise. Another (Connex South Central) was literally thrown out, and replaced, mostly due to poor service.

Virgin Trains, which owns the West Coast Main Line franchise and the Cross Country franchise (all intercity trains which do not serve London), is replacing its entire equipment fleet with superb new trains. The Cross Country diesel multiple unit (MNU) fleet was inaugurated in September 2002, along with a meticulous memory pattern-timetable with more service than ever. Unfortunately, the new trains were just too small (200+ seats instead of 400+) and the increased loads generated by the new service and equipment has caused overcrowding so severe that passengers have been left behind, and some trains will be eliminated in the next timetable change to make more seats available on the remaining schedule. Thus, the service is being hurt by the very factors designed to make it excellent.

Connectivity in terms of information, pricing, station connections, and the like, has been criticized since privatization. Since many franchises are owned by bus

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operators, it is felt that (lowered) bus standards are being applied to rail travel. With about 25 TOC’s, there are bound to be different standards of excellence, and some feel the industry is being brought down by the lower-performing companies. Government has hardly provided direction as to a vision for the industry, but has fostered conflicting points of view and goals, and even with each political party, conflicting statements have been rampant.

In summary, while there is a plethora of rail passenger service offered in the U.K. ranging from superb to poor, and while much of it (particularly the availability of many trains on many routes connecting many cities, and bringing passengers into the cities from the hinterlands) makes rail passenger service in the United States look anemic, the sad truth is that both the U.K. and the U.S. suffer from the many of the same difficulties. In neither case is the government willing to come to a consensus as to what role rail passenger service is to play, and at what level it should be supported. Both nations bandy about the virtues of privatization and the ills of public support, but neither is willing to undertake the rigorous work needed to extract the best of both worlds. In shunning their role, the governments of the two nations create a nightmare of fragmented, under-funded systems without a true vision, which becomes easy prey for competition from the automobile, the budget airline, and the motor coach, without consideration for the proper role of each mode, and the environmental implications of such decisions, or lack of decisions.

For the customer, perhaps the best advice is to enjoy good service where you find it, caveat emptor and good luck! But don’t miss an opportunity to visit the U.K. and look over its railways, for there are valuable experiences and lessons (good and bad) to be brought home, and the one positive constant is the innate level of hospitality to be found – it is without equal!

Please become a member of RUN..

From the run
board of
directors

The Rail users' newsletter is published quarterly by the Rail Users' network, a 501 9c) (3) nonprofit corporation.

Rail users' network newsletter invites passengers to share ways to improve passenger rail service. Send your contribution to:
Rail users' Network,
p.o. box 9373, St. louis, MO 63117

Don't be left behind at the station - join us!

**Rail Users' Network
P.O. Box 9373
St. Louis, MO 63117**

We invite you to become a charter member of the rail users' network, a new organization to represent rail passengers' interest in North America. RUN is based on the successful British model, which has been serving passengers since 1948. Run networks passengers, their advocacy organizations and their advisory councils together for the first time. In addition, run is working to help secure an interconnected system of rail services that passengers will use with pride. Run forms a strong, unified voice for intercity, regional/commuter and transit rail passenger interests. By joining together, sharing information, best practices and resources through networking, passengers will have a better chance of a vocal and meaningful seat at the decision making table.

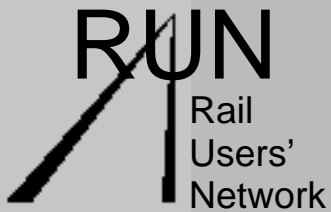
RUN members enjoy newsletters, an annual conference, a passenger action line and meetings to share information while working to improve and expand rail passenger service.

Membership is open to passengers, official advisory councils, advocacy groups, public agencies, tourist and convention bureaus, carriers and other profit-making organizations.

We certainly hope you will join this new organization - vital decisions and legislation affecting the nationwide rail transportation system are being made daily. Don't be left behind at the station!

Yearly dues

- \$35 for individual/family memberships
- \$100 for advisory committees and advocacy groups
- \$250 for government agencies and tourist/convention bureaus
- \$500 for carriers and profit making businesses



What happened to schedules?

Join me now in unfamiliar territory. A metropolitan region of four million, served by intercity trains, regional trains, commuter trains, rapid transit, and streetcars. Rail services aplenty. All one has to do is figure out how to use the multitude of services to get to one's destination. Union Station seems like a good place to begin, especially since that is where the VIA train arrived.

Union Station is a maze of passageways, stairways, and concourses. Eventually through the maze, the commuter rail section is reached, where schedules are abundant in racks. Just one difficulty, there is no mention in the schedules of what the fares are. Through the maze again to reach the VIA level. Ticket windows, information aplenty. Oh yes, regional Ontario Northland also seems to serve this station. The sign says so, tickets available at a booth selling papers. Well maybe so, but not when the both is closes. Wonder when the train runs?

The railroad service scores well, two out of three – the big two – have schedules, information, and ticket sales open and available. Onward to the local transit system. It begins in Union Station, somewhere down in the maze. One subway and two streetcar lines serve the station. Fortunately, if one asks, a cashier' booth has a map of the transit lines. Unfortunately, in three days of looking, not a single schedule could be found for any of the lines of the local transit system. At some stops, a sign at the stop indicated approximate frequency and hours of service. However, one first has to get to a stop with the information to see it. In other words, a pole on a route in the east is of no help planning a trip beginning on a route in the

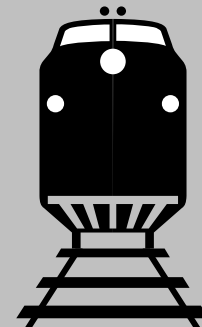
TRAIN		21	23	23	25	25
DAYS/JOURS		x6,7				
Correspondances		0610	0820	0820	1250	1250
		0859	1115	1115	1540	1540

VIA		MONTRÉAL · ALEXANDRIA ·			OTTAWA				
TRAIN	KM	31	631	33	635	35	37	39	
DAYS/JOURS		x6,7		6	6,7	x6	x6,7		
DP	Montréal, QC ET/HE (Central Stn./Gare Centrale)	0	0645	0735	1000	1305	1505	1645	1800
	Dorval	@ 19	0702	0752	1017	1322	1522	1702	1824
	Coteau, QC	63							1847
	Alexandria, ON	* 100	0749	0839	1100	1410	1610	1744	1910
	Casselman	* 140			1118				
AR	Ottawa, ON ET/HE	187	0828	0920	1139	1450	1657	1822	1949

west – or the north or south. Further, there is no indication of travel time – how long will it take to get somewhere, or which of several combinations of routes provides the shortest travel time.

This land in no mythical place, but is the real city of Toronto. Can people be expected to use rail, or bus services if information is not readily available? Fortunately this author had some idea of the system and “muddled through.” What about a more typical person? Is this a plot to force out-of-towners into taxicabs? What about local residents? Not all of them have memorized the complexities of the system. It is far easier to hop into the auto and go – no wondering if a route is frequent or peak hour only, no wondering when the next vehicle will come, and no struggle to plot a path through transit routes.

Sadly, Toronto is not alone. Try to find schedules for many of the systems in North America. If one is familiar with a system, they have likely devised a way to acquire the necessary schedules. For the rest of the population, the large majority, the transit system remains a vast mystery. Where is the source of potential new passengers – in that



Most rail companies now have schedules on the Internet. Check the following sites:

- www.amtrak.com
- www.rail.co.com
- www.viarail.ca



**BNFS Coach –
14th St. Chicago**

RUN's 2nd Conference - Cont. from page 2

Closing remarks were delivered by Gary Prophet, Vice President, Empire State Passenger Association. Gary's charge to everyone was to get out there and fight for passenger rail. Whether it's Amtrak, commuter rail systems, or transit systems, we all need to be out there advocating improvements, continued funding, more equitable funding, etc. Additionally, better scheduling, better maintenance of equipment, and better

facilities for the disabled will ensure the continued health of our rail facilities nationwide.

Dr. Rudolph, RUN Chair, thanked all participants in the Second Conference and reminded the group that the bi-monthly RUN Board meetings are open to all, either in person or by phone. Planning of the Third Conference will commence at the next Board meeting.

Schedules- Cont. from page 8

majority lost in the mystery without information.

This passenger's opinion is that there are many potential passengers that never become passengers because they never find out that they could get where they want to do. For starters, why not have the local transit schedules readily available at the intercity train station? Much more inspired would be to also have transit schedules at the other intercity rail stations along each train route. For instance, Washington, Baltimore, Wilmington, Philadelphia, New York, New Haven, Providence, and Boston could each have a schedule rack at all of those stations. In this manner, potential passengers could find the information they need to plan a complete

trip at their home station. Knowing the local transit available at the destination might make a rail trip possible. Lacking the information may well lead to the certain mode for a complete trip - the auto.

Yes, there is a cost to providing schedule information. Are schedules not one of the most effective marketing tools available to rail systems? What successful industry does not spend a far greater portion of its revenue on marketing and advertising than the passenger rail industry? The ball may not be in your court, perhaps in this case we should say the train is in the industry's station. Can you improve the availability of information?

(The above opinion is that of passenger Chuck Bode, upon arrival in Toronto, Ontario's Union Station)

Volunteers Needed:

Our work is highly collaborative. We need volunteers to achieve our goals. Several committees are being established and will meet on a regular basis and need members' input: They include:

Legislative Outreach Committee

Newsletter/ Communications Committee

Conference Planning Committee

Fundraising Committee

Please join us. Thanks in advance for supporting our mission and helping us achieve it.

The Rail Users' Newsletter is published quarterly by the Rail Users' Network, a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit corporation. Current board members include:

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Please send comments, letters to editor or articles for possible publications to the Rail Users' Network at: RUN; P.O Box 9373; St. Louis, Missouri; 63117 or email to rrudolph@pivot.net