

GUNN FIRED BY AMTRAK BOARD

(continued from Page One)

Reform Act of 1997 required replacement of the board in 2003. If Amtrak was still taking subsidies at that point, the 1997 law mandated that a new board appointed by the president take over.

Amtrak press spokespersons hired under a special no-bid contract with the board told the media that the current board is legal but Chairman LaTourette and other committee members articulated further doubts in the November 15 hearings.

In his opening statement, LaTourette criticized the Bush Administration for proceeding with a largely vacant Amtrak Board. "The best word I can think of for this situation is pathetic. The Administration knew from Day One exactly when each prior director's tenure ended, and did not make timely nominations."

Democrats on the Subcommittee also criticized the Administration's lack of a comprehensive, coherent policy towards passenger rail. In his opening statement, Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) referred to the removal of Gunn as the "FEMA-tization" of Amtrak. Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR) went further, likening Amtrak Chairman of the Board David Laney to FEMA's Michael Brown and other discredited Bush Administration figures appointed because of long personal histories of loyalty to the President, rather than experience in the particular field.

Democrats also expressed deep suspicion that a plan might be in the works to privatize the Northeast Corridor. (see **exchange between Rep. Menendez and Chairman Laney on Page 5**)

Sen. Tom Carper (D-DE), former Amtrak Board member, pinpointed the context of the Gunn firing. It "comes just a week after the Senate overwhelmingly approved an Amtrak reform bill in one of the most pro-Amtrak votes I've ever seen. Ninety-three senators are now on record supporting a meaningful and thoughtful Amtrak reform bill. It's unfortunate that the Administration, through the Board, would rather play games with Amtrak's management than engage Congress on how to make Amtrak stronger."

Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY), Rep. Jim Costa (D-CA), as well as Rep. DeFazio (D-OR) called for Gunn's reinstatement. However, it appears unlikely Gunn or anyone of his stature will be filling the job during the remainder of the Bush Administration.

The Administration wants someone who is willing to be an implementor of its plans to "reform" Amtrak. In the interim, Chief Engineer David Hughes has been named Acting President and CEO, and the Board "has launched a national search to find the railroad's next leader."

RUNNING ON EMPTY

by Gerald Cauthen
TRAC President

In the last issue of CRN we pointed out the huge subsidies going to America's roadway users. This largely unrecognized gift from ordinary taxpayers to roadway users sends the wrong message. Instead of developing the high quality rail and bus systems needed to maintain general mobility while conserving energy, government at all levels lavishes subsidies on a system that compels every traveler to take 3,000 pounds of steel and glass with him wherever he goes.

In recent years the adverse effects of our wasteful and polluting ways have been all too obvious. However, there's now a new factor to be considered.

In a recent article, the London-based *Independent* published a set of disturbing statistics about China. China's timber trade is now by far the biggest destroyer of the world's dwindling rainforests. Perhaps even more startling is the fact that China has now overtaken the US as the world's leading consumer of four out of the five basic commodities; namely grain, meat, coal and steel, leaving only oil. But not for long.

If this pace of growth continues, by 2031 China's demand for oil will be 99 million barrels a day, due in large part to the more than one billion cars the Chinese are expected to be driving by that year. For those who can't quite get their minds around 99 million barrels a day, it is equal to more oil than was produced per day by the entire world in 2004. Just as threatening is the fact that China's increasing reliance on coal-fired power stations coupled with its vast expansion of roadway travel will soon make it the world's biggest emitter of greenhouse gases. If current plans are implemented, China's increasing output of CO2 will dwarf the cuts in greenhouses gases currently planned by the rest of the world.

None of this is intended as criticism of China. China is simply exploiting the resources of the planet, just as all the advanced countries, including in particular the United States, have been doing for the last 150 years. The only problem is that there are 1.3 billion Chinese, to say nothing of additional billions living in other developing countries, including in particular India with a population over one billion people.

So what has America been doing about this oncoming problem? Not much, unfortunately. Subsidies lavished upon truckers and motorists continue to make it cheap and easy for the US to burn up 20 million barrels of oil a day. The 44 cents a gallon in gasoline tax that the average American driver pays at the pump covers most roadway costs. However, here are some of the other costs that America's uniquely low gasoline taxes do not even begin to cover: the public health costs of traffic accidents and roadway-related air pollution, the lost time costs of congestion, environmental costs of auto-induced sprawl,

the social costs of the towns and neighborhoods ripped by freeways and the geopolitical costs in blood and money of having to acquire an ever growing percentage of our fossil fuel from hostile parts of the world.

Delving into this matter a little further produced some telling additional facts. The following data, compiled by the Sierra Club, shows what different research groups have concluded are the real numbers of public dollars going to roadway users every year. It is emphasized that these figures, high as they are, do not include the huge geopolitical costs required to maintain America's oil supply.

Research Group	\$/gallon	Annual cost in \$ billions
Ketcham & Komanoff	5.53	730
Todd Litman	7.08	935
MacKenzie, Dower & Chen	3.03	400
Moffet & Miller	2.86 - 5.00	378 - 660
Michael Vorhees	4.78	631
Office of Technology Assessment	3.39 - 6.81	447 - 890
Mark Delucchi	3.13 - 7.55	413 - 997

References

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Todd Litman; Transportation Cost Survey; Victoria Transport Policy Institute, 1250 Rudlin Street, Victoria, BC, V8V 3R7, Canada, Phone/Fax: (250) 360-1560, litman@vtpi.org, web page: www.vtpi.org; 2 Feb 92

James MacKenzie, Roger Dower & Donald Chen; The Going Rate: What It Really Costs To Drive; World Resources Institute, 1709 New York Ave NW, Washington DC 20006; June 92

John Moffet & Peter Miller; The Price of Mobility; Natural Resources Defense Council, 71 Stevenson Pl #1825, San Francisco CA 94105, 415-777-0220; Oct 93

Michael Vorhees; The True Costs of the Automobile to Society; 3131 Bell Dr., Boulder CO 80301, 303-449-9067; 4 Jan 92

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Mark Delucchi (Inst. of Transportation Studies, UC Davis, CA 95616); A Total Cost Of Motor-Vehicle Use, @ Access, Spring 1996

The hour is late. The world's resources are finite. Fossil fuel will not last long at the current rate of consumption. America, with 5% of the world's population, cannot keep on using 25% of the world's energy. In other words it's time to get serious about energy-conservation and about the leadership role that the US and the other advanced countries must play in better utilizing the resources of the world. It's time the US stopped acting as if there were no tomorrow. We should develop the fast, safe and relatively lightweight trains needed to carry freight and large numbers of passengers in energy-efficient ways. We should cut the time it takes to put a new train system on line from the current 25 to 40 years to between 8 and 12 years. And we should gradually stop subsidizing the US roadway users who are helping to push America's fossil fuel energy consumption beyond reasonable limits.

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