

Service Improvement Program Begins, Stresses Employee Suggestions, Ideas

Improved service to customers is the key goal of a four-part program that has been put into action over the Amtrak system.

The campaign includes:

1—Creation of an inbound "Hot Line" telephone link direct to Amtrak President Alan Boyd's office,

2—Creation of middle management teams, composed of representatives of all departments, to ride trains and visit Amtrak facilities to glean from employees out on the "firing line" ideas and suggestions on improving service,

3—Activation of a timely, twice-a-week, system-wide employee news service utilizing ARTS capabilities, and

4—Visits to all installations by high-level management personnel who will personally represent Boyd in talking to employees and listening to their questions, suggestions and complaints.

All four of the actions are already under way.

Why the new program?

Passenger service complaints are increasing and employee morale dropping. This is happening at a time when Amtrak and its service is under close scrutiny, not only by proponents and opponents of rail service in Congress, but by similar interested persons in the press and the traveling public.

Overcrowding of some trains, equipment failures, lack of diners and baggage dormitories, delays and late arrivals—all of the elements of Amtrak being spread too thin—are putting a real public relations burden on Amtrak's on-board personnel and leaving them over-exposed to increasingly critical passengers.

This will intensify when restructuring develops later this year.

turing develops later this year.

The recent escalation of passenger complaints—with copying letters to Congressional offices—is evidence that serious service deterioration has occurred.

Needless to say, this is happening at a time when Amtrak can least afford to ignore the problem or do nothing about it. It is, without

question, a time when employees and passengers should be aware that Amtrak's management is fully determined to attack the problem.

Amtrak's management wants excellent service for the public and good working relations with its employees. It is thus seeking information from those employees on just how it can achieve those ends.

Help Me Improve Amtrak

As all of us in the Amtrak family know, this is the most significant and critical period of Amtrak's young life. Major changes in our operation have been recommended by the Administration and are being carefully evaluated by the Congress. It will be mid or late summer before we will



Alan S. Boyd

have the final word from Congress as to what our route system will be, and how much money we will have to run that system.

These uncertainties and the increased demand on our services due to the gasoline shortages will combine to make this a difficult summer for us all.

But the picture is not totally bleak!

If we accept this period, when nationally we are both "in the spotlight" and "under the microscope," as a time and a challenge to improve our service, the reactions and responses from the public and the press are bound to be positive.

The public debate on Amtrak has been in full swing and broadly covered by the media in recent weeks.

We are facing a cut-back in our system, and there are those who have criticized top Amtrak management for not publicly fighting all of the cuts. This is due to a misinterpretation of the role of Amtrak.

We do not determine national transportation policy. We simply operate the rail passenger system derived from national policy decisions.

We have, however, taken a very forceful role in the process, drawing the attention of the Administration and the Congress to those fundamental elements vital to a national rail passenger network—provision for state participation, provision for commuter operations, adequate and

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Hot Line Opens, Tell President Boyd Your Ideas

Do you have an idea that will make Amtrak a better company? A complaint about some facet of Amtrak operations?

Well, why not tell it to the boss? Amtrak's President Alan S. Boyd, that is.

Beginning May 16, every employee can do just that with the implementation of Amtrak's "Service Improvement Hot Line," a direct toll-free line to the president's office.

Boyd will not be at the end of the line when you call, but messages will be recorded. The system will be operational from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Washington, D.C., time, Monday through Friday.

Recordings will be transcribed overnight and a hard copy transcript will be on Boyd's desk the following morning when he arrives at work.

The number to call is 800-424-5191 from anywhere in the United States except the District of Columbia. D.C. callers will dial 383-2027.

Callers are asked to limit their calls to three minutes and not to engage in petty personality issues. Otherwise, there is no limit on topics, ideas or suggestions.

Also, the telephone line is intended only for employee use. The general public is asked not to use it but to contact the consumer affairs department directly with their comments.

Why is Amtrak doing this?

Simply to tap the vast amount of experience and potential that is available in its employee force.

Employees who meet and greet the public on a daily basis, as well as others behind the scenes who make Amtrak's product what it is, are the ones who should be heard for their

comments, suggestions and complaints.

Boyd assures all employees that there will be a follow-up on all legitimate complaints and suggestions for service improvements.

The identity of callers will be protected throughout the follow-up and implementation phases.

An employee does not even need to identify him or herself if he or she does not want to do so.

Only one person, with confidential clearance, will be assigned to transcribe the recordings.

Teams Visit Facilities, Ride Trains

Twelve teams of three or four persons each, representing all departments in Amtrak, will be riding trains throughout the system and visiting various facilities during May and June to check operations in the field, to ask employees for their suggestions on service improvements and to learn of any problems that those employees might have in doing their jobs efficiently.

They will also lend their expertise in getting those problems solved as

quickly as possible.

Amtrak's top management is vitally interested and concerned in what difficulties employees may be having out in the field. The teams will be seeking areas where Amtrak can be more helpful in improving the services offered its customers.

Says Boyd, "This isn't meant to be a program that goes out and collects a mass of trip reports on what went wrong.

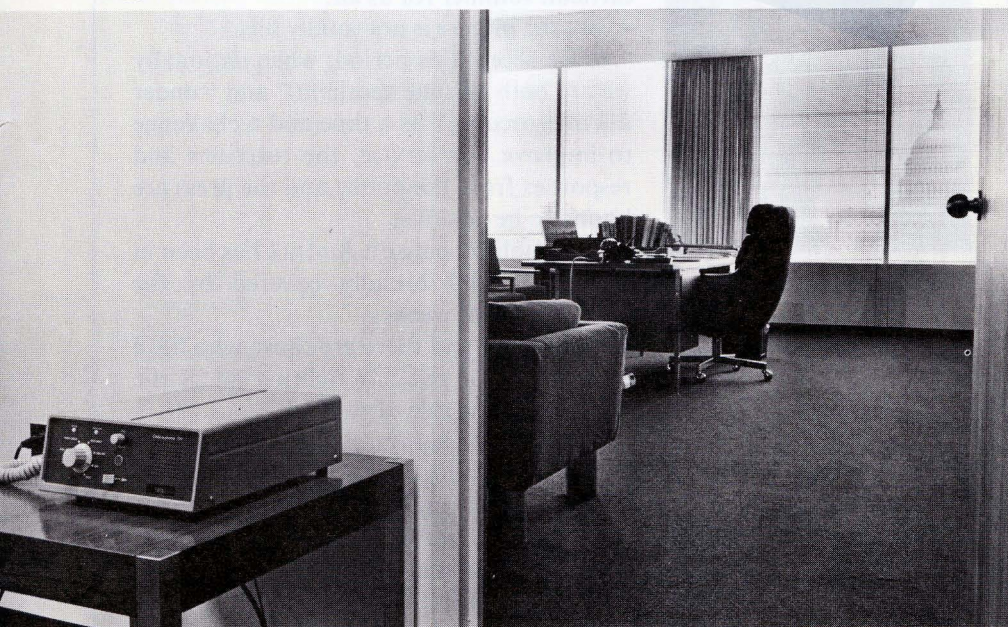
"We're not just trying to write history.

"These teams are designed to be true teams of action, getting corrective action initiated as quickly as possible.

"And they are out there for just one purpose . . . to help the employees and thus, ultimately, help the paying passenger.

"Their collective knowledge and experience will be channelled to find out from people in the field just what their problems, frustrations and troubles are and then do something about them as quickly as they can."

Example: A food service attendant has continuing problems in getting specific items stocked in his car. If he relays this information to the inspection team when it rides his train, they will be responsible to follow up



The recording machine is immediately outside President Boyd's office.

and find out exactly why the situation is as it is.

Perhaps there is a valid reason. If so, the employee will be so informed. If there is, on the other hand, some difficulty at the commissary end, that will be addressed.

Procedures by visiting teams will follow a certain pattern.

On arrival at a facility, team members will introduce themselves to the facility manager and tell him why they are there and what they intend to do. They will also report to him as problems surface.

While at the facility, team members will follow all safety rules and wear safety glasses and hard hats.

In inspecting the trains, teams will first check the equipment about one or two hours prior to departure, then ride the train for a few hours to see that operations function smoothly.

Teams will check the condition of cars that are to be put into service. Inventories will be made of food supplies, and drinking water, soap and paper supplies will be checked to see that they are properly stocked.

Personnel will also see that all lights, the air conditioning systems and berths work properly and that equipment is clean.

One major aim will be to see that employees have all necessary materials to work with. If there are some shortages, teams will have enough time before train departure to have the situation corrected.

In inspecting trains, cleanliness of equipment will be stressed. One question that will be addressed is whether food service cars are opened on time and then kept in operation until proper closing time.

If, for example, a food service car is not opened at the proper time, the team will find out what problems exist.

If an attendant can't open his counter because the commissary failed to stock his car in time, the team will get back to the commissary to see what can be done to correct the situation. On the other hand, employees in food service are expected

to follow company guidelines in keeping their counters in operation the proper hours.

When serious problems are encountered en route, team members will phone, as soon as feasible, the operations center in Washington. That desk, which is in operation 24 hours a day, will, in turn, notify the responsible facility at the end point so immediate corrective action can be taken when the train arrives.

A special telephone number has been assigned so messages can be handled expeditiously.

The teams will not generally ride the train's entire run but concentrate their travel from origination points

and toward end points, as well as meal times.

Virtually every train in Amtrak's system will be checked by one of the teams. Employees are encouraged to seek out the teams and tell them their ideas on how service can be improved and their jobs made better for both themselves and for the company.

When the teams return to home base, team coordinators will address the major problem areas and their suggested solutions to the appropriate vice president. Copies of all reports will be sent to Boyd.

Each vice president will be responsible in seeing that corrective action is taken where appropriate.

Employee News Service Operational

Beginning Tuesday, May 16, Amtrak's public affairs office inaugurated a new employee informational news service using the ARTS network.

Summaries of developments affecting Amtrak service, its employees or its customers will be transmitted on a regular twice-a-week basis to all hard copy printers over the system.

The same material will also be available to locations not having printers by calling up CTY NEWS in their CRT machine.

The purpose of the news service is to keep Amtrak employees informed on a current and factual basis about

events that might be important to their careers or their effectiveness in dealing with the public.

The project has the support and encouragement of President Alan Boyd, as well as all of Amtrak's senior line management.

Public affairs department personnel will make sure material is current, factual and useful. Cooperation is asked of supervisors in ARTS locations in reservations bureaus, commissaries, stations and maintenance facilities to insure that the news bulletins are posted or distributed promptly and in such a way that they are available to as many



Public Affairs Department Secretary Marguerite Broyhill enters information into the ARTS system for the Employees' News Service. The information is transmitted twice weekly.

employees as possible.

In most cases news material will be transmitted over the ARTS system during the evening hours each Tuesday and Thursday to be available the next morning.

Whenever possible the news should be posted immediately on receipt in a conspicuous place, preferably on a permanent bulletin board.

Efforts should be made to assure distribution of the news to employees who are not near an ARTS printer

location.

Employee cooperation and support is vital if this new service is to be valuable to all of Amtrak's em-

ployees.

As the program develops, suggestions on improvements will be most welcome.

Vice Presidents Represent Boyd

Another aspect of the new service improvements program is a series of trips by Amtrak's top management to the railroad's major facilities.

Amtrak's vice presidents will be acting as personal representatives of

President Alan Boyd in expressing his views and ideas on improving service for passengers and working conditions for employees.

Because Amtrak operates around the clock, the trips are planned so the

Help Me Improve Amtrak

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multi-year funding, advance planning, adequate modern equipment, and a staff of properly trained people to operate it.

These are important considerations which supersede lines on a map.

While it is true that we will lose some trains on October 1, it is equally true that we could not continue to run the present system, with the equipment we now have, within the existing federal subsidy level.

We are just spread too thin.

It is important to all of us who care about the future of Amtrak that the size of our basic system be determined by the equipment we have available and our ability to provide good service to the public. I do not consider that running more trains with poor service is a realistic position.

On the equipment front, I have already received a commitment from the Administration for \$1 billion in capital funds over the next five years. This money will be used for new cars, locomotives and fixed facilities and represents almost twice the average capital funding received from 1976 through 1979.

Because I know you are interested in what has been happening in Congress, both with our authorizing legislation and the DOT restructuring report, here's an update.

Both the House and Senate Commerce Committees have finished their work on the Amtrak Improvement Act of 1979. These bills should go to the floors of the House and Senate sometime during the next month. Although similar, they are not identical. There must be a conference of representatives of each committee to iron out the differences and come up with one bill, which then must be passed again by each House of Congress.

Some of the significant points in the legislation include:

- Multiple year authorization. The Senate calls for two years, the House for three.
- Amtrak flexibility in the implementation of the structured routes.
- Both bills have provisions for continuing the *Montrealer*, and the House bill also includes one or two

other trains.

- A commitment to continuation and expansion of 403(b) trains.
- An equal commitment on the part of the Congress for Amtrak's capital needs.

We do not expect to have a bill signed by the President until late summer or early fall.

On another matter I am sure you know that not all of our problems are attributable to Congress, the Department of Transportation, other agencies, or the railroads.

Some are internal and stem from a feeling on the part of many Amtrak employees that they are not truly a part of the whole, that they are not informed of what goes on at headquarters, that they do not understand why decisions are made, and that they are not allowed into the process.

This has concerned me for some time.

On April 3, I testified before the House Commerce Committee and had to answer some difficult and, yes, even embarrassing questions.

A member of the Committee, Congressman Edward R. Madigan, of Illinois, cited a litany of Amtrak-caused problems. Unfortunately, most of them were true. Because they represent a major weakness in our operation, I think it is important enough for me to quote from his remarks.

"I would like . . . to talk with you a little bit about management responsibilities . . . The trains operating in my state originate in Chicago . . . one of the problems is that these trains are not able to ever leave Chicago on time even though they originate there . . .

"It is not unusual to have a train, made up in Chicago, pull out of the station late and have no toilets working on this train and as many as 80 per cent of these cars have no water on board.

"It is not unusual at Champaign, Illinois, to be on time six miles north of town and be an hour late when you arrive at the station.

"I understand that as far as managing this railroad is concerned, that you can only be as good as the people you have working for you.

"Eighty per cent of the cars not having any water on them does not have anything to do with any problem

executives visit the facilities at various times of the day or night.

The visits will take place the last two weeks of May.

Prime goal of the meetings was for the Boyd representatives to talk to as many employees as they could in the allotted time.

Boyd told the executives, "I would like you to do as much of your travel by train as possible. And while doing so, it would be helpful if you talk to our station, on-board and train crew

people, letting them know that management is concerned and wants to help solve any problems they may have."

Like the four-man action teams, the vice presidents will have to address specific problems and possible solutions to the appropriate vice president for action. Copies of all reports will be sent to Boyd.

Said Boyd to the executives, "I will hold each of you responsible for seeing that management is doing its

part to resolve these issues quickly and in a positive frame of mind."

Boyd continued, "I am sure that many of us think we have done and are doing our very best in those areas reporting to us.

"But, let me assure you, I need to improve, and I am sure you, too, need to improve.

"Working together, we can and will turn it around and offer to our passengers a service of which we can all be proud."

except whoever was supposed to put water on it did not give a damn; whoever was supposed to supervise that person didn't give a damn either.

"I honestly believe that you need some people in your organization who care about whether or not people riding Amtrak get adequate service.

"My impression is . . . there are not very many Amtrak employees who do give a damn!"

I do not believe that statement and I want to prove to Congressman Madigan that we do give a damn.

However, his statement does not say much for our dedication to service. It really disturbed me and I responded as follows:

"What I am trying to do is to imbue the people who work for Amtrak with a sense of pride and responsibility. I am concerned about levels of supervision. And I am trying to do something about that.

"If the situation is not better when I am before you next year, I will turn in my card because I am not going to tolerate this sort of thing.

"I am proud of being a part of Amtrak and I am going to see to it that everybody who is there is proud of Amtrak and that they understand the one purpose we have as a business is to serve the public who desires to travel with us and to serve them in a proper fashion.

"I am dedicated to that, and we are going to do it or else I will break my pick."

In short, I am on record to develop and pursue a program that would insure that such horror stories become a thing of the past.

I know I can't do it alone. I need the assistance of every one of you. It will take every bit of our collective talents to make Amtrak a model of passenger concern.

In this regard, after long discussions with the executive staff and other employees in Washington, I have initiated a four-part Service Improvement Plan.

Briefly, the component parts include:

- A Hot Line, started on May 16, which will allow any employee to call—toll-free—directly into my office with suggestions, reports or any sort of constructive message.

- Service Improvement Teams, made up of three or four management staff from headquarters, are riding the trains, visiting yards and other facilities, and talking with employees in the field to discuss, first-hand, problems that you encounter.
- An Employee News Service will be available to all employees wherever we have an ARTS terminal. These twice-weekly reports—the first of which was transmitted on May 14,—will provide up-to-the-minute information on items of special concern to all Amtrak employees.
- Trips by each Amtrak vice president to all of our facilities. Since it was impossible for me to visit each of you, I felt it important that the executive staff carry a personal message from me outlining my deep concern, and bring back an indication of your thoughts, ideas, expectations or problems. It seemed an appropriate way to impress upon you my personal confidence in this plan.

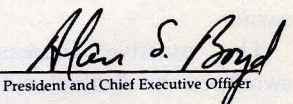
In all of this, I see a major cooperative initiative involving all levels of management and union personnel. I cannot predict just how it will grow or where it will end, but it is a start.

It will grow if it is provided the contributions of our total knowledge of good, sound, efficient, responsive and considerate customer service principles.

It will grow if we eliminate the communications gap that now exists, in both directions, between executive management and the field.

It is one thing to review the morning reports and hear what went wrong. It is quite another thing to instill and nurture in each of us an overwhelming drive to see that the problems do not occur in the first place.

With the active assistance of each of you, we can turn this company around. I will do more than my share. I trust I can expect the same from each of you.


President and Chief Executive Officer

Some Amtrak Facts

Where are we?

- Eight years old with 19,000 employees, 27,000 route miles, and 1,350 cars. Number of cars is down from 2,000 in 1971. Although Amtrak is a billion dollar company, it needs \$600 million plus from the taxpayers just to operate each year.

Facilities

- Better. New stations have and are being built. Beech Grove is being rebuilt and Chicago facilities will be new by 1981.

Equipment

- Improving but still over 50 per cent old. Amfleet has replaced 475 old cars. Superliners are coming off the production line and the first full route will be operational this fall. New locomotives are on order for the Corridor. Others now average just 11 years of age as against 25 back in 1971.

Major problems

- Customer complaints on the upswing again. On-time performance is not good, hovering around the 60-70 per cent range. Equipment breakdowns after leaving terminals are high. Service on trains is inconsistent.

Basic problem

- Amtrak is spread too thin. Not enough good equipment to cover the existing route structure. Costs are too high for the minimal service in many markets.

Basic question

- Should there be an Amtrak? If so, how big? How much money should the public spend on an Amtrak?

Probable Amtrak future

- Probably smaller next year. This means Amtrak will be able to spread its resources and equipment better. The taxpayer will be paying less per passenger for Amtrak service. This also means all Amtrak employees—from the top down—will be expected to do a better job.

Why a better job?

- Amtrak is in the public service business. The public pays our salaries and deserves the service it pays for. Besides, it simply is our job.

Satisfying customers

- Amtrak has made many improvements to date. In place is a better operation than the one of even a few years ago. We must build on that and not slip backward. To do that Amtrak needs every employee's help to make it work.

Why we're all here

- Our paychecks come from the passenger and the taxpayer. The public will decide, in the long run, what happens to Amtrak. They can see how well we operate and how well we treat them.

Huge Increase In Reservations Calls

The nation's gasoline shortage has caused a one-million-a-week increase in calls to Amtrak's reservations bureau phones and brought travelers back to the trains in waves in many parts of the country.

During the week beginning Monday, May 7, calls placed to Amtrak's nationwide computerized information and reservations system totaled 1,365,592. This compares to 366,454 calls placed during the comparable seven-day period a year earlier.

The massive increase in calls swamped the Amtrak system, its toll-free lines and five central reservations offices. Monitoring devices showed that 916,935 calls were lost because

the caller got a busy signal while 448,657 got through to the Amtrak reservations centers and 333,850 were answered and handled by reservations clerks.

To meet the unprecedented increase in call volume, which started early in May, Amtrak has additional clerks in training and is working with the telephone companies to add extra phone lines.

In addition, ridership is booming on many Amtrak trains. The most dramatic increase occurred in the San Diego-Los Angeles rail corridor in California where Amtrak operates six trains each day in each direction.

Between April 30 and May 15 the *San Diegos* carried 59,000 passen-

gers and seem certain to carry well over 100,000 for the month. Standees have become a problem on these trains with over 300 passengers standing on one *San Diegan* one weekend even though the train had twice the number of coaches usually assigned to it.

Ridership elsewhere is showing similar increases up to the limits imposed by Amtrak's fleet. Amtrak has only about 1,350 cars available to operate 250 daily trains over 27,000 route miles.

Advance reservations, already up by 50 per cent over last summer, are rapidly filling the reserved long-distance trains for the early summer months. Examples are the *Southwest Limited* and the *Coast Starlight* which were totally sold out for the last two weeks of May.

Keeping Track Of Amtrak

More Fuel Tenders

Amtrak's successful fuel tender testing program is being expanded with the board of directors' decision to spend \$331,100 to convert three more "out of service" locomotives into tenders.

The action, which occurred at the April 25 meeting of the board, also approved modifying 16 additional locomotives so they can be used with the tenders.

Converting locomotives into tenders means stripping out the diesel engine and electric or steam generators and replacing them with tanks and the accessory pumping and other equipment. Connections must also be installed between the tenders and the modified locomotives.

The expanded program is the result of successful testing which was performed with the first experimental tender last year. That tender allowed trains to operate over the Washington-Miami, Chicago-Seattle and New Orleans-Los Angeles routes without intermediate fueling enroute.

Construction of the three new tenders will be completed this fall and testing will be performed on Amtrak's *Silver Star*, between Washington and Miami.

The tender program was developed after the Environmental Protection Agency informed Amtrak it must redesign and rebuild 70 fueling points across the country by 1983 to comply with new environmental regulations. Total cost of such an undertaking would be over \$20 million.

The fuel tender program, if expanded further, could ultimately eliminate as many as 50 fueling points.

Bicycle Policy

Two of the most energy-saving forms of transport—the Amtrak passenger train and the bicycle—will be even more closely allied as result of a new Amtrak policy effective May 1.

Amtrak is abolishing the special \$5 handling charge which bicyclists previously had to pay to take their bicycles along in Amtrak baggage cars. Instead, Amtrak will now consider bicycles shipped in proper cartons as one of three pieces of free checked luggage.

Amtrak's revised policy allows passengers to supply their own cartons. Cyclists may, if they choose, purchase a reusable carton from Amtrak for \$4.

Bicycles handled in checked baggage or in express service must be in proper cartons because of the increased value of today's bicycles. Current Amtrak policies regarding inspections and packing of bicycles, customers' responsibility to supply tools for dismantling and assembly and Amtrak liability all remain.

Amtrak passengers may take bicycles between any two stations where baggage service is available. Those stations are indicated on Amtrak timetables. Bicycle cartons will be available at all Amtrak baggage service desks. Weight allowed for bicycle and carton is 75 pounds.

Car Costs Zoom

The cost of owning and operating an average, intermediate-sized 1979 automobile is \$2,690 a year, or 17.9 cents per mile, according to the American Automobile Association.

The figures reflect an increase of more than seven per cent over 1978.

The report, detailed in AAA's new "Your Driving Costs" pamphlet, divided auto expenses into variable and fixed costs.

Variable costs include gasoline and oil at 4.11¢ per mile, up from 3.89¢ in 1978; maintenance at 1.1¢, unchanged; and tires at .65¢, down from .66¢.

Fixed costs include insurance at \$483 per year, up from \$424 in 1978; license, registration and taxes at \$90, up from \$74; depreciation at \$942, up

from \$894; and finance charges at \$296, up from \$267.

Copies of "Your Driving Costs" are available from most AAA clubs or by sending a self-addressed, stamped business-size envelope to American Automobile Association, Public Relations Department, 8111 Gatehouse Road, Falls Church, Virginia 22042.

Elkhart Wins Plaque

A local contest in the Indianapolis sales district has resulted in the presentation of a plaque to the ticket agents at Elkhart, Indiana, for achieving the highest increase in ticket sales for the first quarter of the current fiscal year compared to last year.

The ticket office achieved a 40.4 per cent increase resulting in the award to Ticket Agents Dan Harness and Sue Davis. The plaque is signed by all five sales representatives of the Indianapolis district.

Other highly-rated ticket offices included Dayton, up 31.5 per cent; Niles, Michigan, up 21 per cent; Lansing, Michigan, up 18 per cent; and Toledo, Ohio, up 16.2 per cent.

The performance award is the first of its kind to be presented in the country, according to Tom McGinley, district sales manager. The Indianapolis district includes Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan and Ohio.

AMTRAK NEWS

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Harry Edwards Elected

Board of Directors Chairman

Harry T. Edwards, of Ann Arbor, Michigan, was elected chairman of Amtrak's board of directors at its April 26 meeting.

Edwards is a professor of law, specializing in labor law, at the University of Michigan Law School, as well as a faculty member of the Institute of Educational Management at Harvard University.

Nominated to the board by President Carter in October 1977, Edwards is serving a term that will expire in July 1980.

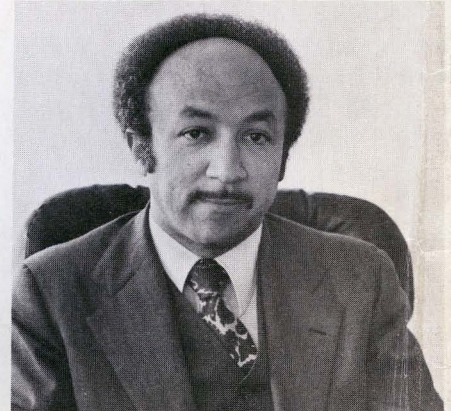
He replaced Dr. Donald P. Jacobs—who is dean of the Graduate School of Management, Northwestern University. Jacobs served as chairman from July 1975 to March 1978.

From 1974 through 1977, Edwards was a law professor at the Free University, Brussels, Belgium, and at Harvard Law School.

Edwards has been a member of the

board of directors of the National Academy of Arbitrators since 1975 and was elected vice president of the Academy in 1978. He is also a member of the board of directors of the American Arbitration Association.

Edwards was born in New York on November 3, 1940, and received degrees from the School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University, and the University of Michigan Law School. He is married and has two children.



Harry T. Edwards

U.S.A. Rail Pass Costs Raised

Amtrak's off-season unlimited-travel U.S.A. Rail Pass fares will be replaced by higher summer rates on May 26.

New peak season costs will be \$289 for a 14-day pass, \$379 for a 21-day pass and \$459 for 30 days of unlimited travel. Current bargain-season costs are \$169 for 14 days,

\$219 for 21 days, \$259 for 30 days.

Amtrak is also retaining the Family Plan U.S.A. Rail Pass discounts but at the increased prices. When a head of family pays full fare for a pass, the spouse and children 12 through 21 pay one-half price and children 2-11 just \$50 each, regardless of the length of pass selected.

Amtrak

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