

revenue shot up 13.5 percent, and ridership increased 4.6 percent. If we were to improve our national system, revenue and ridership would surely increase, easing congestion on our highways and runways.

Transportation by rail is vital to the economy. Businesses depend on it, workers depend on it, and industry depends on it. It is vital to the environment. Trains use less fuel, emit less pollution, and cause less commuter congestion.

For much too long, we have ignored the great potential that a world-class rail system could bring to our country's economy and security. I encourage all Members of Congress to join me and my colleagues in passing the National Defense Rail Act and support the future of expedient travel in the United States. The time has come to invest in the future of high-speed rail transportation by overhauling our Nation's passenger rail infrastructure.

I share the vision of the gentlewoman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON) and urge all of my colleagues to join with us as we propose and develop a national rail system second to none in the world.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING A FEDERAL COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT AMTRAK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SANDLIN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SANDLIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight. And the Democrats rise tonight, to stress the importance of maintaining a Federal commitment to support Amtrak. I, along with 150 of our colleagues, support providing Amtrak with the \$1.2 billion it needs to maintain its current success on into 2003.

A working national passenger rail network is essential for east Texas and America, but the Federal Government must provide resources for capital improvements if Amtrak is to continue to service the Nation at affordable, competitive rates.

According to Amtrak, without this funding Amtrak will be forced to eliminate nearly all long-distance passenger trains by October 2002, which would be disastrous for rural America. Rural America and east Texas support a national rail service. We do not approve of shutting down rural routes while funding only a northeast corridor commuter route.

Under Amtrak's proposal, service between Boston and Washington will remain, while lines like the Texas Eagle route will be shut down if Congress fails to provide sufficient resources for fiscal year 2003. Amtrak's long-distance passenger line provides critical transportation options for rural areas like east Texas, allowing rural residents as great an access to transportation as residents of fully urbanized areas.

In many cases, Amtrak's Texas Eagle is the only means east Texans have to travel long distances. If Amtrak is

forced to close its long distance lines, the main links between Texas and cities would be severed, crippling the local economy and retarding rural development in my district and across the Nation.

Mr. Speaker, the people of east Texas use and support Amtrak. Ridership of the Texas Eagle line and revenue from the Texas Eagle line has increased by 9 percent since January, 2001, exceeding budget projections.

□ 2000

These positive developments have been achieved through bold steps taken by the people of East Texas to do everything in their power to keep the Texas Eagle line running and bold steps from Amtrak to reduce its management to maximize efficiency.

In March, Amtrak announced that its CEO and president George Warrington was resigning to move on to another project after raising Amtrak's revenues to a record \$2.1 billion for the 2001 fiscal year. Capitalizing on this vacancy as a new opportunity, Amtrak's board hired David Gunn to continue improving Amtrak's record. This new administration lead by Mr. Gunn is making radical changes to increase its ridership and revenues to achieve fiscal responsibility in a common sense way.

Mr. Gunn has wide experience with the commuter rail industry both in America and in Canada serving as the president of the New York City Transit Agency from 1984 to 1990 and the chief general manager of the Toronto Transit Commission from 1995 to 1999. He carries with him an exceptional international reputation based on his ability to unite labor, business, local communities and governments to successfully improve financial stability and plan for the future. With this strong track record, Mr. Gunn brings to Amtrak the ability to overcome its financial difficulties through progressive policies and realistic plans for the future.

Just yesterday, Amtrak's governing board approved changes to consolidate authority and remove unnecessary oversight. These measures include cutting the number of vice president titles from 84 to approximately 20, clearly assigning the authority over cars and locomotives to five people when 16 currently share the responsibility, and consolidating Amtrak's three operating divisions and its mail and express business into the company headquarters in Washington. The new streamlined chain of command will vastly improve Amtrak's decision making and efficiency. But any attempts to solve Amtrak's crisis will be for naught without strong Congressional support to match Amtrak's bold new policies.

Now, Amtrak's opponents argue that the Federal Government has bailed out Amtrak before to no effect, and that private passenger lines are the only solution. Not so. In 1997, Congress reauthorized Amtrak for 5 years at \$5.2 bil-

lion. However, only \$2.7 billion was actually appropriated, barely 52 percent of the money. This does not constitute a bail out. In fact, this latest figure is only the continuation of a decades old pattern of underfunding Amtrak while at the same time demanding that it become profitable. In essence, under the guise of supporting Amtrak, Congress has instead set it up for failure, providing Amtrak with just enough money to survive another year but not giving it the capital to develop necessary infrastructure projects that could make it self sufficient by 2001.

No other publicly funded transportation system in America, much less a comparable national passenger rail system in the world has succeeded without significant public capital investment to modernize systems, enhance security and fund long distance service. In fact, no private passenger line could succeed under those same circumstances. Privatization of long distance passenger service would be tantamount to termination of long distance passenger rail service. It would result in the loss of rail service in many rural communities and would result in the lay off of many, many dedicated Amtrak employees. Only short distance commuter routes would remain. The people of East Texas need and deserve access to a national rail network as much if not more so than communities in the Northeastern United States. They do not need a multitude of new rail bureaucracies without adequate resources.

Importantly, if Amtrak is to be reduced to servicing the Northeast corridor alone, as a regional transportation network, it should operate without Federal support.

With proper funding Amtrak can succeed. H.R. 4545 will provide that funding. With \$1.9 billion Amtrak can make necessary changes. America and East Texas deserve a strong passenger rail system and I will continue to fight for Amtrak.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. JEFF MILLER of Florida). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HOLT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

SOCIAL SECURITY AND THE DEBT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, this evening I would like to dedicate my remarks to Social Security, its trust funds and our growing national debt.

In January of last year, our Nation finally moved to an annual balanced budget after decades of being awash in growing debt as far as the eye could see. Many of us fought very hard to