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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I have signed H.R. 4975, The Amtrak Improvement Act of 1975.

This bill provides authorizations for Federal support to Amtrak for an additional 27-month period, through fiscal 1977. It will provide the Amtrak Board of Directors with the flexibility necessary to effectively manage the Corporation's affairs. This should result in improved intercity rail passenger service. I expect the Corporation to develop plans and programs consistent with realistic funding authorized by this bill, thus ~~the past practice of~~ ever-escalating Federal subsidies over which neither the Congress nor the Executive Branch had effective control.

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The bill authorizes procedures which enable Amtrak to modify its system of routes and services consistent with the goal of making rail passenger service an effective part of our national transportation system. It is regrettable, however, that the criteria for exercising this authority must be submitted to the Congress with the possibility of disapproval by either the House or the Senate within 60 days.

The Attorney General advises me that this provision provides for an unconstitutional exercise of Congressional power. I am seriously concerned about the increasing frequency with which Congress passes legislation containing such provisions. I have, nevertheless, signed H.R. 4975 because the Nation needs the important passenger rail service it will provide.

are Once the new procedures for adding and eliminating routes ~~is~~ established, Amtrak will have a sensible basis on which to make determinations on dropping routes which are inefficient or adding service which boosts our overall transportation capabilities. The end result should be better transportation for every tax dollar spent on Amtrak. The management flexibility contained in this legislation will enable Amtrak to improve the present level of rail passenger service and to stay within the spending limits established by the authorization bill.

It is gratifying to note that the Congress has responded to the suggestion I made in signing the Amtrak Improvement Act of 1974 (P.L. 93-396) that mandatory on-board customs procedures would be undesirable. The Congress, in this bill, has provided for cooperation between the Secretary of the Treasury, the Attorney General, and Amtrak to establish inspection procedures which will be convenient for passengers

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and consistent with effective enforcement of the immigration and customs laws. Implementation of these procedures should facilitate the most rapid possible transit in international, intercity rail passenger service.

I commend the Congress for enacting this bill which should, on balance, provide a basis for improved and more economic passenger service for the American people. It is essential that we continue to work toward developing more effective approaches to meeting the complex transportation needs of the Nation.

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