highlights
OFFICE OF SAFETY NEWS

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DOT BUDGET PRESENTED...The Department of Transportation's budget was sent to the Congress January 29 with a request for $9.0 billion in budget authority for Fiscal Year 1974. Cash outlays in 1974 are estimated at $8.1 billion, compared to $8.0 billion in 1973. Total manpower in the Department in 1974 will be approximately 110,300. Of the 1974 total, civilian positions account for 73,100--up 800 over 1973. In a briefing for newsmen, Mr. James Beggs said that major transportation legislation enacted over the past four years "has given the Department of Transportation the tools and resources needed to bring about a truly balanced national transportation system--tools which not only help us cope with the problems of today, but also meet transportation needs in this decade. This 1974 budget reflects this legislation and supports the now mature programs brought about as a result of these legislative initiatives in urban mass transportation, in airport and airways development, in railroad safety, in rail passenger service, and in ports and waterways safety. In most of these areas, the budget requests are being submitted at levels quite similar to those in last year's budget."

FRA REQUEST DETAILED...The FRA portion of the budget requests $144 million in FY 1974, an increase of $22 million over 1973. The bulk of this request is for two areas of activity--the high speed ground and rail research programs, and a Federal grant to AMTRAK. The AMTRAK grant request totals $93 million for operating assistance for continued service over a national rail passenger system. While not in the budget, AMTRAK will also have available $100 million in Federally-guaranteed loans for capital investment in facilities and equipment. Highlights include: continued development of an Improved Passenger Train (IPT); continued construction, research, development, and testing at the High Speed Ground Test Center, including limited experimental work on the Tracked Air Cushion Vehicle systems; continued railroad research directed at solving critical safety problems; an expanded railroad research program aimed at improvement of the railroad industry structure, improvement of freight car management, and improvement of freight services; a new effort in assisting the States in setting up coordinated training programs for railroad safety inspectors and for operating Federal training and technical assistance programs; and additional positions to improve AMTRAK analysis and analysis of railroad economic problems.

BUDGET BREAKDOWN...The $144.3 million request in budget authority and the request for 1,271 positions breaks down as follows:

	FY 1973	($ in millions) FY 1974	Difference
Authorized Positions.....	1,271	1,271	(-0-)
Budget Authority.....	$ 121.8	$ 144.3	$ +22.5
Outlays.....	$ 182.0	$ 151.5	$ -30.5
OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR, SALARIES AND EXPENSES			
Authorized Positions.....	130	133	+3
Budget Authority.....	$ 2.8	$ 3.2	$ +.4
Outlays.....	$ 2.8	$ 3.2	$ +.4
RAILROAD RESEARCH			
Authorized Positions.....	-0-	6	+6
Budget Authority.....	$ 10.4	$ 13.0	$ +2.6
Outlays.....	$ 9.2	$ 9.0	$ -.2
RAILROAD SAFETY			
Authorized Positions.....	272	274	+2
Budget Authority.....	$ 7.0	$ 8.0	$ +1.0
Outlays.....	$ 7.0	$ 8.0	$ +1.0
HIGH SPEED GROUND TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT			
Authorized Positions.....	61	50	-11
Budget Authority.....	$ 52.5	$ 27.1	$ -25.4
Outlays.....	$ 25.0	$ 28.3	$ +3.3

Breakdown of obligations by major program category follows:

Research, Development and Demonstrations.....	$ 38.4	$ 40.3	$ +1.9
Administration.....	$ 2.0	$ 1.8	$ -.2
Total.....	$ 40.4	$ 42.1	$ +1.7
GRANTS TO NATIONAL RAILROAD PASSENGER CORPORATION			
Budget Authority.....	$ 9.1	$ 93.0	$ +83.9
Outlays.....	$ 106.9	$ 93.0	$ -13.9
EMERGENCY RAIL FACILITIES RESTORATION			
Budget Authority (proposed supplemental appropriation)	$ 40.0	-0-	$ -40.0
Outlays.....	$ 30.0	$ 10.0	$ -20.0

MU MODIFICATIONS TO BEGIN...As a result of safety problems brought out at the NTSB hearings last December on the ICG commuter train collision, the Office of Safety is embarking on a two-year program for modification of all Hi-Liner cars in order to improve safety as well as prevent future accidents of this type. OS personnel will work with the ICG to make modifications in the collision posts and attachment of the sides to the underframes. Other efforts will include improvement in visibility, development of an effective anti-climbing arrangement to prevent "telescoping" such as occurred in the ICG collision, and a general review and updating of MU rules.

EQUIPMENT STANDARD HEARINGS HELD...Hearings on the proposed minimum safety standards for equipment were held January 23 and on the proposal for lubrication on January 24. Statements were given by the Association of American Railroads, Railway Progress Institute, the Short Line Association, the United Transportation Union and the Carmen's organization on the minimum standards. None of the groups expressed any real dissatisfaction and their statements were mainly pointed towards minor changes. The proposed standards are looked upon as a living document where changes will be made as the situation arises. Representatives of the AAR, RPI, and the Short Lines attended the lubrication standards hearing and arguments there were that since the FRA has essentially adopted AAR maintenance regulations as a safety standard, the safety standard should be more lenient. FRA has asked for empirical data to help in establishing criteria for where simple maintenance ends and safety begins. All recommendations will be evaluated before a final rule is sent to the Federal Register. Hearings on the proposed standards for prohibited equipment were rescheduled from January 25 to February 8 due to the closing of government offices for a day of mourning for President Johnson.

FLAT CAR PROBLEMS DISCUSSED...A conference was held January 26 with a member of the Rail Fleet Management Division of the MTMTS concerning difficulties encountered with DODX heavy duty flat cars equipped with swivel shank couplers. Numerous derailments have resulted from high lateral forces caused by cocking of these couplers under high buff loads produced while using dynamic braking or attempting back-up moves. The Military Command is modifying the cars by replacing the swivel shank couplers with rigid shank couplers. Out of approximately 800 cars in the "strike force fleet," about 175 cars have been modified. Another problem has developed recently with the cars in a rash of yard derailments. Suspect at this time are the six-wheel trucks with which both DODX and USAX cars are equipped. Both Buckeye and General Steel Industries trucks are under investigation by the carriers involved.

ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION COURSE UNDERWAY... The fifth session of the Railroad Accident Investigation Course began January 29 for a two-week period at the Transportation Safety Institute in Oklahoma City. Attending the course were:

Region 1	M. J. Pastrick, F. H. Hayes
Region 2	J. L. Burt, J. T. McDonald, R. R. Smith
Region 3	J. A. Gates, E. T. Powell
Region 4	H. L. Benskin, M. C. Nicholson, E. R. English
Region 5	C. H. Laws, C. S. Luker
Region 6	D. H. Byrum, W. B. Ingham
Region 8	B. J. Marquardt, J. H. Witthauer, M. R. Sisk
Headquarters	W. H. Fletcher

ALL-ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVES DEDICATED...Administrator Ingram attended a ceremony last month for three new all-electric locomotives. He dedicated the world's first 50,000 volt electrified test track which is multi-gage multi-frequency, and multi-voltage. "President Nixon, Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe and I are proud that the United States is the first country in the world to put into operation 50,000 volt locomotives, carrying two or three times the power of other electric locomotives," Ingram said at ceremonies at the General Electric plant in Erie, Pennsylvania. GE, which built the locomotives, predicts additional benefits in cost and efficiency through use of 60-cycle commercial power that eliminates acquisition and maintenance of conversion equipment, and through incorporation of thyristors that automatically control tractive effort and maintain desired train speed. The locomotives, operated by computers and with a single observer aboard, will haul equally automated 122-ton bottom-dump coal cars from the Black Mesa Mine near Kayenta, Arizona, over 78 miles of new track to the new Navajo Generating Station near Page, Arizona.

FREIGHT CAR COMPUTER MODEL CONTRACT LET...A $299,721 contract for development of a computer model of a system to improve the allocation and management of railroad freight cars has been awarded to Decision Systems Associates of Rockville, Maryland. It is hoped that the study will provide a basic building block toward development of a nationwide freight car management system. Application of an efficient system for railroad rolling stock would improve service to shippers, improve freight car usage by railroads and significantly improve railroads' operating costs. The study will develop a computer model to improve the empty car assignment process by the use of advanced computerized resource allocation programs.

THIRD QUARTER DECLINE IN PASSENGER SERVICE, FREIGHT REPORTED... Both rail passenger service and freight ton-miles showed a drop in the third quarter of 1972, according to a quarterly activity report issued by the Department. All other modes showed increases. Rail passenger service declined from 65,977,323 passengers to 63,887,031, a drop of 2,090,291 over the previous year, and railroad freight declined from 609,601,684 tons to 604,013,322 tons, a drop of 588,362 tons. Interstate buses carried over 25.6 million more passengers over the same period a year ago, and the airlines flew 3.99 billion more passenger-miles over the third quarter of 1971. Increases in freight service were also posted in air ton-miles, highway tonnage, interstate water tonnage, and pipeline barrels.