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COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548
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AUG 26 1974

The Honorable Les Aspin
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Aspin:

Following your request of June 26, 1974, we agreed to provide you with information on expenditures for air travel by AMTRAK personnel in 1973 and part of 1974 and to classify such travel as being

- between cities on the AMTRAK system, other than the Northeast corridor;
- along the Northeast corridor between Washington, D.C., and Boston, Massachusetts; or
- to or from cities not on the AMTRAK system.

As agreed with your office, the information developed includes the cost of airline tickets for which AMTRAK was billed by the airlines but not the cost of tickets purchased by employees for which AMTRAK reimbursed them directly. According to an AMTRAK official, ticket purchases billed through the airlines account for approximately 95 percent of AMTRAK's total air travel cost.

Tickets for some of the travel listed stopovers at intermediate points. The following schedule includes the full cost of such travel. AMTRAK summary records from which we worked did not contain data needed to determine the extent to which stopovers at specific intermediate points occurred or whether the intermediate points were located on or off the AMTRAK system. However, our testing of detailed data supporting four billings--which represented about 16 percent of the total air travel costs--showed that almost all the intermediate travel was to points on the AMTRAK system.

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The cost of air travel by AMTRAK personnel is summarized below.

	<u>Calendar year 1973</u>		<u>First 4 months of 1974</u>	
	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Origin and destination on AMTRAK system:				
Other than North- cast corridor	\$545,000	90	\$202,000	95
Along Northeast corridor	<u>26,000</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5,000</u>	<u>2</u>
Total	571,000	94	207,000	97
Origin or destination not on AMTRAK system	<u>33,000</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7,000</u>	<u>3</u>
Total identified	604,000		214,000	
Unidentified	<u>61,000</u>		<u>-4,000</u>	
Total AMTRAK payments	<u>\$665,000</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>\$210,000</u>	<u>100</u>

The unidentified amounts listed above represent the net of credits for tickets purchased but not used and amounts for which summarized backup data was not available or legible.

Certain points of origin and destination appeared frequently in data supporting the billings. For example, during the first 4 months of 1974, 646 of approximately 1,780 trips, classified as on the AMTRAK system other than the Northeast corridor, were made between the cities listed below. Because of the distances involved, much of the travel may not have been practicable by train.

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	<u>Railroad mileage</u>	<u>Number of trips</u>
Washington and Chicago	764	332
Washington and Miami	1,122	90
Washington and Los Angeles	2,906	78
Washington and Jacksonville	756	61
Washington and Minneapolis	1,161	43
Washington and St. Louis	882	<u>42</u>
Total		<u>646</u>

With respect to the cost of travel to points not on the AMTRAK system, most of these trips were to cities, such as Atlanta, Cleveland, and Salt Lake City, where equipment repair and refurbishing facilities were located.

Internal guidelines covering mode of travel are included in AMTRAK's Procedures Manual. According to the manual:

"The Department Head approving the travel will determine the mode of transportation--rail, air or automobile, depending upon urgency, purpose of trip, and consideration of minimal cost. Whenever possible, rail travel should be used."

Travel plans can be approved by a department head orally or in writing. Reimbursement claims for expenses incurred on official travel must be approved, in writing, by the department head.

A responsible AMTRAK official concurred with the information presented in this report.

We do not plan to distribute this report further unless you agree or publically announce its contents.

Sincerely yours,

[E. F. ...]

Comptroller General
of the United States

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