

= Mountaineer (train) =

The Mountaineer was a passenger train operated by Amtrak between Norfolk , Virginia , and Chicago , Illinois , via Cincinnati , Ohio . It was the first train to use the Norfolk and Western Railway 's tracks since the creation of Amtrak in 1971 and followed the route of the Pocahontas , the N & W 's last passenger train . Service began in 1975 and ended in 1977 . A new train , the Hilltopper , operated over much of the Mountaineer 's route but was itself discontinued in 1979 .

= = History = =

The Norfolk and Western Railway was one of the twenty railroads which joined Amtrak in 1971 but in the first four years hosted no passenger service over its route , the centerpiece of which was its main line between Norfolk and Cincinnati which passed through the state of West Virginia . The main driving force behind the establishment of the Mountaineer was then @-@ United States Senator Robert Byrd (D @-@ West Virginia) , who wanted additional rail service for his constituents and pressured the Department of Transportation to add the route .

The Mountaineer operated in conjunction with the Chicago ? Washington / Newport News James Whitcomb Riley between Chicago and Cincinnati . Beyond Cincinnati , at a Chesapeake & Ohio Railway (C & O) yard in Ashland , Kentucky , the two trains were decoupled and then proceeded separately to Catlettsburg , Kentucky and points east , with the Mountaineer roughly twenty @-@ five minutes behind the Riley . Westbound the procedure was reversed .

The first trains ran on March 24 , 1975 , marking the return of rail passenger service to the Norfolk & Western . Amtrak guaranteed two years of operation , while warning that the train would " habitually lose money . " Amtrak president Paul Reistrup projected costs of \$ 4 @. @ 5 million / year while taking in \$ 900 @, @ 000 in the first year . To make the run viable the Mountaineer would need to carry 150 ? 300 people daily between Norfolk and Cincinnati .

In 1976 Amtrak announced several possible changes to the Mountaineer , including a later schedule through West Virginia and combined operation west of Cincinnati with both the Riley and an unnamed (and never implemented) Washington ? Denver train . Under this plan the Mountaineer would receive new Amfleet equipment but lose its sleeping car . The schedule changes never took place , but Amtrak was forced to re @-@ equip the Mountaineer after a harsh winter damaged many of its old steam @-@ heated coaches and locomotives . The Mountaineer was one of eight routes suspended in January 1977 , and it returned with an all @-@ Amfleet consist , minus the sleeping car .

Ridership on the Mountaineer over its two @-@ year probationary period was disappointing : 58 @, @ 991 in 1975 and 53 @, @ 400 in 1976 . Averaged over a 365 @-@ day year , this was 161 passengers per day in 1975 and 146 in 1976 . By 1977 daily ridership had dwindled to 35 . Monetary losses were far higher than expected : \$ 5 @. @ 7 million in FY1975 and \$ 14 @. @ 9 million in FY1976 . After a brief respite , Amtrak discontinued the Mountaineer on May 31 , 1977 . A new train , the Hilltopper , operated over much of the same route until 1979 .

= = Stations = =

None of the fourteen stations east of Cincinnati had seen Amtrak service before . Catlettsburg , also known as " Tri @-@ State Station " (for the states of Kentucky , Ohio and West Virginia) , replaced an existing stop at Ashland , Kentucky . Amtrak built new stations at Roanoke and Bluefield . The remaining stops all used existing Norfolk & Western stations , with varying degrees of refurbishment and renovation . Two cities , Petersburg and Lynchburg , Virginia , had additional rail service at different stations . Amtrak 's Florida @-@ bound trains used the ex @-@ Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Petersburg station , while the Southern Railway 's remaining trains used Kemper Street station in Lynchburg .

= = Equipment = =

The Mountaineer 's typical consist (at first) was five cars : a baggage @-@ dormitory , two coaches , a grill diner and a 10 @-@ roomette 6 @-@ bedroom (10 @-@ 6) sleeping car . When available , one of the coaches was a dome car . Starting in January 1977 Amtrak ran a consist of three new Amfleet cars , typically two coaches and a cafe .