

= North Coast Hiawatha =

The North Coast Hiawatha was a streamlined passenger train operated by Amtrak between Chicago , Illinois , and Seattle , Washington , in the United States . It operated from 1971 to 1979 . The train was a successor to the Northern Pacific Railway 's North Coast Limited and Mainstreeter , although it used the route of the Chicago , Milwaukee , St. Paul and Pacific Railroad (" Milwaukee Road ") east of Minneapolis ? Saint Paul . The train 's name combined the North Coast Limited with the Milwaukee Road 's famed Hiawathas . Created at the behest of the United States Congress , the North Coast Hiawatha enjoyed an uncertain existence before being discontinued in 1979 . Since then there have been several attempts to restore the service , without success .

= = History = =

= = = Background = = =

The flagship train on the Northern Pacific Railway (" NP ") main line was the North Coast Limited , which had begun running in 1900 . Its running mate since 1952 was the Mainstreeter , which operated on a slower schedule with fewer amenities . The Northern Pacific main line mirrored that of its great rival , the Great Northern Railway (" GN ") , running through southern Montana and North Dakota . Even after the merger of the NP , GN , and Chicago , Burlington , and Quincy Railroad (" CB & Q ") into the Burlington Northern Railroad in 1970 , service continued on both the ex @-@ Northern Pacific and ex @-@ Great Northern . Amtrak chose the Great Northern 's Empire Builder as its Chicago ? Pacific Northwest route . Amtrak based this decision on several factors , including the overall higher speed of the ex @-@ Great Northern route and better availability of alternative transportation options along the ex @-@ Northern Pacific .

= = = Operation = = =

Amtrak 's decision to discontinue the NP trains caused consternation in Montana . Mike Mansfield (D @-@ Montana) , then Senate Majority Leader , pointed out that the Empire Builder bypassed Montana 's major population centers , and had no difficulty in making his displeasure felt . The new company reacted to the pressure and announced a resumption of service over the ex @-@ Northern Pacific , to begin on June 14 . This service took the form of an unnamed section of the Empire Builder running separately between Minneapolis and Spokane , Washington . Mansfield 's intervention earned the train the nickname ? Mike Mansfield Limited ? . The Northern Pacific route , which included the Yellowstone River , Homestake Pass and Bitterroot Mountains , was praised for its scenery . Amtrak considered the route one of the company 's six most beautiful . The train also provided a convenient connection to Yellowstone National Park at Livingston , Montana .

On November 14 , 1971 , Amtrak formally named this service the North Coast Hiawatha , with a tri @-@ weekly schedule between Chicago and Spokane independent of the Empire Builder . In Spokane it combined with the Empire Builder for the trip to Seattle . On the other four days of the week the train terminated in Minneapolis . Amtrak initially named the Minneapolis train Hiawatha , but adopted the Twin Cities Hiawatha name on January 16 , 1972 . Amtrak reverted to Hiawatha on October 29 , and this name remained until the North Coast Hiawatha went daily for the first time on May 19 , 1974 .

This joint operation ended on June 11 , 1973 , when Amtrak extended the North Coast Hiawatha to Seattle over the Great Northern 's route , which included Stevens Pass and Cascade Tunnel . This new routing served the northern Washington communities of Wenatchee and Everett , which had previously been without service . The train remained on a tri @-@ weekly schedule west of Minneapolis . For the summer of 1974 Amtrak added a second train , the Expo ' 74 (named for the " Expo ' 74 " then being held in Spokane) , to the Seattle ? Spokane segment .

The schedule fluctuated over the next three years , with the train operating daily between Chicago

and Seattle in the summers and reverting to tri @-@ weekly west of Minneapolis the rest of the year . Amtrak would also run a daily service during the holiday season (as in 1975 , when the train operated daily December 12 ? January 12) , but the train never operated a daily schedule for a full calendar year . In early 1976 the North Coast Hiawatha was threatened with discontinuance , along with the Pacific International and the three daily Portland , Oregon ? Seattle trains , after the Ford Administration proposed budget cuts . Several members of Congress protested the proposed cuts , including Representative Max Baucus (D @-@ Montana) , and Senators Warren Magnuson (D @-@ Washington) and Bob Packwood (R @-@ Oregon) . In the end Congress approved a budget for Amtrak \$ 62 million above the administration 's request , saving all three services .

Amtrak announced in October 1976 that the North Coast Hiawatha would be the second train , after the Empire Builder , to receive the new bi @-@ level Superliner coaches , then on order from Pullman Standard . In the end the train was cancelled before the Superliners entered long @-@ distance service . In the spring of 1977 Amtrak added seven hours to the schedule , increasing it to 52 hours 30 minutes . The change was prompted by new speed restrictions on Amtrak trains after a rash of derailments involving the new EMD SDP40F diesel locomotives . In September Amtrak eliminated the off @-@ day Chicago ? St. Paul service , leaving the North Coast Hiawatha with three trips a week . Amtrak reduced the Empire Builder to quad @-@ weekly service as well . The Twin Cities Hiawatha returned as a daytime service between Chicago and Minneapolis .

In November Amtrak reduced the running time to 46 hours 40 minutes , after the replacement of the SDP40Fs permitted an easing of speed restrictions . Even as this improved service began , the train was threatened with cancellation . Facing a budget deficit of \$ 60 million , Amtrak identified a half dozen routes which it considered " financially troubled . " Amtrak proposed merging the North Coast Hiawatha and the Empire Builder , or even cancelling both . Throughout 1978 no decision was taken , and the two trains continued to provide between them daily service between Chicago and Seattle .

= = = Discontinuance = = =

In January 1979 Secretary of Transportation Brock Adams announced plans to cut 12 @,@ 000 miles (19 @,@ 000 km) from Amtrak 's network . The North Coast Hiawatha was one of many routes scheduled for elimination . The train had faced cancellation before , but after eight years of federal subsidies members of Congress favored retrenchment . Once @-@ vocal supporters such as Senator Magnuson expressed regret but made no public commitment . Adams noted that the service recovered only \$ 6 million against expenses of \$ 24 million , and that the per @-@ passenger cost was \$ 178 .

In July an attempt by Representative (and future Vice President) Al Gore (D @-@ Tennessee) to impose a one @-@ year moratorium on the proposed system @-@ wide cuts failed 214 @-@ 197 . In the end the Senate approved a smaller cutback , citing a 24 % spike in Amtrak ridership after an oil shock during the summer , but the North Coast Hiawatha remained on the chopping block . In late September the Railway Labor Executives ' Association , along with Senator John Melcher (D @-@ Montana) and Representative Pat Williams (D @-@ Montana) , sued the U.S. Department of Transportation to prevent the discontinuance of the service , then scheduled for October 1 . A federal judge temporarily restrained Amtrak from ending the service , but the last North Coast Hiawathas ran on October 6 , 1979 , arriving in Chicago on the 7th and Seattle on the 8th .

= = = Proposed return = = =

Over the years there have been periodic attempts to restore service in southern Montana and North Dakota . A proposed plan from 1982 ? 1983 would have involved North Dakota and Montana paying 45 % of costs in the first year and 65 % thereafter of a new section of the Empire Builder operating tri @-@ weekly between Fargo and Sandpoint . This proposal went nowhere as neither state voted funds . Another proposal mooted in 1991 would have required an additional yearly federal appropriation of \$ 12 ? 15 million plus new equipment . In this scenario the Portland section would operate over the old route . Again , nothing came of it .

In 2008 Congress directed Amtrak to study resumption of service , which rekindled hope of restoration . Amtrak published a feasibility study in October 2009 , which proposed restoring the North Coast Hiawatha to its 1979 route where possible with a daily schedule . Amtrak projected a yearly ridership of 359 @, @ 800 , some of whom would be drawn from the Empire Builder . Amtrak estimated that \$ 1 billion in funds would be necessary to relaunch the service , including over \$ 300 million for new locomotives and rolling stock . The corporation estimated it would take four to five years to reintroduce the service if a decision was made to move forward .

= = Equipment = =

The North Coast Hiawatha saw a variety of motive power and rolling stock during its eight years , as Amtrak disposed of its inherited equipment as best it could and gradually replaced the older equipment with its own stock . In the early 1970s a typical train might feature as many as four dome cars pulled by ex @-@ Milwaukee Road EMD E9s . In the summer of 1972 the train maxed out at 18 cars , including five dome coaches , an ex @-@ California Zephyr dome lounge , and a dome @-@ sleeper @-@ lounge . The 1970 Burlington / Great Northern merger notwithstanding , cars carried both the " Big Sky Blue " livery characteristic of late Great Northern passenger trains and the " Cascade Green " of the Burlington Northern Railroad .

The train was one of many routes to receive the new EMD SDP40F , which worked the route between 1974 ? 1977 , although older EMD E8 and EMD E9s continued to be used . A series of derailments involving the SDP40F prompted their replacement , and by late 1977 Amtrak had introduced the EMD F40PH . These sometimes ran with an E9 " B " unit as well .