

BATTALION CLASSIFIED

If train stops, business, too?

United Press International
SAN ANTONIO — A blaring mariachi band and 400 spectators turned out Jan. 27, 1973, to watch the arrival of Amtrak's sleek Inter-American passenger train, inaugurating the nation's only rail service to Mexico.

Last week Secretary of Transportation Brock Adams announced he was recommending the Inter-American, along with other long-distance trains, be abolished in a 47 percent cutback of Amtrak service.

During the intervening six years, the businessmen who live along the route had watched their original dreams turn sour. Adams' announcement was merely the final blow, and a good reason for venting the anger that has festered over what they say was the mismanagement of what could have been a beautiful service.

When the service was first announced — a Chicago to Laredo route to meet with the Mexican Aztec Eagle that ran to Mexico City — it created visions of the old days when Mexican businessmen rode twice-daily trains into San Antonio, filling the Gunter Hotel. Laredo and Mexican officials remembered full trains carrying tourists to Nuevo Laredo for the bullfights each weekend.

Mexican railroad officials responded. They had promised to provide all the equipment for direct transfer of Amtrak passenger cars onto the Aztec Eagle. All Amtrak had to do was run daily trains and get them to Laredo on time.

The reality of the Amtrak train was less than that. The Inter-American runs three times a week, misses the Laredo-Mexico City connection by 23 hours, creeps at an average 49 mph and provides service that San Antonio Mayor Lila Cockrell called "rinky dink."

Although Amtrak provides its passengers with comfortable boarding stations, complimentary newspapers and coffee, hourly trains that zoom at speeds up to 100 mph and have on-board telephones, the Inter-American supplies its passengers with frozen sandwiches heated in a micro-wave oven by one employee who is too busy to clean the dining area, the mayor said, and San Antonio still does not have a train station.

Passengers in San Antonio buy their tickets at the Southern Pacific station, then are bused across downtown one mile to wait beside the track for the train in what local Amtrak agent Lester Noble terms "the mud hole."

Although Amtrak officials predicted six years ago the Inter-American would be the only long-distance passenger train to be "in the black"

by 1978, the route lost \$11 million last year. Hamilton contends \$7 million of that loss was "tacked on" by Amtrak railroads because of the shoddy service, connections in Mexico, and to promote the route.

Officials along the Texas route Amtrak officials never intend the Inter-American to continue that Amtrak torpedoes it. Money could be spent on Northeast Corridor.

Hamilton goes further, that Amtrak charged \$38 million in expenses against the distance routes to show the east Corridor trains are profitable and the others are not.

At Laredo, Chamber of Commerce manager Gary Payne believes if the train would make a daily connection with Mexican train, it would be profitable. He said many people take the bus, drive or even fly to Laredo to board the Mexican train for a scenic 27-hour ride to Mexico City for \$11 first-class fare. A state double occupancy ticket is about \$40.

"It has tremendous potential," he said. "If it had the right connections with the rest of the country, the Mexican are full all the time and hundreds of people coming to the States. You've got a big market," Payne said.

Noble, who has been in the road business 35 years and has his job with Amtrak Inter-American is abolished on the local train station. The poorest Amtrak has anywhere said.

United Press International
NAPLES, Italy — Y-scrambled the streets in Naples Tuesday, hoping for the spread of the "dark disease" has killed at least 59 babies last year in southern Italy.

Doctors, admitting they have a cure for the virus, tried playing tape recordings of mothers' voices in an effort to stricken infants from the state from which they do cover.

Most of the deaths have occurred at Santobono Hospital in Naples. Doctors believe the disease is a "dark disease," isolated by Robert Chanock, of the National Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Bethesda, Md.

But though they believe they know the cause, doctors admit there is no cure. No vaccine has yet been developed against the virus and doctors are relying on traditional methods normally used for respiratory problems — strict isolation, artificial respirators and fresh blood analyses.

The children, mostly from slums of Naples and the surrounding foothills of Mount Vesuvius, usually develop vomiting, fall into a coma and die. Villagers in the Naples area are swabbing down the streets and of their houses in a desperate attempt to bring about reasonably good conditions.

United Press International
WASHINGTON — Peace Corps volunteers began a job in Buffalo, N.Y. East. The U.S. said Sunday a male will be m. Near Niobrara, Nebraska. New York. East.


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SPECIAL NOTICE

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OFFICIAL NOTICE

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The Cooperative Education Program in Biomedical Science is now accepting applications from any Biomedical Science student who will be a junior or senior effective September 1, 1979. There are many excellent work opportunities available for both the Summer and Fall semesters of 1979. These work assignments are with veterinarians, humane societies, research organizations, laboratory animal care facilities, etc. Students who might be interested in participating in the Co-Op program should submit an application as soon as possible to the Coordinator of the Biomedical Science Cooperative Education Program. For further information, and an application, you may contact:

Dr. C. A. Thompson,
Coordinator
Room 110-D, VMS Bldg.
845-5310
College of Veterinary Medicine 9015

PREGNANCY TESTING

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FOR SALE

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