

the golden age of passenger railroad service in the United States. Dissatisfied with poor food and service, Harvey arranged in 1875 to provide food service for the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad at its Topeka, Kansas, depot. He became so well known for quality and service that the railroad eventually awarded him all of its dining car services.

Passenger rail service flourished and was an important form of domestic transportation in Canada and the United States until the 1940s. In fact, railroad transportation was so prominent that lodging facilities were developed at major destinations along the rail lines such as Banff, Alberta, Canada, and White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. However, the forces of change eventually led to the decline of passenger rail service in North America. First, automobile ownership as well as the number of miles traveled by car increased. Then, the Trans-Canada Highway Act of 1949 and the U.S. Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 enabled provinces and states to begin constructing major highway systems. Both of these factors facilitated long-distance automobile travel. Second, domestic jet passenger service became available. Third, the railroads did not adequately maintain their tracks or customer services. The final blow to U.S. passenger rail service came in 1967 when the post office announced that it would no longer ship mail by train. Without this government subsidy, passenger services became unprofitable, and the railroads began to concentrate on moving freight.

Canada and the United States Follow Similar Tracks for Rail Service

Rail passenger service followed similar tracks of decline in both Canada and the United States until public interest in salvaging long-distance passenger train service resulted in government intervention. **Amtrak** was formed in 1971 and **VIA Rail Canada** in 1978 to reduce the number of routes and points served while upgrading the remaining passenger rail systems. Although in different countries, there are many similarities between these two passenger-rail-operating companies.

Amtrak is the marketing name for the National Railroad Passenger Corporation, which is a combination of the passenger rail services of U.S. railroads. Amtrak trains now serve 45 states, with stops in hundreds of communities. (Note: The popular Alaska Railroad is not part of the Amtrak system.) VIA Rail Canada is the marketing name for Canada's passenger train network, which links over 400 communities throughout the country. Although they both receive governmental financial support, neither Amtrak nor VIA Rail Canada is a government agency; they are corporations structured and managed like other large businesses.

Passenger rail service in Canada and the United States, where passenger and freight trains share the same rails, still faces an uncertain future and will probably continue to rely on some form of government subsidies. However, with increased urban growth and new airports being constructed farther and farther from city centers, rail service may grow in importance. Because train terminals were originally built in the center of cities, they now provide a convenient central location and, in many cases, faster and easier transportation in crowded corridors. This is especially true between major cities in close proximity to each other, such as Montreal and Toronto, New York and Boston, Kansas City and St. Louis, and Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Recent improvements in Amtrak service can be attributed to several factors: introduction of improved service and scheduling in the high-traffic Northeast corridors, aggressive marketing and packaging of vacation trips including rail passes (All Aboard America Fares) and fly/rail packages, membership in the Airlines Reporting Corporation (ARC), and listings on airline computer reservation systems. Amtrak service has been further enhanced by the addition of high-speed trains (top speeds of 150 mph) on major passenger routes and routes that serve as