

WHAT REMAINS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED

Washington-New York Demonstration

A date for the start of revenue demonstration service on the Washington-New York route is tied directly and solely to completion of developmental testing, modification—principally of electrical components—and final acceptance by Penn Central of new self-propelled electric cars designed for the operation. It is anticipated that the railroads may be able to provide initially nonrevenue and excursion runs, using the first cars accepted. The full demonstration service cannot start until 28 cars meet acceptance tests.

All of the other elements of improvements for which the Penn Central is responsible, and which are required to support the experimental design of the demonstration experiment, have been completed. These include roadway improvements, station modernization, and changes in overhead catenary for electric power distribution. Schedules, fare structures, food service, employee training, advertising and public information and all other administrative elements of the demonstration service are ready for immediate implementation.

Construction of suburban automobile-parking station facilities in New Jersey and Maryland, which are a shared responsibility of the railroad, the Federal Government and local authorities (as noted), is proceeding. Start of the work has been delayed by the need to scale down standards set forth in original plans for the stations. Excessive costs not foreseen in the planning stage, which relate chiefly to modifications in railroad plant to meet operating problems have forced these changes.

Penn Central will operate the new demonstration trains as an integral part of its New York-Washington service. The Government and the railroad have agreed, however, on detailed conditions of the service to be provided. These are precisely set forth in a 60-page operating contract providing four separate service phases over a two-year test period of revenue operation. Each phase will effect a new combination of service elements.

The operating contract calls for experiments in varying types of meal service, luggage handling aboard cars, use of coach attendants, fixed or reversible seating and deletion or addition of intermediate station stops, among others. Food service in the new Metro Club (parlor) cars, for example, will be varied in price from phase to phase, and in one period will be included in the ticket price.

The parties may agree upon experiments in fare levels beyond those already planned. These may include, for instance, premium charges for nonstop service, fees for coach seat reservations, bargain rates for off-peak hours, or special inducements for non-commuter patrons to increase the frequency of their travel on the route.

Variation of a number of service elements simultaneously is required because the two-year limitation on the period of the demonstration will not permit isolated exposure to the test of public acceptance of individual changes.

The task of testing the maximum possible number of service elements in a relatively short time span requires that the Office of High Speed Ground Transportation exercise continuous, detailed surveillance over the demonstration service and, in coordination with the operating railroad management, plan for prompt corrections and changes as necessary to carry out the overall design of the experiment. The contracting parties must inform the public fully and rapidly of forthcoming changes. The Government staff must modify its continuing data collection and evaluation procedures accordingly. The contents of on-train survey questionnaires, for example, must be reviewed constantly so that they will reflect service modifications and identify, so far as is possible by statistical techniques, public acceptance of the individual elements of successive service combinations.

Boston-New York demonstration

As is true of the demonstration to be conducted on the Penn Central, the most critical step to be accomplished before operation of the Boston-New York demonstration can start is acceptance by the Department of Transportation, as lessee, of the two trainsets which will perform the service. It has been necessary for the builder to carry out important modifications, after development testing showed original noise levels, ride quality, braking rates and reliability of power and gearing to be unsatisfactory. As revised, the equipment must again be subjected to road testing. If the two trainsets meet the Department's specifications, they must undergo next a period of scheduled-service testing by the New Haven Railroad lasting approximately six weeks, during which training of employees will