WASHINGTON, D.C. --- Last week, Secretary of Transportation, Norman Y. Mineta, announced the Administration's proposal for reforming the nation's passenger rail system. While the overall plan included few specific details, it did specify that states should pay an increasing share of costs, that Amtrak should create public-private partnerships for some lines and should contract-out jobs now held by rail union workers. This announcement came just as Amtrak is trying to secure a $200 million loan to maintain service this summer. The Secretary's announcement was silent on Amtrak's most immediate needs and failed to address the federal loan requested by the Railroad.

An announcement from the Administration is expected this week regarding whether to grant Amtrak a loan guarantee, how big a loan would be provided, what "reforms" would be required by Amtrak and what role Congress will play in assisting Amtrak with their immediate financial needs.