

Amtrak fleet renewal begins with coach order

UNITED STATES national passenger operator Amtrak has taken the first step in its long-term fleet renewal programme with the acquisition of 130 new single-deck coaches for its long-distance services.

The \$US 298.1 million five-year contract has been awarded to the US subsidiary of Spanish manufacturer CAF. Manufacturing and final assembly will be carried out at CAF USA's plant in Elmira, New York, with the first coach

due to roll off the production line in October 2012.

Amtrak CEO Mr Joseph Boardman says the new vehicles will be similar to the existing Viewliner coaches, 50 of which were delivered in 1995-96. The order comprises 25 sleeping cars, 25 restaurant cars, 55 baggage cars, and 25 baggage/dormitory cars. The new vehicles will allow Amtrak to retire some of its oldest coaches, which date back to the 1940s and 1950s.

Amtrak says the first year of

the five-year contract will be funded with \$US 29.8 million from the company's own revenues, which are running above budget estimates due to higher-than-expected passenger numbers. Further funding will be sought from other sources.

Amtrak is currently reviewing bids to replace electric locomotives used on the Northeast Corridor, and says it may award a contract for 20 locomotives within the next few months.