



Working for a More Balanced Transportation System

Vol. 43 No. 4

Fall 2018



Photo by Ben Turon

New Schenectady Train Station Opens

Governor Andrew Cuomo announced the grand opening of a new modern Schenectady train station on October 17th—two weeks ahead of schedule. Inauguration of the \$23 million facility caps a decade long effort to replace a decaying 1970's station.

“Schenectady is in the midst of a renaissance and is home to an increasing number of popular destinations, and it is critical that transportation to and from the area is convenient, affordable and reliable,” Governor Cuomo said. “The new Schenectady Train Station is a smart investment for the Capital Region, and with modern amenities and historic touches, it will drive tourism and further support the Electric City's downtown revitalization.”

In her remarks at the new station, Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul pointed out: “Schenectady has experienced a transformation with the revitalization of downtown and the continued momentum of community and development projects throughout the city.” Among the improvements are the Rivers Casino, which replaced an old industrial brown-site improvements to the Proctor's theater complex of stage, screen & performance spaces, new business incubator spaces as well as new housing and apartment creation.

“Downtown Schenectady continues its comeback story with our new train station”, said Congressman Paul Tonko. “I fought and helped secure this federal funding from Washington...and I was proud to work alongside Governor

(Cont'd on page 3)

Hudson Valley Food Service Restoration Campaign

Why can't a passenger grab a cup of coffee or a quick snack while enroute during the over two-hour trip between Albany and New York City on many 'Empire Service' trains? We at ESPA have long wanted to change this long-lamented inconvenience and have now started a campaign to have food service restored on all trains traveling thru the Hudson Valley. You can help by contacting your local state representatives and the governor's office on this issue. And please give our dedicated social media page “Hudson Valley Food Service on Amtrak” your “like” on Facebook.



Photo by Ben Turon



Congressional Members write bi-partisan letter on 'TOYS FOR TOTS' Holiday Train
Mr. Richard H. Anderson
National Railroad Passengers Corporation
60 Massachusetts Avenue, NE
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Anderson

We are writing to express great concern that Amtrak is planning to end its support for the annual Toys for Tots Train. This is a beloved and endearing resource that many of our region's neediest families rely on. Discontinuing this train service will mean approximately 40,000 children and their families will not benefit from donated gifts and much needed winter hats and gloves. We implore you to reconsider.

We are aware that Amtrak has established a new policy for the operation of charter trains and believe it has every right to do so. However, ending this important holiday charter service will negatively affect the neediest in our communities and discontinue a positive charitable action that has brought great recognition to Amtrak's reputation in the eyes of many.

The benefit that the Toys for Tots charter brings to families in our region is immense. This program is about supporting our community and remembering people who are less fortunate during the holiday season. We ask you to consider the special circumstances involved here and act to preserve this unique and deeply valued Toys for Tots charter.

This holiday season would mark the 20th year of this longstanding and generous service. We have been deeply moved by the spirit of community and love for our children that are expressed through this program and we sincerely hope that the tremendous good it does will not be lost this holiday season. Sincerely,

John M. Faso (NY-19)
Paul D. Tonko (NY-20)
Elise M. Stefanik (NY-21)

Ostroff Associates Represents ESPA

Ostroff Associates, a government affairs firm based in Albany, has been selected to represent the Empire State Passengers Association. Founded in 1995, the company has consistently ranked as one of the top ten lobbying firms in the state.

With a professional staff of a dozen and supporting administrative personnel, Ostroff has attracted a variety of clients, including nationally known companies including Hewlett Packard Enterprises, Ernst & Young, LLP, and Walmart. The staff has a variety of experience in the executive and legislative branches of state government.

Ostroff uses a team approach and has assigned Senior Vice President Kate Corkery and Legislative Analyst Nicholas Morelle to work with ESPA. Ms. Corkery comes from a railroad family. Other staff members will contribute specialize services.

Our new firm has already begun working on ESPA's current priority issues and helping develop an advocacy plan for 2019. Ostroff was selected after a review of the credentials of five government affairs groups.

Tony Rudmann

Cuomo Calls on Trump to Fund Gateway Project

On the night of October 17, 2018, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo toured the existing Amtrak tunnels into Penn Station. In exposing the corrosion and damage, Cuomo is hoping to publicly shame President Trump to "stop playing politics" and have the federal government fund the previously agreed

upon share of the Gateway Project, made in the last days of the Obama Administration, albeit reneged upon by the Trump Administration.

Gov. Cuomo stated at a press conference at the site, "(y)ou have a level of damage that is possible to interrupt service for days and if you lose service of one of these tunnels for one, two or three days you're talking about a devastating impact on the whole Northeast Corridor.

"We've been talking about it in the abstract; we thought it would be good if people actually saw the tunnel, saw what we're talking about so you have a deeper appreciation of it. We're going to be taking a videotape of much of what you see today. We'll be putting that video together and I'm going to be sending it to President Trump just so the President has a visual understanding of the serious deterioration of the tunnels."

The five-minute video made by the governor's office (showing the existing deterioration of the two extant century-old tunnels under the Hudson River into Penn Station and explaining the need to build two new tunnels) is available for on YouTube (type "NYGovCuomo Gateway Tunnel Video" into your search engine).

Ben Turon



Great Dome Returns

This past Autumn, Amtrak's 'Great Dome' Oceanview returned to run between Albany and Montreal on the Adirondack. Considering that Amtrak has recently divested itself of other pre-Amtrak Era equipment, including the ex-Santa Fe Hi-Level Pacific Parlor cars that ran on the LA-Seattle Coast Starlight, there is speculation that the Great Dome may soon go too.

The only remaining dome car in Amtrak service, number 10031 Oceanview was built in 1955 by the Budd Company for the Great Northern Railway as car number 1391. The car ran on the Chicago-Seattle Empire Builder.

Oceanview was conveyed to Amtrak in 1971, renovated in 1985 for use in daily service on Amtrak's Virginia-Florida Auto Train until 1994, and was further refurbished in 1999. It has been used in various regular Amtrak services, such as the Pacific Surfliners, and for charters and excursions.



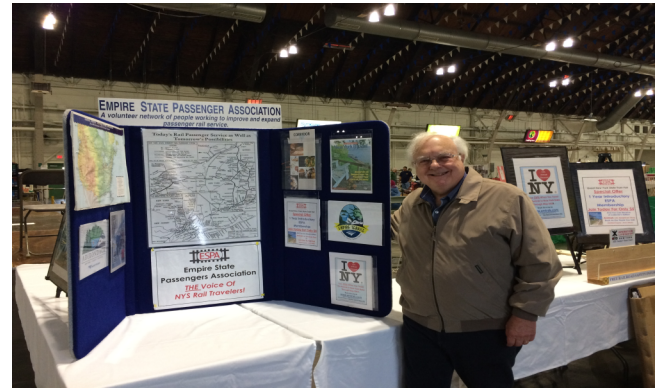
New Schenectady Station (Cond't from page 1)

Cuomo, Mayor Gary McCarthy, Metroplex Chairman Ray Gillian and many others to make today a reality. “Today, we celebrate the opening of a new station, while we continue to work on removing bottlenecks on the tracks and expand high speed intercity passenger service. After all, rail is the most energy efficient form of travel and can help reduce congestion on the roads.”

The total project cost of \$23 million is supported by \$17 million in state funding for construction costs and an additional \$2 million in state funding for engineering services and other costs. The Federal Railroad Administration provided \$3.6 million towards the new station building. Amtrak and Schenectady County's Metroplex Development Authority invested in the project. Amtrak will own, operate and maintain the new station. Metroplex will own and operate the station parking lot.

Schenectady saw its first steam engine drawn passenger train on September 24, 1831 when the Mohawk and Hudson Railroad's five coaches arrived from Albany. The new station is the sixth station to serve the community. Also, Schenectady was the home of the American Locomotive Company (ALCO) which made steam and diesel locomotives for passenger trains.

Tony Rudmann



Setting up for the 44th Annual Great NYS Model Train Fair, Syracuse

It's a pleasure to report that 15 new ESPA memberships, plus 2 renewals, were made over the weekend of November 3 & 4 2018 at the 44th Annual Great New York State Model Train Fair in Syracuse, NY. It didn't happen in a vacuum, of course.

First, a thanks to Bruce Becker for arranging to deliver the traveling ESPA display to me on the Friday before the show. This allowed me to immediately set up our tables at the Center of Progress Building at the New York State Fairgrounds. Actually, the tables and space were made available free of charge by the sponsors of the event, the Central New York Chapter of the National Historical Railway Society. Somehow, we were placed at a remarkably desirable and choice location by the main entrance. No one could miss us!

On both Saturday and Sunday, Connell Raate, Guy Crompt and I manned the tables and put forward the virtues of joining ESPA and answered innumerable questions on Amtrak tickets and routes and rail-related chitchat. We also had a large quantity of recent and older copies of our own ESPA Express Newsletter to offer thanks to Robert (Bob) Lenz. These printed copies are priceless documents of our Association efforts that impresses everyone who stops at our booth. Likewise, a thank you to the folks at our Syracuse Amtrak station who supplied a quantity of New York by Rail issues as well as the Amtrak Vacations brochure. Everything we had to distribute were taken.

May I just draw attention to Guy Crompt's ability to be an “uncle” to every child that is attracted to the train whistles he likes to give to children (at his own expense). This time he signed up a four-year-old whose mother was just so appreciative of Guy's charm with kids! Not bad when you consider Guy was a US Marine in his younger days. Well, “Toys for Tots” is a Marine thing, right?

So, I would encourage our work group members to find a suitable venue and set up a table and make a few friends for ESPA.
Stan Kozaczke

Go Green and Save \$\$

Members providing their e-mail address are entitled to the full-color, electronic version of the *ESPA Express* newsletter at the same time we forward the paper version to the printer. (ESPA will NOT share your information with anyone.)

Receive the newsletter one to two weeks earlier.

Our postage and printing cost savings will give ESPA more resources to further its passenger rail advocacy mission.

Please send your e-mail address to:

www.rwlenz4@gmail.com

Virginia's Successful Inter-city Rail Effort

When one thinks of states that have made successful investments in their Amtrak corridor services, the Commonwealth of Virginia might not be the first that comes to mind.

Some states, like New York, Illinois and California, have continually worked to improve their intercity passenger rail services from the very early days of Amtrak. Other states, like Maine, North Carolina, and Washington, have, since the 1990s, gained the limelight with state-sponsored expansions of passenger train routes. Yet Virginia, while a latecomer, should now be counted in the list of states leading the way to a more balanced and sustainable transport system.

Since 2000, the Virginia state government, working in a bipartisan manner across party lines and over several administrations of governors, created a substantial program of Higher Speed Rail (HrSR). Of specific interest is how Virginia meet the challenge of the devolution under PRIIA Section 209 of public operating subsidies for Amtrak's regional inter-city trains to state governments — by creating a predictable, adequate, and sustainable, dedicated funding source to cover both operating and capital costs of their rail program.

The results are impressive. The Commonwealth has upgraded rail infrastructure and expanded Amtrak service in frequency and to new communities (some having lacked passenger rail service for decades).

Ridership is up 75% since 2006. In FY2017, some 1.6 million people rode Amtrak in the Commonwealth, including 851,000 on state-supported corridor trains. Passenger rail stations are now available within 25 miles of 81% of all Virginians.

EXPANSION OF SERVICE

Virginia's first state-sponsored expansion of Amtrak service began operation in October 2009 with the extension of an existing Northeast Regional frequency 173 miles south of Washington Union Station to Lynchburg — which previously was served only by Amtrak's Washington-New Orleans overnight long-distance Crescent train. This required a \$43m. investment in freight railroad Norfolk-Southern's Piedmont Corridor. In the first year, some 134,000 passengers boarded the new regional train with revenue exceeding operating costs. By FY 2017, ridership increased to 190,000 with a monthly passenger load factor of 81%. In November 2017, the service was extended to Roanoke at a capital cost of \$110m. The state is currently planning to add a third Amtrak service frequency on this route by extending a second Northeast Regional train south of Washington, DC.

Utilizing unused operating support money for the successful Lynchburg train in 2010, the state sponsored an additional Northeast Regional frequency on the Washington-Richmond corridor. There were already four pre-existing Amtrak corridor trains, including two originating in Newport News, a North Carolina-supported NYC-Charlotte Carolinian, and the long-distance Palmetto, Silver Star and Silver Meteor trains. The state had previously invested \$65m. in this rail corridor owned by CSX as part of a grant from a 2000 transportation bill, Virginia's first contemporary foray into improving

passenger rail infrastructure.

In December 2012, the state supported extending a fifth Northeast Regional frequency to Norfolk as part of a \$116m. project in partnership with Norfolk-Southern. The agreement with the freight railroad allows for two additional frequencies to be added in future. In FY 2017, the Norfolk train carried 155,000 passengers with revenue of \$11m. and an operating profit of \$1.9m. As mandated by PRIIA Section 209 since October 2013, all Northeast Regional trains operating south of Washington in Virginia are now underwritten by state government.

INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE

The 123-mile Washington-Richmond "I-95" corridor is part of the broader 'Southeast High-Speed Rail Corridor', a long-term plan to bring fast, frequent, and reliable modern inter-city passenger rail service south of the Boston-Washington Northeast Corridor to Virginia and the Carolinas. Richmond, capital of the Commonwealth, is home to 1.3 million people with another 2.7 million living in the DC suburbs of Northern Virginia — both regions have a steadily growing economy and population.

Given the great ridership potential of the Washington-Richmond corridor, the greatest amount of investment is being made with the goal of increasing capacity for additional passenger frequencies and reducing Washington-Richmond travel time by about 30 minutes (from the current 2-hours plus). Key is construction of additional mainline track, including 17 miles of third mainline track and 6 miles of fourth track south of the Potomac River in Arlington and Alexandria. The construction of a double-track 'New Long Bridge' is a major project to relieve the current double-track bottleneck over the river.

At Alexandria, the mainlines of CSX (to Richmond) and Norfolk-Southern (to Lynchburg) converge with some 28 Amtrak, 34 Virginia Railway Express, and over 20 freight trains daily. Called the 'Atlantic Gateway Program', the creation of a four-track railway into the national capital is necessary to allow for further expansion of service. The \$560m. in new mainline track is fully funded and under construction in one segment. The cost of the new bridge has yet to be determined with planning ongoing.

CSX has committed \$15m. and is lending staff support for the project. As previously mentioned, the expansion of inter-city passenger service has required public investment in the privately-owned and operated rail infrastructure of "host" railroads CSX and Norfolk-Southern. State officials have expressed pride about their well working public-private partnership with the freight railroads."

The state is continuing with various planning studies for rail service expansion. This includes working with North Carolina to acquire from CSX the unused 'S-Line' for conversion to a state-owned 110-mph mainline dedicated to passenger rail service.

ORGANIZATION & FUNDING

The impressive progress being made by the Commonwealth of Virginia with its inter-city rail could not have happen without the state first addressing the managerial and funding issues of its inter-city passenger rail program.

(Con't on page 5)

In 1992, to better plan and manage the state's public transport and railroad efforts, legislation was passed to spin off from the Department of Transportation (VDOT) the 'Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation' (DRPT) as an independent, dedicated agency reporting directly to commonwealth's Secretary of Transportation. Today the agency has grown to having a sizable staff of several dozen in-house employees, with less dependence on outside contractors. In 2008, the US Congress passed the Passenger Rail Investment & Improvement Act (PRIIA) which in its Section 209 mandated that all Amtrak inter-city rail services of 750 miles or less be financially fully-supported by state governments by October 2013 — or face discontinuance.

For most states, this meant previously federally supported Amtrak corridor services became a line item in annual legislative appropriations. However, Virginia decided on a different path and thus became the first state to create a secure and sustainable dedicated funding source for inter-city passenger rail.

The state already had a pre-existing 'Rail Enhancement Fund' grant program created in 2005 for freight and passenger rail, funded by dedicating a portion of vehicle rental taxes — but the legislated requirement for a 30% match from a non-state government source limited its usefulness for investing in passenger rail.

Therefore in 2011, the 'Inter-city Passenger Rail Operating and Capital Fund' (IPROC) was created to cover both the operating and capital costs of Virginia's state supported passenger rail services. The fund receives a dedicate stream of revenue, approximately \$55m. annually, from a 40% share of a 0.125% increase in the general sales and use tax.

Since 2010, Virginia has been awarded \$248m. in federal grants including \$75 million in “High Speed Rail” funding from the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act of 2009, \$165m. for the “Atlantic Gateway Project”, and \$44 million to complete the Tier II Environmental Impact Study for the Washington-Richmond High Speed Rail Project. With its IPROC-dedicated funding source in place, the state was able to match and supplement these federal grants with a further \$467m. For FYs 2018-2023, the DRPT has programmed \$777m. to support and improve passenger rail.

While the IPROC fund was in part created to cover the annual operating costs of its state supported PRIIA Section 209 Amtrak services, ticket revenues of the six Northeast Regional trains operating in Virginia have actually exceeded their annual operating costs, returning a “profit” to the state. This has allowed the state to invest more money in capital projects, including upgrades to tracks and stations.

CONCLUSION

Virginia's recent success in terms of completion of major projects, expansion of service, and the rapid growth in ridership and revenues has made it a star player in building up inter-city passenger service. It offers an example that other states may wish to closely examine and consider moving forward as they work to construct their own modern “HrSR” corridors

Ben Turon

Albany-Worcester Trip Observation

[Editor's Note: CSX reportedly conducted extensive signal work & mandatory positive traincontrol installation on its Boston-Albany line during the time this trip was taken.]

Being a 'newbie' to the area, I wanted to sample the Boston section of the Lake Shore Limited, so my good friend and traveling companion Nan and I bought our tickets and off we went.

We left on Friday, about 1:40 late due to delays west of Cleveland and only got as far as a siding just east of Chatham, where we sat and sat and sat for an hour waiting for a CSX freight and the westbound Lake Shore. Once they passed, we were off to Worcester at a (blistering!?) 45 mph.

The return trip was uneventful, cruising along at 45 mph most of the way. We sat in the siding east of Chatham again, this time for maybe ten minutes for another freight.

Despite these problems, the train was packed, pointing up the fact that people really want alternatives to driving. The siding east of Chatham is too short to allow trains to pass at speed, the result of CSX's bare-bones track removal following the split of Conrail.

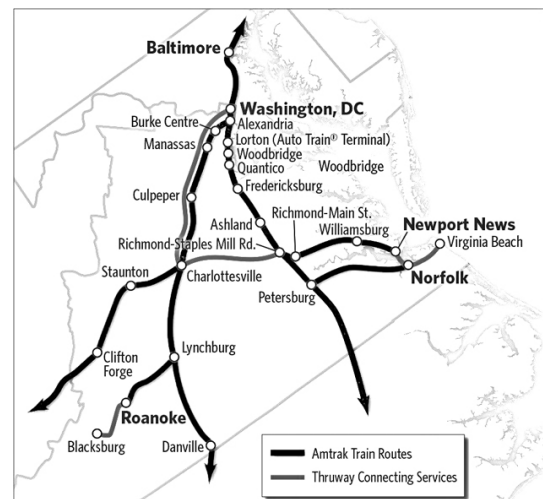
The Amtrak-owned Post Road section between CSX and Rensselaer is also rough, but we moved along much faster (maybe 55-60 mph) than when we were on CSX. What was really frustrating to me was that we crept along between Worcester and Springfield on CSX for no good reason. West of Springfield: yes, that's mountain railroading with many sharp curves.

As far as I am concerned, the proposed Boston-Springfield passenger train service improvements can't come soon enough, if for no other reason than that the Worcester-Springfield segment might be double tracked, and speeds increased to 79 mph. If the service is extended to Pittsfield and Albany, the line should be double tracked west of the siding east of Chatham and upgraded for faster running from there to Rensselaer, along with repair of the Post Road section.

I think that any proposal for Boston-Albany service would need to have these improvements and more. In fact, I'd come off the siding east of Chatham (new stop there) and essentially run alongside the existing CSX track so as not to be subject to freight interference and slow speeds. Thus, it might be possible to run 79 mph between Chatham and Rensselaer.

Thanks for listening!

Bill Hutchison (formerly with All Aboard Ohio)



THE ESPA EXPRESS
10531 Main Street
Clarence, NY 14031-1684

Please take a moment to check your mailing label.
Your membership may be due for renewal.
We appreciate your support.

FIRST CLASS
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #102
CLARENCE, NY

Forward & Address Correction Requested

ESPA Working Group & Meeting

ALL ESPA members (and other interested persons) are welcome and encouraged to attend. Please contact President Gary Prophet at thegp@aol.com for more information or if you are planning on attending a meeting. Advance registration is required!

Next Meeting: January 19, 2019, from noon 'til 4 pm, at Katie O'Byrne's Pub (next to Schenectady Amtrak Station)

Check www.esparail.org, for the most current information on meeting times and venues...
ALL dates, locations and times are subject to change...

ESPA/RPA Member Discount

If you are a member of ESPA and RAP can save \$5 on their ESPA membership fee for Renewal or higher member levels (Renew for \$19 instead of the regular \$24)



Stay In Touch With **ESPA**
Via Facebook at
www.facebook.com/esparail
(You Don't Have To Be A Facebook User To View Our ESPA Page)

ESPA MEMBERSHIP NEW OR RENEWAL

The Empire State Passengers Association is a volunteer network of people working to improve intercity rail, mass transit and bus service in New York State.

- Introductory membership (\$10.00 for one year)
- Renewal membership (\$24.00 per year)
- Renewal - Student, Senior, Fixed-Income (\$12.50 per year)
- Family membership (\$30.00)
- Sustaining membership (\$50.00)*
- Patron membership (\$75.00)*
- Corporate membership (\$100.00)*
- Lifetime membership (\$300.00)*

Member
Number _____

Yes send Pin

Please make checks/money orders payable to ESPA and mail to ESPA c/o Andrew Cabal, P.O. Box 434, Syracuse, NY 13209. *Premium membership can receive ESPA pin.

Check www.esparail.org, for the most current information on meeting times and venues...
***** Stay in Touch with ESPA Via Facebook at www.facebook.com/espa**

Send news items and "Letters to the Editor" to: Robert Lenz, Editor, 10531 Main Street, Clarence, NY 14031, Tel: 716-759-2315.
Email: www.rwlenz4@gmail.com Deadling for material for Winter Issue is January 21st, 2019.
Material may be reproduced if credit is given ESPA and to the writer.