

# THE ESPA EXPRESS

News from the Empire State  
Passengers Association, Inc.

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## State buys back Adirondack RR lease

In a convoluted move, the state departments of Environmental Conservation (EnCon) and Transportation (DOT) bought the remaining 19 years of the Adirondack Railroad's lease at a US bankruptcy court auction last month. The auction took place in Utica on November 10; the lease was sold for \$210,000, of which \$185,000 came from EnCon, \$25,000 from DOT.

The rail line was last used in 1980, after being rehabilitated for the winter Olympics in Lake Placid. Since the Adirondack Railroad Company had leased the property from the State, it appeared to some that the State was buying the lease back from itself. However, according to Arthur Woldt on EnCon, the purpose was to regain control; "Nobody could do anything as long as it was tied up in the bankruptcy court".

According to a joint EnCon-DOT statement, the property will be used for "recreational purposes". Woldt said it fits the "trail category—for snowmobiles, hikers, or skiers". "Whether it will be used for a railroad for transportation purposes depends on DOT," he said. Geoffrey Orton, a spokesman for DOT, said its use has not been determined, and will be largely up to EnCon. Both Woldt and Orton said public hearings will be held before any final determination is made.

The state agencies outbid a group of private investors who had hoped to restore rail service on the line. Dan Kaestle, a real estate developer from Saranac Lake who heads the group, felt the state was underhanded; "We had been meeting with them to outline our plans; we had no idea they were going to do this," he said.

According to a DOT news release announcing the sale, the buyer would be required to conform to the conditions of the original ARC lease, which included maintaining "all facilities so that rail services can be provided between Remsen and Lake Placid." But according to Orton, these conditions do not pertain to the State, since in drawing them up originally it had acted as the lessor, not the lessee. "Those conditions were put in to discourage anyone wanting to buy it for scrap," Orton told the ESPA Express.

This stance poses some thorny questions: is it fair to impose conditions on private buyers that do not apply to state agencies? Was the state acting in good faith in suggesting through its press release that the property must be maintained for rail service and then buying it itself for apparently different purposes? Thomas Grant, a spokesman for Senator Ronald Stafford, told the Watertown Daily Times he was concerned that the sale "files against the grain of attracting private industry," a major state goal.

Kaestle said the group has not given up; "We will do whatever is necessary," said Bill Kissel, the group's legal counsel.

Kaestle also said there is room for snowmobiles and hikers as well as trains on the 100 foot right of way. "The important thing is to save it—if it is lost, people will really regret it a few years from now."

## D&H Service Interrupted

Track problems on the D&H have caused two temporary suspensions of Amtrak's *Adirondack*. In both cases the NYS&W, operating the D&H under an ICC directed service order, responded quickly to restore service.

On October 17th the *Adirondack* was terminated north of Schenectady after an inspection by Amtrak's geometry car revealed gauge problems over 90 miles of track. The inspection found many instances of incorrect width—too much distance between the rails, usually as a result of worn rails. NYS&W quickly imposed a 10MPH slow order, effectively terminating all Amtrak service to Montreal. A substitute bus was provided.

But just as quickly, NYS&W mobilized its forces: furloughed track workers were called back, and existing crews worked extra hours. The gauge was corrected and some rail was replaced with surplus from D&H's abandoned line to Wilkes Barre, according to DOT's Mark Silo, who participated in the inspection. The work was done without mechanized track machinery. CSX, which was provided financial and material backing for NYS&W in operating D&H, assisted with funding. Service was restored in a matter of days, with delays averaging only 30-40 minutes. . . .

### . . . Repeat Performance

A repeat performance, occurred when Amtrak's geometry car traversed the line again after an inspection of the newly acquired Central Vermont trackage between Windsor and Brattleboro, Vt. On November 30 the car's computers again recorded multiple instances of incorrect gauge over 80 to 90 miles of D&H track—problems very similar to those found earlier, according to Amtrak spokesman Clifford Black. Again a 10MPH speed limit was imposed, and again passenger service was suspended. The following day the track was inspected "on foot" by Amtrak, NYS&W, D&H and FRA technical personnel, who found the gauge to be well within permissible tolerances, according to Black. Passenger service was restored on December 2; the cause of the computer readings remains a mystery.

That evening, in a speech to the NRHS Mohawk & Hudson annual meeting, NYS&W President Walter Rich complained that Amtrak's reimbursement for operating the *Adirondack* was far less than the cost of maintaining a 70MPH railroad. But, as he told ESPA's Frank Barry afterward, "If we're gonna run passenger trains, we're gonna do it right." Thank you, Walter Rich.

## ESPA-NARP ANNUAL MEETING

February 25, 1989

Empire State Plaza  
Albany, N.Y.

Tour of Amtrak's Rensselaer shops  
(see flier inside)

# EDITORIAL: New Leadership Needed

During the past few years ESPA has grown to become a respected advocacy organization, listened to by legislators, state and local officials, as well as Amtrak management. Since 1985 our membership has grown from roughly 250 to 400. This is a result of hard work by many in ESPA, as well as support from friends who share our objectives.

However growth brings its own challenges, and it has become clear to me that the presidency, as now defined, is no longer manageable by one person. Some functions are not always addressed expeditiously, and the responsibility for guiding the organization, while rewarding and at times exhilarating, at other times can be overwhelming. This is a measure of success, but also a warning; if we are to increase our effectiveness, our structure needs to grow too.

I also believe that if the organization is to develop strength and continuity, it cannot rely too long on one person for leadership. From this perspective the five years I have been president is a long time. From a personal perspective, the increasing demands of my job are making it harder and harder to sustain the level of ESPA activity possible in prior years. For these reasons I have asked our officers to seek a replacement candidate for president for next year. I will continue to be active, but in other ways.

In short, there is a need for new leadership and involvement of more people in our organization. For ESPA to continue to grow, a constant infusion of new energy and ideas are needed. The future of rail and mass transit is becoming more critical as traffic congestion grows and environmental concerns increase. The world our children and grandchildren will inherit depends a lot on what we do today to advance energy efficient transportation. In the absence of strong advocacy by government, those of us concerned about rail and mass transit have a unique and urgent role to play in our country's history.

The ESPA officers will discuss leadership functions at the next Officers Meeting, in Schenectady on January 21st. If you think you might like to become more involved, please contact me at 607-533-7563 evenings or weekends.

-Frank Barry, President

## Harrison resigns; new LI Coordinator Needed

Arthur Harrison, a retired civil engineer, is resigning as ESPA's coordinator on Long Island. Art has done his share of lobbying, telephoning and public speaking, and ESPA will miss him.

The Long Island coordinator will become increasingly important in 1989 when Nassau County's Ralph Marino succeeds Warren Anderson in the top New York State Senate position. Approximately 10% of ESPA's members live on Long Island.

## What does a Coordinator do?

ESPA coordinators represent each major region of the State; responsibilities involve making the case for better rail service and mass transit in their region. Individual coordinators have done such things as organizing telephone campaigns, contacting key legislators, speaking to civic organizations, testifying at public hearings, and contributing news items to the *ESPA Express*.

Actually, few coordinators do all of this—everyone contributes as best they can within their time limitations and abilities. Coordinators also participate in the quarterly ESPA officers meetings where policy decisions are made.

In addition to the regional coordinators, elected by the membership at the annual meeting, local coordinators represent ESPA in various cities around the state. Local coordinators are appointed by the president.

ESPA still needs active representation in Niagara Falls, Rochester, Rome, Utica, Amsterdam, Hudson, Rhinecliff, and in locations along the Adirondack route. More representation is also needed in parts of the state not served by Amtrak.

If you live on Long Island or another area without an ESPA coordinator, and think you might be interested in representing ESPA, please contact Frank Barry (607-533-7563, evenings).

## 2020: Letters needed from legislators

*Please ask your Congressman and state representatives to write to AASHTO urging that its 2020 recommendations include stable funding for rail improvements, both passenger and freight.*

The American Association of State Highway Officers (AASHTO) is developing recommendations for replacing the Interstate Highway legislation which will expire soon. NARP is urging AASHTO to recommend a stable means of funding for rail passenger and freight improvements to relieve highway wear and congestion. ESPA and many others advocated this position in the 2020 AASHTO hearings in Albany last winter. ESPA and NARP believe that much of the decline of railroads in the U.S. has resulted from lavish funding for air and highway improvements which private railroads could not match.

Congressional letters should go to: Francis Francois, Executive Director, American Association of State Highway Officers, 444 N. Capitol St. NW, Suite 225, Washington, D.C. 20001. (Sen. D'Amato and Fran Pordum have already written).

## D&H Prospects: Big Ifs

by Robert Crane

The Delaware and Hudson will be operating on its own in January, and by Spring talks will be underway to sell it as a going concern, probably to one or more connecting lines—if Francis DiCello, bankruptcy trustee for the line, achieves all his goals. He admits that's a big "if". The road will never be viable by itself, he concedes, but he believes it has a future if combined with other lines.

DiCello, in an interview published by the Albany Times Union, would not confirm rumors that he has talked to the NYS&W, (now operating the D&H under a temporary ICC order), Grand Trunk Western, Canadian Pacific, Providence & Worcester, and Bangor & Aroostook railroads. But he does admit talking to unnamed connecting lines which might consider guaranteeing (in effect co-signing) bank loans of \$10-15 million needed to provide working capital.

The list of obstacles DiCello faces is formidable, ranging from bad labor relations, insufficient traffic and a need for new equipment, to a \$9.6 million price tag for rehabilitating 32 locomotives. And the connecting lines, which are only "considering" a loan guarantee, won't get much closer to signing one unless the New York and federal governments agree to subordinate their claims—some \$115 million—to give the guarantors a reasonable chance of recovering their money if they do have to make good on their guarantees. Subordination would mean that the two governments would agree to be paid nothing until the co-signed loans had been paid in full.

But the alternative, says DiCello, is liquidation. And so much of the railroad's debt is secured by liens on its property that there is no chance of workers or unsecured creditors getting anything in a liquidation, he says. "There is not going to be a government bailout," he adds.



## Station Improvements:

### Inmates and Lions Help Rebuild Rome

On September 1st the city of Rome bought its railroad station from Amtrak for \$10, and has since mobilized volunteer lions, prison inmates and its own workers to rehabilitate the 76 year old structure. Inmates from the Oneida Correctional Facility, some from as far away as New York City, have been "a pleasure," according to city transportation director Michael Rossi, "they've been here just two weeks, but they've done a month and a half of work." Volunteers from the Lions Club have worked to restore the waiting room benches, and city employees are working on the station when not needed elsewhere.

Care is being taken to preserve the historic nature of the building, one of the few original station structures left west of Albany. "We want to keep it totally original," Rossi said.

Fare Well Travel and Tours now operates a branch office in the station under a contract with the city, enabling passengers to purchase tickets in the station. (Utica Observer Dispatch and Rome Sentinel)

### Utica Walkway Finished

A new enclosed walkway from the station building to the platform was inaugurated in Utica on November 2nd. This replaced a climb across an unused track which had replaced the original subway tunnel. The walkway features a heated area on the platform, plus new mercury vapor lighting.

### Westport Parking Expanded

Westport's new parking lot is now completed and the station building's interior work was to have been finished by December 15, according to Mark Silo of DOT. Restoration of the station will permit retirement of the present shelter.

### M-N Plans Parking Expansion

Metro-North has announced plans to expand parking at seven stations: Port Chester (garage: 625 spaces), Tarrytown (350 car garage), Golden's Bridge (132 spaces), Crestwood (108), Purdys (100), Cronton Falls (75), and North White Plains (22). Metro-North will put up \$20 million, which must be matched by localities with local, state or federal funds. Completion depends on agreement with each locality. (Journal News).

### UMTA helps Hudson

Congressman Gerald Solomon (R), of Glens Falls has helped to arrange federal financing for Hudson station improvements through the Urban Mass Transportation Administration. UMTA involvement was apparently justified on the basis of high usage by commuters. NYSDOT will contribute \$300,000, UMTA \$1,125,000 to the \$1.5 million project.

The improvements will involve expanded parking, and complete rehabilitation of the historic station building, with some expansion of the waiting room area. (Hudson Register Star)

### Ticonderoga Approves Move

The Ticonderoga town board has passed a resolution approving the town's participation in a project to move its station location to Pell's Crossing on NYS 74. The new site will be closer to both the ferry to Vermont and the town's Revolutionary War fortress. The new structure will be a brick faced shelter modeled after a station built in Kewanee, Ill.

## Thanksgiving: No Complaints

After a less than perfect summer (see last issue), Amtrak went all out to make people comfortable over the Thanksgiving holiday, lengthening trains, running extra sections and even borrowing a trainset from Metro-North.

An advance section of train 65 (to Niagara Falls) ran five minutes ahead of the regular train on Tuesday, Nov. 22nd as far as Syracuse, returning Wednesday morning as Advance 62. On Wednesday train 65, normally a 6 car turboliner, ran with 11 Amfleet cars; this was followed by No. 31, the weekend train, which had an advance section as far as Albany. No. 93, which normally runs to Albany on Friday only, ran on Wednesday also, using Metro-North equipment.

On Sunday, No. 62 from Niagara Falls sported three sections, all turboliners; one advance section originated in Syracuse, another in Albany. "This was one of the best holidays we've ever had," said Sal Bruno, Amtrak's Superintendent in Albany; "basically, there were no complaints." Thank you, Amtrak.

## Last RTG II Arrives

Amtrak's third rehabilitated RTG II turboliner arrived in Rensselaer from Beech Grove, Nov. 11th, according to Floyd Jamison, of Amtrak's Rensselaer Shop. After a test run to Grand Central, it made its first revenue run, Nov. 23rd.

Because of their lightweight construction and European couplers, the three French-built RTG are limited to five cars by the Federal Railroad Administration, which recently denied an Amtrak petition to increase their length to six cars. The heavier Rohr built RTL turbos, which utilize US couplers, routinely run with 6 cars. Growing ridership on the Empire Corridor has made 5 car trains impractical on many runs, thus limiting the utility of the RTG II's.

The RTG II's are now regularly used between the Capital District and New York on trains 78 and 73, and at times on trains 71, 72, 74, 77, 79, 84 and 93, according to Sal Bruno, Amtrak's Superintendent of Transportation in Rensselaer.

## Turboliners to Montreal

The added RTG II turboliners will enable Amtrak to convert its *Adirondack* train to Montreal to a turbo consist on or before the January 15 timetable change, according to Bruno. While the turboliner's 125 MPH capacity will not be used on the D&H, passengers will appreciate the turboliner's spacious windows—more suitable than Amfleet for viewing the spectacular scenery along the line.

## NY Subway Extension

In what the Associated Press described as the biggest change in the history of New York's Subways, half of the system's routes were changed on December 11. The most significant change was probably the inauguration of the two mile Archer Avenue extension of the J route from 121st Street to the new Jamaica Center Parsons/Archer Terminal in Queens. This project includes a new connection between the new J route and the popular E-F route to 179th St. As a result, E trains now originate at Jamaica Center instead of 179th St., while the R train has been extended along Queens Boulevard to 179th St. to replace the E.

## New Windows on at Niagara Falls

Amtrak has replaced many stained turboliner windows at its Rensselaer shop and at Niagara Falls, where on trainset lays over between 9:42 PM and 7:15 AM. Formerly this work was done at Beech Grove, Ind., which required the car to be out of service until all repairs were done. Doing the job at Niagara Falls and Rensselaer allows repair of one window at a time during normal layovers, without taking the car out of service.

# Destination: Visiting Queens Via the Flushing Line

by Theodore W. Scull

In recent years, one of New York's great elevated rides has assumed the new title "The Orient Express", but not because of its plush accommodations, rather for the train's destination, Flushing or "Little Asia." Roughly half of this Queens community is now made up of newly arrived Koreans, Chinese, Southeast Asians and Indians.

A ride on the maroon "Siver Fox" cars of the Flushing El, completed in 1928 and now undergoing the final stages of reconstruction, offers an interesting overview of the sprawling borough and takes you within walking distance of lots of attractions. There is frequent train service at all hours of the day.

The #7 IRT trains begins at Times Square and rises out of the East River tunnel to an elevated structure opposite the LIRR's Hunterpoint Avenue platforms. The line gives an aerial view of Amtrak and NJ Transit trains in the Sunnyside yards and then crosses the LIRR main line and the beginning of the Hell Gate Route to New England.

After passing through a largely industrial area, the line runs at roof level through residential neighborhoods of small brick apartment buildings and single-family row houses. At Woodside, the subway interchanges with the LIRR for trains to Jamaica and eastward. During the stops, you can feel the structure sway. Don't be concerned, it's supposed to.

At 111th Street, a few minutes' walk leads to the Queens Museum (718-592-2405, small admission), for its special art exhibits and the detailed panoramic model of New York's five boroughs. On the balcony above, you can watch the city pass through cycles of night and day. Nearby is Flushing Meadow Park, the Unisphere and a small-scale zoo for children (currently under reconstruction).

The Flushing Line continues east past Shea Stadium, home of the amazing Mets, the Corona subway yards and several buildings left over from the 1964 World's Fair. The ride ends at Flushing Main Street, an underground station with colorful tiles lying beneath the main shopping center.

A few blocks south via the LIRR overpass leads to the Queens Botanical Garden (718-886-3800, free), a 38-acre year-round quiet haven for the local residents that features 400 types of roses in the spring and summer, 50,000 tulips, an evergreen collection, Bee and Bird gardens, and a splendid Victorian Wedding Garden that sees constant use.

Historic Flushing is to the east and not far from the busy subway station but taking a detailed street map is recommended. The 1661 Bowne House (718-359-0528, small admission) served as an early clandestine Quaker meeting

house until 1694, when the British government agreed to certain religious freedom in the colonies. The immediate result was the gray-shingled Quaker Meeting House, that is today the oldest religious building in New York City.

## Amtrak Ridership Increases

	1987	1988	Yr. %
	Fiscal Yr.	Fiscal Yr.	Change
Empire Corridor	1,000,099	1,058,481	+ 5.7%
Lakeshore Ltd.	372,465	378,031	+ 1.5%
Adirondack	82,563	97,550	+18.2%
Metroliner	1,661,666	1,901,887	+14.5%
NEC Conventional	6,547,822	6,836,599	+ 4.4%
Amtrak Total	20,441,779	21,496,303	+ 5.2%

(Amtrak fiscal year begins Oct. 1)

Amtrak's Empire Service generated \$2.4 million in revenues in October—up 16.7% from last October. Empire Corridor revenue is nearly twice that of the San Diego Corridor, and is second only to that of the Northeast Corridor. (Amtrak)

## All Doors Not Open Yet

The announcement in our last issue that all doors would open on through trains at Rensselaer turned out to be premature; resignation of a key aide at Rensselaer forced Amtrak to postpone the new procedure. But Amtrak's Sal Bruno has promised ESPA's Frank Barry that the idea, suggested by ESPA, will be implemented in the near future.

## ESPA Membership

The Empire State Passengers Association is dedicated to improving intercity rail, mass transit, bus service in New York State. Keep informed with *The ESPA Express*. Keep the pressure on for safe, efficient, environmentally sound transportation. Dues and contributions support ESPA's publications and advocacy on the passengers behalf.

- Regular membership (\$10.00 for one year)
- Student or Senior Citizen membership (\$7.50)
- Family membership (\$15.00)
- Sustaining membership (\$25.00)

Please make checks and money orders payable to: Empire State Passengers Association. Mail to John Ross, ESPA Treasurer, 4 Maplewood Court, Greenwich, NY 12834.

Send offers to volunteer to work for ESPA and any other ESPA communications to: Frank Barry, President, Empire State Passengers Association, 219 E. Lansing Rd., Groton, NY 13073.

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